

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
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Faculty of Letters and Languages
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**A Memoir Submitted In Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirements For The
Master Degree In English
Specialty: English
Option: Comparative Literature**

Title

**Love and Tragic Fate in Nathaniel Hawthorne's
The Scarlet Letter (1850) and Henri Stendhal's *Le
Rouge et Le Noir* (1830).**

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Academic Year: 2013/2014.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*I would like to say thank you to **Mrs. Maidi Naima** for all her urging during the writing of this dissertation. Many thanks are due to her for all her help, instruction, direction, advice and corrections, and most of all, patience with me throughout the various phases of the writing process of this humble work.*

*I would also like to thank professor **Mrs. Arezeki Dalila**, for providing me with instructive, knowledgeable and professional guidance and education throughout my studies.*

This Dissertation is sincerely dedicated to my beloved
mother,
father,
brother,
sisters, and
all my best companions in life.

Abstract

This paper examines Hawthorne's novel The Scarlet Letter (1850) and Stendhal's Le Rouge et Le Noir (1830). To achieve this aim, we have used the IMRAD method. This work starts with an introduction that highlights our main ideas and reviews some of the literature written on the novels and the novelists. After that, we have stated our problematic and our working hypothesis. In the method section, we have explored Northrop Frye's theory of Tragedy. The material section has provided the summary of the two novels. Then, we have pointed out the results we have reached from the study of materials. The discussion section embodied our study of the themes of love and tragic fate as represented by the main characters in the light of Frye's theory of Tragedy. At last, we have supplied a conclusion that summarized the steps we have followed in our work, and restated the issue we have worked on.

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I. Introduction

The 19th century witnessed the emergence of many artistic and literary movements in both America and France. These literary trends ranged from Romanticism, realism, and naturalism at the end of the century. The American colonies emerging as the United States of America welcomed these trends in literature and arts essentially because the time was ripe for the new nation to discover a distinctive American voice and assert her literary identity.

Likewise, the France during the nineteenth century saw the birth of many literary trends and the production of great works of art and literature. The Romantic Movement did not reach France until the 1820's. By about the middle of the 19th century, a new tendency in literature, Realism swept the French literary scene. Realism emerged in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1848 that overturned the monarchy of Louis-Philippe, and it developed during the period of the Second Empire under Napoleon III.

The period that saw the transformation from romanticism to the realism of Gustave Flaubert was spanned by the writings of the great 19th-century novelists George Sand, Honoré de Balzac, and Stendhal. The romantics and realists alike wrote of the painful discovery of self-awareness and the torments of the inner life and, in differing degrees, concerned themselves with contemporary social mores.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, a great romantic novelist of the 19th century, is one of the founders of American literature. His novels are considered as classics, Charles Eliot pays him due tribute in these words;

If America possesses a classic author ..., that author is decidedly Hawthorne. His renown is un-impeached: his greatness is probably permanent, because he is at once such an original and personal genius and such a judicious and determined artist".¹

Hawthorne was born on July 4, 1804 at Salem, Massachusetts to one of New England's oldest Puritan families. His novels reflect a strong flavor of Puritan ideology, and this theme is well illustrated in his great novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850).

Marie-Henri Beyle, known as Stendhal, is likewise, a prolific writer from early nineteenth century France. He was born in Grenoble in 1783 to a bourgeois family. He was the co-founder of French realism and one of the giants of French literature, and many place him as the greatest of novelists of the nineteenth century. Stendhal's novels, including *The Red and the Black* and *The Chartreuse of Parma*, address issues of their contemporary society while also using themes and characters derived from the Romantic Movement.

Stendhal lived through a period of intense disorder, instability, and great social change in French history. His best work can be seen in *Le Rouge et le Noir* which represents a criticism of the history of France during the restoration period.

Published in 1830, *The Red and the Black* shocked the public with its incisive portrait of Restoration France, along with its probing psychological study of the complex protagonist, Julien Sorel.²

In speaking of Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter* was first published in 1850. It is Nathaniel Hawthorne's first 'romance' and is thus far his most renowned and well-received novel. It is a monument in the history of American Romantic literature. "The Scarlet Letter was in the United States a literary event of the first importance, the book was the finest piece of imaginative writing"³. It reflects a strong flavour of puritan ideology.

No other book of Nathaniel Hawthorne is so deep, so dual, and so complete as the *Scarlet Letter* this great allegory of the triumph of sin.⁴

As far as Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* is concerned, it is one of the greatest European novels, a chronicle of the 19th century, and one of the most distinguished

monuments of literary realism. It appears to be Stendhal's masterpiece, which serves as a picture of French restoration society, "a modern consciousness of reality...more detailed and more real than had been exhibited in any earlier novel."⁵

The two fictional works *The Scarlet Letter* and *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, are considered as the best-known and important works of prose fiction that can be classified as romances, which have always colored, and at times have shaped their historical reality. *The Scarlet Letter*, which takes as its principal subject colonial New England during the seventeenth-century, was written and published in the middle of the nineteenth century. Because Hawthorne took an earlier time as his subject, the novel is considered a historical romance written in the midst of the American literary movement called romanticism.

1. Review of the Literature

Actually, Hawthorne's and Stendhal's novels have been subjected to a great deal of criticism and have been widely analyzed. Many critics agree that the two novels are building a critical picture of the authors' societies in a tragedy of love stories.

As far as Nathaniel Hawthorne's romance is concerned, critic Benjamin Kilborne writes that the novel discusses a variety of themes. "The Scarlet Letter shows us the way to a variety of interrelated themes pertaining to shame dynamics, shame conflicts, and the tragic situation."⁶

Another critic of Hawthorne, Agostino Lombardo considers that the central theme in *The Scarlet Letter* is love. It is one where "Puritan inhumanity is counter-posed to the vitality and emotional wealth of love".⁷

The scarlet Letter has prompted various interpretations and has been approached in a variety of ways; as a romance, a historical novel, a tragedy and most of all of passion and love. Sylvia Eeckman contends that;

The story has engendered numerous interpretations, seeing as it has been read as a tale of sin and its consequences, of social isolation, of redemption, of passion and love, of an individual struggling against society's conventions.⁸

For his part, Julien Cowley points out that "The Scarlet Letter is a tale of illicit passion, a highly stylized and artificial variation upon allegorical convention, and yet is grounded in historical actuality"⁹

Other critics approached the novel as a tragedy, for example, Luo Lanlan asserts that Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is a tragedy of romance. Besides, the novel became a romantic literary classic in America and the world of literature.

was not intending to write a wonderful "romance", but to write a tragedy of "romance"...It is precisely the pitiable tragedy that created unique enduring charm of The Scarlet Letter and made

it become a romantic literary classic in American or even the world literature.¹⁰

Stendhal's novel also has raised a great interest in critics since its publication. It is regarded as the chronicle of the 19th century and a great psychological novel of all times.

