

## A FEMINISM READING IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S *BIRTHMARK AND RAPPACINI'S DAUGHTER*

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### **Abstract**

*This paper investigates the effect of the prevailing patriarchal oppression towards female characters in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short stories searching for identity through the lens of radical feminism, focusing specifically on authority and power. It can be seen that Hawthorne demonstrates how female characters struggle to define their lives as best as they can under male societal strictures in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The rationale is that by understanding the effect of dominant patriarchal culture in two tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne reveals the motivation towards the quest of identity among women of the period can be better understood. Hence, Hawthorne's short stories serves as an indication and polemic of what happens to women when they are not allowed to attain their own identity independently of the men. This paper analyzes two famous short stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne namely Birthmark (1843) and Rappacini's Daughter (1844). The result of this research reveals that Hawthorne has challenged patriarchal oppression through "death as a triumph". In short, this research shows that Hawthorne in some ways exalts the rights of women to seek their own identity in society.*

**Keywords :** *Female identity, radical feminism, patriarchal oppression, authority, power and Nathaniel Hawthorne's tales.*

### **Introduction**

This paper explores the intention of the author's conceptions on the images of women by using the theory of radical feminism which regards patriarchy as the root cause of women's oppression and subordination. This position views patriarchy as the oldest and most universal form of oppression and domination. Echols argues that radical feminism aims to challenge patriarchal oppression by opposing standard gender roles or "a reordering of society". This theory also advocates equal rights for all women in all aspects of life - socially, politically, professionally and personally (Echols 7). Danny Frederick defines the theory in this way, radical feminism purports to be concerned with equality for women; it has campaigned for a number of things on the grounds of equality for women. Each of these things could be objectionable on the grounds of sexual equality in the way sexes were treated in respect of them (1).

The main figures who struggle with radical feminism include Kate Millet, Marilyn French and others. They hold differing views as to the possible solution to achieving the shared outcome of total equality for women, but they have the same ideological belief systems which emphasize certain variables as the cause of women's oppression. Kate Millet (1977) argues the root of all inequalities and women's oppression is the patriarchal system (31). She uses the term "patriarchy" to

explain the cause of women's oppression. Patriarchy subordinates the women to the men or treats the women as inferior men. It is similar to Marilyn French's position which is that patriarchy is a "sexual system of power in which the male possesses superior power and economic privilege" (17). She further explains that patriarchy is "the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general" (18). It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and women are deprived access to such power. Radical feminism posits that due to patriarchy, women have come to be viewed as the "other" to the male norm and as such have been systematically oppressed and dominated (Rhodes 4). Early radical feminists posit that the root cause of all other inequalities is the oppression of women. These categories of oppression may include the oppression based on gender identity, sexual orientation, perceived attractiveness, social class, and ability (5).

Therefore, this paper examines the female characters in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short stories such as *Birthmark* (1843) and *Rappacini's Daughter* (1844) in light of Kate Millet's radical feminism concepts to discover and challenge patriarchal oppression over women in Hawthorne's time, thus redefining women as those who have an identity which is separate from male definition.

### **Conceptual Theory**

The chosen theory for this research is radical feminism, which will provide the bridge between literary texts and analysis. The concept of radical feminism is based on the idea of oppression and domination, which emphasizes patriarchy as the root of women's inequality and social dominance of women by men (Firestone 14). The radical feminists tend to be skeptical of political action within the current system and instead support cultural change that undermines patriarchy and its associated hierarchical structures. They also tend to be more into opposing the existence of political organizations in general, which is inherently tied to patriarchy (Koet and Levine, *at al.*, 1973: 4).

Using this concept will be a way to understand the oppression and domination over women in their quest to find their own identity. This present study will explore the process of patriarchal oppression in the postulation of Kate Millet which uses the term "patriarchy" in revealing the cause of women's oppression and domination. She goes on to say it is exerted directly or indirectly in civil and domestic life, to constrain women. Kate Millet (1969) explains that patriarchal ideology is divided into two parts: (1) a set of beliefs that legitimize male power and authority over women, for example in marriage or a marriage-arrangement, and (2) a set of attitudes or norms supportive against wives who violate, or who are perceived as violating, the ideals of familial patriarchy (222 - 223). She also argues that the ideology within the patriarchy system is a set of ideas, explaining the social world (society as a whole) and, as a result, indicates explicitly and implicitly how power has been disturbed within this world (224). The dominance of ideology of men will disseminate and maintain social control by winning over the hearts and minds of the population, including the family and the church. In *Sexual Politics* (1977), she also explains:

Sexual politics obtains consent through the “socialization” of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role, and status. As to status, a pervasive assent to the prejudice of male superiority guarantees superior status in the male, inferior in the female. The first item, temperament, involves the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sex category (“masculine” and “feminine”), based on the needs and values of the dominant group [...] aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, “virtue,” and ineffectuality in the female. (26).

