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NARRATIVE CODE OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S NOVEL THE SCARLET LETTER

Мета статті – визначити специфіку наративного коду роману Натанієля Готорна «Шарлатова літера», спираючись на здобутки західноєвропейської наратології. У процесі дослідження застосовано історико-літературний, рецептивний, порівняльний *методи*, а також прийом «уважного читання».

Установлено, що складна наративна структура роману оприявнюється вже на рівні апарату видання: твір зчеплено з нарисом, початково задуманим саме як передмова, а не як окремий, самостійний текст. Намагаючись внутрішньо самоусунутись від зображуваних подій, які відбулися понад 100 років тому, письменник створює образ об'єктивного фіксатора інформації від безпосередніх спостерігачів, отож можна говорити про множинного наратора. Дистанціювання автора від викладених подій досягається через два популярних у європейській літературі XIX ст. прийоми: прийом «текст у тексті» і прийом містифікації. У нарисі точкою зору є наратор рамкової історії – *primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator*, що виявлено на граматичному рівні першою особою однини. Історія життя жінки є текстом у тексті, що належить вторинному наратору (наратору внутрішньої історії), який є персонажем в рамковій історії, але в основній він – *primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator*, оскільки перебуває поза художнім світом і викладає події від третьої особи, рефлексуючи над ними. Зазначено, що, формовуючи образ надійного розповідача, *primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator* наділяє *primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator* ім'ям, біографічними даними і навіть офіційними документами. Акцентуючи в нарисі свою роль саме як редактора автентичної розповіді, *primary diegetic narrator* одночасно зауважив, що все ж домислив мотиви і почуття, котрими керувалися персонажі. Тому можна говорити про змішування точок зору, читач сам має вирішувати, де чия. Події в романі Готорна подано з точки зору *primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator*, а першу особу множини оявлено в тексті різними конструкціями, відповідно у форму «ми» можемо включити й автора, і нараторів усіх типів, представлених у тексті.

Зазначено, що головна героїня – особистість з винятковим характером, яка, не плануючи цього, інтегрується в новий для неї світ на нових для цього світу засадах. Через позашлюбну дитину жінка опинилася в соціальній ізоляції. У розвитку мотиву психоемоційного терору героїні з боку містян у романі залучено мотиви ірраціональної здатності жінки відчувати інших грішників, позірної набожності і прихованої гріховності всієї громади, включно дітей. З мотивом соціальної ізоляції матері і дитини пов'язаний мотив кола, що на символічному рівні репрезентує замкненість і безвихідь. Підкреслено, що в художній версії Готорна саме соціальна ізоляція матері та дитини уможливила формування людей з новою аксіологією всередині фанатично релігійної громади. З мотивом гріха зчеплений мотив його спокутування.

Акцентовано, що наскрізним для роману є мотив відносності сенсу багряної літери. Якщо взяти до уваги, що «А» (від *adultery*), є першою літерою в алфавіті, то образ Естер Прінн набуває символічного значення – це жінка, з якої почалася історія американської ментальності. З іншого

боку слово «letter» в англійській мові використовується і на позначення листа, послання, відповідно в поєднанні з семантикою слова «шарлатовий» назву «The Scarlet Letter» можна потлумачити і як «Дорогоцінне послання», а твір загалом – як послання і до жінок, і до чоловіків, що оселилися й оселяються в новій країні.

У готорнівському розумінні мотиву спокутування гріха значущим є образ позашлюбної дитини. Через опис поведінки дівчинки, особливості її спілкування з матір'ю в романі послідовно показано, що вже в дитячому віці маленька героїня проявляла свою індивідуальність і могла протистояти жорсткому натовпу. Підкреслено, що Естер Прінн відкидає старозавітну істину, за якою діти мають відповідати за вчинки батьків, тому не нав'язувала доньці аскетичне життя, допускала радощі від дитячих забавок, дозволяла дівчинці керуватися власними пориваннями. Вибудовуючи образи матері і дитини Прінн, оповідач порівнює героїню з Дівою Марією, також згадує про пророка Натана, Давида і Беер-Шеву / Вірсавію. Підкреслено, що через непрямі відсилання до двох знакових для людства постатей, асоціативно зринає думка про те, що маленька Перл – апостол іншого, майбутнього світу, вільного від догм. У такому аспекті значимим є епізод, коли дівчинка танцює на могильній плиті одного з найбільш поважних поселенців. Невинні дії пустунки сприймаються як символічне відкидання / знецінення всього того, що вчорашні європейці намагаються примусово імплантувати в американський світ, воно має померти і дати шлях новому. Неперсоналізоване зауваження, що при появі дівчинки було порушено закон, у поєднанні з подальшою щасливою долею маленької героїні скеровує на думку про те, що своїм жорстоким присудом непомітно для себе колоністи змінили плин життя, у напрямку напрацювання нових принципів суспільного існування.

У сконденсованому вигляді пуританське суспільство в романі «Шарлатова літера» презентує літній науковець Роджер Чиллінгворт / Прінн, якого в сучасному розумінні можна означити як аб'юзера. Образ Чиллінгворта відповідає популярному на час написання роману байронічному типу героя. З одного боку, це наділений внутрішньою силою розумний науковець з широким кругозором і вільною думкою, та з іншого – він похмурий та ображений на світ, у якому його ніхто не покаяв через вроджене каліцтво і для якого пошук суперника спочатку перетворюється на психологічну ломиголовку, а потім і жорстоку гру. У тексті розкидано деталі, що так чи інакше скеровують також на архетипний образ Фауста і наскрізний у романі образ диявола. Найбільш неоднозначним у романі Готорна є образ *Артура Димсдейла*.

Змальовування в романі подій як містичних, а героїв як виняткових, наділення їх ірраціональними вміннями, їхня демонізація скеровують на естетику романтизму, що домінувала на той час в літературі. Якщо брати до уваги змістові особливості роману «Шарлатова літера», його можна розглядати як невимушену повчальну історію про нові жіночі цінності на американському континенті. У той же час твір можна класифікувати і як роман про кохання (romance), і як психологічний роман (novel), у якому художньо досліджується, як почуття провини впливає на поведінку людини, її емоції і ставлення до світу. Використання прийому містифікації і гра авторськими масками спонукає читача самому вирішити, чи справді існувала жінка з такою історією, чи її вигадано.

Ключові слова: *наратор, архетипний образ, мотив гріха і спокути, кольоровий код, образ диявола, романтичний дискурс, готичний дискурс.*

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Introduction

In literary studies, the works of the early 19th-century American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne are traditionally viewed through the lens of romanticism as a literary movement. Still, according to the peculiarities of artistic intentions, his works clearly do not fit into the romantic discourse only. His novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) is considered by critics to be among the 100 best novels in the world literature [McCrum, 2014]. As G.S. Gillard noted, the novel *The Scarlet Letter* is the highest expression of Hawthorne's genius in delineating the dark side of human nature: "He had a passion for exploring the crypts and caverns of the soul, or, to state the case more exactly, his genius found congenial employment in painting the struggles of a heart burdened with the weight of a secret and unconfessed sin, and in portraying lives of a double aspect, which are fair and goodly outside, but spotted with guilt and shame within. He is the searcher and analyzer of dark bosoms" [Hillard, 1870, p. 265]. A direct analysis of international publications about this work has shown that researchers have repeatedly focused on its the-

matic features from various perspectives: the factors shaping a dual personality and the distortion of the soul as exemplified by the character of Arthur Dimmesdale [Chen, 2017, pp. 85–89], the relationship between body and gender [Kardiansyah et al., 2017, pp. 58–67], the social consequences of the Puritan law on adultery [Wulansari, 2017, pp. 14–29], topographical space and cultural connotations [Pan, 2021, pp. 90–101], society's disloyalty to adultery [Kessek et al., 2022, pp. 431–438], morality and ethics, morality and religion, morality and law, immorality [Aristiawan, 2023, pp. 50–59]. For example, Ramtin Noor-Tehrani Mahini and Erin Barth, in their study of Hawthorne's novel in the context of transcendentalism and anti-transcendentalism, emphasized that while most novelists focused on depicting the external world, Hawthorne delved into the most intimate emotional and intellectual movements of his characters' psyches [Mahini, Barth, 2018, pp. 474–479]. Xiaohan Mei, studying the work through the lens of 20th-century spatial theories, particularly noted that Nathaniel Hawthorne constructed three spaces in his "romantic novel": material, spiritual, and social [Mei, 2019, pp. 13–21]. Xingwen Pan, reflecting on the chronotope in Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*, noted that the work artistically depicts open temporality and confined spatiality, represented by the prison, Hester Prynne's house, Arthur Dimmesdale's study, and Roger Chillingworth's laboratory. The researcher emphasized: "One of the important methods he chose was spatial form. In his novels, even the basic time factor is vague. Without mentioning the detailed time of this early period of New England history, he also flickered at the specific time length, and put more energy on the architecture of space rather than the process of time. From the perspective of modern space narratology, the destruction and rejection of time sequence is precisely the most obvious feature of the spatial form" [Pan, 2021, p. 92]. The Albanian scholar Shpëtim Madani explored the dichotomy of individualism/collectivism in Hawthorne's novel, highlighting the gap between the strict 17th-century Puritan community, which demands complete conformity from its members, and the heroine's ongoing struggle for individualism [Madani, 2022, pp. 40–50]. Mujtaba Mohammedali Yahya Al-Hilo, Haider Saad Yahya Jubran focus on ideological strategies in Hawthorne's novel, in particular, they note: "The author deliberately overshadows the text with dark puritan domination over all social and political structures. This type of deliberate exposition of ideological factors hovering above the novel's events tends to crash the ideology at work with his harsh critique. Hawthorne successfully obliges the reader to experience a sense of disgust, not only his contemporary readers who might take the events and reaction of the character for-granted, or part of the strata of the age, but also today's model readers who can read the text with its historical and cultural contexts, or a new historical reading of the text" [Mujtaba, Haider, 2022, p. 49].