Michael Valdez Moses considers Stendhal's novel as one of the greatest European novels of the nineteenth century. The novel reflects the image of France during the 1830 "We might say that *Le Rouge et le Noir: Chronique de 1830* emerges from Stendhal's ambition to write a subjective tragedy in a post-historical age."¹¹

Another critic, Raffel Burton states that *Le Rouge et Le Noir* is the most important novel of Stendhal which gives his prose brilliance. "*Le Rouge et Le Noir* has given me new respect for the virtuosic brilliance of Stendhal's prose, and for the passionate intensity that makes this novel a profound and moving tragedy."¹²

In the same vein, Stirling Haig argues that the central theme of Stendhal writings is love "Love is the grand theme at the centre of all Stendhal's writings"¹³. Besides "For the reader of *The Red and the Black*, however, only two types are relevant: l'amour- passion and l'amour de vanité"¹⁴

Another critic of Stendhal Roger Gard points out that *Le Rouge et Le Noir* is one of the great European novels and the mostly received and admired at that period. According to him the novel form a double love story,

in 1829-30, produced *Le Rouge et Le Noir*(*The Red and The Black*), which, as well as being so obviously thrilling double love story, pulsating with the energy of youth seen through the eye of experience, is one of the greatest European novels, and one of the most fervently admired.¹⁵

Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henri Stendhal are seen as writers who partly write to explain the social dilemma of the group to which they belonged and partly to a way of life which they had survived.

This dissertation offers a thematic comparison between two literary works that are of quite different backgrounds. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), and Henri Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir* (1830). The comparison highlights the similarities and the divergences between two cultures and how they are reflected in literature.

The focus of our dissertation is on the themes of love and tragic fate as they are developed in the novels. Therefore, for a clear and competent analysis of the two novels, we have adopted Northrop Frey theory, *Anatomy of Criticism* because it best suits the study. Under Frey theory, we shall be looking at the themes of love and tragic fate as they are developed in the books.

2. Issue and Working Hypothesis

It is clear from our review of some of the literature written on the two novels that both received a lot of critical attention, and that there is a critical agreement in literary studies that *The Scarlet Letter* and *Le Rouge et Le Noir* are narratives of illicit love and passion and that both stories evolve around tragic fates. yet, in spite of the striking convergences between Hawthorne's and Stendhal's novels, it is surprising how no previous comparative study has been undertaken to show the similarities and convergences in Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir* and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

Therefore, it is our purpose to venture this piece of research to show the similarities and differences between the two novels. So, our aim in this present paper is to analyze the theme of love and tragic fate in the two novels, trying to explore how the two novelists portray love and death in their works.

In order to accomplish this task, we will borrow insights from Northrop Frye's theory, "Mythos of Winter", as he expresses it in his book *Anatomy of Criticism* to discuss the issue.

Our choice of this theory is due to the fact that its theoretical category fits in well with the perspective of our comparative study. We will implement this approach to perform a new reading of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir*

3. Methodology

To achieve our aim, this research paper will be divided into three sections. The method section is based on Northrop Frye's theory of Tragedy as he developed it in his book, *Anatomy of Criticism*. The second part is concerned with the results; it recapitulates the findings reached in our analysis. The last section is the discussion, which is the most detailed one. In the latter, we intend to compare the two novels in terms of their socio- historical background, their characters and themes.

End Notes

- ¹ Charles William. E, *The Scarlet Letter & Rappaccini's Daughter Nathaniel Hawthorne*, (Bartleby: The Harvard classics shelf of fiction, 2001), 10.
- ² Raffel Burton, trans., *The Red and The Black: A chronicle of 1830*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 3.
- ³ Henri James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, Vol 01, (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 402.
- ⁴ D.H Lawrence, , (1993). *Studies in Classic American Literature*. (London: Penguin Book, 1971), 108.
- ⁵ Stirling Haig, *Land Marks of World Literature: Stendhal The Red and The Black* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 48.
- ⁶ Benjamin Kilborne, *Shame conflicts and Tragedy in the Scarlet Letter*. (Los Angeles: psychoanalytic society and Institute, 2003), 482.
- ⁷ Marcus Cunliffe, (1991). *The penguin History of Literature: American Literature to 1900*. (London: penguin books, 1973), 173.
- ⁸ Sylvia Eeckman, *Women in The Scarlet Letter* (Ghent University: Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, 2008), 4.
- ⁹ Julien Cowley , (2001), *York notes on The Scarlet Letter* (Hong Kong: Longman, 1999), 34.
- ¹⁰ Luo Lanlan, *On the Tragedy of Love in The Scarlet Letter* (China: University of Economics and Law, 2011), 83.
- ¹¹ Michael, V Moses, *The Novel and The Globalization of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc, 1995), 15.

¹² Raffel Burton, trans.; *The Red and The Black A chronicle of 1830* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 3.

¹³ Stirling Haig, *Land Marks of World Literature, Stendhal The Red and The Black* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 78.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Roger Gard. Trans., *Stendhal The Red and the Black translated with an Introduction and Notes* (pustaka perdana: Penguin Books, sd), 5.

II. Method and Materials

1. Method

In studying Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), and Henri Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir* (1830), we will rely on Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957).

In this book, Frye composes four essays, each one on a form of literary genre.

In *his Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye devotes a whole chapter entitled 'Mythos of Winter' in which he gives his definition of the theory of Tragedy. According to Northrop Frye,

Without tragedy, all literary fictions might be plausibly explained as expressions of emotional attachments, whether of wish-fulfillment or of repugnance: the tragic fiction guarantees, so to speak, a disinterested quality in literary experience. It is largely through the tragedies of Greek culture that the sense of the authentic natural basis of human character comes into literature."¹

Furthermore, Tragedy is defined or explained according to two theories; one of these is the theory "that all tragedy exhibits the omnipotence of an external fate"², and it happens to be an external necessity only after it has been violated. In addition to this, the other theory of tragedy is that the tragic process

must be primarily a violation of moral law, whether human or divine; in short, that Aristotle's hamartia or "flaw" must have an essential connection with sin or wrongdoing."³

Besides, Frye points out six phases composing his mythos of tragedy. These phases move from the heroic to the ironic. The first three are phases of romance, and the last three are phases of irony.

