

Hawthorne: Portrayal of Juvenile Literature

Joy Elvine Martis, M.A., M.Phil., PGDTE (EFLU), Ph.D.

Asst. Professor

Dept. of Humanities

NMAM Institute of Technology, Nitte 574110

Udupi Dt., Karnataka

joymartis@nitte.edu.in

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Abstract

Nathaniel Hawthorne had a focus towards didactic children literature which earlier used to be read from England. Though, Puritanism was very strong in the region and the whole idea of forgiveness was not desired after, yet, Hawthorne employs an approach to contrition and how the characters play an important role to fortify the understanding of sin to young readers. Hawthorne wanted his young readers to have a sense of desire than force. The moralistic view of Hawthorne towards a change and accepting the Transcendental viewpoint is remarkable though he had a Puritan lineage. This paper is an attempt to view Hawthorne as a writer of moral teaching to children.

Keywords: moral teaching, children, Calvinistic, Original Sin, Juvenile fiction

Nathaniel Hawthorne, one of the most celebrated writers of fiction in America had a lot of difference in his writings because of the incidents that happened in his life. He wrote with various themes of dark romanticism, political and Puritan inspiration. His short stories are ornamental to read and give the joy that they were written for, but still, they came with an underlying message. Hawthorne articulated the belief in the importance of fancy in books for children that has remained a guiding assumption about children's literature ever since. But the whole system of Juvenile literature merely existed in those days.

Before the 1812 war of America, didactic children's literature was mainly imported or reprinted from the British Press. But, later on during the 1820s these books were supplemented and by the 1830s largely replaced by a literature for and about children that celebrated and inculcated values that were entirely American. Patriotism began to grow. Even though, Americans may still read Dickens, the increase for purchase of story books, magazines and school books for your children grew.

In the early years, there was very little space or desire for delight in fiction: the education of the young was a serious, moral, spiritual and political undertaking. Fiction for the young thought values as the transcendental view began to grow. They taught honesty, charity, piety, industry and self-control through stories for small children and they grabbed the ideas under guidance of wise adults. Hawthorne may seem to be a writer of a different genre, but he joined this race too as later on in life,

the entire thought process of his generation being in a very bad light was thrown out of him though very stained short stories and novels.

His story *Little Daffydowndilly* allegorically adopts both formulas in the ‘rambles’ of a boy who runs away from school and evades a character Mr. Toil but now and then finds him in all places. Hawthorne writes, “Daffydowndilly, had learned a lesson, when he became better acquainted with Mr. Toil.” (21-22)

The lesson that Hawthorne wanted children to receive was internalization of social values. Once again, Hawthorne used words to his benefit, ‘Toil’ could be taken in two aspects, ‘hard work’ which children had to understand from childhood. These carved signs of discomfort as Toil was like a dictator in the story and so, we feel sympathy towards Daffydowndilly. Hawthorne, too, when he was young showed equal pain with Daffydowndilly as he was separated from his mother as he had to go to school and he mentions, “The happiest days of my life are gone. Why was I not a girl that I might be pinned all my life to my Mother’s apron?” (87)

There were many expectations from Juvenile literature and *Little Daffydowndilly* brought an experience of life to its readers. Hawthorne put in essential transformation by cultivating a self-regulating conscience, which is necessary for children. This is another aspect of Humanism where we see children being looked into from a wide angle to be a member of society. The society was Puritan in those days, but coming out of that and not accepting the wrongs done during that period was the greatest challenge that American writers faced for the future generations of America.

Later, we see how attitudes towards child rearing gradually undergoes a transformation, replacing the awful birch rod that Daffydowndilly would have found in the heart of his school make, and so we observe the story to be a more effective incentive to industrious and virtuous toil.

The Calvinistic ideologies that child-rearing was ‘infantile depravity’, that is having the Original Sin in them from the fault of Adam and Eve. This thought of depravity brought children from an angelic view to the need of womanhood from Satan even before they could learn to choose right. Children were born without Sin, salvation came later. (Leupold 20) And thus, we had grim and primitive attitude towards childhood which persisted in evangelical families. The idea that children were born angelic had to be brought and thus, Horace Bushnell in *The Christian Nature* asserts the innocence of children as they were unaware of the thought of Sin, ‘Infancy and childhood are the ages pliant to good.’ (4)

We nurture good in children, and should not subdue bad, then only can we change the attitudes towards children, and cause a major shift in the structure of families. Maria J. McIntosh rightly states, “The only right way to govern ant one is by giving them confidence in your kindly feelings towards them - by love.” (145)

This in itself creates a new domestic order that can bring our focus to how familial ties should be. As normal humans, we tend to stress ourselves and pass on this stress to our children many times. But the real discipline that we look into is 'love' and this 'love' is tied to the mother, more than the father, as Mary Ryan asserts in *The Empire of the Mother*. (145-147)

Hawthorne in the 1830s moved into juvenile fiction and brought in a different look into the household. We see a change that is historical, developments which happen completely uneven in practice; sinfulness and sinlessness, punishment and affection, paternal and maternal governance live together in this world and not against one another. They bring in a flux within a single family, or even within an ambivalent self.