In the context of our research, the studies by Migara Jayasinghe [Jayasinghe, 2020, p. 38] and Lifeng Zhang are particularly important [Zhang, 2023, pp. 156–158]. Thus, Migara Jayasinghe noted that the novel is written from an "omniscient third-person perspective," while the researcher emphasized: "The narrator also frequently adds commentaries about characters and their actions, which shapes the reader's perception" [Jayasinghe, 2020, p. 38]. Drawing on the premises of contemporary narrative theory, which posits that focus is the point of view used by the narrator (the one who observes the story, not the one who speaks), Zhang identifies three types of focus in the novel: zero, external, and internal focus [Zhang, 2023, p. 156]. The zero focus (omniscient narrator / God-like perspective) is realized in the first chapter of the novel, where only what the narrator sees and hears is recorded. Internal focus involves the narrator's speculations about the heroine's feelings and thoughts, and her psychological reactions. External focus is presented through "the spatial form of the novel structure" – the "destruction and abandonment of time sequence": "From the point of view of narrative structure, the narrative of *The Scarlet Letter* breaks the traditional time narrative rules, breaks the linear time flow of the beginning, the development, the climax, and the ending of the general love story. And the cause and effect of the plot take the ending of the extramarital love affair as the beginning of the narrative of the novel. The author enlarges the outcome of the extramarital love affair and the inner struggle of the characters" [Zhang, 2023, p. 157]. It is worth noting that in his analysis, Lifeng Zhang overlooks the essay "The Custom-House. Introductory to *The Scarlet Letter*," which served as a preface in the first edition of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. We believe this essay is key to understanding the narrative strategy of the work.

A direct review of publications on Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* in Ukrainian literary studies reveals that this work only recently became the subject of academic research, and its narrative techniques and artistic features remain largely unexplored. For example, T. Lavrienko, analysing the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), determined that Hawthorne differentiated between two types of large prose: the romantic (romance) and the domestic (novel) genres. The researcher incidentally mentioned *The Scarlet Letter*, categorizing it as a romance [Лаврієнко, 2006, p. 168]. This gap underscores the relevance of our study, which aims to identify the textual strategies in Hawthorne's novel. *The purpose* of the article is to determine the specifics of the narrative code of Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*, taking into account the achievements of Western European narratology.

The *research methods* used are historical and literary methods, receptive and comparative methods, and close reading techniques. The works on narratology inspired the methodological guidelines of the study by R. Barthes, G. Genette, W. Schmid, T. Kushnirova.

The narrative mode of a literary text: theoretical basis

In contemporary literary studies, the narrative mode of a literary text is traditionally understood in the framework of author–narrator–reader, with the primary question being who is speaking and from whose perspective the events are presented. The narrative approach in literary studies in the latter half of the 20th century was a reaction against attributing the views of the characters to the author and an attempt to establish the degree of the real author's presence through terms like "implied author," "conceptual author," "hidden author," "metaphysical author," "author as active agent," "author-narrator," "author-observer," "authorial voice," "author's viewpoint," "authorial intervention," and "authorial digression". This entire set of categories was fundamentally challenged by Roland Barthes' theory of *The Death of the Author*. Barthes emphasized that, while the relationship between author and work may resemble that of parent and child [Barthes, 1977, p. 148], the author, whom he called "the scribe," essentially "enters into his own death" during the text's creation [Ibid., p. 143]. **Stressing that a text is a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash,"** Barthes proposed abandoning the search for a definitive meaning in the text ("an ultimate meaning, to the text (and to ~e world as text") [Ibid., p. 147]) and instead, highlighting the reader's role in uncovering the cultural, biographical, and psychological "traces by which the written text is constituted" [Ibid., p. 148]. Barthes insisted that one must abandon the establishment of a work's meaning through the involvement of the author: "The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author 'confiding' in us" [Ibid., p. 143]. Notably, prior to Barthes' studies, Käthe Auguste Friedemann proposed the first classification of narrative forms: 1) **editorial omniscience**; 2) **neutral omniscience**; 3) **I as witness**; 4) **I as protagonist**; 5) **multiple selective omniscience**; 6) **selective omniscience**; 7) **dramatic mode**; and 8) **the camera** [Friedemann, 1908, pp. 512–561].

Although the term "narratology" was first introduced in scholarship by Bulgarian scholar Tzvetan Todorov in 1969 [Todorov, 1969], Ihor Papusha confidently asserted that "in fact, narratology" was already present in Aristotle's *Poetics* [Papusha, 2013, p. 15]. **He emphasized that "narrative is a type of discourse, and studying it in specific literary examples means inevitably studying these texts as models of certain genres"** [Ibid., p. 16]. **Discussing the "mechanism of narrative transmission" and narrative agencies (storyteller / narrator, listener / narratee, and character / actor),** he highlighted: "Each agency possesses its own narrative competence, acquired in the process of storytelling: today's listener may become tomorrow's narrator or even protagonist" [Ibid., p. 31].

The establishment of the "narrator" category in literary theory enabled the distinction between the real writer and the textual strategies implemented at the level of the narrative subject as part of the artistic world. Therefore, as Lidiia Matsievko-Bekerska aptly noted, "It is important that the narrator can serve as a point of understanding within the classical oppositional structure between language and speech, between addresser and addressee, and later – between the meaning and the significance of the text" [Matsievko-Bekerska, 2009, p. 280]. At the same time, she pointed out, "The author's speech is carried out within the boundaries permitted

by the historicity of language in its primary meaning, as well as within a context of secondary meanings, which may obscure the reader's perception in subsequent generations. Similarly, the reader is primarily dependent on their intellectual and value-based environment, thus interpreting the proposed text in accordance with their own egoistic need for self-recognition. Thus, differences are clearly articulated between what is narrated (narration) and what is perceived (discourse)" [Ibid.].

For modern narrative theory, Wolf Schmid's research [Schmid, 2010] has become a compendium that, on the one hand, synthesizes the contributions of his predecessors and analyses central narratological categories (such as fiction, mimesis, author, reader, narrator, etc.), while on the other, it reflects deeply on issues of communicative structure, narrative subjects, point of view, the relationship between the narrator's and character's texts, narrativity and eventfulness, and the transformations of narrative events. Specifically, Schmid, in analyzing types of narrators as proposed by Percy Lubbock, Norman Friedman, Wilhelm Füger, and Erwin Leibfried, concluded that "They often confuse the type of narrator with the type of perspective and define the underlying criteria only imprecisely" [Schmid, 2010, p. 66]. He emphasized that "a typology of the narrator must be simple and may be based on only the most elementary criteria, without striving for an exhaustive picture of the phenomenon being modelled" [Ibid., p. 66]. To define *Types of Narrator*, Schmid suggested considering the following: "Mode of representation (explicit – implicit), Diegetic status (diegetic – non-diegetic), Hierarchy (primary – secondary – tertiary), Degree of markedness (strongly marked – weakly marked), Personality (personal – impersonal), Homogeneity of symptoms (compact – diffuse), Evaluative position (objective – subjective)" [Ibid., p. 66].

Schmid found the terminology of Gérard Genette (extradiegetic – heterodiegetic, extradiegetic – homodiegetic, intradiegetic – heterodiegetic, intradiegetic – homodiegetic, metadiegetic – heterodiegetic, metadiegetic – homodiegetic) [Genette, 1972, pp. 227–231] complex and conceptually problematic, so he chose Bertil Romberg's terms, proposing distinctions such as "the primary narrator (the narrator of the frame story), the secondary narrator (the narrator of the inner story, who appears as a character in the frame story), the tertiary narrator (the narrator of an inner story of second degree, who appears as a character in the first inner story), and so on" [Schmid, 2010, p. 67]. Schmid also provided a table correlating his terms with those of Genette [Ibid., p. 70]. Drawing from Genette's terminology, Schmid developed his own classification of narrators, taking perspective into account, and noted that events may be presented from the viewpoint of an impersonal narrator (narratorial) or one or several characters (perceptual or figural point of view). Their intersection with diegetic and non-diegetic storytelling yields four types of narrators:

Type 1: A non-diegetic narrator narrates in a narratorial fashion – referring involves a non-diegetic narrator who presents events from their own perspective, which, in our view, aligns with an omniscient author.

Type 2: "A narrator who appears in the story as the narrated self narrates from the perspective of the 'present,' i.e., the narrating self": the narrator is simultaneously a character, meaning a participant in the events being described, observing themselves from a distance or from the perspective of time.

Type 3: A non-diegetic narrator adopts the standpoint of a character who functions as a reflector – taking the perspective of a character to convey the narrative.

Type 4: A diegetic narrator recounts their experiences from the "earlier" narrated self's perspective [Schmid, 2010, p. 107].

In the glossary of Ukrainian literary studies, two native terms appear alongside the foreign-derived "narrator": *оповідач* / opovidach / storyteller and *розповідач* / rozpovidach / narrator. Thus, the terms while universal in covering all possible types of narrators in a literary text, fail to account for specific narrative perspectives, as Wayne Booth rightly noted: simply stating that a text is written in the first or third person conveys little without a more precise description of how the narrators' qualities relate to a particular effect [Booth, 1996, p. 146].

In analyzing Hawthorne's novel, Western European narratology insights will be incorporated.

