山东师范大学
硕士学位论文

论文题目  An Ecofeminist Reading of Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*

霍桑《红字》的生态女性主义解读

学科专业名称  英语语言文学
申请人姓名  景小丽
指导教师  张京生 教授
论文提交时间  2011 年 6 月 8 日
山东师范大学

硕士学位论文

论文题目：An Ecofeminist Reading of Hawthorne’s
The Scarlet Letter
霍桑《红字》的生态女性主义解读

学科专业名称    英语语言文学
申请人姓名      景小丽
指导教师        张京生 教授
论文提交时间    2011年6月8日
An Ecofeminist Reading of Hawthorne's
The Scarlet Letter

By Jing Xiaoli
Supervisor: Prof. Zhang Jingsheng

A
Thesis
Submitted to
the English Department
of the Foreign Language School
in Candidacy for the Master’s Degree of Arts

Shandong Normal University
Ji’nan, Shandong, China
June, 2011
独 创 声 明

本人声明所呈交的学位论文是本人在导师指导下进行的研究工作及取得的研究成果。据我所知，除了文中特别加以标注和致谢的地方外，论文中不包含其他人已经发表或撰写过的研究成果，也不包含为获得__________（注：如没有其他需要特别声明的，本栏可空）或其他教育机构的学位或证书使用过的材料。与我一同工作的同志对本研究所做的任何贡献均已在论文中作了明确的说明并表示谢意。

学位论文作者签名:  导师签名:  

学位论文版权使用授权书

本学位论文作者完全了解______学校______有关保留、使用学位论文的规定，有权保留并向国家有关部门或机构送交论文的复印件和磁盘，允许论文被查阅和借阅。本人授权______学校______可以将学位论文的全部或部分内容编入有关数据库进行检索，可以采用影印、缩印或扫描等复制手段保存、汇编学位论文。（保密的学位论文在解密后适用本授权书）

学位论文作者签名:  导师签名:  

签字日期：2011年6月8日  签字日期：2011年6月8日
Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... i
摘要 ............................................................................................................................. iii

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter One Theory of Ecofeminism ........................................................................ 7
  1.1 The Rise and Development of Ecofeminism .................................................... 7
  1.2 The Connotation and Basic Theory of Ecofeminism ....................................... 9
  1.3 The Ecofeminist Literary Criticism ................................................................. 13

Chapter Two The Formation of Hawthorne’s Ecofeminist Consciousness ............ 15
  2.1 Hawthorne’s Affinity with Women ................................................................. 15
  2.2 Hawthorne’s Affinity with Nature ................................................................. 17
  2.3 Hawthorne’s Accusation of Society ............................................................... 19

Chapter Three Ecofeminism Embodied in The Scarlet Letter ................................. 25
  3.1 The Interconnection between Women and Nature .......................................... 25
    3.1.1 Hester’s Experience with Seasonal Change ........................................... 27
    3.1.2 Nature and Pearl ................................................................................... 32
  3.2 Oppression to Women and Nature from Patriarchy ....................................... 35
    3.2.1 Men’s Subjugation to Nature ................................................................ 36
    3.2.2 Men’s Subjugation to Women ............................................................... 40
    3.2.3 Nature and Witch Hunts ...................................................................... 42

Chapter Four Longing for a Harmonious Relationship among Women, Nature and Men ...................................................................................................................... 45
  4.1 The Ideal Relation among Nature, Women and Men ....................................... 45
  4.2 The Ideal Relation between Nature and Men ................................................... 48

Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 53

Bibliography ............................................................................................................... 55

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................... 60

Publications ................................................................................................................. 61
Abstract

Nathaniel Hawthorne is one of the most influential writers in American literature in 19th century. His creation mainly takes New England of Colonial America as the background, reflecting the social reality of the day. *The Scarlet Letter* shows Hawthorne, the literary artist, at his best. Hawthorne sets the novel in the 17th century, depicting the cruelty of the Puritanism and its killing of human nature. With the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850, Nathaniel Hawthorne became famous as the greatest writer living then in the United States and his reputation as a major American author has been on the increase ever since. So more and more scholars are studying the novel from different angles. Ecofeminism is a school of thought arising in the 1970s, which combines ecology and feminism. It came into the field of literature in the 1990s. Ecofeminism draws on the approaches of ecological criticism and feminist criticism, which concerns the relation between nature and female. It holds that the men’s domination over women is closely related to men’s domination over nature. The ends of ecofeminism are to deconstruct anthropocentrism and advocate building a kind of harmonious relationship between human beings and nature. The thesis consists of six parts trying to have an ecofeminist reading of *The Scarlet Letter* from the perspective of ecofeminism.

Introduction mainly introduces Hawthorne’s literary achievement, his status in the history of literature, the content of *The Scarlet Letter*, and researches on the novel both at home and abroad. Then put forward the central argument of the thesis.

Chapter One mainly summarizes the theory of ecofeminism. By summarizing the background, the development, the connotation, the characteristics, and the significance of ecofeminism, I will provide the theoretical foundation for my thesis.

Chapter Two analyzes the reasons of the formation of Hawthorne’s ecofeminist consciousness. The life experience of Hawthorne’s mother and the influence that his wife has on him make Hawthorne ponder the women’s marginal status in the patriarchal society. And Hawthorne’s family history, his political sufferings and
social reality stimulate him to accuse the cruelty and harshness of puritan society.

Chapter Three mainly analyzes the ecofeminism embodied in *The Scarlet Letter* from two aspects. Women and nature are closely interconnected: Hester’s four periods of life is just like the four seasons of a year. Incompatible with the puritan society, Pearl maintains a harmonious relationship with nature. In the patriarchal society with the prevailing Puritanism, nature is exploited and destroyed by men. In the meanwhile, an analysis of the protagonist Hester’s marginal status because of the “adultery” and Mistress Hibbins’ involvement in “witch hunt” case show men’s domination over women and nature are closely associated.

Chapter Four analyzes Hawthorne’s ideal expectation of a harmonious world in the future, which is to realize the harmony among male, female and nature. Hawthorne draws a vivid picture for us—human beings are living in harmony with nature. Nature is the refuge and the source of power for women. Man can obtain self-confirmation and salvation in nature, and men and women can get along with each other equally in nature.

The conclusion part further summarizes the ecofeminism embodied in *The Scarlet Letter* through the analysis of above chapters.

**Key words:** ecofeminism; nature; female; patriarchy; harmony; *The Scarlet Letter*
摘要

纳撒尼尔·霍桑是 19 世纪美国文学史上最具影响力的作家之一。他的创作多以美国殖民地时期的新英格兰为背景，反映当时的社会现实。小说《红字》能展现出霍桑这位文学艺术家的天赋。《红字》的故事背景设置在十七世纪，描写了清教主义的残酷和它对人性的扼杀。随着 1850 年《红字》的出版，纳撒尼尔·霍桑成为了当时美国最知名最伟大的作家。从那时起，这位美国主流作家的呼声越来越高。从不同角度研究《红字》的学者也越来越多。生态女性主义是 20 世纪 70 年代产生的一种将生态学和女性主义想结合的思想流派，在 20 世纪 90 年代进入文学流域。它借鉴生态批评和女性批评的方法，它关心的核心问题是自然与女性的联系。它认为男性对女性的压迫和人类对自然的压迫是紧密联系在一起的，它的目的是解构人类中心主义，提倡建立一种人和自然之间和谐相处的关系。本文分六个部分试运用生态女性主义理论对《红字》进行解读。

引言部分主要对霍桑的文学成就和在文学史上的地位，《红字》的内容以及国内外研究现状做简单介绍，从而提出本论文的中心论题。

第一章主要概述生态女性主义理论。通过对这一理论的产生背景、发展、内涵、特征和意义等进行概述，为本论文提供理论基础。

第二章分析了霍桑生态女性主义意识形成的原因。霍桑妈妈的生活经历，他妻子对他的影响，使他开始沉思父权制社会下女性的边缘化地位。他的家庭的历史，政治遭遇和社会现实促使他控告清教社会的残忍和严厉。

第三章主要从两方面分析了红字所体现的生态女性主义意识：女性和自然紧密联系在一起：海斯特的生活经历就像大自然中四个季节的变化。与清教社会格格不入的珠儿却与自然和谐共处；在以清教主义盛行的父权制社会中，自然遭到男性的破坏和蹂躏。同时通过分析女主人公海斯特因为“通奸罪”处于社会的边缘化地位，西宾斯太太卷入“猎杀女巫”的案件，说明人类对自然的压迫和男性对女性的压迫也是紧密联系在一起的。

第四章探析了霍桑对未来和谐世界的美好期望，那就是实现男性、女性、自然三者之间的和谐。霍桑给我们描述了一幅人和自然和谐相处的画面，大自然是女性的避难所和力量的源泉，男性也在自然中得到自我认定和救赎，男性和女性
在自然中能够平等相处。

结论部分对《红字》以上章节的分析做出总结，对小说中体现的生态女性主义思想做进一步归纳。

关键词：生态女性主义；自然；女性；父权制社会；和谐；红字
Introduction

Nathaniel Hawthorne is one of the important pioneers of romantic novel and psychoanalytic novel in American literature in 19th century. His creation mainly takes the New England of the colonial period in the United States as the background, reflecting the social reality of the day. On the methods of creation, he is good at applying the romantic imagination, symbolic implication, the massive subjective psychological analysis to highlight the theme, reveal the characters’ inner world and simultaneously also displays the obscurity of the mysticism.