In the first phase, "the central character is given the greatest possible dignity in contrast to the other characters"⁴. In this phase, the hero or the heroine are portrayed as

courageous and innocent in contrast to the other characters. The distinctive figure of this phase is a woman, often the mother of an illegitimate child.

The tragedy of innocence or of a youthful life represents the second phase. This is related to the youth of the hero who is presented as having no experience, and usually involving young and old educated people in his life. “In a more complex situation, in the bewildered mixture of idealism and priggishness that brings Hippolytus to disaster.”⁵.

The third phase is related to the theme of romance and gives a strong emphasis on passion, and the success or completeness of the hero’s achievement. This phase comes at the end of a heroic life and is often a sequel to a previous tragic action which end “in a full rich serenity that goes far beyond a mere resignation to fate.”⁶.

The fourth stage moves around the ironic aspect of tragedy, its aspect is the fall of the tragic hero. It looks at tragedy from below, from the moral and realistic perspective of the state of experience. It stresses the humanity of its heroes, minimizes the sense of ritual inevitability in tragedy, and supplies social and psychological explanations for catastrophe by making human misery apparent.

The fifth phase corresponding to fatalistic or fifth-phase tragedy is irony in which the main emphasis is on the natural cycle, the steady unbroken turning of the wheel of fate or fortune. The characters are in a state of lower freedom and move according to the conditions of laws. “The tragic action of the fifth phase presents for the most part the tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge... Oedipus Tyrannus belongs here, and all tragedies and tragic episodes which suggest the existential projection of fatalism”.⁷.

In the last phase, Frye presents human life figures in terms of misery or madness, often parodies of romantic roles. Its settings feature prisons and madhouses. “a world without pity and without hope, satire begins again”⁸

This phase is also concerned with Oedipus Tyrannus where the hero is in great pain or humiliation to gain the privilege of a heroic pose.

End Notes

¹ Northrop Frye, (1990), *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Penguin books, 1957), 206.

² Ibid.;209.

³Ibid.;210.

⁴Ibid.; 219.

⁵Ibid.; 220.

⁶Ibid.; 221.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.; 222.

⁹Ibid.; 238.

2. Materials

This section includes the material we will rely on the discussion section. It consists of the summaries of the novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Henri Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir* (1830).

Summary of the two novels

I-Summary of *The Scarlet Letter*

The Scarlet Letter is the story of a passionate illicit affair between a young married woman named Hester Prynne and the minister Arthur Dimmesdale. The novel is a tragedy that ends with Dimmesdale's death, set in the seventeenth century in a puritan colony in Massachusetts.

The book depicts the life of Hester Prynne as she commits the ignominious crime of adultery with the town's church minister, and gives birth to an illegitimate daughter. The heroine with the charming child of her guilt, a daughter stands on the public scaffold and is sentenced to wear a scarlet "A" upon her breast for the rest of her life.

Hester Prynne, the protagonist of the story married Chillingworth when she was very young. Her former husband is a doctor and a man of science. He sends his wife to Boston two years before him while he was delayed by his affairs. When he arrives to Boston, he finds Hester with a child in her arms wearing a scarlet "A" as a mark of shame because she refuses to reveal the identity of the father of her child.

Chillingworth decides to take revenge. He visits Hester in prison, and makes her swear to keep his identity secret. After her punishment and prison, Hester goes to live isolated from her society with her little Pearl. She works hard to provide for her daughter. In fact, Dimmesdale's health begins to fail after Hester's punishment. Chillingworth being a physician pretends to help him, but uses medicine to torture him. Later on, Hester reveals his

identity to Dimmesdale. Hester and Dimmesdale plan to escape with their Pearl from the puritan society, but Chillingworth hinders their plan.

At the end of the novel, Arthur Dimmesdale stands with Hester and Pearl on the pillory Scaffold, where he confesses his sin and declares that he is the sinner. He dies in Hester's arms, kissed by his daughter. Chillingworth dies soon after the minister. Hester and Pearl leave Boston to Europe. Afterwards, Hester returns to settle in the New World.

II-Summary of *Le Rouge et le Noir*

Le Rouge et Le Noir tells the story of Julien Sorel, the son of a carpenter, who has an affair with Mme de Rênal, the wife of the Mayor in Verrieres, and Mathilde de la Mole in Paris. The novel consists of two parts; the first deals especially with the time when the protagonist lives with M. de Rênal as a tutor of his children. The second is about the life of Julien as the secretary of M. de la Mole at his home in Paris.

The protagonist, Julien Sorel is eighteen years. He lives with his father, and his two brothers in a small town in a French county. Unlike them, Julien is educated Father Chelan taught him Latin.

The Mayor M. de Renal wishes to engage Julien as tutor for his son. Installed at the big house of M. de Renal, Julien is inspired by the conquests of Napoleon. He wants to believe in the audacity to imitate his idol, to win the heart of Louise, the wife of M. de Renal. Julien seduces her, and becomes her secret lover. Time passes, Julien and Louise enjoy being together. However, after some times, the adultery of Ms.de Renal is interrupted by the illness of her son, Stanislas. She feels punished by God and wants to tell everything to her husband to prevent divine punishment to be fatal. However, after the recovery of the child, the relationship between Madame de Renal and her young lover becomes deeper.

Elisa, the servant in De Rênal's house, who falls in love with Julien discovers the secret and denounces, out of jealousy, the lovers to Mr. Valenods. Despite this, Madame de Renal persuades her husband by her innocence. Julien has to leave to go to seminar Besançon where he studies to become a priest. The director of the seminar; Abbe Picard takes him under protection. He offers Julien a position as a secretary with the Marquis de la Mole in Paris.

Julien arrives to Paris to the service of one of the wealthiest and the most influential men in France. The Marquis recognizes the intelligence, and the spirit of the young secretary, thus he treats him with respect. Julien works in the library where he occasionally meets Mathilde the only daughter of the Marquis de La Mole. This young woman falls in love with Julien.

At first, Julien does not like her, but gradually as time passes, the relationship between the two becomes warmer. When she learns that she is pregnant, Julien decides to marry her. However, Madame de Renal writes a letter to the Marquis where she reveals the past of Julien saying that he is an ambitious who sleeps with women in order to advance in society.

As a reaction, Julien enters the church in the middle of the mass and shoots Louise with his gun. He confesses his crime, and then he is informed that Mme.de Rênal is not dead. However, he does not struggle to escape the death penalty. Madame de Rênal visits Julien in his cell and forgives him his attempt to assassinate her. Despite the efforts of the two women (Mathilde and Mme de Renal) to save him, Julien's penalty is executed. At the end, Madame de Rênal dies three days after the execution.