Millett’s definition of “sexual politics” is explained from a feminist point of view. It suggests that the “sexual politics” practised in society is the patriarchal politics of dominant males, who have a stereotyped sex category for the purpose of sexual hierarchy. As a result, men enjoy the privileges guaranteed by such patriarchal politics, and, at the same time, deprives women of their rights to equality by reinforcing the sex category, according to which women are expected to play their social roles as submissive, silent, and domestic daughters, wives, and mothers. In this way, men take women as their opposites or the Other. Millett’s definition of “sexual politics” reveals women’s low social status as women and explains patriarchal politics as the cause of the practice of sexual hierarchy. Millett’s “sexual politics” will enable women to be aware of their situation both in society and at home, to form their self-consciousness as women, to demand their equality with men, and to obtain their autonomy.

Furthermore, Kate Millett claims in *Sexual Politics*, “the situation between the sexes now, and through history, is [...] a relationship of dominance and subordination” (24-25). However, Millett points out that male supremacy does not “reside in physical strength but in the acceptance of a value system which is not biological” (27). Millett argues,

Because of our social circumstances, male and female are really two cultures and their life experiences are utterly different - and this is crucial. Implicit in all the gender identity development which takes place through childhood is the sum total of the parents’, the peers’, and the culture’s notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression. (*Sexual Politics* 31).

Thus, according to Millett, the sex category, “based on the needs and values of the dominant group”, has become stereotyped: “aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy in the male” and “passivity, ignorance, docility, ‘virtue’ in the female” (*Sexual Politics* 26). In this sense, constructing stereotypes has become an important strategy for the male to subordinate the female. To resist male domination, the female characters can show their own ability, the radical feminist key concepts like “confrontation”, “separatism”, “death” and “self-reliance are applied to resist the oppressor around the women’s life, as Elaine Showalter asserts in *A Literature of Their Own*, that women have the authority or power to describe women’s own experiences (99) and that women “have always had to struggle against the cultural,

historical force, oppression, that relegated women's experience to the second rank" (36). For radical feminists, women's confrontation, separatism, death, and self-reliance can be transformed to reduce, to stop or even to face the adverse effects of oppression. These are as a method located in practice, whereby women could interrogate their experiences in the light of systematic male domination. This perspective is always interested, it is a political activity which locates the origin of women's oppression in patriarchy, and which tries to find the ways to overcome it.

The postulations of radical feminist are applied to examine the female identity under patriarchal oppression as practiced in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Birhmark* and *Rappacini's Daughter*. Women, by understanding the "Sexual Politics" of men will be aware of their situation or "self-consciousness" under patriarchal oppression in society or at home, and demand to extricate from men's oppression to be free, independent and self-determining individuals. This researcher believes that her postulations can lead one to explore women's identity under oppression of men and as the best way to unravel their oppression.

### **Methodology**

This research is qualitative research with a textual method. Textual method will investigate and analyze the literary work which emphasis on content analysis. According to Guba and Lincoln (in Moleong, 2005: 220), this content analysis is conducted by interpreting and making conclusion through identification the specific characteristics within texts objectively and systematically.

The main data or material of this research are quotations, sentences which highlight on the women identity under patriarchal oppression as practised in two short stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Birthmark* and *Rappacini's Daughter*. In order to conduct more detailed analysis, it is necessary to take the supporting ideas of other feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Marry Wollstonecraft, Shulamith Firestone, and others. Their ideas will provide the critical reviews of radical feminism and feminist's literature to look at the portrait of women's identity in Nathaniel Hawthorne's tales.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Female Identity and Patriarchal Oppression**

The patriarchal practice is often used to refer to the "norms or regulations made by men against women". According to Jones, this term tends to refer to the patriarchal oppression in the social, political, and religious spheres (77). Using this word to describe the web of oppressive forces reveals that male domination has a long history and stretches across cultural boundaries touching various facets of life.

The position of women under patriarchal practice is often one of oppression and domination by male power and authority. The crucial impact of this treatment has systematically deprived women and limited them from exploring their capabilities, desires and needs as women and also indirectly drawn a line of identity between men and women. Eva said, under patriarchy society, women are imaged with negative conceptualization; "women are associated with labels obedient, passive and powerless, while men are more associated with labels active, powerful

and superior” (12). These attributes systematically have placed men’s identity as more dominant than that of women. Johnson (2005) also adds that male privilege is promoted to be dominant (male centred) within a patriarchy society.

Nathaniel Hawthorne presents the insights above in his famous short stories, *Birthmark* (1843) and *Rappacini’s Daughter* (1844). He depicts women oppressed by the patriarchal oppression, particularly power of male. His female characters must face the difficult situation of being oppressed by male’s power in society and domestic area. His female characters are oppressed in term of “self-obsession”, they (Hawthorne’s female characters) become the object or victim of male’s obsession in the field of science.