He attempted to write novels in the 1830s’. Then he wrote *Mosses from an Old Manse, The House of the Seven Gables, The Blithedale Romance, The Marble Faun*, etc. Two myth collections of his works are: *a Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys* and *Tanglewood Tales for Girls and Boys*. Hawthorne was accorded due recognition by many of his contemporary men of letters and his important place in American literature is fully recognized. He changed Herman Melville original scheme for his *Moby Dick*, and Herman Melville called Hawthorne “the largest brain with the largest heart”. The Jamesian psychological realism may have taken its cue from Hawthorne’s soul-searching works. In this century William Faulkner and some Gothic novelists clearly showed their indebtedness to him. If Hawthorne’s reputation is still rising, it is indeed as it should be. As Henry James put it, “Hawthorne’s work will remain… Among the men of imagination he will always have his niche.”(James, 1902: 183)

With the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850, he became the most greatest writer in the United States and his reputation as a major American author has been on the increase ever since. And *The Scarlet Letter* shows Hawthorne, the literary artist, at his best. It is not only because of the creative symbols, ambiguous art, but also because of Hawthorne’s psychological seriousness, structural unity and poetic languages that make his novels stand out. Henry James sets a high value on *The Scarlet Letter*, “In fact, the Publication of *The Scarlet Letter* was in the United States a literary event of the first importance. The book was the finest piece of imaginative
writing yet put forth in the country. There was a conscious of this in the welcome that was given it—a satisfaction in the idea of America having produced a novel that belonged to literature, and to the forefront of it. Something might at least be sent to Europe as exquisite in quality as anything that had been received, and the best of it was that the thing was absolutely American, it belonged to the soil, to the air, it came out of the very Heart of New England.” (James, 1902: 12)

In *The Scarlet Letter* all elements of Hawthorne’s thinking and aesthetics seem to find an adequate expression. The story takes place in Boston in the 17th century when Puritanism was very powerful and almost influenced every aspect of people’s life. The protagonist of the novel Hester Prynne follows her husband, an aging and ugly English scholar who is dehumanized by a life of abstruse studying, emigrating from Britain to New England that is still a colony of Britain. Unfortunately, her husband is captured by the Indians on their way to the destination. So Hester comes to New England alone waiting for her husband. Before long word comes that Hester’s husband has been lost at sea. The sharp contrast of image, the disposition and the pursuit between Hester and her husband shows their marriage is just a formality, not to mention true love. So at that time Hester falls in love with a brilliant minister Arthur Dimmesdale and gives birth to a baby, which is against the doctrine of the Puritanism and will be punished. So on a summer morning in the puritan town of Boston, Hester stands on the scaffold holding her illicit child as a humiliation of a sinner for her adultery, wearing a scarlet letter A as a sign of shame. When demanded and cajoled to name the adulterer, Hester keeps silent and leaves Arthur Dimmesdale anonymous in the affair. Just at that time, Hester’s husband appears and he is bewildered to see her in pillory. Determined to find out who is the adulterer, Hester’s husband disguises himself as a physician and gives himself a name “Roger Chillingworth”. When Hester returns to prison, he visits her and warns her not to reveal his real identity and pledges to devote himself to revenging on the adulterer. Refusing to confess his sin to the public, Dimmesdale suffers from shame and compunction physically, developing a serious heart condition. In the meanwhile, Chillingworth tries all means to torment the minister. Dimmesdale cannot do anything
but banish himself from the community. But Hester is able to reconstruct her life and wins a moral victory. Shunned by the community, she earns her living by sewing and embroidering, winning respect and admiration by resuming charitable work and performing good deeds to villagers who had a prejudice against her before. The torture Dimmesdale suffers from makes Hester realize that she should reveal the true identity of Chillingworth to him. Then she makes the decision to flee to Europe together with Dimmesdale. They agree to find a ship that is due to sail after Dimmesdale gives his last sermon. Unexpectedly, on the scaffold the minister confesses his sin and dies in the arms of Hester. There being no purpose for living except for revenge, Chillingworth dies a year later, leaving a large amount of money to Pearl. Afterwards Pearl is said to have been married to an aristocrat of England. When Hester passes away many years later, she is buried next to the Dimmesdale.

As the masterpiece of Hawthorne’s, The Scarlet Letter has aroused widespread concern since its publication in 1850, which marks a great breakthrough in the creation of novel in America because of its deep theme, rich imagination and the unique way of writing. From the publication to now, a lot of critics at home and abroad do many researches on the novel and illustrate it from different angles.

In the history of American literature, the critical studies on The Scarlet Letter can be divided into several stages, just as Rita K. Gollin put it in his “Nathaniel Hawthorne”: before twentieth century, early reviewers read the novel as a moral book, as an allegory; in the early stage of twentieth-century, importance is attached to the Puritanism revealed in the novel and Hawthorne’s attitude to it; in the middle of twentieth-century new critics concentrated on the symbolism and the organic unity of the novel; more recently, poststructuralists feminists and new literary historians have studied Hawthorne. Reader-response theorists show how Hawthorne’s texts “create” his readers, semioticians examine such significance as The Scarlet Letter: Deconstructionists read his texts as hieroglyphs that resist final interpretation; and his conception of romance and his theoretical performance are reassessed (Rita, 1994: 2212). And the critics of different periods speak highly of the novel. An early twentieth century critic E. A. Duyckinck labeled the novel “a psychological romance”
and inferred that there was “no truer product of the American soil” than Hawthorne (Harris, 1985: 269). Carl Van Doren, a renowned American critic, editor, and biographer interpreted how the themes of the novel were reflected and Hawthorne’s attitude towards Puritanism. Richard Chase put an emphasis on the symbolism in the novel and gave a detailed analysis. In the 1930s, Neal Frank Doubleday first explored the feminist theme of the novel. Since then, many other critics began to do research on the novel from this aspect. Without these researches, studying the novel would be an incomplete experience.

Since Shi Heng’s translation of The Scarlet Letter appeared in the 1950s, scholars and critics in China show an increasing interest in his works. Over the years a number of biographical and critical studies have been written, and almost all aspects of his life and work have been treated with meticulous care, which testimonies Hawthorne’s influence and permanence. The studies of The Scarlet Letter can be roughly divided into four categories. Firstly, some scholars illustrate how the author’s experience and life affect his creating in his novel. It is thought that sin will get punished, one way or another. As a matter of fact, Hawthorne’s thought that his family’s fortunes have to do with the sins of his ancestors’ echoes his creation of sin and guilty (Chang Yaoxin, 2006: 72). Secondly, many critics diverse the themes from different aspects. Some critics think the novel focuses on the scapegoat motif, whereas other critics analyze the theme of loneliness in The Scarlet Letter by representing different types of lonely characters of the novel. Some scholars also present the theme that the novel accuses the cruel Puritanism’s killing on human nature by comparing the novel with the novel The Wuthering Heights (Wu Yong, 2001: 34-35). Thirdly, profound researches have been made of the writing techniques. For example, psychological description, allegory and irony, ambiguity and symbolism, of which symbolism merits particular mention. The symbolic meaning of the scarlet letter A develops gradually as Hester’s relationship with her fellowmen changes. “A” first appears as a symbol of shame, “Adultery”, but then its meaning changes into “Able” when Hester provides her fellow villagers with selfless help and makes her living by sewing and embroidering. At the end of the story, “A” appearing in the sky signifies “Angel”, and so forth.
Fourthly, some critics apply diverse critical theories to interpret the novel, including archetypal criticism, feminism, Freudian Psychoanalysis, Semiotic Theories and Lacan’s theories, etc. Some scholars make a detailed analysis of the heroine’s marriage, love and relationship with society from the perspective of women’s reading and feminist critical theory; some scholars illustrate Hawthorne’s potential feminist consciousness from the transformation of the heroine Hester’s status: from “marginal” status gradually to the “subjective” status; and some scholars reveal this idea from the point of view of humanity by exploring the authoritarian rule of Puritan, personal struggle in freedom and the authority, as well as the development of humanity of the protagonist under the suppression. In the recent years, eco-criticism is also adapted to expose the ecological crisis of nature. It points out that not only human civilization does causes severe unbalance of nature, but also the root of nature’s crisis—men’s spiritual crisis is the deeper crisis. The best way to solve the two kinds of crisis is to build a harmonious relationship between man and nature. And only in this way can men’s spiritual crisis be solved.

To draw a conclusion, all kinds of studies of the novel are like flowers blooming in a riot of color, which lay a foundation for further researches on the novel. However, since the mid of the 1990s, due to the increasingly serious environmental problems and magnificent ecological thinking all over the world, the studies that explore ecological literary criticism concerning the relationship between literature and the natural environment are also gradually being warmed up and become a trend in the field of interdisciplinary research. Driven by the prosperity of ecological literature and research, the sustainable development of feminist thought as well as literature and its “external” research trends, ecofeminism comes into being as a new wave of literary research and criticism. The ecofeminism is not a genre of the traditional, single feminism or ecology, but the product of various literary genres concerning about women’s social status, and the development of civilization. It is an immature literary theory, or even we can say that it has not cut into the literature successfully from the cultural field and has not formed a complete theoretical system. Secondly, eco-feminist criticism is a relatively new theory. It wasn’t introduced by Chinese
scholars Cao Nanyan and Liu Bing until the mid of the 1990s. And they summarized and introduced different thoughts of various schools and their representative works were almost from a philosophical point of view. Thus, there are many theoretical studies on *The Scarlet Letter*, but the research study combining with the theory of ecofeminism is relatively rare. Thus, to have an ecofeminist reading of *The Scarlet Letter* is a new starting point and perspective in the field of literary criticism, which has an important color of the era. At the same time to re-interpret the traditional literary works from the perspective of women and nature will undoubtedly have a new revolutionary significance and plays an important part in promoting the development and research of ecofeminist works of the later periods.
Chapter One Theory of Ecofeminism

Ecofeminist literary criticism is a kind of emerging theory and rhetorical criticism, which links nature and women for the first time and carries on literary criticism from the dual perspective of gender and environment. It taps and represents the destiny and position of nature and women from the literary works, causing nature and women to shift from “being absent” to “present” and gradually extricates the “marginalized” and “the other” status. Not only the literary criticism does make the literary study touch women ignored by men, but also it touches nature neglected by human beings. Compared with radical feminism and single ecological criticism, ecofeminism is a theoretical breakthrough that combines different disciplines. As Greta Gaard puts it, ecofeminism is a theory that “has evolved from various fields of feminist inquiry and activism: peace movements, labor movements, women’s health care, and the anti-nuclear, environmental and animal liberation movements” (Gaard, 1993: 1).