There was brought into a Puritan society, a change - a shift from curtailing women, but this gender shift as when we talk about children, we normally relate them to women, and thus, more women came out with works for children. Hawthorne placed himself and his literary success in an audience much bound with women and unknowingly but increased the prominence of authorship by women. As Juvenile fiction remained in the female sphere, but the mention of another American litterateur Samuel Goodrich has to be made as his motivation exemplified the market for children's literature and he provided a platform from where the young Hawthorne in those days could go into a realm of talents. (Goodrich 317). Goodrich hired Hawthorne as an editor. Hawthorne's effort in the camp of Goodrich brought in him a complete change. In his letter, Hawthorne reveals his understanding of writing literature for children and how this can be lucrative and useful.

Hawthorne used children in his fiction to figure out avidity of consumer desires. In *Little Annie's Ramble*, Annie's "pleasure in looking at the shop windows." Or, in *The House of Seven Gables* where the feats of the little cannibal who frequents Hephzibah's shop. We see Hawthorne associating the market with children. He wants to bring out the picture of looking at children as an asset to be had.

If we look at the economic side, Hawthorne with his juvenile histories - *Grandfather's Chair*, *Famous Old People* and *The Liberty Tree* tried a lot to get them to be state schoolbooks for the state of Massachusetts. But, most interestingly his Greek myths for children *The Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales* make him financially successful. He made a lot of earnings in juvenile literature than his famous novel, *The Scarlet Letter*.

Hawthorne mainly wrote for the young and he describes this in the preface to *Little Annie's Ramble*. He asserts:

I have written for the young, but as I desire that these volumes may not be faced upon anybody as a monitor or master, I say in the title page that it is designed for families. I wish it to be permitted and enter the family circle and take its chance to make its way. If it is placed not as a task-book, but rather as a storyteller, on the table, perhaps the children may patronize it, perhaps the parents may desire to look into it. (84)

Hawthorne preferred desire to force. Homes had to have affection and love, and literature for children had to resist hierarchies and control, and celebrate storytelling as the most effective means of learning. In his letter from Millington's compilation, he wrote to Longfellow about collaborating to produce fairy tales for children. Hawthorne imagined that this could "revolutionize the whole system of juvenile literature." (150) He mentions, "I think that a very pleasant and peculiar kind of reputation may be acquired in this way - we will twine for ourselves a wreath of tender shoots and buds, instead of such withered and dusty leaves as other people crown themselves with." (150-1)

In *Little Annie's Ramble*, the mother's fear of losing Annie is put forward very nonchalantly and what they see as they roam the streets of the town, the narrator also brings about his fascination with Annie's "pure, instinctive delicacy of taste." (Millington 152), then the narrator himself appears as the source of taint. "Here we see the very sane world - do not go near him, Annie! - the selfsame wolf that devoured Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother." (152)

We see a difference here between the fairy tale and the real. In presenting himself, thus, as a writer of stories for children, we see Hawthorne suggesting the perverse and the innocent possibilities of that role. Here, we see Hawthorne bringing in a comparison with the *Scarlet Letter*. When Chillingworth tortured Dimmesdale, there wasn't any sort of remorse that was felt. The thought once again of 'Unpardonable Sin' is brought into the picture. But *Little Annie's Ramble* presents itself as an innocent children's story but we do see hidden aspects of Sin that is 'unpardonable' when the narrator cries out, "I have gone too far astray for the town crier to call me back!"

Though, Annie is symbolized as a sinless child, the whole idea of this little girl symbolizing herself as a source of seduction is also noticed. Hawthorne's writings brought about an 'intersubjectivity' of mother and child and it revealed the nature of authority in the family.

In the *Scarlet Letter*, though Pearl is symbolized to be the Sin that Hester had committed, it is the authority that binds Hester and Pearl. In one of the chapters *The Child at the Brookside*, Hawthorne explains Pearl's gestures and emotion in the reflecting water of the brook:

At length, assuming a singular air of authority, Pearl stretched out her hand with the small forefinger extended, and pointing evidently towards her mother's breast. And beneath in the mirror of the brook, there was the flower-girded and sunny image of Little Pearl, pointing her forefinger too. (44)

There existed a relationship - a bond between mother and child, Hester and Pearl. This notice puts into play how one's own human child can nevertheless be so alien - this thought is seen obsoletely in the fiction of Hawthorne where his own parenting towards his daughter Una may have not been so successful.

The Wonder Book, one of the most successful children's books of Hawthorne imagines the idealization of childhood and the expectations of culture as seamlessly united. Children being innocent

and the clarity of authorial control are very certain. Thus, the paradise of childhood lies upon obedience and domestic accord. True parenting with better understanding of the needs of the child can bring across a sunny and happy thoughtful familial lining rather than be different. Though being deluded, Hawthorne's writings on children's literature talks in a way of the 'Original Sin' and the 'Innocence' that children have when they are born; how they reflect angelic terms and how they can show a transformation in bringing out a better society if they know what went wrong. The Transcendentalist idea of America brought in this shift from a lower level to a higher one of how though born with Sin, children have that fascination and perseverance and then, psychologically proved, we see that pleasure and discipline grow together in a rationalized understanding and thus Hawthorne's writings on Juvenile Literature became such a powerful pedagogical form. This stakes the nature for both family and romance.

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Joy Elvine Martis, M.A., M.Phil., PGDTE (EFLU), Ph.D.
Asst. Professor
Dept. of Humanities
NMAM Institute of Technology, Nitte 574110
Udupi Dt., Karnataka joymartis@nitte.edu.in