III. Results

In our comparative study of the two novels, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir* (1830), we have used the IMRAD method, which consists of a general introduction, method and materials, and discussion. Hence, in this section of our dissertation, we have shed light on the results reached after the analysis of the socio- historical background of the two novels, characters and themes.

From the comparison of the historical background, characters, and themes of Hawthorne's and Stendhal's novels, we have noticed a great analogy between *The Scarlet Letter* and *Le Rouge et Le Noir*. We have tried to underline the similarities as well as the differences in relation to the characters in the light of the theory of Tragedy as it is defined in Northrop Frye's book *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). Following Northrop Frye's explanation of each phase, we have come to conclude that the two novels form pitiable tragedies of love.

Throughout the discussion of the themes, we have discussed the theme of love and tragic fate in the two novels. We have seen also that both Hawthorne and Stendhal create their heroines to show the status of women, reflect the image of their societies in the seventeenth and nineteenth century, and to express their own ideas about the Puritan and the Bourgeois societies at that time. Hester Prynne violates the Puritan laws by having a love affair with the minister Arthur Dimmesdale while Mrs. Rênal also betrays her husband and is involved in a love affair with Julien Sorel. Thus, from all this, we notice that society plays an important role in shaping the individuals' fates. In fact, the rigid laws and the society at that time led people to live a miserable life and eventually a tragic fate.

In the light of all that has been said, we have shown in this comparative study of *The*

Scarlet Letter and *Le Rouge et Le Noir* why the love story of Hester Prynne with Dimmesdale and Mrs. De Rênal with Julien Sorel are doomed to destruction. In other words how the two love stories end in tragedy.

VI. Discussion

I-Socio-historical Background

We will start our research paper by the contextual part which forms the first chapter and which will explore the socio-historical background of the two novels. Through this chapter, we will show the elements that influenced Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henri Stendhal and informed the writing of *The Scarlet Letter* and *Le Rouge et le Noir* respectively.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* was written during the nineteenth century. What is remarkable about the novel is that it was written in the nineteenth century, but it portrays the seventeenth century puritan society. Henry James rightly observed that "Hawthorne 'had, as regard the two earlier centuries of New England life, that faculty which is called nowadays the historical consciousness'"¹ He described the stories with Puritan themes "as the only successful attempts at historical fiction that have been made in the United States"²

The Puritan past was the raw material for Hawthorne's romance. Despite Hawthorne's origin as a Puritan, he is not always satisfying in his portrayal. Most of Hawthorne's critics have not failed to point out to the recurrence of this theme, in *An Introduction to American Literature* critic Françoise Grellet contends that;

The theme of Puritanism is recurrent in the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne which are often set in Colonial America. Haunted by the past, by what he saw as the shame brought upon himself by his fathers...His interest lay in psychological truths and moral conflicts. His characters are often isolated beings, slowly destroyed and cut off from others by their pride, their coldness or their presumption, the ultimate sin being the "want of love and reverence for the human soul."³

From the seventeenth century, the puritan settlers used the metaphor of "a city upon a hill" to highlight their position as a moral example to the rest of the world. They established a set of core values that can be traced to their founding fathers.

Puritanism was part of the Protestant Reformation in England. The puritans' conscious act of rejecting the forced religious view of the Anglican Church gave them the name Puritans since they desired to purify the Church of England from its corruption. In 1620, the English monarchy, as impatient to get rid of the Puritans as the Puritans were eager to get rid of the king, granted a charter to a group of Separatists to settle in the new world. These men and women who left England and established Plymouth colony in Boston, Massachusetts, had a vision for the future in America; they believed that the Puritans should settle together in a city, which their leader John Winthrop assumed, would be a city upon a hill.

We have seen that one aim of the Great Migration was to provide in the New World a new model of the due form of government, civil and ecclesiastical,... 'We must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill,' said Winthrop to the first settlers, 'the eyes of all people are upon us.'⁴

The Puritan deep moralistic values had remained part of the identity of the American settlers at that time. They also formed a society with a rigid structure that was repressive to the individuals. Obviously, Hester's transgression in *The Scarlet Letter* shows the conflict of individual passion with the group's regulations.

The rules by which the puritan leaders governed their community came from the Bible. The penalties or punishments were public, severe and many crimes carried the penalty of death. The punishment of *The Scarlet Letter* is a historical fact.

In the novel of Hawthorne, for example, the marketplace and the scaffold are places that were concerned with sin, punishment and public humiliation. These were symbols of the rigid Puritan laws.

For Hawthorne... external reality, nature, objects, tangible forms are merely symbols of a deeper, more inward, ultimately spiritual reality, and Hawthorne's language, ..., is an attempt to extract the secret meaning from reality, to render the sense of life in visible terms.⁵

On the other hand, Stendhal's novel *Le Rouge et Le Noir* can be considered as a historical novel as the novelist manages to document the scenes of the Revolution of 1830, with a frame of the social structure of France at that time, the opposition between Paris and the provinces, between the nobility and the bourgeoisie.

However, *Le Rouge et Le Noir* remains a realistic novel even if it carries conventional romantic themes. In fact, the story is inspired from the real story of Berthet (1827). It is the first source of inspiration for the plot of Stendhal's novel. Berthet, son of a craftsman and young seminarian was sentenced to death for murdering his former mistress during the mass, the wife of a notable man who had hired him as tutor to his children.

Roman d'amour, *Le Rouge* réunit les deux types de femmes qu'a aimées l'auteur. *Le Rouge* est aussi un grand roman de mœurs qui peint les libéraux de province, le grand séminaire et le faubourg Saint-Germain avec une étonnante vérité ; une chronique aussi...du premier semestre de 1830 : voyages royaux, événements mondains, conspiration ultra dans laquelle on reconnaît derrière les personnages fictifs tous les ténors politiques du moment.⁶

Le Rouge et Le Noir, titled *Chronicle of the 1830s* is the second novel of Stendhal after *Armance*. This novel was written during the Restoration period, and it traces the social evolution of Julien Sorel, a young peasant who dreams of glory. The novel was written in an extremely dramatic and violent time. After the Battle of Waterloo and the fall of Napoleon, France experienced a terrible crisis when the great empire collapsed. In addition to this, King Charles X, like so many other aristocrats immigrated since 1789, and returned to France after the fall of Bonaparte. When Charles succeeded in 1824, he tried to ban any free speech in the country. And, when the Liberal opposition victory in the elections of 1830 rose against him, Charles responded by dissolving the House, and led the Revolution.