Narrative Structure of Hawthorne's Novel *The Scarlet Letter*

The novel's complex narrative structure is evident even in its apparatus: the work is linked with the introductory essay *The Custom-House. Introductory to 'The Scarlet Letter'* [Hawthorne, 1874, pp. 1–48], originally intended as a preface rather than a separate text.

The specifics of the image of the narrator as a source of sensemaking and an observer are manifested in the fact that, trying to internally distance himself from the depicted events that took place over 100 years ago, the writer creates the image of an impartial fixer of information from direct observers. The author's distancing from events is achieved through two techniques popular in 19th-century European literature: the "text within a text" technique and the technique of mystification. In the essay, the point of view is that of the primary diegetic narrator (Schmid) or homodiegetic narrator (Genette), as revealed by the grammatical first person singular. Considering that this narrator uses details from Nathaniel Hawthorne's biography as elements of his own life, he can be regarded as a double of the author. Thus, he explains that, while working as an inspector at the Customs House in Salem (then a suburb of Boston), and out of boredom sifting through old documents in hopes of uncovering descriptions of ancient customs and forgotten people who left a mark on the city's history, he stumbled upon a bundle among private papers. Inside it was a nearly disintegrated, artistically embroidered letter "A" and notes about a woman named Hester Prynne. Accordingly, the story of this woman's life is a text within the text, and it belongs to the secondary narrator (the narrator of the inner story). This secondary narrator is a character within the framing story, yet in the main narrative, he is the primary non-diegetic narrator (Schmid) / extradiegetic narrator (Genette) (hereafter referred to as the primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator), as he exists outside the fictional world and recounts events in the third person, reflecting upon them.

In crafting the image of a reliable narrator, the primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator grants the primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator a name, biographical details, and even official documents, including an appointment letter for Jonathan Pue bearing Governor Shirley's signature and seal. The artistic technique of mystification, where in the preface the author deliberately attributed the authorship of his work to another person, allowed for the assertion of the authenticity of the subsequent story. As it is stated, *"it should be borne carefully in mind, that the main facts of that story are authorized and authenticated by the document of Mr. Surveyor Pue"* [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 34], **which was a reaction to the demands of readers who were seeking stories from real life.** Given that the bundle with the letter was among the papers of the inspector, the remnants of which were unearthed during the restoration of the church, the reader may assume that the embroidery was also unearthed along with the remains of the woman during the city's redevelopment. **On the one hand, references to excavated graves as a source of information** subconsciously tune the initiated reader into the Gothic discourse popular in the 19th century, while on the other hand, they give symbolic meaning: the story of the discovery can reveal what the contemporary Massachusetts society of the writer was built upon.

This introductory sketch is invaluable in Hawthorne's understanding of the connection between the author, the fictional world he creates, and the reader, as well as how the writer's life circumstances influence his work. As Stephen Martin noted, Hawthorne had a guilt complex. However, this feeling was rather related to the biblical fall of man than caused not by his personal act: "He was much troubled by his ancestor Judge John Hathorne's role in the Salem witch trials" [Martin, 2023]. Reflecting on his lineage as a descendant of the Boston community's founders, the primary diegetic/homodiegetic narrator notes, with irony, his right to include autobiographical elements in this section of the text. He additionally contemplates the work as an imaginary, trusting dialogue between the writer and a friend-reader, observing, *"unless the speaker stand in some true relation with his audience, it may be pardonable to imagine that a friend, a kind and apprehensive, though not the closest friend, is listening to our talk,"* and that *"we may prate of the circumstances that lie around us, and even of ourself"* [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 2]. The primary diegetic/homodiegetic narrator describes his literary activity as *"my all of lettered intercourse"* [Ibid., p. 28], which Iryna Bondarenko aptly translates as *"моє літературне спілкування"* ("my literary communication") in Ukrainian, to capture the sentiment precisely [Hawthorne, 2017b, p. 29].

As Oleksandr Potebnia noted, "a single work of art or a single image impacts different people in various ways and even one person differently at different times, just as every individual understands the same word differently" [Potebnia, 2002, p. 38]. **Thus, the nuanced term "intercourse,"** which could also be translated as *"злягання"* (intimate encounter), expresses a subtle irony in the narrator's unfulfilled aspiration to join the ranks of celebrated writers, hindered by

insecurity over his literary merit – evident in a hypothetical dialogue with deceased ancestors, where the primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator calls himself “*the degenerate*” because “*A writer of story-books*” [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 9]. Due to his financial obligations, his literary pursuits have deteriorated into fleeting, superficial efforts; he reflects, “*I had ceased to be a writer of tolerably poor tales and essays, and had become a tolerably good Surveyor of the Customs*” [Ibid., p. 41], now seeing his name not on a title page but on sacks of taxed goods [Ibid., p. 28]. The regret over the impossibility of balancing the grueling customs job with his literary ambition is also conveyed in his conversation with the ghosts of his characters: “*The characters of the narrative would not be warmed and rendered malleable by any heat that I could kindle at my intellectual forge. They would take neither the glow of passion nor the tenderness of sentiment, but retained all the rigidity of dead corpses, and stared me in the face with a fixed and ghastly grin of contemptuous defiance*” [Ibid., pp. 37–38], as the primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator laments having lost “the tribe of unrealities” to the paltry wages of public service (“*pittance of the public gold*” [Ibid., p. 38]).

The story of Hester Prynne is narrated by a primary non-diegetic (or extradiegetic) narrator, as defined by theorists Schmid and Genette. This primary narrator is identified within the introductory sketch as Jonathan Pue by the primary diegetic (or homodiegetic) narrator. While the primary non-diegetic narrator offers an internal perspective, the primary diegetic narrator provides an external view, even imagining or describing events in a gothic manner, for instance: “*with his own ghostly hand, the obscurely seen but majestic figure had imparted to me the scarlet symbol, and the little roll of explanatory manuscript*” [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 35], thus bestowing authority to honor his ancestor’s memory. Emphasizing his role as the editor of an authentic story, the primary diegetic narrator acknowledges embellishing the characters’ motives and emotions, “imagining the motives and modes of passion that influenced the characters who figure in it” [Ibid.]. Therefore, in general, one can talk about the blending of perspectives, and thus the reader will have to decide for themselves where the point of view of Jonathan Pue, the primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator, ends and where the primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator begins. To some extent, the techniques of using multiple narrative masks and mystification were not an artistic invention of Hawthorne, but rather refer primarily to *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes, as well as to the writing strategies of Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, James Macpherson, Thomas Chatterton, Horace Walpole, who, in order to stir the reader’s attention, attributed the authorship of their works to someone else. The most notable comparison, however, is to *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero* by William Makepeace Thackeray, where the narrator is represented both as a puppet master and as an omniscient author, as well as a storyteller [Thackeray, 2015].

The ironic remark that the customs inspector was also Robert Burns (a representative of Scottish Romanticism, whose central theme was love) sets the “advanced” reader up for a romantic love story, while the mystical sense of the warmth of the scarlet letter [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 33] and the contact with the ghost lean towards the gothic discourse. Artistically contemplating ethical issues in the novel, Hawthorne focused on the psychological analysis of the human soul. As noted by the primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator in the essay *The Custom-House. Introductory to The Scarlet Letter*, “*Nature, – except it were human nature, – the nature that is developed in earth and sky, was, in one sense, hidden from me; and all the imaginative delight, wherewith it had been spiritualized, passed away out of my mind*” [Ibid., p. 27]. This is perceived as his ironic distancing from the contemporary authors of landscape poetry and prose, who concentrated on describing what was around the person, rather than on their inner world.

System of Images as Points of View in the Novel *The Scarlet Letter*

The events in Hawthorne’s novel are presented from the perspective of a primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator, and the first-person plural is articulated through various constructions in the text, such as “*our story*,” “*that would startle us*,” “*In our nature*,” “*against our common nature*,” and others ([Hawthorne, 1874, pp. 55–62]; “*He looked like the darkly engraved portraits which we see prefixed to old volumes of sermons*”; “*as we have already said*”; “*And we must needs say*”; “*We have as yet hardly spoken of the infant*”; “*The people, in the case of which we speak*”; “*We have thrown all the light we could acquire*” [Hawthorne, 1874, pp. 71, 98,

101, 104, 153, 316], etc.). In this way, the “we” form can encompass the author, all narrators in the text, and the reader, who transforms from a passive consumer of information into a co-participant. This involvement allows the reader, on one hand, to share the narrator’s views, while also developing their own understanding of the situation, guided by the characters’ lines. By emotionally engaging the reader in the depicted events, the primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator employs specific syntactic structures characteristic of spoken language, such as rhetorical questions, addresses to an imagined narratee, parenthetical constructions, and logical connectors (e.g., “*To say the truth*”; “*From first to last*”; “*Had Hester sinned alone?*”; “*But – it must now be said*”; “*To sum up the matter, it grew to be*”; “*The reader may choose among these theories*” [Hawthorne, 1874, pp. 80, 98, 100, 152, 153, 316], etc.).

To further engage the audience, the narrator occasionally withholds details of the young woman’s life, prompting the reader to make assumptions (e.g., who is the child’s father, what really happened to Hester Prynne’s husband, what Roger Chillingworth / Prynne actually saw on Arthur Dimmesdale’s chest, if there was a mark, what its origin might be, whether the magistrate’s wife Gibbins, executed in 1636, was truly a witch, and what ultimately became of Pearl). With the appearance of the heroine in the narrative, however, the primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator’s focus shifts to include the narrative of the woman herself, beginning when the narrator mentions the shameful scaffold – **a specific location from which Hester Prynne literally looked down upon the townspeople** (“*the scaffold of the pillory was a point of view that revealed to Hester Prynne*” [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 64]). In the context of punishment for her sin, this spatial “point of view” takes on symbolic meaning, foreshadowing to the reader the heroine’s separation from the community, and signaling her elevated position relative to others.