1.1 The Rise and Development of Ecofeminism

As a school of cultural and literary theory, ecofeminism is striking in the 1990s. However, the theoretical foundation of Ecofeminism can be traced back to the works of French women writers of the 1970s’. Since the 1960s, the relationship between environment and society, nature and man has become a highlight in the field of academic study with the ecological crisis becoming an increasing problem. And a series of new discipline emerges one after another to seek the origin of the environmental deterioration and ecological crisis in order to explore the human civilization and sustainable development of human society. Under the background, American woman ecological ideologist Rachel Carson in her Silent Spring declaimed against the degradation of our environment man caused to nature. Her prediction of
agricultural pesticide once received the related department’s attack but at the same
time she made people shocked and realize the abusive use of chemical substances in
agriculture would lead to pollution. *Silent Spring* urges people to be aware of the
importance of protecting the environment. It was the French feminist Francoise
d‘Eaubonne that firstly put forward the term “ecofeminism” in her book *La
Feminisme ou la mort* in 1974. She combined the thought of feminism and ecologism
and pointed out the affinity of nature and women. In 1978, she published another
work *Ecologie Feminism: Revolution ou Mutation*, which pointed out the earth and
female also suffered from the neglect of society and the solution was that female and
nature should unite as one to save themselves and the earth. Thus, as a new theory
ecofeminism emerges as required.

The distinguished proponents of ecofeminism are: Susan Griffin, Starhawk,
Vandana Shiva, Carolyn Merchant, Dorothy Dinnerstein, Karren J. Warren, Val
Plumwood and Charlene Spretnak, etc. Susan Griffin in *Woman and Nature: The
Roaring Inside He* stresses the value of nature and women and illustrates that women
are naturally and closely associated with nature. Starhawk believes that women can
understand the identity of nature through their unique experience, such as the
menstruation, being pregnant, giving birth to a baby and so on. Vandana Shiva
advocates nature and females are victims in the patriarchal society and women
transfers from victims to the protectors in the furnace of green revolution. Carolyn
Merchant directly targets the western patriarchal society in *The Death of Nature*,
considering the male-dominated mechanical world outlook has killed organic views of
nature and deprived women’s power of knowledge. Dorothy Dinnerstein thinks only
by eliminating the traditional western binary can protect women and nature from
being oppressed. Karren J. Warren in her representative work *Ecofeminism: Women,
Culture, Nature* systematically expounds the conceptual framework of western
patriarchal domination, explicitly pointing out that patriarchy hierarchy, the
hierarchical system, binary opposition are the origins of the exploitation of nature and
women. Aiming at recognition and depreciation of perception and rationalism in
western traditional society, Val Plumwood proposes to criticize the domination from
rationalism theoretically by applying the criticism of epistemology. Charlene Spretnak further develops the ecofeminism by calling for “radical nonduality” in *The Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature, and Place in a Hypemodern World*, and she gives a different definition of body, nature and place and illustrates them further.

In 1990s’, some ecofeminists began to conduct the study and researches on the issues of environment and gender from the literary perspective. With the research of ecofeminism involved in literature firstly in America, a new critic theory comes into being.(Garrd, 1993: 1-13). Ecofeminists regard *Silent Spring* as the first literary text. Afterwards, ecofeminism involved into the region of literature from the environmental field, producing unprecedented influence and charm and attracting numerous academic attentions. Thus it quickly spreads to Europe and other countries. So the theory of ecofeminism gradually develops and is constantly improved and applied.

### 1.2 The Connotation and Basic Theory of Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is not the traditional, single feminism or school of ecology, but the outcome of various literary genres concerned about the social status of women and the development of ecological civilization. In 1980, Ynestra King developed the concept in her 1989 essay “Healing the Wounds: Feminism, Ecology, and Nature/Culture Dualism”,

“The ecological crisis is related to the systems of hatred of all that is natural and female by the white, male western formulators of philosophy, technology and death inventions. I content with the systematic denigration of working-class people and people of color, women, and animals are all connected to the basic dualism that lies at the root of western civilization. But this mindset of hierarchy originates within human society, its material roots in the domination of human by human, particularly women by men. Although I cannot speak for the liberation struggles of people of color, I believe that the goals of feminism, ecology, and movements against racism and for
the survival of indigenous peoples are internally related; they must be understood and pursued together in a worldwide, genuinely profile, movement” (King, 1989: 353)

As a new theory, it is difficult to make a specific definition of ecofeminism, because ecofeminism has many different aspects. But “all ecofeminists agree that there are important connections between the unjustified dominations of women and nature” (Warren, 2000: 21). Therefore, ecofeminism is just what the name implies: it is a new trend of literary criticism that combines ecological consciousness and feminism. It opposes the traditional anthropocentrism and androcentrism, repudiates male chauvinist cultural values, compliments women’s good essence of being close to nature, calls for equality between the sexes, and asserts the idea that human being can subdue the nature is wrong. In accordance with what Warren defines the ecofeminism, there are five basic characterizations: “(1) there are important interconnections among the unjustified dominations of women, other human Others (such as women, people of color, children, and the poor), and nonhuman nature (referring to nonhuman animals, plants, and ecosystems); (2) understanding the nature of these interconnections is important to an adequate understanding of and solutions to these unjustified dominations; (3) feminist philosophy should include ecofeminist insights into women—other human Others—nature interconnections; (4) solutions to gender issues should include ecofeminist insights into women—other human Others—nature connections; and, (5) solutions to environmental problems should include ecofeminist insights into women—other human Others—nature interconnections.” (Warren, 2000: 43) Besides, there are four main principles of ecofeminism as follows: Firstly, the dominations over women and nature are closely connected dialectically; Secondly, patriarchy’s domination is the origin of both gender oppression and environmental degradation, which must be resisted on all levels; Thirdly, we must keep the preservation of the diversity of species; Fourthly, we must eliminate dualistic thinking because it distinguishes culture and nature, especially supports domination.

Ecofeminists argue that the subjugation of women and the subjugation of nature rise from the same origin. In the history of the development of western civilization, nature is regarded as otherness that has no right to speak and is deemed to be
conquered and ruled. Nature is forced to become the object of human exploitation and serves human beings. However, men’s need is always running counter to the need of nature itself. Women’s status in the patriarchal society is similar to nature’s status in human society: they are compelled to keep silent and to be the second-class citizens. Not only the establishment of modern western industrial civilization does add up the oppression to nature, but in the meanwhile it deepens the oppression to women as well. So when women are united to revolt against the destruction and ravage to nature, they are naturally aware that man’s domination plays a similar role in the oppression to nature and them. When women fight for their liberation, they also make it their business to save the earth, because the outlet for their liberation is the same. So ecofeminists keep their eyes on serious damage to the ecological environment, such as the disappearance of forests, air pollution, and water pollution and so on. They suggest all forms of rape to the earth have become a metaphor, just like indecent assault on women on one pretext or another. Man’s plundering of natural resources is interrelated with man’s insult to women, and the origin of their oppression is the patriarchal oppressive conceptual framework in western culture. The patriarchal oppressive conceptual framework has three main features: hierarchical thinking, value dualism and the logic of domination. Hierarchical thinking, that is “‘up-down’ thinking, which attributes greater value to that which is higher, or up, than to that which is lower, or down. It may put men up and women down, white up and people of color down, culture up and nature down, minds up and bodies down. By attributing greater value to that which is higher, the up-down organization of reality serves to legitimate inequality ‘when, in fact, prior to the metaphor of up-down one would have said only that there existed diversity’.”(Warren, 2000: 46) Value dualism is the concrete representation of hierarchy giving higher status to “male”, “white”, “rational” and “culture” to “female”, “black”, “emotional” and “nature”. The logic of domination involves a ‘value system’ that allows the justification of subordination, usually through a feature that one party (the dominate) will possess that the other may not (Warren, 2000: 150). So, the patriarchal oppressive conceptual framework leads to the dominations over women and nature being closely connected.
Ecofeminism probes into the interconnection between nature and women from different aspects. By analyzing the relationship of ecofeminism and other strands of feminism, Warren summarizes that women and nature are intimately related and further expands the association to eight perspectives: historical, conceptual, symbolic, epistemological, political, ethical and theoretical. Firstly, from the perspective of women’s natural gender, the women’s biological roles are similar to the earth’s mother role in the process of creating things and lives. Women can comprehend the identity of human beings and nature through their own unique experience, for example, menstruation, pregnancy, bearing and rearing. However, men cannot do this. Therefore, women can get closer to nature than men and they are the best spokespersons of nature. This kind of connection should be displayed. Secondly, from women’s social gender, women’s feminine quality is the product of socialization or the result of adapting to culture. Women can get easier access to nature by performing their social roles. What’s more, their connection is constructed by society and strengthened by the ideology. Carolyn Merchant holds the view that the connection between women and nature has a long history, and the association survives with the development of culture, language and history.

Under the circumstance where nature suffers from relentless devastation and women encounter heartless oppression, we should advocate mutual concern between human beings and nature, men and women. The mutual concern is a kind of equal relationship, which requires both sides involved exchange roles. Just like men should realize women need to be cared, and human beings should also be aware of the necessity of caring nature while extorting the resources from nature. Besides, ecofeminism adheres to the view of the ecology holism, whose staring point and ultimate goal is to protect the entirety of eco-benefits. From the perspective of holism, Ecofeminism calls the entire world “chain of universe”, believing everything is interconnected and interactional and human beings are only a small part of “chain of universe”, which means human beings are neither above nature nor outside of nature, but in nature. So human beings should build and maintain a harmonious relationship with nature.
1.3 The Ecofeminist Literary Criticism

As a theoretical union of the feminist and ecological movements, ecofeminist literary criticism has grown into a literary force since the 1970s. Until the 1990s, with the researches of ecofeminism involved in the region of literature, ecofeminist literary criticism comes into being. It offers a double angle to the literary criticism, showing concern to ecological crisis and futures of human beings from the perspective of ecology and feminism. Ecofeminist literary criticism does not seek only “a literature that meets equally the criteria of ecological and feminist sophistication,” but work “that to some extent embodies both dimensions.”(Warren, 2000: 253) It carries on literary criticism from the multiple perspectives, such as nature, environment, gender and so on. It puts literary criticism in the context of sex discrimination and ecological crisis and combines the factors of gender, literature, nature and culture, opposing species discrimination and sex discrimination, questioning and deconstructing the binary concept that exists in western culture, and excoriating anthropocentrism and the patriarchy-centered culture to make literary creation by literary study. Thus ecofeminist literary criticism can give new consideration and criticism to the whole human culture, change “the other” and “marginal” status of women and nature, and awaken people’s ecological consciousness and consciousness of equality between men and women with the aim to build a harmonious society.