At the Restoration period, and especially the years preceding the Revolution of 1830 there was a wide spread of poverty, and an extreme social injustice. Poverty had certainly existed before, but after 1789, during the reign of Napoleon, there was the hope of getting out. At that time, France suffered from a serious decline, the rich and especially the poor sought refuge. At least, Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* describes, and provides us with a picture of the society and the people of that time. It is especially in describing the characters and their thoughts, that Stendhal shows trends and ideas of society in general. Julien Sorel therefore has the misfortune to be a very poor man in a country where money is everything.

D'une part Stendhal apparait comme le premier en date des grands romanciers réalistes. En se temps, il s'est fait fort d'être original en faisant simplement ressembler : « la vérité, l'âpre vérité », proclame le Rouge et le Noir.⁷

Above all, during the Nineteenth century in France and America women were considered as sexual objects and were not given the same rights as men. In that period, man was seen as the power, or the only representative of society, whereas women had no importance in society and even in their home. France during the 1830's was a patriarchal society, and the individual was viewed according to his social class and wealth.

The traditional society of Western civilization was a hierarchical one, based on inequality and power. Henri Stendhal and Nathaniel Hawthorne are among many other writers who revolted against those restrains that affected the individuals and society in general. Indeed, through *The Scarlet Letter* and *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, Hawthorne and Stendhal reflect the image of their societies as they were in the seventeenth century America and nineteenth century France .

To conclude, glimpses at the historical backgrounds of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir* reveal that there are some similarities in the context that informed the writings of the two novels especially concerning the power of

religion and the status of women. In fact, the societies of the France of the nineteenth century, like the America of the seventeenth century were patriarchal societies.

End Notes

¹ Marcus Cunliffe, (1993), *The Penguin History of Literature: American Literature to 1900* (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 174.

² Ibid

³ Françoise Grellet., *An Introduction to American Literature* (Paris: Hachette, 1987), 84.

⁴ Bryn O'callagan, *An Illustrated History of the U.S.A.* (England: Longman group. 1990), 43.

⁵ Marcus Cunliffe , (1993). *The Penguin History of Literature: American Literature to 1900.* (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 173.

⁶ Rose Fortassier , (1982), *Le Roman Français au XIX^e Siècle.*(Paris : Press Universitaires de France, 1995), 30.

⁷ Ibid. ; 35.

II. Characterization

The Scarlet Letter and *Le Rouge et Le Noir* give insights of the societies and the epochs they portray. Hawthorne's novel is regarded as a reflection to the 17th century while Stendhal's novel was considered an indictment to the 19th century (1830). In this section of our dissertation, we will compare the two novels: *The Scarlet Letter* and *Le Rouge et Le Noir* at the level of characterization. In this regard, we will deal with the study of the most important characters in relation to our subject 'love and tragic fate' We will also show the similarities and convergences in the two novels in the light of the theory of Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957).

1-Hester Prynne and Mrs. De Rênal

In his theory of Tragedy, Northrop Frye argues that, in the first phase, the hero or the heroine is portrayed as courageous and innocent in contrast to the other characters. The figure of this phase is always a woman, and often a mother of an illegitimate child.¹

Hester Prynne and Mrs. Rênal are two important female characters in the novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne *The Scarlet Letter* and Henri Stendhal *Le Rouge et Le Noir*. The two heroines are described by focusing on their physical appearance and their status in their societies.

In the *Scarlet Letter*, the heroine is portrayed in the novel as a courageous and innocent woman, and is the mother of an illegitimate daughter. Likewise, Mrs. Rênal is depicted in Stendhal's novel as a special woman of high class. She married Mr. Rênal when she was very young and innocent. In spite of all the difficulties, the two women succeeded to face their problems with great courage.

Hester Prynne is the protagonist around which the events of the novel are centred. In spite of the torments and agony she undergoes, Hester Prynne has, to a certain degree, always

possessed the fortitude and mental power which Reverend Dimmisdale lacks. Throughout *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester is portrayed as a young passionate, intelligent, strong, and impetuous woman. She is “tall, with a figure of perfect elegance, on a large scale”². Her countenance possesses a beauty “from regularity of feature and richness of complexion”³ and “the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes”⁴. Hawthorne describes her as “lady-like” as well,

She was lady-like too, after the manner of the feminine gentility of those days; characterized by a certain state and dignity, rather than by the delicate, evanescent, and indescribable grace, which is now recognized as its indication”⁵

Like Hester, Mrs. Rênal too is a beautiful and gracious woman. Julien is impressed by her beauty, and surprised by the warm reception she gives him. “Madame de Rênal paraissait une femme de trente ans, mais encore assez jolie.”⁶. the author describes her in these terms :

C’était une femme grande, bien faite, qui avait été la beauté du pays, comme on dit dans ces montagnes. Elle avait un certain air de simplicité, et de la jeunesse dans la démarche.⁷

Hester Prynne and Mrs. Rênal are portrayed in the novels as two beautiful women, educated, and intelligent. The two heroines married when they were young with wealthy old men for whom they had no feelings. Moreover, the two fall in an adulterous love and both live tragic love stories when the two meet with their lovers; Dimmesdale and Julien Sorel.

Hester for example married old Roger Chillingworth, a man for whom she has no feelings. He is a difficult husband; he ignores his wife for much of the time. He had sent her to Boston two years earlier before him to work and prepare their house,

Her marriage was reckless and made more in a spirit of adventure than in love. She travelled away from her family, first to Amsterdam, and then, without her husband, to the New World...not did her husband insist that she should wait for him.⁸

Once in Boston, Hester has a love affair with Arthur Dimmesdale, which results in an illegitimate daughter, Pearl. Hawthorne portrays Hester as a woman of strength, independence, and kindness, who stands up to the judgments and constraints of her society. She stands on the scaffold to wear the red scarlet “A” as a symbol of her adulterous affair for the rest of her life.

I happened to place it on my breast...It seemed to me then, that I experienced a sensation not altogether physical, yet almost so, as of burning heat; and as if the letter were not of red cloth, but red-hot iron.⁹

She stands alone on the scaffold, surrounded by the puritans. In fact, the puritans consider her as a sinner and all women avoid her and make her an example for the community “This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die”¹⁰.

Like her daughter Pearl, the letter ‘A’ on her breast functions as a physical reminder of Hester’s affair with Dimmesdale. Yet, her sin is inseparable from love, love for Dimmesdale, and love for Pearl. She suffers a lot from public humiliation and her isolation from society. “let her cover the mark as she will, the pang of it will be always in her heart”¹¹. The puritan judges allow her to remove the letter only if she reveals to everybody the identity of the father of her child, but she refuses in order to protect her one true love.