In analyzing the artistic chronotope, Tetiana Kushnirova noted: “Narrative time is the time of narration, the recounting of the events depicted. The author, witness, or narrator relays events, marking the passage of time within the work. In this way, narrative time serves important functions in the work: recording and informing, and is characterized by subjectivity since it is presented from the narrator’s point of view (e.g., monologue, confession, letters, diary entries, dreams, visions, etc.)” [Kushnirova, 2018, p. 15]. Based on this principle, we can assert that in Hawthorne’s novel, narrative time can be divided into three layers: the time of events, the time of recording events (which does not coincide with the time of the events themselves), and the time when recorded events are disclosed (when the frame story’s narrator processed and published the discovered records).

Although Hawthorne’s text does not provide a direct timeline for the events, a careful reader can discern it through several key details: in June, when the woman stood on the scaffold, the girl was three months old; when Hester sat by the deathbed of John Winthrop, her daughter was seven years old, indicating the child was born in March 1642. Thus, the woman’s arrival on the American continent dates to 1639–1640, and her relationship with the child’s father dates to 1641. The primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator published the story almost 200 years later (1850), a period long enough to assess the significance or insignificance of the events described. The time when the primary non-diegetic / **extradiegetic narrator recorded the story can be tentatively identified**: the half-decayed artistic letter attached to the papers suggests that Jonathan Pue did so after the woman’s death, as he himself had passed away **80 years before the rediscovery** of his records. Furthermore, the frame story’s narrator’s comment on the ghost’s “century-old” clothing implies that the intervals between the events, their recording from oral tradition, and eventual publication spanned roughly one hundred years each. **We might interpret this narrative time as symbolic**, approaching the mythic and representing an extended socio-historical period, thus imbuing the depicted events with an epic quality. In part, the temporal distancing of the frame story’s narrator from the main story, combined with his remark on the significance of even the smallest details (“*Nothing is too small or too trifling to undergo this change, and acquire dignity thereby*” [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 38]), underscores the idea that if Hester Prynne’s story was retold even after her death, it held importance for people, and thus for American society as it sought to understand the organic principles of existence on the new continent.

The main character, Hester Prynne, is a woman of exceptional character who, without intending to, integrated herself into a new world on terms unfamiliar to it. This young Englishwoman arrived in Boston, fell passionately in love, and gave birth to an illegitimate child. For her adul-

tery, she was imprisoned, where she gave birth, then forced to stand with her infant at the pillory in the town square, and was sentenced to wear the letter "A" (for Adulteress) on her chest for life. The primary non-diegetic / **extradiegetic narrator notes that the moral judges** (magistrates, ministers, and the most fanatical parishioners) angrily believed that Hester Prynne should be branded ("At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 56]) or even executed. A mitigating factor in choosing this "light" form of punishment (she wasn't even shackled at the pillory!) was that her official husband had been missing for more than two years, his body never recovered after a shipwreck.

The plot and archetypal figure of a woman bearing an illegitimate child were quite popular during the Romantic era and are represented in the literature of various cultures (such as Evchen Humbrecht in Heinrich Leopold Wagner's play *The Child-Murderess* (1776), Gretchen in Goethe's tragedy *Faust* (1800), Paquette Chantefleurie in Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831)). In Ukrainian literature, this archetype is notably represented in the romanticized figures of Kateryna and the servant girl in Taras Shevchenko's poems *Kateryna* (1840) and *The Servant Girl* (1857). However, compared to these heroines, Hawthorne's protagonist neither took her own life nor harmed her child (though such thoughts crossed her mind: "At times, a fearful doubt strove to possess her soul, whether it were not better to send Pearl at once to heaven, and go herself to such futurity as Eternal Justice should provide" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 201]) and nor did she abandon her child. In constructing the images of Hester and her child, the primary non-diegetic / **extradiegetic narrator compares her to the "Divine Maternity – 'that sacred image of sinless motherhood, whose infant was to redeem the world'"** [Ibid., p. 62]. The resemblance between the Virgin Mary and Hester Prynne is evident at the narrative level: both gave birth to a child not by a lawful husband but by a holy spirit (for the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale was almost seen as such by the parishioners). From the moment when the primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator gifted the reader a rose, signaling that the story would explore human frailty and suffering [Ibid., p. 53], an astute reader might anticipate a story about motherhood and an illegitimate child, as the rose is symbolic of the Virgin Mary. The image of the rose recurs throughout Hawthorne's novel, artistically emphasizing the woman's suffering. At the same time, the name of the main character in *The Scarlet Letter* explicitly alludes to the biblical *Book of Esther*, which tells of a woman who, despite the threat of losing her royal status and even facing death, violated court etiquette but ultimately saved her people [KJV¹, The Book of Esther, 4:16]. Esther's image also evokes associations with the harlot described in the *Book of Proverbs*: "Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love! / For the man is not at home; he has gone on a long journey" [KJV, Proverbs 7:18–19].

In Hawthorne's novel, the theme of sin is intertwined with the theme of its redemption. The devout Hester herself saw the birth of her illegitimate child as a moral transgression; moreover, she believed "that no fellow-mortal was guilty like herself" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 103]. Therefore, she chose an ascetic lifestyle with dignity and without coercion, dressing in coarse, gray clothing (evoking associations with monasticism), sewing clothes for the poor, distributing her surplus earnings, caring for the sick, and sitting by deathbeds when needed. "She was patient, a martyr, indeed" [Ibid., p. 98], as she felt that the daily shame, she endured would transform her soul, making it different than before her sin. **Society – both the poor and the wealthy – while accepting her artisanal work, still treated her with malice and contempt** (the poor spat at her, while the wealthy taunted her with words), but Hester ignored this. The narrator's remark that she "stood apart from moral interests, yet close beside them" [Ibid., p. 98] can be interpreted as meaning that Hester did not reject morality as a concept but distanced herself from its Bostonian version.

Legends with dark undertones began to grow around her life. Significantly, not only did rumors surround the woman herself, but even the letter on her chest became the subject of mystical tales, transforming gradually from a sign of oppression to something diabolical, and then finally into a protective charm. At first, ordinary and superstitious people spread rumors that the mark had been forged in an infernal forge, glowing red-hot as she walked at dusk ("the symbol was not mere scarlet cloth, tinged in an earthly dye-pot, but was red-hot with infernal fire, and could be seen glowing all alight" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 104]; "that the scarlet letter threw a lu-

¹ KJV – King James Version Bible, edited by D. Cogliano [Cogliano, 2004].

rid gleam along the dark passage-way of the interior" [Ibid., p. 79]). Later, it was rumored that a crazed Native American had once shot an arrow at Hester, only for it to strike the letter and break, leaving her unharmed [Ibid., p. 198].

As a result of the ongoing psychological terror, the heroine develops an irrational ability to perceive hidden sins in others, a revelation that leaves her shaken: "*Sometimes the red infamy upon her breast would give a sympathetic throb, as she passed near a venerable minister or magistrate, the model of piety and justice, to whom that age of antique reverence looked up, as to a mortal man in fellowship with angels*" [Ibid., p. 102]. Interpreting her inner turmoil amid the puritan community's relentless harassment, the young mother initially considered it the work of an evil spirit and eventually questioned the virtues of Boston's citizens, perceiving herself as the greatest sinner among them. The motif of a mystical "sisterhood" between the heroine and numerous prominent figures, including matrons and girls of the town (mystic sisterhood [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 102] – translated by I. Bondarenko as "подруга по нещастю" ("a companion in misfortune") [Hawthorne, 2017b, p. 90]), interlocks with the theme of outward piety masking the hidden sinfulness of the entire community, including the children, whose behavior and games mirrored those of adults. It is clear that this portrayal was interpreted as offensive by religious communities who subsequently called for the novel's ban. The colonists' settlement is essentially a "brotherhood in sin" (with some guilty of malice, others of slander, and others still of superstition). Of all the parishioners, only Hester Prynne lived by true Biblical principles. Acknowledging her sin, she accepted her punishment without fleeing or shifting blame onto the child's father (had she revealed his identity, she would not have been sentenced to wear the shameful mark for life). Those who share guilt in the same sin are treated differently by the townspeople: while the man experiences a rise in social and professional status (as the most respected pastor in the province – "for no mark is on the Cossack"), the woman is socially isolated, for her sin bears visible consequences that are undeniable – pregnancy and the birth of a child. Hawthorne links the theme of social isolation of mother and child with the topos of the home (the house the community allowed them was on the town's outskirts, distant from others [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 93]) and the motif of the circle, symbolically representing the entrapment and hopelessness of their situation ("*the destiny that had drawn an inviolable circle round about her [the child]*" [Ibid., p. 109]; "*Mother and daughter stood together in the same circle of seclusion from human society*" [Ibid., p. 110]). Yet, in Hawthorne's artistic vision, it is this social isolation of mother and child that enables the development of individuals with a new value system within a fanatically religious community.

In Hawthorne's presentation of the theme of sin and its atonement, the image of Hester Prynne's illegitimate child carries significant weight. The narrator interprets the birth of the girl in *The Scarlet Letter* as "*the inscrutable decree of Providence*" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 104], resulting from sinful passion. In our view, I. Bondarenko's otherwise artistic translation of this passage into Ukrainian as "незбагненна примха долі" ("inscrutable whim of fate") [Hawthorne, 2017b, p. 92], loses the connotations of intentionality in the situation and the arrival of the girl with a predestined purpose (as Providence implies divine action), favoring a different meaning – that her conception was a matter of pure chance without broader significance for the world (a whim implies an unplanned desire or something lacking practical purpose).