Literature and literary criticism are mutually independent and mutually promoted. According to Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy, ecofeminist literary criticism should involve reading literary texts through the lens of ecofeminist theory and practice and asking such questions as:

What previously unnoticed elements of a literary text are made visible, or even foregrounded, when one reads from an ecofeminist perspective? Can this perspective tell literary critics anything new about a text in terms of the traditional elements of style and structure, metaphor and narrative, form and content? How might an ecofeminist perspective enhance explorations of connections and differences among
“characters” in a text between humans and animals, between culture and nature, and across human differences of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation—connections and differences that affect our relationship with nature and with each other (Gaard & Murphy, 1998: 7).

Restoring nature literature and feminist literary heritage, ecofeminist literary criticism revalues literary classics, mining once buried or neglected writers and works, affirms and praises the ecological consciousness, the ecological wisdom and feminist consciousness, analyzes and repudiates sexual discrimination and species discrimination embodied in the literary works so that we can rewrite the history of literature, reconstruct literary classics and construct cross-interactional multicultural criticism on the basis. It is known that ecofeminist literary criticism uses the science of ecology, the ecological ethics and its corresponding knowledge of rational thinking and logic for reference. An important goal of ecofeminist literary criticism is to construct cross-interactional multicultural criticism on the basis of ecological philosophy, ecological ethics and feminist theory. So in the process of theoretical transformation that emphasizes wholeness, harmony, interactivity and multi-culture, ecofeminist literary criticism is playing an important and unique role. Its ethical value is reflected in the ecological and social fields. For one thing it recognizes that non-human beings (such as animal and plants, rivers and mountains, and other natural resources) have the equal moral status as human race, for the other thing it opposes all forms of social discrimination (such as racism, class discrimination doctrine, age discrimination, imperialism, etc.) and takes care of the marginalized vulnerable groups (such as women, blacks, etc.), which is on behalf of the interests of the bottom. So with its literary form ecofeminism assumes the mission of redemption of justice and the room for honest speaking and provides the spiritual resources for the construction of new ecological ethics. With increasingly serious environmental crisis and there being defects of the existing ecological wisdom, the ecofeminist literary criticism makes the traditional literary criticism more directional and have the splendid colors of the time.
Chapter Two The Formation of Hawthorne’s Ecofeminist Consciousness

The inspiration of literary works usually comes from the writer’s life experience and works is like a mirror which echoes the thoughts of a writer, and a writer has to draw on his imagination and experience. If we compare the literary work to a person, the life experience of the writer is its external body, and his thoughts constitute its soul. Both of them are indispensable for a writer. There is no exception to Nathaniel Hawthorne. So, when it comes to The Scarlet Letter, it is of vital importance that Hawthorne’s personal background, especially his special relation with nature and women shouldn’t be ignored to understand his works better.

2.1 Hawthorne’s Affinity with Women

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem in 1804 whose childhood was miserable. When he was only four years old, his father who was a sea captain died of yellow fever on his voyage to Dutch Guiana, leaving Hawthorne’s mother three children under age. His father left them little property because women at that age had no right of inheritance under the law. When word came that Hawthorne’s father was buried under sea, Hawthorne’s mother almost had a physical and mental collapse. Heartbroken as she was, she still assumed the responsibility of taking care of her children. It can illustrate the reason why Hawthorne speaks highly of maternity in The Scarlet Letter. Besides, his mother was discarded by society at that time because of her pregnancy out of wedlock, which was in the scorn of society and despised by people of its day. And Hawthorne’s elder sister Ebe, just as Nina Baym once commended that she became very independent, and she was partly influenced and socialized because she had been exempted from normal social expectations by those entrusted with rearing her. Inspired by his mother’s life experience, Hawthorne
depicted the character Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* who was denied and cast away in the patriarchal society. Pearl, a child of nature, was out of step with the doctrines of puritan society. So, Hawthorne’s decision to devote himself to writing was gradually taken shape from then on and finally put into practice during these years when he was living with his mother. To some extent, Hawthorne’s mother’s life experience and situation made Hawthorne ponder the women’s marginal status in the patriarchal society and show his sympathy for their sufferings and appreciation of the women’s good virtues.

It is Hawthorne’s marriage and his love with Sophia Peabody that matter a lot to his literary imagination and creation. In 1821, they got married and since then Hawthorne’s life and career were improved to a new level. During this period, Hawthorne had harvested the richness of his literary creation. Sophia became Hawthorne’s assistant and critic in his literary career. For three years his wife and he lived in a house called the Old Manse, in Concord, where he wrote the splendid stories in the volume called *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Born in a prominent Salem family, Sophia Peabody and her family members—her mother Mrs. Elizabeth and her sister Mary were active advocates and participants of the feminism. They established schools to let women receive education. Overwhelmed by his wife’s independent and brilliant thought, Hawthorne was greatly influenced by Sophia’s feminist ideas. Besides, Sophia held the view that home was the great arena for women, where she felt completely free and happy. In the summer of 1849, Hawthorne resigned from the customs. The pressure of the political opponent, the difficulty of maintenance of a family, his mother’s dead of illness had almost broken him up. Involved in the complex emotional state, he was supported by Sophia’s will of iron and began to devote himself to the creation of *The Scarlet Letter* in which he transferred the attachment, the respect, and the admiration of his mother and wife to the compliment, mercy and compassion of the character of Hester. At the same time, his harmonious marriage life promoted him to explore imagination, intuition, love and maternity. Hawthorne began to actively participate in the tide of thought, paying attention to women and society. Fortunately, Hawthorne got acquaintance with a well-known
feminist, Margaret Fuller, who was an independent-minded intellectual woman in American literary and cultural history and devoted herself to improving people’s spiritual world. She adhered to the transcendental faith of “self perfection” and proposed the concept of “female temperament” and “sisterhood”. If there hadn’t been the two female characters stimulating Hawthorne, he would not have gained such brilliant achievements in literature.

Hawthorne’s ecofeminist consciousness has close relationship with the social background of that time. America was experiencing a crucial period when *The Scarlet Letter* was written. During the first part of the 19th century, the mass Abolition Movement in United States was well under way. Then a large number of female abolitionists appeared in the northern United States who were gradually awakening to the discriminative and restricted treatment they had suffered from while they fighting for the freedom of the slaves. They began to integrate the cause of the abolition of slavery with the movement aimed at equal rights for women. With the feminist ideas penetrating into the fields of social life, Hawthorne was awaken to the inferior social status of women to that of men and thus showed sympathy for women and began to speak for women.

### 2.2 Hawthorne’s Affinity with Nature

In 1817, Hawthorne left his hometown Salem for Maine where he could receive an education that distinguished from school education. Living in a cabin near Sebago Lake, Hawthorne gradually became fascinated with nature. Every day he reveled in fishing and skating. And he was intoxicated with the activity of hunting in forest and walking along the path to forest. Nature gave Hawthorne the creative passion and inspiration in literary writing. For him, nature was a paradise where he could comfort himself and got relief. So in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne depicted forest as the refuge of the oppressed people in the puritan society. Only in forest could Arthur Dimmesdale and Chillingworth obtain salvation spiritually and being true oneself.
And only in forest could Hester Prynne gain rebirth and power.

When it comes to Hawthorne’s literary achievements, there are several people that have to be mentioned. They are the prominent Transcendentalists of that time: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Bronson Alcott. Hawthorne was greatly influenced by their transcendentalist theory and struck up a very intimate relationship with the latter, and all the three people had played an indispensable role in Hawthorne’s literary career. Transcendentalism has had great influence for centuries extending beyond the literary community to the American people at large. Transcendentalism is literature, philosophy and literary movement that flourished in New England from about 1836 to 1860. It originated among a small group of intellectuals who were reacting against the orthodoxy of Calvinism and the rationalism of the Unitarian Church, developing instead their own faith centering on the divinity of humanity and the natural world. Transcendentalism has four main characteristics: First, Transcendentalists attach great importance to spirit or Oversoul that is omnipresent and omnipotent. It exits in everyone’s heart, through which nature and intuition are connected. Secondly, Transcendentalists think that everything has spirit and nature is the emblem of spirit. God is omnipresent in nature. Nature touches the essence of human soul and stimulates the human inspiration and intuition. And human beings can grasp the truth and nature through intuition. Nature has smoothing and purifying effects on human beings. Besides, the Transcendentalists believe human soul has an intuitive ability to promote the communication and exchange between the individual soul and the Oversoul through intuition to achieve the unity of personal spirit and the universal spirit, that is to say, everyone has the unlimited potential to communicate with God and perfect himself directly through intuition. Thirdly, the Transcendentalists put an emphasis on the importance of individual. “As the regeneration of society could only come about through the regeneration of the individual, his perfection, his self-culture and self-improvements, and not the frenzied effort to get rich, should become the first concern of his life.”(Chang Yaoxin, 2006: 57) During these years, Hawthorne became a productive writer and wrote many great works, such as the tales collected in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846) and *the*
Snow-Image and Other Twice-Told Tales (1851) and Blithedale Romance (1852) that is a fictional treatment of some aspects of the Brook Farm setting, which have doubtlessly become part of the American literary heritage. So the Transcendentalists’ influence on Hawthorne is readily discernible and Hawthorne put the influence into practice.

As Hawthorne’s relationship with the Transcendentalists grew more and more intimate, he participated in the Brook Farm founded by George Ripley with the purpose of creating a utopian microcosm of society that would eventually serve as a model for and inaugurate the social macrocosm. At Brook Farm, the Transcendentalists sought what they had been looking for by physical labor, which was perceived necessary for mental well-being and health. By performing physical tasks, they sought the philosophy of Transcendentalism: individual freedom, the merging of values, ideas, and spiritual matters with physical events, the union of mind and body, spirit and flesh, and the building of the harmonious relationship between human beings and nature. Besides the physical labor, they would get together to relax and discuss literary works and exchange the views of individuals. However, the Utopian community was impractical and proved to be a failure. Although Hawthorne was skeptical of the ultimate goal of Brook Farm, we can find Transcendentalist view of nature is embodied in Hawthorne’s works by reading and analyzing his works.