In *Anatomy of Criticism*, the second phase of Tragedy is the tragedy of innocence or of a youthful life. In this phase, the hero is depicted as having no experience, and usually involving young and old educated people in his life. Hester Prynne and Mrs. Rênal are two women characters in Hawthorne’s and Stendhal’s novels who married while they were very young with two old, and wealthy educated men.¹²

Mrs. Rênal, in her turn, is the most important character in *Le Rouge et le Noir*. At the age of sixteen, she marries Mr. Rênal, a wealthy man from Verrières for whom she has no passion. She has three children with him, but when she meets Julien who is supposed to teach her children Latin, she falls in love with him and goes through an adulterous affair,

Mme de Rênal, riche héritière d'une tante dévote, mariée à seize ans à un bon gentilhomme... Elle regardait comme une exception, ou même comme tout à fait hors de nature, l'amour tel qu'elle l'avait trouvé dans le très petit nombre de romans que le hasard avait mis sous ses yeux. Grâce à cette ignorance, Mme de Rênal, parfaitement heureuse, occupée sans cesse de Julien, était loin de se faire le plus petit reproche.¹³

Mrs. Rênal's high status, position in society, and her good education endow her with a different character. Even if she has not a passionate relationship with Mr. Renal, she respects him. In addition to this, she doesn't allow herself to judge him or be disloyal to him until she falls in love with Julien Sorel,

C'était une âme naïve que ne s'était élevée même jusqu'à juger son mari, et s'avouer qu'il l'ennuyait. Elle supposait sans se le dire qu'entre mari et femme il n'y avait pas de plus douces relations.¹⁴

Like Hester Prynne, Mrs. De Rênal is depicted as a strong woman. Hester stands against the puritan community, accepts to be punished publically and wear a scarlet "A" rather than reveal the name of her child's father. Similar to her is Mrs. Rênal who chooses to reveal her adultery, to be humiliated publically in order to save her child whom she believes is ill and will die as a result of her sin. She tells her lover, Julien;

Mais, si je te quitte,... Songe que c'est avec ignominie qu'il te chassera de sa maison; tout Verrières, tout Besançon parleront de ce scandale... s'écria-t-elle, en se levant debout. Je souffrirai, tant mieux... je m'humilie moi-même, je me jette dans la fange... Cette humiliation, aux yeux de tous, c'est peut-être une pénitence publique? Autant que ma faiblesse peut en juger, n'est-ce pas le plus grand sacrifice que je puisse faire à Dieu?... Peut-être daignera-t-il prendre mon humiliation et me laisser mon fils! Indique-moi un autre sacrifice plus pénible, et j'y cours. Laisse-moi me punir.¹⁵

Above all, both Hester Prynne and Mrs. De Rênal are tender-hearted mothers. Hester has primordially been a mother from the beginning of the story onward. First of all, she is a mother to Pearl, but secondly, and perhaps more significantly, in her Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter: A Romance*, Nina Baym remarks that Hester Prynne is a “Magna Mater” or “mother to all” as well.¹⁶ While the first type of maternity symbolizes her adultery and as a result involuntarily detaches her from the rest of the Puritan community, the latter creates a connection between Hester and mankind.¹⁷

2-Dimmesdale and Julian Sorel

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Minister Arthur Dimmesdale resembles in many ways Henri Stendhal’s young Julien Sorel. Dimmesdale is a religious man. He is seen as a trustful person of high status, and the founder of the puritan community. He becomes an eloquent and emotionally powerful speaker, and a compassionate, brave leader. Consequently, this drives Dimmesdale to further internalize his guilt and self-punishment. This leads to still more deterioration in his physical and spiritual condition.

a young clergyman, who had come from one of the great English universities...His eloquence and religious fervor had already given the earnest of high eminence in his profession. He was a person of very striking aspect, with a white, lofty, and impending brow, large, brown, melancholy eyes... with a freshness, and fragrance, and dewy purity of thought, which, as many people said, affected them like the speech of an angel.¹⁸

Unlike Dimmesdale, Julien Sorel is the son of a carpenter, and the intellectual of the family. Julien dreams of following in the footsteps of his hero, Napoleon. He received an excellent education but his lack of money forces him to fight to become a famous person in his society. He is an intelligent and passionate peasant who becomes tutor to the three sons of the mayor of Verrières. He seduces their mother, Mrs. Rênal, who falls in love with him.

Il avait les joues pourpres et les yeux baissés. C'était un petit jeune homme de dix-huit à dix-neuf ans..., mais délicats, et un nez aquilin. De grands yeux noirs,...Des cheveux châtain foncé, plantés fort bas...Une taille svelte et bien prise annonçait plus de légèreté que de vigueur.¹⁹

In the two novels, the two heroes are portrayed as self-centred men. Julien is depicted by Stendhal as a hypocrite and ambitious man. He imagines a great destiny for himself, and learns the Bible by heart to impress the citizens. Like Dimmesdale, Julien realises, while still in his early youth, that the road to power and success lies in the church. He reaches this conviction when a new church is being built in Verrières. He talks of “ce bel état de prêtre qui mène à tout”.²⁰ In this province, power lies in the hands of the clergy. “Julien fut étonné; l'idée de la religion était invinciblement liée dans son esprit à celle d'hypocrisie et d'espoir de gagner de l'argent”²¹

He continues to attempt to seduce Mrs. Rênal, and then, he tries to kill her in a church. “Son amour était encore de l'ambition ; c'était de la joie de posséder, lui pauvre être malheureux et si méprisé, une femme aussi noble et aussi belle.”²² The young Sorel is obsessed with the fear that his mistress will never be able to love him because she is noble and he is not.

When Julien leaves the Rênal home, he settles in Paris where he takes a position as a secretary for the Marquis de la Mole. Once there, he seduces the Marquis' daughter, Mathilde. The first time Julien sees Mathilde, during his first dinner at the Marquis's house, he does not like her. But the quest to seduce Mathilde, the need to dominate her, possess her love to integrate into high society, and to satisfy his ambition gives him the strength to do it.

In his turn Hawthorne's hero Dimmesdale wants to protect his social status, and is too frightened and selfish to reveal his sin; therefore, he convinces himself that it is better to put on a false show and continue to serve his fellow-men than to confess his guilt and take up his

shame, like Hester has done. Dimmesdale is morally awful, “Dimmesdale suppressed struggle for personal morality to an outward confession and assertion”.²⁴

Besides, Julien’s desire to be an important man in his society leads him to leave Mrs. De Rênal alone despite his love for her. His ambition to attain a high status in society urges him to have a relationship with Mathilde de la Mole. For this reason, he attempts to kill Mrs. Rênal when she manages to stop his marriage with Mathilde.