Nevertheless, women still have a dream to be free, independent and self-determined individuals. Slowly, women began to question their roles and respond to patriarchal treatment in a variety of new ways - withdrawal, revolt, and action to change society, - which have ironically reduced their capability to have self-identity. Literary critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar assert, “significantly, as the hope for a new future merges with revulsion against a contaminated past [...] the vision of a woman (is) fused with horror at the traditional woman” (81). Richard Millington says that women can also be ‘heroic’ suggesting that women must create a sense of identity to resist male dominant characters in literary texts to show that women also can think and be even more ethical characters than their men counterparts (1). Women who are engaged as heroic characters defy the master of patriarchy and participate in defiance because they refuse to adhere to patriarchal boundaries. They boldly oppose the practice of patriarchy with its denial toward women’s labels in the gender relationship. These women renounce the continuation of oppression, and re-assess their own practices to defy patriarchal control. Thus, the fundamental change will occur when women view themselves as beings of character and when they respond to public spaces and their own identities. They must explore themselves and their facets to re-envision culture as space where they can become who they want to be without patriarchal domination, reform communities to be women-conscious, and use the power to transcend the boundaries of patriarchal regulations.

### ***Birthmark* (1843)**

This story reveals Georgiana as being oppressed by Aylmer who wants to re-create her to be a perfect woman from his own view. Her “birthmark” becomes the object of disgust from Aylmer’s point of view and his sympathy and attention towards Georgiana’s beauty, is only a bad tactic for chasing the perfection with his love for science. Under oppression of her husband, Georgiana still envisions the life freely and her own decision to participate in Aylmer’s experiment, which brings her demise, is her own decision for resisting oppression around her world. Georgiana’s position is clear under patriarchal oppression; ruled, controlled and uncomplainingly obedient towards what Aylmer says. The narrator shows this insight through the self-opinionated view by Aylmer who regards Georgiana’s birthmark as a sign of imperfection. Thus, Aylmer cannot accept it and wants to remove it in order to create a perfect/beautiful woman. According to Aylmer, ideally, his wife must remove her birthmark to release her flaw. It seems that Aylmer sympathizes and cares for



Georgiana's beauty, but actually, there lies a mission behind it. After Aylmer gets married to Georgiana, he sees the birthmark upon his wife's cheek. He directly comments that her birthmark symbolizes her imperfection and should be removed soon. It can be seen in the following quotation:

Such a union accordingly took place, and was attended with truly remarkable consequences and deeply impressive moral. One day, very soon after their marriage, Aylmer sat gazing at his wife with a trouble in his countenance that grew stronger until he spoke; "Georgiana," said he, "has it never occurred to you that the mark upon your cheek might be removed", "to tell you the truth it has been so often called a charm that I was simple enough to imagine it might be so", he continued, "dearest Georgiana, you come so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature that this slightest possible defect, which we hesitate whether to term a defect or beauty, shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection (*Birthmark*, p. 15).

This passage implicitly informs the reader that Georgiana is physical seen as an imperfect wife by her husband due to her birthmark. Aylmer seems unsatisfied towards it, so much so that he is obsessed about removing Georgiana's birthmark through his experiment in the laboratory. The narrator shows us perhaps Aylmer's job as a scientist has shaped him as ambitious to put his wife through an experiment in the laboratory. Hawthorne asserts Aylmer's love for his wife could only become strong by "intertwining itself with love of science and uniting the strength of the latter to its own." The narrator shows Aylmer "possessed this degree of faith in man's ultimate control over nature". Clearly, the higher intellect of Aylmer can permit him to conquer intelligence beyond the realm of possibility for a woman, while woman is unable to surpass the "self-opinionated man." Georgiana herself is described as a simple woman and the victim of an "indistinct idea" of her husband. She is seen as a defective woman by Aylmer, although her birthmark has been with her from the day she was born and despite that, she is a completely perfect woman; her birthmark could be considered as evidence of her beauty, but it becomes the object of disgust by Aylmer.

Aylmer shows his dissatisfaction towards her birthmark, because according to him this birthmark is a blemish, which seems entirely out of place. On an otherwise flawless Georgiana. Interestingly, Aylmer never feels Georgiana as a part of himself before their marriage, but after Georgiana becomes his wife, he sees a need to remove it. It indicates that Aylmer's vision for Georgiana's perfection is still vague, or is an "indistinct idea". His mission is only concerned with perfection and with his love for science, but not the true perfection of Georgiana. Understanding his self-opinionated view of Georgiana's birthmark is a sort of man's maneuver on behalf of his own obsession, while Georgiana is made to believe that her birthmark is a symbol of woman's imperfection.

Over time, Aylmer's obsession with her birthmark turns into a paranoia that he believes must be dealt with if he is to be happy with his wife. Aylmer chases and forces Georgiana by never considering her feelings in order to make her the object of his experiment. Georgiana herself is mentally and unceasingly oppressed by

Aylmer's obsession. For Georgiana, her husband's treatment is outrageous oppression because her marriage is drastically changed into a frightening situation: love turns into hate, hope into frustration and good into evil.

Aylmer is really distraught with that birthmark; he even cannot rest at all if he cannot remove it. He uses his intelligence in science to vanquish woman. He asserts that:

He had made discoveries in the elements of the powers of Nature that had roused the admiration of all the learned societies in Europe. His scientific successes began while he was yet in his youth, and "I feel myself fully competent to render this clear cheek as faultless as its fellow; and then [...] what will be my triumph, when I shall have corrected what Nature left imperfect, in her fairest work! (*Birthmark*, p 50).