2.3 Hawthorne’s Accusation of Society

Hawthorne’s accusation of puritan society where men dominate women and nature touches the deepest roots of the oppression over women and nature. In a sense, Hawthorne’s family history prompts him to consider the situation of women and nature in society. Hawthorne was born in a declining Puritan family. There were two ancestors of Hawthorne who played an important role in his works and made his life be full of guilty and regret. One of Hawthorne’s ancestors was William Hathorne, who participated in the trial of the Quakers. Hawthorne’s another ancestor was Judge
Hathorne, who presided the persecution of the Salem witchcraft trials and was cursed by a witch’s husband. To Hawthorne, sin will get punished, one way or another. And in fact, he firmly believed that the decline of his family’s fortunes had to do with the sins of his ancestors. Once he commented his ancestors as follows, “I … hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them … may be now and henceforth removed.” He believed that “the wrong doing of one generation lives into the successive ones,” (Hawthorne, 1999:7) and often wondered if he might have inherited some of their guilt. So it seemed that Hawthorne’s life was hunted by the guilty and misdeeds of his puritan ancestors. He inserted the “w” to the family name to break off the association to his ancestors. He fully realized the misdeeds of his ancestor, which lead him feeling ashamed of the cruelty of his ancestors, the hypocrisy of the Puritanism and showing the sympathy for the persecuted. It is easy to conclude that Hawthorne’s ancestors’ behaviors and his attitude towards his ancestors have influenced his whole life and contribute his creation of his works. The insight of the malpractice of the rule of Puritanism made his works reflect a kind of exposure and criticize the darkness and evil of Puritanism at the core of human life. Therefore it is obvious that he condemned the sin, immorality and inhumanity of Puritanism and puritan society in many of his works. For example, his attitude towards the puritan society and the Puritanism was fully displayed in his masterpiece The Scarlet Letter. Not only does Hawthorne mean to tell a story of sin, but he is concerned with the moral, emotional, and psychological effects or consequences of the sin on the people in general and those main characters in particular as well, so as to show us the tension between society and individuals and the oppression of the man-dominating puritan society over women and nature in the novel.

It is believed that Hawthorne’s political suffering stimulates him to create The Scarlet Letter. His political frustration alerted him to realize the misuse of the sovereign power to get control of people in the puritan society. In 1836 and 1846, he held a position in the customs office as the chief executive officer in Salem. However, he kept a neutral position in politics. “Had it been otherwise-had an active politician
been put in this influential post, to assume the easy task of making head against a Whig Collector, hardly a man of the old corps would have drawn the breath of official life within a month after the exterminating angel had come up the Custom-House steps.” (Hawthorne, 1997:11) In fact, he was fully capable of dissolving the Liberty Party which consisted of some seventy or eighty years old elders on the pretext of frailty in constitution and inefficiency. Instead, he didn’t play the dirty political maneuver. Ironically, when the Liberty Party got the upper hand and won the presidential election, Hawthorne became a victim of the partisan competition and suffered the humiliation of being forced to resign at the zenith of his career, losing his livelihoods. Afterwards, he occupied himself writing the novel *The Scarlet Letter*, which was a mark of his full engagement in the literary creation. Besides, his political suffering brought home to him the evil and darkness of the society. So he engaged in writing and created the protagonist Heater in *The Scarlet Letter* who suffered from the oppression of society and the unfair trial to satirize the hypocrisy and decay of the society that lacked for security and safety and expressed his sympathy for the victims. He also endowed Hester with the mission of revolting the unfair society to present his own political point of view. In a word, Hawthorne’s political experience provided the material, archetype and the creation of character image for his novel.

In addition, the Enlightenment of the 17th century in Europe and French Revolution has a profound influence on Hawthorne’s view of society and individual. The Enlightenment Movement is an intellectual movement that developed in Europe in the 17th century and reached its height in the 18th century. The Enlightenment Movement celebrated reason, equality, science and human being’s ability to perfect themselves and their society. It has some important characteristics: Firstly, the thinkers of Enlightenment stress the importance of reason rather than authority. People enjoy rights of property, life, freedom and pursuit of happiness and so on, which denies the authority of the government or monarchy to deprive the above rights of human beings and opposed to tyranny. Secondly, it protestes against ecclesiastical privilege and vehemently and condemns the church’s persecution of human nature. On the contrary, it advocates Deism and atheism, which puts an
emphasis on the power of knowledge and advocated universal education. Thirdly, the thinkers of Enlightenment propose the political principles of “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity”. Last but not the least, the thinkers of Enlightenment propose we should return to nature. They believe that human reason is the gift god gives to us, not the product of religion or civilization. Therefore, a harmonious relationship should be maintained between human beings and nature.

The 18th-century Enlightenment occupies an important position in the history of the development of Europe, not excepting America. As a writer, Hawthorne concerned himself with affairs of state and was affected inevitably by the essence of the Enlightenment. The French Revolution is the largest bourgeois revolution in the modern history of the world, which destroyed the French feudal autocracy system, shook the feudal order of the whole European continent, established bourgeois political domination, promoted the development of capitalist economy, and spread the democratic progressive ideas of capitalism. Its influence was throughout Europe and the whole world. The French Revolution set an example for the anti-feudal struggle of the whole world, which evoked the resonance and interest of the American people who had just won their independence for less than a century. The famous radical feminist Margaret Fuller, as a foreign correspondent traveled to Europe and sent back articles about the current affairs in Europe in 1846. She even assumed charge of one of the hospitals during the Revolution of 1848 and her husband participated in the war. Inspired by the French Revolution, Emerson began to travel to Europe and got acquaintance with some social activists. In 1848, he also went to Paris to feel the atmosphere of the revolution personally. Hawthorne’s wife Sophia was in an ecstasy of delight with the result of the revolution and declared that “there seems to be a fine fresh air in France just now.” Being in this kind of social environment, influenced by his intimate friends and his beloved wife, Hawthorne couldn’t have been immune to the irresistible trend of revolution. He was eager for a new social order that was against the harsh statement of the Puritanism and struggled for equality and democracy.

Living in a period when capitalism developed rapidly, the social structure was
undergoing great changes and new values were renewing old values, Hawthorne had an implacable hatred for the social evils brought by the development of capitalism and the acquisitive society in which the craving for material things seems never satisfied. He attempted to find a good way to save society. Because Puritanism was stamped on his mind, Hawthorne often thought about and analyzed social phenomenon in the view of Puritanism and he believed the unreasonable phenomena of society came down to an abstract evil. Puritanism is the hidden cultural prototype within the deep of Hawthorne's soul. Therefore, for one thing, he exposed and criticized the cruelty and inhumanity of the puritan rules. For another thing, he penetrated into the latent sinful nature of innermost being based on the “original sin,” “internal corruption” and other concepts of Puritanism and advocated the adoption of confession and purification of the mind to gain salvation. Just as Melville pointed out, “Hawthorne’s enormous power of depicting darkness is due to the impact of ideology of the Calvinist teachings about innate depravity and original sin. There is no person with profound thought could completely get rid of the impact of the thought in one kind or another.”(Melville, 1902: 108) There are many internal factions of Puritanism because it is lack of a unique and unified theology. We select and give a brief explanation of one of the Calvinist party and its beliefs. There are two reasons. Firstly, compared to other theologies, the number of Calvinist puritans is relatively large and the duration of their belief is relatively long. Secondly, the overwhelming majority of initial immigrants to the New England were those puritans who were persecuted because they believed in Calvinism in England. The main feature of Calvinism is its “irresistible grace” doctrine, that is to say, the doctrine of “predestination”. “Predestination” is the illustration of grace, which involves these religious center issues, such as God and followers, the hereafter and this life and so on. Its founders of Calvinism Calvin believed everyone was predestined to be alive or dead, which was the definition he made about “predestination”. His principle of “predestination” mainly includes five major points: the original sin, unconditional election, limited atonement, perseverance of the saints and irresistible grace. People all have original sin, so we need atonement, but not all humankind can gain salvation. Hawthorne’s
belief of original sin can be illustrated by the female character of Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*. In this way, mankind is divided into two parts: rescued and punished. Before people were born, his fate had been predestined by God. All good deeds, reverence, worship or even belief cannot change people’s rescued or punished fate. Belief is the result of God’s choice, not the reason for salvation. If a man is predestined to be the chosen people of God, he must respond to God’s call to make his own behavior and life goals established on the basis of serving to God, thus having a “divine life”. “Unconditional election” is achieved in the name of Christ out of his mere free grace and love regardless of any possible special value of the people who will be saved. “Limited atonement” refers to Christ redemption applies only to the elect, and the non-elect must be tried. If they are found guilty, they need to spend the rest of their life under the wrath of God. “Irresistible grace” means the elect will find God’s saving grace irresistible the very first time it is extended to them, even though the elect themselves don’t need the salvation. God assumes the responsibility to save them. The major points constitute the content of the Puritan ethics, which have the characteristics of secularism, asceticism and utilitarianism. So Hawthorne’s novels permeate with strong Puritan thought because of the influence of Puritanism. In *The Scarlet Letter*, to some extent, his description of sin and evil illustrates the influences that the Calvinist doctrine of “original sin” and total depravity has upon his mind. It can also illustrate Hawthorne’s view that evil and sin can be changed. Hester’s “adultery” with Dimmesdale made her change from “adultery” to “able” and “angel”, completing her salvation. Moreover, Hawthorne revealed the cruelty and evil of Puritanism to expose its oppression on women in the patriarchal society.
Chapter Three Ecofeminism Embodied in *The Scarlet Letter*

In Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, the theory of ecofeminism can be illustrated mainly from two aspects: the connection between women and nature and the oppression to women and nature from patriarchy.

3.1 The Interconnection between Women and Nature

All ecofeminists hold a view that the close interconnection between women and nature has been the focus and concern of ecofeminism. The recognition of the link between women and nature can prove that the origin of the oppression of women and nature are the same. Generally speaking, there are several reasons accounting for the affinity of women and nature in western history.