3-Roger Chillingworth and Mr. Rênal

According to Northrop Frey’s theory of Tragedy in his book *Anatomy of Criticism*, the events of a story always present a situation of enmity; an enemy to the hero returns to take revenge of him.

The hero provokes enmity, or inherits a situation of enmity, and the return of the avenger constitutes the catastrophe. The revenge-tragedy is a simple tragic structure, and like most simple structures can be a very powerful one, often retained as a central theme even in the most complex tragedies.²⁵

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Roger Chillingworth works to take revenge from Hester Prynne and Dimmesdale. In *Le Rouge et Le Noir* Mr. Rênal also yearns for taking revenge from Mrs. Rênal and Julien Sorel. Both men want to get rid of the young lover and to make their wives suffer for their infidelity.

Roger Chillingworth and Mr. Rênal are two wronged characters . From the beginning, the two characters are presented as wealthy men who seek revenge from their wives who betrayed them by committing adultery.

Roger Chillingworth is the former husband of Hester Prynne; he is an important character who takes part in the events of the novel. He has spent his life as a lonely scholar.

When he arrives in Massachusetts Bay Colony, he finds his wife suffering public shame for an adulterous act. He chooses revenge and decides to pursue Hester's lover.

a man, elderly, travel-worn, who, just emerging from the perilous wilderness, beheld the woman, in whom he hoped to find embodied the warmth and cheerfulness of home, set up as a type of sin before the people.²⁶

Mr. Rênal, the husband of Mrs. Rênal, is the wealthy Mayor of Verrières. He spends his life gathering money and in the construction of his social status. He is portrayed in the novel as a diplomatic person interested in politics more than in his wife. Julien describes the mayor at one point as: “Cet automate de Mari” and it is true that Mr. Rênal’s puppet-like existence has stripped him of all humanity. He is insensitive to the natural beauty and charm of his wife and to her feelings.

The two husbands are described as men who do not take care of their wives’ needs and desires; this is why the two women betrayed them by committing adultery when they meet with true love.

The Mayor is always occupied by his affairs, and is far from Verrières while his wife is occupied by the garden, and her children. His wife regrets that “ Mr .de Rênal serait ennuyé des conversations que j’ai avec Julien sur des choses d’imagination. Lui il pense a ces affaires.”²⁷

In *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, Mr. Rênal is depicted as an offensive and difficult man even with his wife. The latter has not the right to judge him; thus, she always listens to him,

c’était par un beau jour d’automne que M.de Rênal se promenait sur le Cours de la fidélité, donnant le bras à sa femme. Tout en écoutant son mari qui parlait d’un air grave, l’œil de madame de Rênal suivait avec inquiétude les mouvements de trois petits garçons ce beau monsieur de

Paris, disait M. de Rênal d'un air offensé, et la joue plus pâle encore qu'à l'ordinaire.²⁸

Unlike De Renal, Chillingworth in Hawthorne's novel is a doctor and a man of skill; he married a young passionate woman whom, he is aware, has no affection towards him. Chillingworth "married his young, passionate wife. He knows that Hester did not love him and that he was not the kind of man to make her a husband".²⁹. Moreover, he sends Hester to Boston while he gives more importance to his affairs.

Through the two novels, we notice that the reactions of Chillingworth and Mr. Rênal toward their wives' deeds are mainly the same. The two characters seek revenge, and plan to make the two women suffer with their lovers.

Once Mr. Rênal receives a letter from an anonymous person who informs him of the relationship between his wife and the tutor, he unconsciously thinks how to kill them. "depuis l'instant qu'il avait ouvert la lettre anonyme, l'existence de M. de Rênal avait été affreuse"³⁰. He is, nevertheless, satisfied that he has not a daughter that will bear the shame of her mother and the penal code will be with him. He tells himself;

Grâce au Ciel, disait M. de Rênal dans d'autres moments, je n'ai point de fille, et la façon dont je vais punir la mère ne nuira point à l'établissement de mes enfants ; je puis surprendre ce petit paysan avec ma femme, et les tuer tous les deux ; dans ce cas, le tragique de l'aventure en ôtera peut-être le ridicule. Cette idée lui sourit ; il la suivit dans tous ses détails. Le code pénal est pour moi, et, quoi qu'il arrive, notre congrégation et mes amis du jury me sauveront. Il examina son couteau de chasse, qui était fort tranchant ; mais l'idée du sang lui fit peur.³¹

On his part, Chillingworth also chooses to administer private vengeance upon Dimmesdale; he decides to torture the Reverend morally. "The physician knew then, that, in the minister's regard, he was no longer a trusted friend, but his bitterest enemy."³². To reach his aims, he pretends to cure the minister after his health deteriorates. In fact, he uses his knowledge of science for bad ends.

a quiet depth of malice, hitherto latent, but active now...which led him to imagine a more intimate revenge than any mortal had ever wreaked upon an enemy.³³

What makes Mr. Rênal differ from Chillingworth is that Mr. Rênal is simply convinced by his wife that she is innocent, and that Julien is too young to have a relationship with. In addition, Mr. Rênal sees that the best way to save his social status from this scandal is to send Julien far from his home. “M. de Rênal avait ordonné à Julien de loger chez lui.”³⁴

Enfin Julien quitta Verrières. M. de Rênal fut bien heureux ; au moment fatal d’accepter de l’argent de lui, ce sacrifice se trouva trop fort pour Julien. Il refusa net. M. de Rênal lui sauta au cou les larmes aux yeux. Julien lui ayant demandé un certificat de bonne conduite.³⁵

Besides, unlike Mr. Rênal, Chillingworth knows that he is also a sinner, and that Hester has not loved him from the beginning of their relationship. When Hester reminds him “thou knowest that I was frank with thee. I felt no love, nor feigned any.... It was my folly! I have said it... “I have greatly wronged thee,”³⁶ Chillingworth replies:

“We have wronged each other,” answered he. “Mine was the first wrong, when I betrayed thy budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay.”³⁷

4-Mathilde de la Mole and Hester Prynne

The second important woman character that Stendhal created in *Le Rouge et le Noir* is Mathilde. She is from high status, and keeps an important place in her society. Mathilde de La Mole is the beautiful, proud daughter of the marquis de La Mole, a rich and powerful noble man. She is a remarkable personality, and aristocratic young girl from Paris. She is the second mistress of Julien. Mathilde falls in love with him and confesses that she is pregnant. She warns her father of her desire to marry the young secretary. But the Marquis de La Mole refuses the marriage when he receives a letter from Mrs. Rênal denouncing the immorality of Julien Sorel,

Elle outre toutes les modes, sa robe lui tombe des épaules...elle est encore plus pâle qu'avant son voyage...Quels cheveux sans couleur, à force d'être blonds! On dirait que le jour passe à travers !...Que de hauteur dans cette façon de saluer, dans ce regard ! quels gestes de reine !.³⁸

Hester Prynne is Hawthorne's most important woman character in *The Scarlet Letter*. She is portrayed as having a significant place in her community in comparison with the other women. She is educated, courageous and very beautiful. She lived a love story with Arthur Dimmesdale but the affair was doomed to destruction.