The condition of Georgiana is clearly under pressure by the intellectual power of Aylmer. Aylmer exploits the powerlessness of Georgiana by showing off his experiences and records for subduing woman's stance; "he had made some discoveries in the elements of the powers of nature that had roused the admiration of all the learned societies in Europe" (19). His capability in natural science is undoubted, and his expertise in conducting some experiments is acknowledged: "I feel myself fully competent to render this clear cheek as faultless as its fellow...and then that will be my triumph" (50). This is only a self-opinionated view in the interest of self-ambition. Georgiana then is made to believe and accept his claims that she is a flawed or imperfect woman. However, from the patriarchal point of view, it is clearly that Georgiana is intentionally created as an imperfect woman in the interest of patriarchal purpose. Her powerless nature has made her a victim of man's self-opinionated stature. Kate Millet comments on the propaganda of Aylmer as "men often use terrorization (pressures) over women to keep their dominance and men are the lord of women" (12). As depicted in the characterization of Aylmer, he chases unceasingly for perfection of his love in the name of science. Meanwhile, Georgiana herself is described as being unable to extricate herself from Aylmer's control, because she is never given a chance to protest.

Georgiana, under over domination of Aylmer, however, cannot be said to be a fragile woman, but it is only her condition under compulsion of her husband that makes her unable to think/observe carefully the agenda behind Aylmer's experiment. She has not enough time to observe the possible effect of that experiment. Nina Baym argues that Georgiana's position is that of a woman who is "thought of as lesser than men" who is unable to overcome hardship and trials because she is considered weak (12). It makes her easier to be subdued by man, as can be seen in the following quotation:

As she read, revered Aylmer, and loved him more profoundly than ever heretofore, much as he had accomplished, she could not but observe that his most splendid success was almost invariably failure, if compared with the ideal at which it is aimed. She even recognizes "you have deep science! All

the world bears witness of it. You have achieved great wonders” (*Birthmark*, 8).

The above passage shows that the woman is made to believe man’s capability in science. Aylmer seems to succeed in convincing Georgiana that his expertise as a scientist is undoubted and Georgiana shows her great respect for Aylmer’s fame. Then she concurs to modify her birthmark which is “aimed loftily”, “done nobly”, “will not repent” (25) - implying the purity of Georgiana’s feelings. She is not only subdued, but reinforces a man’s image. Georgiana is able to make her own decision after she is given the information. Her decision is the result of the coercion of patriarchal control.

This scene often occurs in real life, where man creates the important illusion of women’s beauty and keeps them subservient: Wollstonecraft explains

The sovereignty of beauty, they have to maintain men’s power, resign the natural rights, which the exercise of reason might have procured them, and chosen rather to be short-lived queens than labours to obtain the sober pleasures that arise from equality through experience should teach them that the men who pride themselves upon paying this arbitrary insolent respect to the sex, with the most scrupulous exactness, are most inclined to tyrannize over, and despise, the very weakness they cherish (97).

She also says that “the differences in gender were used for millennia to divide, exploit and isolate women” (98). The biggest mistake in the relationship between men and women, is that the women are forced to be the ideal woman/wife, for example, to become perfect wife. Through this story, women are expected to be perfect women from the men’s perspective by changing her nature. The power of man has made woman unable to reject it. In short, it can be said that Georgiana’s world is clearly ruled and controlled by the power of man.

However, Georgiana still envisions her life freely without determination and domination of her husband. The narrator shows Georgiana to be a free woman through her decision to sacrifice herself to Aylmer’s experiment, which brings her demise. This decision seems an unhappy one for her, but it can extricate her from the oppression of man. As cited by Stephens;

The early feminist movement gave a bad name to the selfless notion of placing one’s partner’s happiness over one’s own. Perhaps due to the fact that many women were routinely giving and not quite so routinely receiving of this particular principle for so long, feminists started promoting the idea that to put another’s happiness before one’s own was to become a victim, and in some cases this may have been true (4).

Stephens’ idea can illuminate woman’s decision under patriarchal oppression. It is indeed difficult and a decision that is not happy for women, but the true freedom is found in allowing women to decide their own choice, and sacrificing still can be



noted as a noble course of action, for example Georgiana's decision to Aylmer's experiment seems to be subjugation, but she knows how to use it.

The narrator shows it through her ways which actively criticize Aylmer's activities and what he will do in his experiment. It indicates that Georgiana's decision to take part in Aylmer's experiment is her decision. For example,

Georgiana asks her husband about the risks of his experiment. She seems to realize that Aylmer never tells her what the risks of that experiment are on herself and her health. This is Aylmer's big omission as a scientist, but Georgiana actually informs Aylmer about the dangers in changing her birthmark; "again, do we know that there is a possibility, on any terms, of unclasping the firm grief of this little hand which was laid upon me before I came into the world. Through this, Georgiana is actually in a process to prevent herself and protect her health, because she has suffered enough of Aylmer's expectations. From the feminist point of view, her initiative can be applauded and respected. It is seen clearly that Georgiana asks her husband to proceed with the experiment: "It is resolved, then? Georgiana asked" (14).