Supporting our interpretation, *The Scarlet Letter* includes references to the Virgin Mary, the prophet Nathan, David, and Bathsheba [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 152] depicted on a tapestry in the pastor's library. Through indirect references to two iconic figures significant for humanity (Jesus Christ, who introduced new values to humankind, and Solomon, Israel's wisest king), the notion arises that little Pearl represents a messenger of a future world free from dogma. The generalized observation that "*a great law had been broken*" with the child's birth [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 106], along with Dimmesdale's response to the doctor that she embodies "None, save the freedom of a broken law" [Ibid., p. 161], coupled with her eventual happy fate, suggests that the colonists unwittingly altered the course of life on this new continent by their harsh judgment. This life, still "*feeding itself on time-worn materials*" [Ibid., p. 64], would now be directed toward developing new principles of social existence. The narrator's reflections in the frame story also lead us toward this conclusion: "*Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil*" [Ibid.,

p. 11]. Through the lens of the negative consequences of Puritan principles and the methods of imposing them, the image of “worn-out soil” becomes a symbol of exhausted morality, hindering the growth of the human spirit regardless of where it may settle in the world.

The life of the girl, much like her mother’s, is surrounded by mystical legends and rumors about her paternity (she is called “*demon offspring*” [Ibid., p. 117]). Both her mother and other adults see witch-like or supernatural qualities in Pearl. To the devout Hester, who never expected a righteous outcome from her sinful act, it seems as though she “*felt like one who has evoked a spirit, but, by some irregularity in the process of conjuration, has failed to win the master-word that should control this new and incomprehensible intelligence*” [Ibid., p. 109]. Her child is referred to as an “*airy sprite*,” “*the little elf*” [Ibid., p. 108], a “*born outcast*,” “*an imp of evil, emblem and product of sin*”. Pearl “*smiles with sprite-like intelligence*,” and “*it was as if an evil spirit possessed the child*”. Sometimes, her daughter had “*a face, fiend-like, full of smiling malice*”. She would stand still, gazing at Hester, “*with that little, laughing image of a fiend peeping out – or, whether it peeped or no*,” and her childish cries sounded like “*the sound of a witch’s anathemas in some unknown tongue*”. Pearl would laugh and begin to dance “*with the humorsome gesticulation of a little imp, whose next freak might be to fly up the chimney*,” as if influenced by an “*evil spirit*” [Hawthorne, 1874, pp. 108–116]. Reverend John Wilson remarks that “*witchcraft*” is hidden within the girl and adds, “*She needs no old woman’s broomstick to fly withal!*” [Ibid., p. 140].

While recounting the townspeople’s rumors about the girl, the primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator also presents his own view of her. This perspective is encoded in the micro-image of sunlight, which, as noted by the narrator, shines equally on everyone, yet shares a special connection with the girl, as if she were its favorite. A **symbolic episode occurs when Pearl, enchanted by the sun’s reflection on the broken glass embedded in the governor’s house wall, insistently asks her mother to gather all the sunshine from the wall and give it to her.** Through an associative chain linking the sun/sunlight as a symbol of unclouded life, the mother’s response – “*Thou must gather thine own sunshine. I have none to give thee!*” [Ibid., p. 122] – is perceived as an unconscious lesson urging her daughter to create her own happiness.

A unique feature in the artistic rendering of sin and its redemption in Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* is the heroine’s rejection of the Old Testament principle that children must bear the consequences of their parents’ sins. Unlike Madame Simonin in Denis Diderot’s *La Religieuse* (1760), who confined her illegitimate daughter to a convent in hopes that her prayers might secure forgiveness for the mother, Hester Prynne rejects the Old Testament notion that a child should bear the punishment for her mother’s actions. Instead, she refrains from imposing an ascetic life on her daughter, allows her the joys of childhood play, encourages her to follow her own impulses, sews Pearl the finest clothing in town, and, when the opportunity arises, removes her from Boston so that her mother’s reputation would not dictate her status in society. Hester’s tragic experience also influences her approach to raising her daughter – she forgoes traditional methods like physical punishment and the rigorous memorization of Scripture as a means to cultivate and refine “*the growth and promotion of all childish virtues*” [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 107]. Hester Prynne did not associate with the town gossips, so Pearl never absorbed any “examples” of hypocritical behavior. As a result, Pearl did not hold back her emotions or attempt to conceal her feelings toward others; she was impossible to compel into obedience. For instance, although she knew the basics of the Bible, she refused to speak about them on command from the minister, avoided Pastor John Wilson’s attention, but freely kissed Reverend Dimmesdale’s hand. She was unafraid to pick up a stone to defend herself against young Puritans, echoing her mother’s refusal to pray for her enemies, as the Bible commanded (“*She was patient, – a martyr, indeed, – but she forbore to pray for her enemies*” [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 98]). **Through a detailed description of Pearl’s behavior and her interactions with her mother, the novel demonstrates that even in her early years, Pearl exhibited a distinct individuality that defied both local norms and her mother’s principles.** She could stand up to the hostile crowd of children. Hester interpreted her daughter’s behavior and emotions as an embodiment of her own desires during pregnancy. A particularly significant episode occurs when Pearl dances on the tombstone of one of the town’s most esteemed settlers [Ibid., p. 161]. **Key to understanding this moment is the narrator’s comment, while Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth watched her from a window: “[Pearl was] skipping, dancing, and frisking fantastically, among the hillocks of the dead people, like a creature**

that had nothing in common with a bygone and buried generation, nor owned herself akin to it. It was as if she had been made afresh, out of new elements, and must perforce be permitted to live her own life, and be a law unto herself, without her eccentricities being reckoned to her for a crime" [Ibid., p. 162]. The young girl's innocent playfulness can be seen as a symbolic rejection or devaluation of the old European traditions that settlers tried to impose upon the American world, traditions that needed to die to allow for the emergence of something new. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne repeatedly emphasizes Pearl's organic connection to the American landscape, illustrated when she is in the forest and the animals neither hide from her nor attack. Her interaction with a Native American man, where her childlike curiosity about his face causes him to sense that before him stood a nature even wilder and freer than his own, further underscores her bond with this new, untamed land.

Pearl inherited Roger Chillingworth's estate and became the wealthiest heiress in the Massachusetts colony, yet the people of Boston never learned her whereabouts. They understood only that she had grown into a grateful daughter, a happy woman, and a loving mother. This happy ending fits well within the traditions of didactic literature, an aesthetic that is evident in the way the story is narrated. It can be assumed that, by giving Pearl a new and different life, the frame-story narrator, whom we can identify as the author's double, was, in some sense, realizing his own hopes for a happy life and seeking absolution for his ancestors who had participated in the persecution of women accused of witchcraft. (Let us recall that in the essay, the primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator states that he humbly accepts the shame of his ancestors, which, in his opinion, caused the impoverishment of the family and his joyless necessity to work as a customs inspector).

In the artistic depiction of Boston life in *The Scarlet Letter*, the pervasive theme of sin as an inherent part of human life is intertwined with the notion that joy itself can be sinful. For instance, Hester forbids herself to feel joy in her favorite craft; the games of the "little Puritans" are associated with pain and death; and in the governor's home, portraits of deceased ancestors appear "as if they were the ghosts, rather than the pictures, of departed worthies, and were gazing with harsh and intolerant criticism at the pursuits and enjoyments of living men" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 124]. **Most significantly, the novel begins by describing the prison, gallows, and cemetery as the defining places of the town.**

The structure of Boston's world, "the oldest church – the gallows – the cemetery," evokes associations with the medieval triad of "Notre Dame Cathedral – the gallows – the Montfaucon crypt" (undoubtedly familiar to Hawthorne through Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), as that work was then at the height of global fame). References to Queen Elizabeth, the *Chronicles of England*, the Westminster Catechism, and the settlers' lifestyle (an ale mug as an essential English attribute, armor crafted by a London armorer, etc.), along with the prison's designation as "the black flower of civilized society" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 52], repeatedly point to the colonists' desire to replicate the old ways on the American continent rather than founding life on new principles.

In Hawthorne's novel, it is consistently shown that, despite presenting themselves as staunch defenders of Christianity, the Puritans were actually quite superstitious. They believed in witches and eagerly commissioned Hester for various sewing projects for adults, children, and even the deceased – but never wedding attire, which might stem from a pagan belief that a woman could pass her unfortunate fate onto a bride. Though they advocated simplicity in dress, lifestyle, and rituals, they did not deny themselves luxury and comfort, illustrated by the description of Governor Bellingham's home. The contrast between Prynne as a representative of the new and different, and the Puritan community of Boston as old, outdated, and harmful, is symbolically highlighted in *The Scarlet Letter* through a juxtaposition of the games played by the Puritan children and Pearl. The former's grim activities mimic the actions of adults ("She saw the children of the settlement, on the grassy margin of the street, or at the domestic thresholds, disporting themselves in such grim fashion as the Puritanic nurture would permit; playing at going to church, perchance; or at scourging Quakers; or taking scalps in a sham-fight with the Indians; or scaring one another with freaks of imitative witchcraft" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 110]). In contrast, young Pearl's games involved the ruthless destruction of garden weeds, which she imagined as her Puritan peers. Another significant detail is Pearl's habit of stripping the thorns from thistles,

which in her childhood games always represented the young Puritans. This act suggests her ability and readiness to disarm those who might seek to hinder her from building her life as she wishes. The primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator explains to the reader that this young girl, feeling the world's hostility from an early age, is tireless in strengthening her life force to secure victory in her adult life.