Firstly, there is the empirical connection between women and nature. In the process of recreation and reproduction, women and the Earth-mother play the same role. According to the Greek myth, all lives on the earth are from the goddess Gaea who has an infinite fertility. The goddess Gaea has been propagating lives on the earth and the earth is respected as the carrier of life. So it is the same with women whose bodies are born to complete the sacred mission to give birth to and nurture new lives, which make women easier approach to nature than men. Secondly, the status of women and nature experienced the same rise and fall in the western history. In the medieval period nature was respected in her richness and diversity, both for her own sake and as a precondition for the survival of all creatures on the earth. Hence, nature was not exploited for the sake of profit, instead, wherever possible, the damage done to nature was healed. At that time due to the agricultural productivity, women’s activity was the mainstay of the agricultural production. Women were experts in the breeding and feeding of farm animals, including not only cows and buffaloes but also pigs, chickens, ducks and goats. And knowledge of the feed value of different fodder species, of food products and species is essential to agriculture in
which women are predominately active. So there is no doubt that women were looked upon in the medieval period. However, as the rise of science and technology, what people sought was the total control of nature and natural process by science and technology, the “civilizing, that is, taming of all “wild” forces of nature for the benefit of man. In the meanwhile, with technology adapted to production, women, as farmers, have remained invisible despite their contribution. For men, nature is by no means an asexual being; it is a woman, an evil, dangerous woman who must be dominated. Man can best maintain domination over nature and women through mind and intellect. They must first rob women and nature of their subjectiveness, that is, their own dignity, their spirituality, and turn them into lifeless, controllable labor. Thirdly, it is Judaeo-christianity that legitimates man’s domination over women and nature. In The Bible, God says to Adam, “Replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have domination over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth”. (Huang Xinhua, 1998: 6) Man is bequeathed the right to dominate nature. Likewise, in The Bible, Eve committed the original sin tempted by the serpent Satan, eating the forbidden fruit of the knowledge tree, which is against the God’s will. Adam also ate the fruit in her persuasion. So it was believed it is Eve’s sin that led to the fall of men. “Because of what you have done, the ground will be under a curse,” God said to Eve. So women are destined to be abused and cursed. In addition, the women’s ancestor Eve was created with a rib taken off from Adam while he was sleeping by God. From the perspective of religion, nature and women have been in the subordinated and inferior position. Last but not the least, the degradation of women and nature are conceptualized. The ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras declares, “Man is the measure of all things”. (Plato, 1956: 157) What he means is that men possess the absolute and unquestionable control of women and nature. The French philosopher Descartes also holds the view that “Humankind is superior to animals and plants” and “Humankind is the master and ruler of nature” (Lewis, 1992: 69). Aristotle thinks that, “women are merely tools” and “They are property at the free proposal of men” (Stiff, 1993: 5). As far as Descartes and Aristotle are concerned, nature is subjected, disciplined, forced into
men’s service. So it can be concluded that women and nature are closely associated with each other.

In Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, the interconnection between women and nature will be interpreted from two aspects: Hester’s life experience with seasonal change, the connection between Pearl and nature.

3.1.1 Hester’s Experience with Seasonal Change

Frye once stated: “These cyclical systems are usually divided into four seasons of the year being the type for four periods of the main phases, the (morning, noon, evening, night), four aspects of the water-cycle (rain, fountains, rivers, sea or snow), four periods of life (youth, maternity, age, death) and the like.” (Frye, 1989: 52) He implied that the experience of a person may have something with the change of seasons: comedy with spring, romance with summer, tragedy with autumn, and despair with winter. And Shelley also links season to women. In his *Ode to The West Wind* he wrote “Each like a corpse within its grave, until Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow”. (Wu Weiren, 2006: 55) The rising wind, linked with the cycle of the seasons, is represented as the outer correspondent to an inner change from apathy to spiritual vitality, which is also paralleled to women or life-giver. Hawthorne also displayed his great talent of applying the technique in his masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter*. The symbolic significance of the seasons sets off the character’s change of mood and psychology.

Just as Shelley said, “If winter comes, can Spring be far behind?” (Wu Weiren, 2006: 58) Spring means that change is on the horizon, representing the overcoming of chilling winter and tempestuousness and the revivification of nature. The new spring is surging life all round-life awakened with overwhelming new forces. The background of *The Scarlet Letter* set in the 17th New England where the rigid Puritanism had far-reaching impact in every facet of life. Under relentless domination of Puritanism, women were deprived of their rights of pursuing true love and should be put in the hands of male characters. According to the Ten Commandments of
Moses, “You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (The Bible, 1995: 111). But in order to pursue her true love, Hester violated the doctrine of Puritanism and committed adultery. In the eyes of puritans, her behavior should be accused and severely punished. So she was forced to put on the scarlet letter A on her breast. Confronted with the questioning of the puritans, if she had told the public the name of her lover, she would have been regarded as a victim not the adulterer and exempted herself from the humiliation and punishment according to what the Governor said. However, she would rather keep her lover anonymous, responding “Never…, and would that I might endure his agony, as well as mine” (Hawthorne, 1997: 64). Besides her deep love with her lover Dimmesdale, her courage of facing the obstacles and humiliation came from her new-born daughter Pearl who was the product of their love. In the literal sense, Pearl means something that is very precious or highly valued. Just as Hawthorne put it in the novel, “as being of great price-purchased with all she had—her mother’s only treasure”(Hawthorne, 1997: 57). As we all know, pearl is the product of grit in the meat of shellfish undergoing a long process of tempering. As the matrix, it will endure intense anguish. And the process is very slow. Pearl, who was the secret unacceptable product of love, brought great pain to Hester, which was similar to the natural formation of pearl. Pearl deserved her mother’s devotion and treasure because Pearl’s birth was at the expense of her mother’s condemnation. But it was just the birth of Pearl that gave Hester the courage to survive continually. Perhaps without Pearl—the bond of the love between Hester and Dimmesdale, Hester would have committed suicide. So the birth of Pearl can be taken as a repay or a celebration of Hester and Dimmesdale’s true love and the coming of “spring”— the rebirth and regeneration of Hester from her past.

Summer is the culmination of life in the seasonal calendar, which also means that a person begins to walk out of the lowest point in his life. When Hester’s love affair with Dimmesdale was disclosed to the public, Hester insisted on fighting against the cruel and hypocritical Puritan society to gain her union with her lover and child.

After Hester suffered from the trial and was punished to wear the letter A on her
breast, she could have chosen to settle down in the other place to avoid people’s prejudice and disdain. On the contrary, she and her daughter settled down in a small thatched cottage on the edge of the forest where they could enjoy the grace of nature. The reason why she didn’t leave the Puritan settlement completely was that she could face her lover though they could not contact with each other freely and openly. She named her daughter “Pearl” to imply that the love between her lover and her was pure and innocent. No matter what she would suffer from, she would never turn to anybody for help. She supported herself and her daughter by her excellent needlework. She firmly believed that “the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul, and work out another purity than that which she had lost, more saint-like; because the result of martyrdom” (Hawthorne, 1997: 61). In order to pursue love and take the responsibility of bringing up her child, she must bear the pressure of the puritan society and prevent Roger Chillingworth from hurting her lover. Though the priest Dimmesdale concealed his sin, he struggled in the pain of conflict between faith and humanity with his remorse and guilty becoming increasingly serious. Besieged with degradation of the spirit and darkness of inner heart, he was terribly upset and painful all day long. But the deeply rooted ideology of patriarchy and man-domination completely ruled his mind, he couldn’t permanently abandon his power, status and honor for love and enjoyed the true happiness of human beings though he endeavored to help Hester to win back the guardianship of Pearl. At this time, Hester assumed endless disgrace and condemnation in order to keep her lover’s honor and status though she was discarded by society. The taboos and commandment of Puritanism couldn’t prevent her from pursuing the pure love. The sin of Hester was just the label stuck by religion. What’s worse, Chillingworth disguised himself as a doctor to harass and penetrated into Dimmesdale’s flimsy heart constantly to take revenge to lead to Dimmesdale’s physical and mental collapse. Finally, Hester decided to tell Dimmesdale Chillingworth’s true identity—her husband with the purpose of extricating her spiritually exhausted lover. Dimmesdale was so frail due to the torture of seven years that he couldn’t enjoy freedom. Hester became the only person who could save him from despair. In the forest where they can be free from the restrictions
of religion and talk with each other heart to heart, Hester suggested that they flee to Europe where nobody knew them, and Dimmesdale accepted the suggestion. It seemed that the family would union together forever and never lived under the shield of shame. If so, it would be the culmination of Hester’s life journey from the lowest point of her life. Europe was to them what the Eden garden was to Adam and Eve where they could immune to sufferings and punishment.

Autumn is the third season of the seasonal calendar, which is associated with sunset, fallen leaves, and old age—all symbols of impending death. Autumn is the dying stage of the seasonal calendar, which parallels the tragedy genre because it is, above all, known for the “fall” or demise of the protagonist.

As a respected priest of the community, Dimmesdale played the role of a saint who served for God and be a message of sender of God. “Never, on New England soil, had stood the man so honored by his mortal brethren as the preacher!” (Hawthorne, 1997: 224) So inevitably, Hester fell in love with him and gave birth to a baby. After the secret was disclosed, he chose to conceal his sin. The indwelling guilty and what Hester had suffered would make him to confess his sin. “More than once, Mr. Dimmesdale had gone into pulpit with a purpose never to come down its steps, until he should have spoken words like the above. More than once, he had cleared his throat, and drawn in the long deep, and tremulous breath, which, when sent forth again, would come a burdened with the black sack of his soul…”(Hawthorne, 1997: 69) Encourage by Hester’s bravery and stimulated by the deeds of Pearl, he was persuaded by Hester into leaving for Europe in the forest. However, the result of Dimmesdale’s choice was surprising. While calling the names of his lover and daughter fair and square, he stood on the scaffold where Hester endured her humiliation and trial with their daughter seven years ago and confessed his sin concealed in his heart for seven years. At that time, he became surprisingly calm and courageous, which manifested that he was loyal to his soul and inclined to pursue human nature. He abandoned hypocrisy and the restrictions of Puritanism in the patriarchal society, emancipating himself from the past anguish. Unexpectedly, he collapsed and died on the scaffold because of the torture of seven years, just like the
glow of sinking sunset or falling leaves through the wind and rain. For Hester and pearl, the ending of him was a tragedy.