Then, before the experiment is done, Aylmer does not want Georgiana to follow him into the laboratory, but advises her to stay in one room. Georgiana disobeys and enters Aylmer's lab.

"Nay, Aylmer," said Georgiana with the firmness of which she possessed no stinted endowment, "it is not you that have a right to complain. You mistrust your wife; you have concealed the anxiety with which you watch the development of this experiment. Think not so unworthily of me, my husband. Tell me all the risk we run, and fear not that I shall shrink..."

Aylmer seems angry at Georgiana's behavior in not obeying his instructions. Georgiana only stands silently by not following him, but she is also does not back down. In this situation, Georgiana actually has won the battle, and she is eventually told the information she demanded for. Aylmer informs her that this experiment may result in her death. After obtaining this knowledge, Georgiana apparently understands Aylmer has a specific mission. She decides to proceed and will not regret her decision regardless of the outcome of this experiment.

Georgiana also shows her dissatisfaction towards the result of Aylmer's experiment. She complains to her husband, but Aylmer himself attempts to hide his failure; it can be seen in the following conversation:

And what is this?" asked Georgiana, pointing to a small crystal globe containing a gold-colored liquid. It is so beautiful to the eye that I could imagine it the elixir of life." "Is it with this lotion that you intend to bathe my cheek?" asked Georgiana. (*Birthmark*, 22).

Georgiana in this situation actively asks the skill of Aylmer in removing her birthmark. She seems unsatisfied with the result of his experiment and she also

demands his promise to create her to be a perfect woman by insinuating, “it is terrible to possess such power, or even to dream of possessing it.” Besides that, Georgiana cannot conceal her anger towards Aylmer, “is it with this lotion that you intend to bathe my cheek?” and “it has made me worship you more than ever” (25). It occurs when Georgiana finds out “sorcerer’s books” (25), she reads it and then she reflects the effect of Aylmer’s experiment on her birthmark. She bursts into tears within her anger and Aylmer says, “it is dangerous to read in a sorcerer’s books.” Meanwhile, Aylmer himself actually has failed in his experiment, but he does not dare to be honest about his failure. He tries to reassure Georgiana, “wait for this one success, and then worship me if you will. I shall deem myself hardly unworthy of it” (25). The attitudes of Georgiana who actively criticizes what Aylmer has done on her birthmark represents that her position cannot be said as “subordination woman”.

Finally, Georgiana is given the heavy burden of Aylmer’s experiment. She is seen as sad: “She is so pale with the crimson hand, which at first had been strongly visible upon the marble paleness of Georgiana’s cheek, now grew more faintly outlined. Georgiana remains no less pale than ever; but the birthmark with every breath that came and went, lost somewhat of its former distinctness” (25). It shows how the effect of the failed experiment makes Georgiana really suffer. In a her exclamations, slowly, she cannot close her eyes and only beholds what Aylmer has prepared for that purpose. She asks Aylmer:

“Why did you hesitate to tell me this?” asked she. “Because, Georgiana,” said Aylmer, in a low voice, “there is danger.” “Danger? There is but one danger...that this horrible stigma be left upon my cheek!” cried Georgiana. “Remove it, remove it, whatever be the cost, or we shall both go mad!” (*Birthmark*, 27).

The above quotation clearly indicates that she is the victim of oppression by Aylmer in chasing his self-obsession. She says to her husband that “you have served me well” (29), even though, her husband’s face shows anxiety and is troubled. Georgiana declares: “My poor Aylmer,” “you have aimed loftily; you have done nobly. Do not repent that with so high and pure a feeling. Aylmer, dearest Aylmer, I am dying” (30). Her responses towards Aylmer’s failure seem that she is a kind woman. She never regrets at all her decision to participate in Aylmer’s experiment which leads to her demise despite knowing of the risks involved. She even says, “You have done nobly”, “do not repent” and “you have served me well”, these words are her own expression, indicating that she seems to have reached the true freedom in her life. By doing this, her death can be noted as a triumph for women.

We can conclude that Hawthorne explores that Aylmer is only a self-important man with a character that deserves no admiration. He is only ambitious to meet his desires but fails. Georgiana, on the other hand, she is actually a smart, intelligent, loving and generous woman, but unfortunately, she becomes the object of a man’s wills. As described in the story she comes to a sad end, and some readers interpret it is as proof of Hawthorne’s misogyny. At the end of his story, Hawthorne declares, “*Yet, Had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the selfsame texture with*

*the celestial. The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and, living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present*”, here, Hawthorne addresses the criticism of patriarchal treatment over women in the society of his time. Men use scientific power to subdue women, to serve their own purposes. It is only an abusive tactic to serve their desires and ambitions.