In summary, Puritan society in *The Scarlet Letter* is represented by the elderly scholar Roger Chillingworth (Prynne), who, having exploited the dire circumstances of a young girl's family, took her as his wife – **though she was never able to love him. Once a kind man, he became embittered** by her rejection, fully aware that infidelity was inevitable. When it finally occurred, he dedicated himself to identifying her lover and turning both their lives into a psychological and emotional hell. In modern terms, Roger Chillingworth could be described as an abuser. He took pleasure in Hester's public humiliation, openly telling her that leaving her alive to suffer under the weight of her *"burning shame"* was the perfect revenge [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 84]. By living under the same roof as Arthur Dimmesdale and keeping constant surveillance over him, Roger prevented Hester from meeting privately with the pastor, mentally tormenting the young man with his words. The Boston community itself is also abusive, as its leaders poured their energy into identifying sinners and degrading them morally. In Roland Joffé's film adaptation, this is taken to the extreme: each time Hester walked through the town, the city authorities assigned a boy to follow her, beating a drum as he went. The relentless sound made even being near her an acoustic torment, creating a uniquely oppressive experience for anyone around her [Joffé, 1995].

The character of Roger Chillingworth aligns with the Byronic hero type popular when *The Scarlet Letter* was written. On one hand, he is a deeply intelligent scholar, possessing inner strength, broad knowledge, and independent thought – qualities that made his conversations with Arthur Dimmesdale a breath of fresh air amid the oppressive city atmosphere. On the other hand, he is a dark, resentful figure embittered by a world that has never loved him due to his congenital deformity (*"Misshapen from my birth-hour, how could I delude myself with the idea that intellectual gifts might veil physical deformity in a young girl's fantasy!"* [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 84]). His search for Hester's lover initially becomes a psychological puzzle, which he later turns into a game, as a well-informed cat toying with a morally confused mouse. The scattered details throughout the text also subtly evoke the archetype of Faust, especially in Goethe's interpretation, which has become the "motto of European culture" [Кулакевич, Ковальова, 2023]. Hawthorne portrays Roger as *"a man of thought," "the bookworm of great libraries,"* and *"a man already in decay, having given my best years to feed the hungry dream of knowledge"* [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 84]. He practiced alchemy, was rumored to have connections with English occultist Simon Forman (1552–1611), participated in Native American black magic rituals, and, like Faust, possessed knowledge of medicine and the healing properties of wild herbs without being a doctor. Most significantly, he indirectly caused Hester, much like Goethe's Gretchen, to bear an illegitimate child. In his prison conversation with Hester, Roger acknowledges his own fault (*"It was my folly! I have said it"* [Ibid., p. 84]), **having foreseen** the inevitability of her infidelity as early as their wedding day: *"Nay, from the moment when we came down the old church steps together, a married pair, I might have beheld the bale-fire of that scarlet letter blazing at the end of our path!"* [Ibid., p. 84].

The character of Roger Chillingworth also aligns with the recurring image of the devil throughout *The Scarlet Letter*. The primary extradiegetic narrator often remarks on the townspeople's superstitious tales of a "Black Man" walking among them, luring Christian souls astray – Hester Prynne is suggested to be one such seduced soul. Hester herself tells Roger that he resembles the Black Man who tempts her soul, and when he touches the scarlet letter on her chest, it feels as if his finger is burning, *"as if it had been red-hot"* [Ibid., p. 83], evoking associations with hellfire. Later, even little Pearl refers to the Black Man. Roger is frequently portrayed as the devil, the Black Man, an evil spirit, or a tempter. For Hester, his secrets are *"like a serpent from its hole,"* while he is described as one who *"thrust this idea upon Hester's soul, like the tempter"* [Ibid., p. 92], and townsfolk believe that *"the fire in his laboratory had been brought from the lower regions, and was fed with infernal fuel"* [Ibid., p. 154]. They even say that Reverend Dimmesdale may be haunted *"either by Satan himself, or Satan's emissary, in the guise of old Roger Chillingworth"* [Ibid., p. 154]. Chillingworth acts *"as Satan comports himself when a precious human soul is lost to heaven, and won into his kingdom"* [Ibid., p. 167].

His demonic nature is also suggested by his surname, "Chillingworth," evoking a sense of cold terror, and it connects to Gothic themes, which were spreading internationally at the time. His physical description is equally unsettling; his posture is slightly deformed, with "*one shoulder higher than the other*" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 68], and **superstitious Christians believed congenital deformities indicated a connection to the devil**. This infernal association is further highlighted by the fact that his higher shoulder is on his left side, traditionally viewed as sinister. He is later likened to a grave-robber, secretly unearthing the soul of the reverend, and he claims ownership of Dimmesdale's soul, declaring, "*Sooner or later, he must needs be mine!*" [Ibid., p. 86]. The devil motif in Hawthorne's novel is further emphasized through the theme of a pact. Hester and Roger seem to make a pact with each other, with Hester asking, "*Art thou like the Black Man that haunts the forest round about us? Hast thou enticed me into a bond that will prove the ruin of my soul?*" to which Roger responds with a sly smile, "*Not thy soul...No, not thine!*" [Ibid., p. 89]. Roger also ironically refers to Dimmesdale's hand covering his heart as a mark of their own devilish agreement.

The character of Roger Chillingworth, in his psychological torment of his wife and the father of her child, is somewhat comparable to Heathcliff Earnshaw from Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* (1848). Notably, both reclusive and vengeful figures meet death after carrying out their revenge. Chillingworth's death is depicted in the Gothic tradition: first, the narrator mentions the mysterious disappearance of this demonic physician, and later notes that he left a will bequeathing all his possessions to Hester and Pearl.

As Xingwen Pan stated, "The protagonists in most of Hawthorne's works struggled in the abyss of sin and cannot escape" [Pan, 2021, p. 92]. In *The Scarlet Letter*, the fates of Hester and Arthur Dimmesdale illustrate how the Puritans' repressive measures, intended to maintain high moral standards, led community members to become disingenuous in their emotions and to live double lives – as if not being caught in the act meant they were not sinners. (It is likely that had Hester's lawful husband been present in Boston at the time of the child's conception, the community would have eagerly overlooked the adultery, maintaining appearances). It is no coincidence that the role of father is ascribed to the man whom the Puritan community regarded as its moral icon. **Arthur Dimmesdale vividly represents a believer whose facade of social success conceals a deeply unhappy person, one who dies young due to psychological self-torment**. Although he sincerely believes in God and is aware of his sin, he is forced to hide his paternity without a chance to atone, for the community would destroy him otherwise.

Arthur Dimmesdale is the most ambiguous figure in Hawthorne's novel. This spiritual leader of the Puritan community, educated at England's top university, brought with him to the wilderness the latest knowledge of the time, was genuinely devout, and became a minister by vocation. Yet, out of fear of the community's repressive measures, Arthur did not dare to publicly acknowledge his complicity in sin with Hester Prynne. Dimmesdale's character development features the motif of physical illness as a result of inner turmoil: while Hester endured the community's scorn and gradually regained its respect through her impeccable conduct, thus maintaining her emotional balance, the young and handsome man with whom she was bound by "*the iron link of mutual crime*" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 194] **deteriorated into a physical ruin, a troubled creature with an anxious, frightened look** ("*an apprehensive, a startled, a half-frightened look*" [Ibid., p. 75]). These destructive changes became especially evident to the townspeople once a doctor took up residence under the same roof as the minister; Dimmesdale's once serene and thoughtful face began to show signs of something dark and hideous. This further convinced the townspeople that Roger Chillingworth was Satan – or at least his emissary – who had gained the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale's trust in order to corrupt him. **The minister's final psychological breakdown, resulting from his long years of silence, is symbolized by the lost glove at the scaffold, traditionally regarded by believers as a symbol of the minister's high office and purity from sin** [Braun, 1909]. As Roger Chillingworth aptly observed, Dimmesdale lacked Hester's inner strength and could not bear the weight of the scarlet letter as a marker of social disgrace.

Arthur's character development of is marked by the micro-symbol of the forest and the code of the number seven. Across various mythologies, the forest symbolized spiritual wilderness, as well as what psychologists in the 20th century would define as the subconscious. This is why mythic and folktale heroes, when facing a life dilemma or seeking something or someone,

often find themselves in a forest. In the spiritual world, the number 7 is not tied to a specific religion but symbolizes the search for truth; according to Christian mythology, the seventh day is marked by God's rest after the creation of the world. **In Hawthorne's novel, the scene of the parents' meeting in the forest takes on symbolic significance:** through a conversation with a woman who has managed to resist spiritual decay, the morally devastated man finally decides to publicly confess and lift the burden that has weighed on his soul for seven years, ever since Hester Prynne stood alone with her infant by the shame post. The Puritans' latent reluctance to acknowledge their inconsistency in punishing both participants in a single sin is evident in their varied interpretations of the pastor's confession, ultimately elevating his act to the level of martyrdom. According to legend, this pious man is not truly the girl's biological father; rather, he claimed the role to share the heavy burden of his parishioner.

When analyzing the specifics of the narrative code, Rudolph von Abele's remarks on the image of the pastor proves especially insightful: "Dimmesdale, a cloistered, childlike person in the tradition of Fanshawe, Warland, Coverdale, has 'written a book' by having begotten a child; and has anonymously 'published' it in that the identity of the child's father is unknown. This parallels in sexual terms Hawthorne's own experience with the stories of Twice-Told Tales, anonymously issued in the periodicals and not officially ascribed to him until their collected publication in 1837. By that collection Hawthorne, as it were, assumed 'paternity' for them, just as Dimmesdale, by ascending the scaffold with Hester and Pearl, assumed his – after an interval of years during which he had not only refused to make the confession, but had indulged, in the privacy of his study, in heterodox modes of self-punishment" [Abele, 1955, p. 47].

