

大觉醒运动和《红字》

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[英文提要]

Nathaniel Hawthorne was one of the first and best of the nativist American writers, who chose to use American materials, American issues, and drew on the background of the emerging Evangelical Movement, which was characterized by pietism, emotionalism, emphasis on the grace of God, egalitarianism, simplicity, and personal faith. In many ways, this merged with the Romantic tradition which was also a strong influence on his writing—with its preference of emotions over reason, simple folk over aristocratic, the personal over the general. His greatest novel *The Scarlet Letter*, published in 1850, is a rich compendium of this confluence of movements in America.

The novel chronicles events in the distant past, 200 years before, in a time almost forgotten by his audience. Like his contemporaries, Herman Melville and James Fenimore Cooper, he found he could use American characters, settings, and ideas to attract an international audience. By this time America had large cities, a reading public, and a tradition to draw on, making such works possible.

Hawthorne himself (1804-1864) was the descendent of one of the judges of the Salem witchcraft trials and was one of America's

first professional writers. He drew on the history and nature of New England, the theology of the Puritans, the customs of the early settlers to portray a vivid tale of temptation and redemption.

The central character, the gentle, loving Hester Prynne, was the mother of an illegitimate child. She is judged by the community, denounced, and sentenced to bear the mark of the scarlet "A" for adultery. By her proud and loving attitude, she transforms this mark of disgrace into a badge of courage. It is finally the men, cowardly and judgmental, who are disgraced and destroyed by her natural response to love.

The story is a complex and tantalizing tale of sin, judgment, nature, morality, and forgiveness. It is by no means a simple summary of the Calvinistic views of early Puritans. Hawthorne uses vivid characterization, allegory, rich symbolism, eloquent narrative, and dramatic events to create a sympathetic critique of Puritan thought and of universal human dilemmas.

It is a powerful example of indigenous American masterpieces.

17世纪末,清教徒在新英格兰已失去了大部分政治、社会和伦理的权力。到了18世纪末,大部分教会已失去支配权。美国大革命后,那些过去对州教堂予以补贴的教会不再给他们钱了。许多首批移民者的后代已不再有他们的父辈追随教会的那种热情。年轻人尤其不能忍受清教徒思想和道义上的那种约束。他们对提高生活质量、成家立业更感兴趣。许多人离开家人西行,成为新领地的开拓者。他们没有对英国和欧洲大陆的旧恨,因此也就不那么渴望追求理性、节制、教义上的信仰。对于第二代移民来说,追求富裕、自由的目标已足矣。(在纳撒尼午·霍桑所塑造的人物形象中,