### ***Rappacini's Daughter (1844)***

The patriarchal oppression in this story appears through the power of men over women. Beatrice Cenci is oppressed by the power of Rappacini who controls her life, especially when she has a relationship with Giovanni. His misdeed has made Beatrice unable to get the freedom to be an independent woman. Then he sacrifices Beatrice by employing her in a poisonous garden to protect her from the evils of men. She is also oppressed by Giovanni who is interested in her physical beauty. Beatrice, who falls in love with Giovanni is quickly disappointed as Giovanni is not serious in his relationship with her. His is only a physical attraction to her beauty.

Hawthorne describes Beatrice who is an obedient, very compassionate and energetic woman but her time is only spent to fulfill her father's jobs. She must handle her father's garden as if they were her own children, maintaining and defending it. And then, something changes in Beatrice's character after her meeting with Giovanni. Giovanni is very interested in Beatrice at first sight from the balcony of her father's poisonous garden. Beatrice also has the same feelings for Giovanni while Rappacini constantly monitors the progress of *his* daughter's relationship with Giovanni. Here, the question is posed as to what Giovanni actually wants from Beatrice; physical beauty or soulful level, because professor Baglioni has informed and warned that Beatrice and her father are dangerous, and he is well aware of this. Giovanni chases his love and begins a relationship with her. Through this relationship, Beatrice who has been infected with the disease herself, although not intentionally, has poisoned Giovanni. With Giovanni, infected by Beatrice's disease, there is later a confrontation between them. Beatrice is first to provide an antidote but the potion does not work. Here, we ask whether Beatrice, arguably the tragic hero, is able to separate herself from her father's jealousy and seek the right to be protected from the evils of men.

It becomes very interesting realize that Beatrice is a tragic hero who through her ways liberatee herself from the domination of men. She sacrifices herself due to the private wishes of her father and Giovanni, the latter seeking only her physical beauty. She is in turn to be dominant character. It very rarely appears in Hawthorne's works that the quality of the female character is more dominant in determining her destiny. Millington in "The Meanings of Hawthorne's women" says, "Hawthorne uses his admirable female characters to represent an adequate *complex* and comparatively free relation to life. Such relations would, of course, include a healthy sexuality (sexuality understood by Hawthorne, as a particularly complex emotional terrain and a key target of a culture's ordering schemes). But the key issue for Hawthorne, and the heroic possibility at once are evoked and mourned or yearned for through the bleak careers of his heroic women. Millington also suggests that

Hawthorne intentionally creates Beatrice as a female character with distinct male qualities to show that women can think, more powerfully ethical and be heroic with their male counterparts. Then we can see Beatrice as described by Hawthorne as a tragic heroic figure, but not martyr.

Revealing Beatrice as a martyr needs substantial evidence because she is at the end of story able to *reverse* her situation into a hero as can be seen from the following quotation;

“I would fain have been loved, not feared,” murmured Beatrice, sinking down upon the ground. “But now it matters not; I am going farther, where the evil, which thou hast striven to mingle with my being, will pass away like a dream – like the fragrance of these poisonous flowers, which will no longer taint my breath among the flowers of Eden. Farewell, Giovanni! Thy words of hatred are like lead within my heart – but they, too, will fall away as I ascend. Oh, was there, not from the first, more poison in thy nature than in mine?” (20).

This quotation implies Beatrice is a martyr. She has been the victim of male needs, that is those of her father (Rappacini) and Giovanni. She tells Rappacini that he never gives her a chance to access the real world, and it is her father’s big mistake..Beatrice also shows her death is the result of Rappacini’s effort to keep her pure is futile. Beatrice also tells Giovanni when she will draw her last breath that Giovanni is only interested in her physical beauty, not her inner beauty. From her actions she shows that she can give both men a lesson and that her sacrifice only changes her fate for the better.

By converting our focus from victim to hero, we ask why Beatrice sacrifices herself for Giovanni and whether death is meaningful or meaningless. Margaret Hallissy in “Hawthorne’s Venomous Beatrice”, said that Giovanni is only interested in the woman’s physical beauty and cares not for any inner, spiritual beauty. ,Hallissy further says Giovanni is the very opposite of Beatrice who tries to save Giovanni, not only physically, but more than that, spiritually and morally. It is as described by Hallissy:

Venomous women in particular have long been the embodiment of fear for moral evil and physical destruction. Venomous women have been equated with sexual excess and are believed to threaten men both physically and morally. Beatrice explores the paradoxes and ambiguities, which surround female sexuality. Beatrice represents the homeopathic strand of this tradition, defined by Sir Thomas Browne, which makes her both a sexual seductress and a spiritual savior (234).

The word “venomous” refers to “sexual access” and thus a menace towards men “physically and morally. It explains why Giovanni is interested in Beatrice so quickly and why Rappacini protects Beatrice by poisoning her. Within the relationship between Giovanni and Beatrice, he is more interested to pursue the physical beauty instead of her inner beauty. The “sexual access” of Giovanni is very

dominant and aggressive in satisfying his lust for her, but Beatrice understands better when she takes the prophylactic before Giovanni. The word “venomous” can be an indication of the vindictive nature of Beatrice in relation both men in her world: Giovanni and Rappacini.