The symbolism of the Title

As Xingwen Pan rightly noted, "metaphor is a major feature of Hawthorne's narrative" [Pan, 2021, p. 92]. In our view, the word "letter" in the novel's title serves as a key to understanding the text. The punitive sign chosen was the first letter of the word "adulteress," yet this word is seldom used in the novel (with the town gossips preferring terms like "sinner" or "harlot"). Instead, "scarlet letter" appears 45 times, including in the title itself, alongside phrases like "scarlet symbol," "ignominious letter," "letter of infamy," and "curiously embroidered letter". Migara Jayasinghe highlighted the appearance of the sign: The physical image of the letter A has a triangular shape. When inverted, it can resemble the outline of a heart [Jayasinghe, 2020, p. 40]. Considering that "A" is the first letter of the English alphabet (and, broadly, of European alphabets), Hester Prynne's character acquires a symbolic meaning – **she is the woman with whom the story of American consciousness begins.** This idea is further suggested by an indirect reference in *The Custom-House. Introductory to 'The Scarlet Letter'* to one of Nathaniel Hawthorne's most famous essays, *A Rill from the Town Pump* (1835): "when the antiquary of days to come, among the sites memorable in the town's history, shall point out the locality of *The Town Pump!*" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 48]. Thus, in an allusive sense, Hester Prynne is the stream from which flows the river of the American woman's spirit. **This interpretation of Hester's character is also supported by Robert McCrum, who observed:** "The most memorable and original aspect of *The Scarlet Letter* lies in Hawthorne's portrait of Hester Prynne, who has been described as 'the first true heroine of American fiction', a woman whose experience evokes the biblical story of Eve. Hawthorne's achievement is to make her passion noble, her defiance heartbreaking, and her frailty inspiring. She becomes the archetype of the free-thinking American woman grappling with herself and her sexuality in a cold, patriarchal society" [McCrumb, 2014]. Ramtin Noor-Tehrani Mahini and Erin Barth share a similar view. In exploring this "dark romantic story," the authors of their article called Hawthorne the first writer to present an American point of view and experience [Mahini, Barth, 2018, pp. 474–479].

As Oleksandr Potebnia observed, a good work evokes thoughts in the recipient rather than delivering them ready-made: "Art is the artist's language, and just as with words, one cannot transmit one's thoughts to another but can only awaken theirs. Similarly, meaning cannot be conveyed in a work of art; its essence (when completed) develops not within the art itself but within those who understand" [Potebnia, 2002, p. 40]. Thus, we believe that the color of the symbol is crucial to the work's meaning. In translating into Ukrainian, there is a variety of synonyms that could convey the adjective "Scarlet" – "шарлатний", "шарлатовий", "багряний", "пурпурний", "черлений", "червоний". For example, in V. Merenkova's Ukrainian version,

Hawthorne's title is rendered as *Червона літера* [Hawthorne, 2017a], which would be fitting if the original had been *The Red Letter*. Throughout the English text, the adjective "red" is used 24 times, while terms like "red letter," "red symbol," "red ignominy," and "red stigma" are rare, as when the symbol is referred to as "red letter" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 60] by an old woman who suggests sewing it onto a scrap of flannel from her rheumatic knee to inspire not just shame but revulsion in its wearer. This was a spiteful reaction to the letter, which had been skillfully embroidered on high-quality fabric in stark contrast to the rough and cheap material of Hester's dress, acting as a conscious challenge to the Puritan community, which allowed no luxury for its members (later, the narrator mentions that sewing for Hester Prynne was a way to express her passion: "*Women derive a pleasure, incomprehensible to the other sex, from the delicate toil of the needle. To Hester Prynne it might have been a mode of expressing, and therefore soothing, the passion of her life*" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 97]). Therefore, Iryna Bondarenko's choice of the Ukrainian title *Шарлатова літера* [Hawthorne, 2017b] is entirely justified. We believe that in Ukrainian, the adjective *шарлатовий* / *шарлатний* best conveys the original title's semantics and the novel's meaning, as it emphasizes not only the color but also the fabric quality. The term *шарлат*, sharing roots with the English "scarlet," was used in Ukrainian territories to denote high-quality fabric of a crimson or bright red color, while *червоний* mainly reflects a visual aspect but can contextually imply shame, disgrace, as well as pain and courage, which aligns with the associations of the English "red". M. Dudchenko and A. Medvid understood the color similarly: "The red color, for Puritans, signifies the fires of hell that cleanse sins, and it is also the color of Hester's courage and spiritual resilience. Thus, the letter 'A,' embroidered on her garment, is bright red" [Dudchenko, Medvid, 2013, p. 41].

On the other hand, the word "letter" in English also refers to a written message or epistle. Consequently, combined with the semantics of the word "scarlet," the title *The Scarlet Letter* can be interpreted as "The Precious Message," which, in turn, evokes associations with the Gospel. According to the Gospel, anyone can save their soul through faith in God and sincere repentance for their sins – something Hawthorne's heroine herself hoped for. This sense is also suggested by the primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator's remark that "*the scarlet letter had the effect of the cross on a nun's bosom*" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 198]. The average reader may interpret the novel as a story of sin and redemption. **However, when coupled with later reflections from Hawthorne's narrator, such as "Men of the sword had overthrown nobles and kings," "The world's law was no law for her mind"** [Ibid., p. 199], and the observation that the heroine cast off "*the fragments of a broken chain*" [Ibid.], Hester Prynne's image can be seen as emblematic of a European woman who broke free from societal expectations, thus becoming the first on the American continent to carve out a life based on her own principles and values and her personal relationship with God. Viewed in this light, the novel can be seen as a message to both women and men, who settled and continue to settle in a new land.

A central theme of Hawthorne's novel is the relativity of the meaning of the scarlet letter, even within the Boston community. Not everyone who had some connection with Hester Prynne interpreted the letter as a mark of shame, despite Governor Bellingham publicly obligating her to wear it. For example, a servant in the governor's house perceives the letter as a symbol of high status and therefore readily admits Hester into the parlor, considering her a "*great lady in the land*" [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 123]. For little Pearl, the letter was an adornment and an inseparable element of her mother's appearance, making her recognizable to her child (recall that initially Pearl made herself a green letter from seaweed on her chest, and later in the forest, she refused to approach her mother until she picked up the letter and pinned it to her own chest). For the Native Americans, the letter worn by the woman was something between the white collars of the pastor and the church – things that were both inaccessible and unnecessary for their understanding of the world. Two hundred years later, for the customs inspector, it was simply an embroidery of fine work, an artistic object. The motif of the relativity of the meaning of the scarlet letter is also evident in the episode with the meteor: while the guilt-ridden Dimmesdale saw in the A-shaped glow of the celestial body a reminder of the letter on the woman's chest and the shared sin, the average townsman interpreted the event as a divine sign that a righteous soul had ascended to heaven: "*But did your reverence hear of the portent that was seen last night? – a great red*

letter in the sky, – the letter A, which we interpret to stand for Angel. For, as our good Governor Winthrop was made an angel this past night, it was doubtless held fit that there should be some notice thereof!” [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 192].

Scattered throughout Hawthorne’s text are remarks by the primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator about how the scarlet letter removed its bearer from ordinary relations with humanity and enclosed her in a sphere of her own: “*It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself*” [Ibid., p. 60]. In Boston, the heroine experienced a symbolic rebirth: “*It was as if a new birth, with stronger assimilations than the first*” [Ibid., p. 92]. Despite the shame, Hester Prynne found her niche in society: “*Hester Prynne came to have a part to perform in the world*” [Ibid., p. 97]. These observations lead to the idea that it was this very sign that made the creation of a new society possible, founded by a woman with the manners and appearance of a true aristocrat, even though she did not consciously seek this. **An important point for us is that the heroine carves out a place for herself in the world precisely through traditionally feminine activities: caring for the sick, helping the needy, and, most importantly, needlework.** On one hand, this can be interpreted as a subtle sexist reaction from the primary non-diegetic / **extradiegetic** narrator to women’s aspirations to engage in non-feminine pursuits, like Queen Elizabeth, who is described in the novel as “man-like,” as she “*had been the not altogether unsuitable representative of the sex*” [Ibid., p. 56] (recall that Queen Elizabeth I of Tudor (1533–1603) was a political leader who successfully ruled England for 45 years, consciously refusing marriage and childbearing). On the other hand, this very type of activity manifested the Puritans’ focus on the visible aspect of a deed / event (one could not wear jewelry, but it can be replaced with exquisite embroidery, even if they are not comparable in value; Arthur Dimmesdale bore a mark of shame on his chest, just like Hester Prynne, but since it was not visible, the pastor was accorded respect). **The narrator’s remark that Hester Prynne’s designer creations established local fashion** (“*her handiwork became what would now be termed the fashion*” [Hawthorne, 1874, p. 95]) and that Pearl inherited the gift of sewing (“*She inherited her mother’s gift for devising drapery and costume*” [Ibid., p. 218]) can be interpreted as an indication that both the heroine and her daughter began to influence the behavior of the townspeople, even though the latter were likely unaware of this influence. We can assume that to some extent, the image of Hester Prynne contributed to the creation of the archetype of fashionable heroines in literature and film, particularly in Remarque’s novel *Arch of Triumph* (1945), the Mexican series *Simplemente María* (1989), as well as in Elizabeth Gilbert’s novel *City of Girls* (2019). These characters, having suffered moral downfall in the eyes of society, also found fulfillment through clothing design and raised children without a husband (although María López does marry, as this is portrayed in the version by producer Valentín Pimstein as the goal of every woman’s life, for the heroine of Elizabeth Gilbert, m rejects the notion of marriage as the only path to a successful life.)