Winter is the season that represents darkness, chaos and hopelessness. Winter is a nightmare for the protagonist. With the death of Dimmesdale, Hester and Pearl’s dream that the whole family can get together to enjoy a happy life was crashed. Hester lost an ideal husband, and Pearl lost a loving father. Seven years’ waiting turned out to be a nightmare. Sad and despair, Hester and Pearl went away mysteriously and no real news was received since then. It was guessed that they might go the Old World and lived a happy life there. The ending of the story became mysterious. “Its spell, however, was still potent, and kept the scaffold awful where the poor minister had died, and likewise the cottage by the seashore, where Hester Prynne had dwelt.”(Hawthorne, 1997: 76)

In the New England people were still shocked by the unbelievable fact that the prominent priest Dimmesdale was the sinner who had been regarded as a holy saint and savior to preach for people and to save the lost sheep. And sex was one of the most shunned upon sins in that puritan society in seventeenth-century New England. So people never guessed it was the prominent minister that had committed adultery, which caused the chaos and fuss of people’s belief with the collapse of their spiritual prop.

The psychological process of the protagonist is like the cycle of seasons. The rebirth of new life will conquer the darkness and hopelessness of winter. The technique of cyclical progress was applied by Hawthorne into his writing. After many years of mysterious disappearance, Hester returned back to the puritan settlement with a new duty rather than the previous one where she was punished and humiliated. She came out of the shadow from Dimmesdale’s death and became spiritually stronger. She made full use of her excellent needling skills to support herself and people who was in need of help, trying to integrate herself into society. Hester’s embroidery “was seen on the ruff of the Governor; military men wore it on their scarves, and the minister on his hand; it decked the baby’s little cap; …to embroider the white veil which was to cover the pure blushes of a bride”. (Hawthorne, 1997: 79) Her virtue of
enduring humiliation and taking pleasure in helping people earned her respect, support as well as the praise of people. The symbol of “A” is changed from “Adultery” into “Able”, “Amiable” and even “Angel”. Finally, she removed into her cottage again. She accomplished her salvation with her determination, enthusiasm, and her love for the needed. And Hester gained her rebirth from a sinful woman to a holy prophetess.

Hester’s four periods of life was just like the four seasons of a year, spring with rebirth, summer with culmination, autumn with death, winter with hopelessness and darkness, which is a seasonal cycle. Her emotion was just like the symbolic meaning of different seasons, displaying that nature and women were closely interconnected.

3.1.2 Nature and Pearl

Pearl, just as the name means, represents value and nature. For Hester, Pearl is her only treasure, her only friend and her only companion to help her to purify her soul and save her from Satan’s snare. When Mistress Hibbins asked Hester to go to the forest to atone her sin by meeting the Black man who was regarded as the servant of Satan, Hester rejected by declaring “I must stay at home, and keep watch over my little Pearl. Had they take her from me, I would willingly have gone with thee into the forest, and signed my name in the Black Man’s book too, and that with mine own blood!” (Hawthorne, 1997: 179) It can be assumed how precious Pearl is to Hester. It is known that the formation of real pearl is natural and goes through difficulties. Junwu Tian once remarked, “The natural pearl can reflect the naturalness of Pearl’s character, just as the name suggests, Pearl in the novel is beautiful, innocent, and natural.” (Tian Junwu, 1999: 3) Exiled from society with her mother, Pearl was untamed by the puritan society and was free from the harsh constraint of Puritanism. She possessed all natural qualities that puritans denied. In the eyes of common people and puritans, she was the sinful product of Hester. Her birth destroyed common customs and standard, and her unbridled growth even provoked the religious doctrine of Puritanism. Although she was a child, she was able to see through the hypocrisy of
people and behaved with her own principles. In the Governor’s Hall, she kissed her father when Dimmesdale did them a favor. However, she refused to receive her father’s kiss and washed the kiss with the water in stream when Dimmesdale dared not to respond Pearl’s proposal that they stand together at the scaffold. She harshly censured, “you have no courage and you are dishonest”. She was eliminated from the “normal” child and what she did and said could not be understood by most of the characters in the novel. She played alone with toys and destroyed everything in her game. When the children of the puritan society gathered about her, she just picked up the stones to throw at the children, becoming terrible in her puny indignation. And she always kept asking her mother where she came from and why Hester wore the letter A on her breast. Even her mother Hester suspected if Pearl was her real child because sometimes she felt her daughter was far away from her and she couldn’t shape her personality and control her. In fact, Pearl was closer to the way nature intender her to be.

The naturalness of Pearl was first attached to the rosebush growing by the prison door. At the beginning of the story in The Scarlet Letter, she made her first appearance by being embraced by her mother. At that time, the rosebush by the prison door, “symbolize some sweet moral blossom that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow.” (Hawthorne, 1997: 10) Not only Pearl herself was a sweet moral blossom but also she was the product of human frailty and sorrow. When she and her mother were in the governor’s garden, she cried for rose. And her connection with rosebush was illustrated by the example: when asked where she was from by the minister, Pearl announced that “she had not been made at all, but had been plucked by her mother off the bush of wild roses that grew by the prison-door.” (Hawthorne, 1997: 112) Thus, Pearl’s life was vigorous and natural, which was like the blossom of rosebush, wild and pure. Besides, there was also a symbolic connection between rosebush and Pearl. The red color of rosebush was the same with the coloring of the grab Pearl wore, “a crimson velvet tunic of a peculiar cut, abundantly embroidered in fantasies and flourishes of gold thread. So much strength of coloring, which must have given a wan and pallid aspect to cheeks.
of a fainter bloom, was admirably adapted to Pearl’s beauty, and made her the very brightest little jet of flame that ever danced upon the earth.” (Hawthorne, 1997: 89) The same color also implies the link between rosebush and Pearl.

Although Pearl was incompatible with the puritan society, she was free and was herself in nature. Nature endowed her with life and she was the embodiment of nature. Nature was always friendly to Pearl and presented natural things to her. The warmth from nature—sunlight was always with her. “She stood laughing in the midst of it, all brightened by its splendors, and scintillating with the vivacity excited by rapid motion. The light lingered about the lonely child, as if glad of such a playmate.” (Hawthorne, 1997: 130) When Pearl was in nature, she was a happy spirit. She loved flowers, grass, water in brook and the other things in nature. For her, the representative of nature—forest was an eternal paradise for her. She was a part of nature just as Darrel Abel once remarked, “Pearl is in her most fundamental character a Child of Nature. She is of course a “natural child” in the euphemistic sense of the phrase. But a Child of Nature is properly speaking one who discovers conscious and valuable affinities with the natural world and enjoys an active and formative relationship with that world... Little Pearl manifests this relationship between man and nature; her life and the life of nature are contiguous and sympathetic modes of being.”(Abel, 1990: 57) Therefore, Hawthorne observed: “The mother forest, and these wild things which it nourished, all recognized a kindred wildness in the human child.” In the forest, she fancied playing with her own inverted image in the creek and her imagination. “The pine trees, aged, black and solemn, and flinging groans and other melancholy utterances on the breeze, the ugliest weeds of the garden were their children, whom Pearl smote down and uprooted, most unmercifully.” (Hawthorne, 1997: 140) She collected all kinds of grasses and braided them into a scarf or a wraps. A pigeon sang a song to greet the girl. She could make friends with the animals in the forest: squirrel, fox, partridge and so on. Even the fierce wolf “has surly lapsed his tale into the improvable, came up and smelt of Pearl’s robe and offered his savage head to be patted by her hand” (Hawthorne, 1997: 142). Her harmonious relationship
with nature contrasted sharply with her incompatible relationship with the puritan society.

### 3.2 Oppression to Women and Nature from Patriarchy

Not only does Hawthorne present the interconnection between women and nature, but also he demonstrates that oppression to women and oppression to nature have historical, symbolical, and political relation in western culture. And the relation is the patriarchal world view. Ecofeminists hold the view that the patriarchal world view offers the reasonable excuse and logic of domination for oppressing women and nature. In the meantime, patriarchal world view also proves the oppression to women and nature is closely associated. According to the ecofeminist Karen J. Warren, the logic of domination is as follows:

- **(A1)** Humans do, plants do not, have the capacity to consciously change the community in which they live.
- **(A2)** Whatever has this capacity is morally superior to whatever doesn’t have it.
- **(A3)** Humans are morally superior to plants and rocks.
- **(A4)** For any X and Y, if X is morally superior to Y, then X is morally justified in subordinating Y.
- **(A5)** Humans are morally justified in subordinating plants and rocks. (Warren, 2000: 129)

The above logic of domination is the conceptual framework for men’s oppression to nature in the patriarchal society. The hierarchical thinking and value dualisms are also included in the conceptual framework. So it is the same with the oppression of men to women according to the logic of domination that was put forward by Warren.

- **(B1)** Women are identical with nature and the realm of physical; men are identical with the “human” and the realm of the mental.
- **(B2)** Whatever is identified with nature and the realm of the physical is inferior to (“below”) whatever is identified with the “human” and the realm of mental.
(B3) Thus, women are inferior to men.

(B4) For any X and Y, if X is superior to Y, then X is justified in subordinating Y.

(B5) Men are justified in subordinating women. (Warren, 2000: 130)

Therefore, the reason of the oppression of women and nature lies in the theory of logic of domination. When the econfeminists criticize the logic of domination of the patriarchal society, they also criticize the traditional dualism in western rationalism that is inherent to patriarchal logic of domination. The ecofeminists believe in the dualism, women and non-human nature belong to the same category of “subordinated others”. Because men are categorized to the cultural, mental, rational, objective, and public civilized world, whereas women are categorized to natural, physical, emotional, subjective, and private bearing world. According to this binary thinking, men and nature, body and physiology are isolated and opposite, which are the two opposed poles. Men and women, men and nature are related occasionally, and they are hostile to each other. The binary thinking embodies the prejudice of androcentrism of patriarchal world view and shows that women are just a kind of belongings and decoration in the man-dominating society. And nature, which is the incarnation of women, is regarded as the server and slave of men. Nature and women are excluded from mainstream culture and become devalued and controlled by men. So, both women and nature are regarded as property and resources.