Rappacini is typical of a man who is not democratic but also too over protective; he is worried and doesn't want her daughter to be used by men. To protect Beatrice from being exploited by the “evil” of men, he poisons her. Rappacini says:

What mean you, foolish girl? Dost thou deem it misery to be endowed with marvelous gifts, against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy? Misery, to be able to quell the mightiest with a breath? Misery, to be as terrible as thou art beautiful? Wouldst thou, then have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil, and capable of none? (20)

This quotation tells us that Beatrice does not understand her father's vision; he wants Beatrice to be a modern or an independent woman. Here, Beatrice's father is stuck in the past, he has a vision for her future, but the most important thing behind all this is that Beatrice can proceed with her father work. For this reason it is very clear that Beatrice cannot live her life based on her own choice, because her father always secludes and monitors her. Perhaps, it maybe the main motive why Beatrice is quickly attracted with Giovanni as she is not familiar yet with a man like Giovanni giving her attention. Beatrice still keeps her relationship, but does not let Giovanni know so much her feelings about their relationship, for she knows that her lover only looks at her physical beauty first. According to Nina Baym, a female character like Beatrice is able to attack men's misdeeds like Giovanni and Rappacini and rewards men with nothing and punishes their domination. She explains:

Many of the stories we most value and most often teach compose a sustained analysis of and a powerful attack upon male behavior. Hawthorne stages encounters between men and women. In these encounters, male characters - their underlying anxiousness and aggression disguised as ambition or obsession - refuse the invitation to full, complex, and humane life offered by their female counterparts (22).

This quotation implicitly conveys the denial to punish and surrender to male domination. This form is conducted by women to refuse the coward and sadistic man, and can be seen to be a more complex form in the novel. Now, the psychological weakness and social phenomenon towards the stories that emerges is the symptom of culture. As created in Hawthorne's female characters, women can be used to convey not only positive values but also exemplary of subversive alternatives such as Miriam, Zenobia and Hester. These characters implicitly refuse male domination and also encourage evading such poisonous things.

Nina Baym states that Beatrice has been trying to make a change towards the existence of male characters, unfortunately, male characters cannot realize that due to culture. Beatrice becomes the tragic hero, and she really suffers because Rappacini never gives her the freedom and to do what she wants to from her world. Her death

can be rewarded as a “positive value” which shows her existence under domination of men in her society, but she also wants readers to discern her soul instead of merely physical beauty.

The characterization of Beatrice is very complex; firstly, she attempts to make love with a man who is enamoured with her beauty, not just physically, but also her inner beauty. She has also been trying to be loved and finds out although she is not sure if she can accept it, but Beatrice is willing to sacrifice herself for her lover. Secondly, she can also feel a sense of freedom albiet Rappacini always monitors her, but she can still think for herself as seen in the quotation below:

“Are there such idle rumors?” asked Beatrice, with the music of a pleasant laugh. “Do people say that I am skilled in my father’s science of plants? What a jest is there! No; though I have grown up among these flowers, I know no more of them than their hues and perfume; and sometimes, methinks I would fain rid myself of even that small knowledge. There are many flowers here, and those not the least brilliant, that shock and offend me, when they meet my eye. But, pray, Signor, do not believe these stories about my science. Believe nothing of me save what you see with your own eyes” (P.47).

This quotation makes us think that Beatrice seems to learn from the enclosed environment with her father. In this environment, she has to think and learn about her father’s experiments with plants because as described in the story Beatrice is so concerned with such plants as if they were her children. In her mind, Beatrice wants to show to her public especially men that she has begun and is able to think for herself. It is supported by the inkling and the rumors around her that her life is judged by man, due to her relationship with her father but themen in her town never understand what she experiences, whether it is right or wrong. The researcher argues that Beatrice is trying to ensure that she is no more intelligent than him, because she wants to bring her love, meaning she wants to sacrifice her moral and hide her intelligence for the sake of love.

By analyzing Beatrice’s character, what does she truly want in her life? We now can understand that she is actually searching for love, but her world makes her unable to realize that. Unfortunately, Rappacini has a plan for his daughter; he sacrifices Beatrice by poisoning her as a form of his love. By doing that, he can keep Beatrice special in his world and it will be his greatest accomplishment. The researcher does not think that Rappacini hopes Beatrice will take the antidote and she sacrificies herself for her lover. But Beatrice also wants to show her point to both men around her. First, for Rappacini, she wants him to understand that she can sacrifice herself to the man who falls in love with her as a symbol that she needs a change and releases herself from the domination of her father. She is also tired of Rappacini’s teachings which do not allow here to access the real world, because it has made her world alone, secluded and closed from what she wants to do. And second, for Giovanni, Beatrice wants him to see her not only physically but also her strengths, weaknesses, and inner beauty. Unfortunately, Giovanni fails to do this and lets her go her own way. His deeds can be considered as those of a coward, more



concerned with his lust. Now, we can see that Beatrice as a tragic hero who has suffered from male domination in her world. Hawthorne puts her in a different light; she is willing to sacrifice herself in Rappacini's experiment as a noble way to free herself from the domination of men. In short, we can conclude that her death is more meaningful if both men (Rappacini and Giovanni) understood. Beatrice takes this way to bring women to a higher existence in society.