Overall, the depiction of events in Hawthorne’s novel *The Scarlet Letter* as mystical, and the characters as exceptional, endowing them with irrational abilities and their demonization, undoubtedly points to the aesthetics of Romanticism, which dominated literature at the time. Life in the colony appears as a gloomy swamp, society as merciless, and the scarlet letter as a visualization of the harsh and cruel spirit of Puritan legality. The text notes that the sentence did not force the heroine to remain in Boston; she could have left for her homeland or any European country and there, concealing her name, begun a new life. The fact that Esther stayed, the primary non-diegetic / **extradiegetic narrator explains, was because her life had fundamentally changed here, and she wanted to at least see her beloved.** However, it seems more plausible that the woman’s choice is primarily determined by her understanding of the sinfulness of her actions and the impossibility of escaping from herself (which is why she wore the sign until the end of her life, even though the community no longer demanded it, as for her it was an object that in no way defined her relationships with people; rather, it presented her professional skills but defined her relationship with God). The use of the mystification technique and the play of authorial masks prompts the reader to decide for themselves whether there really was a woman with such a story or if she was invented.

Conclusions

The complex narrative structure of Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* is evident even at the compositional level: **the work is intertwined with an essay originally conceived as a preface** rather than as a standalone, independent text. Internally distance himself from the events depicted, the writer creates the image of an impartial fixer of information that he gets from direct observers, which allows us to speak of multiple narrators. The author's distancing from the events is achieved through two techniques common: the "text within a text" approach and the technique of mystification. The essay is presented from the perspective of the narrator of the frame narrative – **the primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator – who is expressed grammatically in the first-person singular**. The woman's life story functions as a text within a text, attributed to the secondary narrator (the narrator of the internal story), who is a character in the framing narrative but serves as a primary non-diegetic / **extradiegetic narrator in the main narrative**, positioned outside the fictional world and recounting events from a third-person perspective. In establishing a reliable narrator, the primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator assigns the primary non-diegetic / **extradiegetic narrator a name, biographical details, and even official documents**. By emphasizing his role as the editor of an authentic story, the primary diegetic narrator acknowledges having invented the characters' motives and emotions, indicating a blending of perspectives and leaving it to the reader to determine whose viewpoint is being presented.

It is noted that the main character possesses a remarkable personality and unintentionally integrates into a world foreign to her by new principles unfamiliar to that society. Due to her out-of-wedlock child, she finds herself socially isolated. Hawthorne's fictional portrayal underscores that the social isolation of the mother and child enabled the emergence of individuals with a new value system within a fanatically religious community. The novel emphasizes the theme of the relativity of the meaning behind the scarlet letter. If we consider that "A" is the first letter of the alphabet, Hester Prynne's character gains symbolic significance as the woman from whom the story of American identity begins. On the other hand, the word "letter" in English can also mean "message," so combined with the semantics of "scarlet," the title *The Scarlet Letter* could be interpreted as "The Precious Message," with the novel itself serving as a message to both women and men settling in a new country.

In Hawthorne's interpretation of the theme of sin's atonement, the portrayal of the illegitimate child becomes particularly significant. Through the behavior of the girl and her unique interactions with her mother, the novel consistently shows that, even at a young age, the heroine displayed individuality and was capable of standing up to a harsh crowd. Subtle references to two figures born outside of marriage yet symbolic for humanity suggestively evoke the idea that young Pearl is an apostle of a new, future world free from dogma. In this light, the episode in which the girl dances on the gravestone of one of the most respected settlers becomes significant. Her innocent playfulness is perceived as a symbolic rejection or devaluation of everything that the former Europeans are trying to forcibly implant in American society – a past that must fade away to make room for something new. The impersonal note that the law was broken with the girl's birth, combined with her ultimately fortunate fate, suggests that through their severe judgment, the colonists unknowingly altered the course of life, paving the way for the development of new principles of social existence. Considering the thematic features of the novel *The Scarlet Letter*, it can be characterized as a subtle moral tale about new female values on the American continent. At the same time, the work can also be classified as a romance and as a psychological novel, in which the impact of guilt on a person's behavior, emotions, and attitudes toward the world is artistically explored.

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NARRATIVE CODE OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S NOVEL THE SCARLET LETTER

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The purpose of the article is to identify the distinctive features of the narrative code of Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*. The research methods include historical and literary methods, receptive and comparative methods, and close reading techniques. The study draws on narratological frameworks developed by R. Barthes, G. Genette, W. Schmid.

It has been established that the complex narrative structure of the novel is evident even at the level of its framing apparatus: the work is intertwined with an essay originally conceived as a preface rather than as a separate, independent text. Trying to internally distance himself from the depicted events that took place more than 100 years ago, the writer creates the image of an impartial fixer of information that he gets from direct observers, which allows us to speak of multiple narrators. The author's distancing from the events is achieved through two techniques common in 19th-century European literature: the "text within a text" approach and the technique of mystification. The essay is presented from the perspective of the narrator of the framing story – the primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator – who is expressed grammatically in the first-person singular. The woman's life story functions as a text within a text, attributed to the secondary narrator (the narrator of the internal story), who is a character in the framing narrative but serves as a primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator in the main narrative, positioned outside the fictional world and recounting events from a third-person perspective. It is noted that, in establishing a reliable narrator, the primary diegetic / homodiegetic narrator assigns the primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator a name, biographical details, and even official documents. By emphasizing his role as the editor

of an authentic story, the primary diegetic narrator acknowledges having invented the characters' motives and emotions, indicating a blending of perspectives and leaving it to the reader to determine whose viewpoint is being presented. The events in Hawthorne's novel are presented from the perspective of a primary non-diegetic / extradiegetic narrator, while the first-person plural appears in the text through various constructions. Consequently, the form "we" can encompass the author as well as narrators of all types represented in the text.

It is highlighted that the main character, Hester Prynne, possesses a remarkable personality and unintentionally integrates into a world foreign to her with new principles unfamiliar to that society. Because she bears a child out of wedlock, she finds herself socially isolated. In developing the theme of the townsfolk's psychological and emotional torment of Hester, motifs of her uncanny ability to perceive the sin of others, the ostensible piety, and hidden sinfulness of the entire community – **including children – are employed**. The theme of social isolation of mother and child is linked to the motif of the circle, symbolizing entrapment and hopelessness. Hawthorne's fictional portrayal underscores that the social isolation of mother and child enabled the emergence of individuals with a new value system within a fanatically religious community. The motif of sin is further intertwined with that of atonement.

The novel emphasizes the theme of the relativity of the meaning behind the scarlet letter. If we consider that "A" is the first letter of the alphabet, Hester Prynne's character gains symbolic significance as the woman from whom the story of American identity begins. On the other hand, the word English "letter" can also mean "message," so combined with the semantics of "scarlet," the title *The Scarlet Letter* may be interpreted as "The Precious Message," with the novel itself serving as a message to both women and men settling in a new country.

In Hawthorne's interpretation of the theme of sin's atonement, the portrayal of the illegitimate child becomes particularly significant. Through the behavior of the girl and her unique interactions with her mother, the novel consistently shows that, even at a young age, the heroine displayed individuality and was capable of standing up to a harsh crowd. It is emphasized that Hester Prynne rejects the Old Testament notion that children should bear the consequences of their parents' actions. She refrains from imposing an ascetic lifestyle on her daughter, allows her the joys of childhood play, and lets her follow her own impulses. In building the images of Prynne as mother and child, the narrator compares the heroine to Divine Maternity, referencing the prophet Nathan, David, and Bathsheba. **Subtle references to two figures born outside of marriage yet symbolic for humanity suggestively evoke the idea that young Pearl is an apostle of a new, future world free from dogma.** In this light, the episode where the girl dances on the gravestone of one of the most respected settlers becomes significant. Her innocent playfulness is perceived as a symbolic rejection or devaluation of everything that the former Europeans are trying to forcibly implant in American society – a past that must fade away to make room for something new. The impersonal note that the law was broken with the girl's birth, combined with her ultimately fortunate fate, suggests that through their severe judgment, the colonists unknowingly altered the course of life, paving the way for the development of new principles of social existence.

Puritan society in *The Scarlet Letter* is, in part, embodied by the elderly scholar Roger Chillingworth / Prynne, who could be described in modern terms as an abuser. Chillingworth's character aligns with the Byronic hero type, popular at the time the novel was written. On one hand, he is a knowledgeable scientist with a broad perspective and a free-thinking mind; on the other, he is somber and resentful toward a world in which he believes he is unloved due to his physical deformity. His pursuit of a rival begins as a psychological puzzle and eventually turns into a cruel game. Scattered throughout the text are details pointing toward the archetypal image of Faust and the recurring motif of the devil in the novel. **The character of Arthur Dimmesdale is perhaps the most complex in *The Scarlet Letter*.**

The novel's depiction of events as mystical and characters as extraordinary, endowed with irrational abilities and even demonic qualities, directs us toward the aesthetics of Romanticism, which dominated literature at that time. Considering the thematic elements of *The Scarlet Letter*, it can be interpreted as an effortless didactic story about new feminine values on the American continent. At the same time, the work can be classified as both a romance and a psychological novel that artistically examines how guilt influences a person's behavior, emotions, and worldview. The use of mystification and the play of authorial masks invite the reader to decide whether such a woman truly existed or if she was fictional.