3.2.1 Men’s Subjugation to Nature

Throughout the development of relation between human beings and nature, there are two main kinds of values about nature. The first kind is the environmental value, which implies that nature is respected because of her richness and diversity, both for her own sake and as a precondition for the survival of all creatures on the planet. Hence, nature is not exploited for the sake of profit, instead, wherever possible, the damage done to nature is healed. Human interaction with nature is based on respect and reciprocity. Nature is regarded as our mother and our friend. Human beings are an indispensable part of nature, and we are nature’s children. The other kind of view is
the consume value, which means that the total control of nature and natural processes by science and technology, the ‘civilizing’, that is, taming of all ‘wild’ forces of nature for the benefit of man. According to the dualistic and patriarchal logic, man, in the process of ‘humanization’ and ‘civilization’, emancipated himself from the realm of nature (the ‘realm of necessity’), from woman and from savagery. Ultimately, men want to bring the art of production, the power of creation under their control, the control of the ‘pure’ male spirit. They want to be creators themselves. But for that they must rob women and nature of their subjectiveness, that is, of their own dignity, their spirituality, and turn them into lifeless, controllable matter. Living organisms became raw material for the fathers of the future machinery and goods. From then on, nature was no longer men’s friend and became natural resources only for men.

Hawthorne set *The Scarlet Letter* in the 17th century when the Enlightenment was being initiated. Since the time of Enlightenment, the progress of men means a ‘going away from nature’ (Werlhof, 1991: 171). This ‘going away’ is based on Man’s domination over Nature. In *The Scarlet Letter*, ecology is destroyed and the crisis of nature emerges.

Nature is the victim of men. As harbor of Hawthorne’s hometown, Salem is depicted as a wasteland by Hawthorne with unpleasant words in the preface of the novel. Salem was attractive and prosperous in the past. On the contrary, it is full of bustling wharf burdened with decayed wooden warehouses and wild grass, forming a disgusting picture. As the homeland of mankind, people should maintain a close and harmonious relationship with it. But now with the destruction of Nature, the loss of homeland, the fear about ecological destruction, the author is despair, hopeless and sorrowful about the loss of a homeland, about men’s alienation and separation from nature. For men, “all the imaginative delight, where with it had been spiritualized, passes away out of man’s mind” (Cheryll, 1990: 130).

It was not merely during the three hours and a half which Uncle Sam claimed as his share of my daily life, that this wretched numbness held possession of me. It went with me on sea-shore walks and rambles into the country, whenever—I bestirred myself to seek my that invigorating charm of Nature, which used to give me such
freshness and activity of though, the moment that a stepped across the threshold of the old Manse. (Hawthorne, 1997: 26)

While reading between lines of Hawthorne’s descriptions of Salem, we can form a vivid picture in our mind with beautiful seashore and freshness. Immersed in the beauty of nature and enjoying the peacefulness of nature, Hawthorne thanked the blessing of nature while walking on the seaside. However, his hometown is subordinated and put at the service of Man by the new science and technology now.

In the chapter The Prison Door, Hawthorne describes ‘a wild rose bush’ contrasting sharply with the prison that is built on the place that was once a valley. “The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of a human virtue and happiness they originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a potion of the virgin soil as the site of prison...” (Hawthorne, 1997: 36). The original site was a valley where should be the ocean of flowers, flowing clear water and all kinds of trees. But men built a prison on its virgin soil. In the past, mankind saw soil as the mother and people as her offspring, not her master. Chief Seattle once told us that “The earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand of it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.” (Seattle, 1977: 12) Soil is the womb not only for the reproduction of biological life but also of cultural and spiritual life; it epitomizes all the sources of sustenance and is ‘home’ in the deepest sense. Now men have converted soil from sacred mother into the disposable object—to be ravaged for prison. And the soil is full of “grass-plot”, “burdock”, “pigweed” and “unsightly vegetation”. Men have become the master of soil. Next to the prison door, there is a wild rose bush, “by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history. But whether it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness so long after the fall of the gigantic pines and oaks that originally overshadowed it...” (Nathaniel, 1997: 50). The image of rose-bush is stressed by Hawthorne to imply that in the past the rosebush was too ordinary to be noticed. But Hawthorne employs the phrase “by a strange chance” to stress that the wild rose-bush is so scarce that it
appeals to people’s attention. The rose-bush is regarded as “delicate germs”, the vitality of which used to be strong now becomes a “fragile beauty”. Besides, the wild rose-bush is a “token that the deep heart of nature could pity and be kind to” the mankind, in contrast to man’s inhumanity to nature. Hawthorne uses the technique of irony on men’s rude behavior towards nature. If mankind did not end their stupid behavior, they wouldn’t have the chance to appreciate the fragile beauty nature bestows to mankind.

In addition to the wild rose-bush, Hawthorne also employs the same technique of irony to depict the Governor’s barren garden. Longing for seeing the rose, Pearl was taken by Hester to visit the Governor’s garden. Hester told Pearl to “Come and look into this fair garden” (Hawthorne, 1997: 77). However, what they saw was not a garden full of flowers but a barren garden with “closely shaven grass” and “some rude and immature shrubbery”. The only plant they saw in the garden was “cabbages grown in plain sight and a pumpkin line rooted at some distance, which had run across the intervening space, and deposited one of its gigantic products directly beneath the hall window”.( Hawthorne, 1997: 78) The plant was regarded as the gift “New England would offer people”. The reason why garden was no longer the place where people could get relaxed and enjoyed wonderful scenery was explained by Hawthorne: “The proprietor appeared already to have relinquished as this side of the Atlantic, in a hard soil and amid the close hopeless the struggle for the effort to perpetuate on subsistence…”(Hawthorne, 1997: 77).

For Bacon, who is called the father of modern science, nature was no longer Mother Nature, but a female nature, to be conquered by an aggressive masculine mind. As Carolyn Merchant points out, “nature was now viewed as a system of dead, inert particles moved by external, rather than inherent forces, the mechanical framework itself could legitimate the manipulation of nature. Moreover, as a conceptual framework, the mechanical order had associated with it a framework of values based on power, fully compatible with the directions taken by commercial capitalism.” (Merchant, 1980: 193) Nature is transformed from a living, nurturing mother to inert and manipulable matter.
3.2.2 Men’s Subjugation to Women

Under patriarchy women is an object for male subjects, their behaviors are placed under a rigid control. It is believed that men were born to be the dominant of women who are objective and made passive. In *The Scarlet Letter*, it is evident that women suffer from the oppression of men in patriarchal society and they have marginal status in society.

Hester was abandoned to be in the marginal status because she committed adultery that was not allowed according to the seventh of the Ten Commandments of the puritan doctrines. Hester’s marginal status resulted from her unreasonable marriage to Roger Chillingworth. First of all, their appearance formed a sharp contrast. Hester was a beautiful passionate woman. Chillingworth is “small in stature, with a furrowed visage, which, as yet, could hardly be termed age” (Hawthorne, 1997: 45). What’s more important, there was no true love between them and the reason why Chillingworth married to Hester was that he wanted to satisfy his selfish desire and the supplement to his spiritual barrenness. He confessed that “But, up to that epoch of my life, I had lived in vain. The world had been so cheerless! My heart was a habitation large enough for many guests, but lonely and chill, and without a household fire. I longed to kindle one” (Hawthorne, 1997: 56)! When they got married, the book worm Chillingworth preferred to devote himself to learning rather than give her warmth and left her alone regardless of her feelings. And Chillingworth’s selfish choice ruined Hester’s budding youth just as he once said, “Hester, I drew thee into my heart, into its innermost chamber, and sought to warm thee by the warmth which thy presence made there! We have wronged each other. Mine was the first wrong, when I betrayed thy budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay. Therefore, as a man who has not thought and philosophised in vain, I seek no vengeance, plot no evil against thee. Between thee and me, the scale hangs fairly balanced. But, Hester, the man lives who has wronged us both! Who is he”? (Hawthorne, 1997: 56) Married to an old man for whom she had no love or affection, she did not submit and endured like most of the women at that
time, but stood up for the true love, committing adultery, thus fulfilled her first revolt against the church, the state, the law and doctrine of the Puritan society set by men. To men, the most dangerous thing about Hester’s adultery was not that she committed adultery, or gave birth to an unlawful child, but that she refused to keep to her appointed place as a woman should do. And Hester was a real, not an imagined threat to the community, as her natural dignity and force of character—unusual in a person just emerging from a long prison confinement like her, she would have “attempted nothing less than revolution”, (Kennedy, 1999: 133) a revolutionary struggle against men. The arrangement of Hester’s marriage reflected women’s marginal status in the 17th century because they were deprived of the right to choose their lover and what they could do was to listen to their fathers’ arrangement. If their marriages were unhappy, women had no right to end their relations with their husbands.

When Chillingworth went to Boston, Hester had no choice but to follow him. In Boston, it was difficult for her to survive in the man-dominating society because she had no high rank status and social reputation. And their marriage without love drove Hester to pursue her true love. At that time, Arthur Dimmesdale, who was another representative of patriarchal society appealed to Hester with his intelligence, emotion and eloquent sermons. When the lovers fell in love with each other and gave birth to a baby, Hester was punished severely by wearing the letter A on the breast and was abandoned by society. It seemed that her wrong doings led to her exclusion and repression, as a matter of fact, “Man had marked this woman’s sin by the scarlet letter, which had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her, save it were sinful like herself”(Hawthorne, 1997: 61). As the punishment, she was expelled from the town, and lived a life of exile in a lonely and desolate wasteland. However, Hester’s exclusion from society was not only due to her sin, but also because of her gender as a woman who pursued her true love in patriarchal society. What is more important, Hester was a rebellious and indomitable woman who was full of courage and passion, which was against the ideal image men set for women: weak, oppressed, sentimental, and dependent on men. Once the hypocrisy and darkness of patriarchal society is exposed by somebody, he is certain to be