### **Hawthorne's Women and Radical Feminism**

The concept of radical feminism a concept which stronger emphasizes the oppression over women due to patriarchy. It analyzes the authority and power that seems to presuppose a model of domination within patriarchal oppression. This study has set out to examine the concept of radical feminism is used to analyze Nathaniel Hawthorne's short stories through the use of concepts like "death as a triumph". These concepts are applied to reinforce or challenge the female characters under patriarchal oppression as practised in his tales.

The representation of female characters as the docile, submissive, subjugation has been challenged and given a new perspective by Nathaniel Hawthorne as strong, capable and daring individuals in his tales. The result of this study reveal radical feminist's key concepts are used to depict patriarchal oppression, especially authority and power. Nathaniel Hawthorne demonstrates his female characters such as Georgiana and Beatrice who are totally controlled and dominated by Aylmer's power which forces her to remove her nature (*Birthmark*). Aylmer is a scientist whose "purposes are controlled by human morality". His wife is created to be object in order to pursue his own perfection in science "by creating her as an ideal wife by removing her birthmark". Similarly, Beatrice is oppressed by Rappacini (her father) in *Rappacini's Daughter*. He employs her daughter without considering her feelings in his experiment, "The plants are described as his daughter, "purple gems clustering all over it [that] glowed in the air, and gleamed back again out of the depths of (a marble fountain)." Beatrice likes the plants, is a perfect specimen with an education and intellect that qualifies her to "fill a professor's chair". Both female characters become the object and victim of male obsession in science. They realize their condition under oppression of male. They need a change in their life. Their "death" is a self-decision, a protest against the patriarchal oppression over them. Georgiana decides to participate in her husband's experiment in the laboratory as her protest to tell Aylmer that "she is a typical woman who wants to extricate herself from her husband's control and determination". As stated by Madsen (2000), "the idea that to put another's happiness before one's own was to become a victim, and in some cases this may have been true...but true freedom is found in allowing women to make the decision for them". As Georgiana dies as the result of Aylmer's failure in his experiment, it can be regarded as her own choice to be a woman free from Aylmer's control and determination. Her death shows her oppression and existence under male dominance and can be noted as a "positive value". Through this, Beatrice wants to prompt readers to discern the independence and beauty in her soul. Rappacini, who tries to create Beatrice to be a modern woman extinguishes human nature because he never gives a chance for her to access the outside world and also unable to enjoy her world. Her own decision to sacrifice herself in her father's experiment is her own

reaction to teach Rappacini a lesson that she is typical woman who cannot live under domination of her father. So, the death of both women in *Birthmark* (1843) and *Rappacini's Daughter* (1844) could be representations a triumph for them, because they believe that "death is better than life under domination of men."

The findings too indicate that the above analysis can be an indicator of the women's representation under a patriarchal society as practised in Nathaniel Hawthorne's time, above all in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. On the whole, Nathaniel Hawthorne has resisted portraying his characters as weak, subordinate and submissive females in his writings. He has clearly developed his characters as daring individuals to resist patriarchal practices by conducting "death as a triumph". By doing so, Nathaniel Hawthorne has criticized the iron bar of patriarchal practices in America that existed for years and some still say exists now. He has made readers reflect on the current social and cultural norms, and to challenge, renew and redefine practices which have become part and parcel of women's lives. Patriarchal practices, that have long "shackled" women and subjugated them, have been brought to scrutiny by these stories. Nathaniel Hawthorne links the radical feminists' idea of "freedom or liberation" into perspective and highlights the socially *construed* and constructed gender roles, and the biases that come with them in contrast to the contemporary women who seek independence. In short, Hawthorne through his tales supports the idea of radical feminists' to challenge and liberate women's oppression, domination and exploitation under patriarchy.

### **Conclusion**

As has been analyzed before, the results of analysis was found that Hawthorne demonstrated his female characters were oppressed due to authority and power; as experienced by Georgiana and Beatrice who are mentally oppressed by the abuse of authority of their husbands. Their husbands use their authority for keeping a social status and dominant position in domestic area and society. These female characters become victims of men power around their world. They are used as the objects to pursue men's obsession in science. Georgiana forced to removed her birthmark by Aylmer which brings her demise. It is similar to Beatrice who forced to handle her father's experiment which makes her unable to access her outside world.

All in all, Hawthorne succeeds in reinforcing his women's identity under patriarchal practices as shown in his short stories. He shows how his female characters who appear to be weak, passive and submissive are transformed into strong and daring individuals. This is proven through the "separatism", "death" and "self-reliance" of his women in overcoming their oppressed situations under patriarchal practices. This can be seen in the characterizations of Georgiana and Beatrice. Hawthorne uses these instances to reinforce his women's identity in resisting the patriarchal oppression in society. The radical feminist asserts "a true feminist would applaud their initiative".

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