She saw her own face, glowing with girlish beauty, and illuminating all the interior of the dusky mirror in which she had been wont to gaze at it.³⁹

As far as *Le Rouge et Le Noir* is concerned, Mathilde's child managed to change her life. In spite of being a symbol of adultery or shame, he became a source of happiness for his mother. Once Mathilde recognizes that she is pregnant, her relationship with Julien Sorel begins to be more serious than before. Informed by the young woman, Julien decides to marry her. "Elle se trouva enceinte et l'apprit avec joie à Julien...Mathilde fut bien heureuse. Julien avait suivi son rôle avec tant d'application"⁴⁰

Similarly, in *The Scarlet Letter* Pearl is regarded by her mother as a God's gift for all the sadness she bears. "She named the infant "pearl", as being of great price, purchased with all she had, her mother's only treasure!"⁴¹. This little girl gives her strength to face the Puritan community, the courage and the happiness to accept her new life. "She is my happiness...she is my torture, none the less! Pearl keeps me here in life! Pearl punishes me, too!"⁴²

Although Pearl is regarded as a symbol of shame and sin, Hester looks at her daughter with great love. This is evident when she refuses to reveal the identity of the father of her

child. "God gave me this child! He gave her in requital of all things else which ye had taken from me".⁴³

In *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, Stendhal creates his heroine Mathilde in a different way. He gives her more freedom than the other characters because she is the young girl of the Marquis de la Molle, a wealthy man in Paris. Her high social status gives her the chance to do what ever she wants “ Mademoiselle de la Mole était le centre d’un petit groupe qui se formait presque tous les soirs derrière l’immense bergère de la marquise.”⁴⁴

Contrary to Mathilde, Hawthorne’s heroine Hester Prynne has not a high status in her society. She leaves England to America to make her life better. Yet, her education and open-mindedness let her to be free and do all what she considers appropriate to her life.

alone, and hopeless of retrieving her position, even had she not scorned to consider it desirable, she cast away the fragments of a broken chain. The world’s law was no law for her mind. It was an age in which the human intellect, newly emancipated...She assumed a freedom of speculation.⁴⁵

In fact, the two heroines get involved in reckless love affairs. At the end of the two novels, both Hester and Mathilde accept their tragic fate and even decide to die with their partners when they are condemned to death. What’s more, after the death of Arthur Dimmesdale and Julien Sorel, things turned out for the two women who managed to change their societies’ views, and their stories served as symbols for individual’s struggle and triumph over the constraints of society.

In this section, we have compared the main characters of *The Scarlet Letter* with those of *Le Rouge et le Noir* in the light of the definition of the theory of Tragedy given in Northrop Frye’s book *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). We have shown the similarities as well as the differences at the level of characterization. We deduce from all that we have said before that both Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henri Stendhal intend to give a critical view of the

societies and the mores in seventeenth century England and nineteenth century France. Above all, they give hints of the struggle of the individual against the constraints of society and his fate when he transgresses his society's laws.

End Notes

¹ Northrop Frye, (1990), *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Penguin books, 1957), 219.

² Nathaniel Hawthorne , (1994), *The Scarlet Letter*, (New York: Penguin books, 1850), 50.

³ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 50.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Henri Stendhal, *Le Rouge et Le Noir : Le livre de poche* (Paris : Brodard et Taupin, 1961), 15.

⁷ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 19.

⁸ Suzanne Brown , (1995), *York notes on the Scarlet Letter* (Singapore: Longman, 1981), 63-64.

⁹ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 31.

¹⁰ Ibid.; 44.

¹¹ Ibid.; 49.

¹² Frey, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 220.

¹³ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 50-51.

¹⁴ Ibid.; 20.

¹⁵ Ibid.; 120.

¹⁶ Nina Baym, “Introduction”. *The Scarlet Letter. Nathaniel Hawthorne* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 23.

¹⁷ Ibid.; 7-28.

¹⁸ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 62.

¹⁹ Stendhal, *Rouge et Noir*, 24.

²⁰ Ibid.; 270.

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid.; 97.

²³ Ruland.R and Bradburry. M, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 146.

²⁴ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 208- 209.

²⁵ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 108.

²⁶ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 72.

²⁷ Ibid. ; 15.

²⁸ Terry. J Dibble, *Cliffs Notes on Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter* (Nebaraska: Cliffs Notes, Inc. 1998), 66.

²⁹ Stendhal, *Rouge et Noir*, 129.

³⁰ Ibid.; 131.

³¹ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 204.

³² Ibid.; 128.

³³ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 142.

³⁴ Ibid.; 166.

³⁵ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 69

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 289.

³⁸ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 55.

³⁹ Stendhal, *Rouge et Noir*, 435.

⁴⁰ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 82.

⁴¹ Ibid.; 104.

⁴² Ibid. ; 103.

⁴³ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 261.

⁴⁴ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 150-151.

III. Themes

Representation of Love and Tragic Fate in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Le Rouge et le Noir*

I- Representation of Love in the two Novels

Throughout our study of the two novels, we notice that one of the most prominent themes in both works is the theme of love and tragic fate. Through this analysis, we will see how Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henri Stendhal build their tragic love stories through the main characters in relation to their societies. In dealing with these themes, we are going to rely on Northrop Frey's theory Mythos of tragedy in his book *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957).

Both Hawthorne and Stendhal tackle the theme of love in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Le Rouge et le Noir*. In fact, the two authors undertake this theme of passionate and reckless love as the centre of their works to explore the hypocrisy of their own societies. Concerning Hawthorne's novel, the centre of the story is the love affair between Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne and its consequences. According to Leslie A. Fiedler:

The *Scarlet Letter* is the only eminent American book before the modern period to have made-or to have seemed to make-passionate love its center, and it was this which moved the scandalized critics to talk about the beginnings of "a French era" in our chaste literature.¹

The young clergyman of high social class, a man of God and truth who is supposed to be an example for all the community, asks Hester publicly to name her lover while he is the sinner.

I charge thee to speak out thy name of the fellow-sinner, and fellow-sufferer! Be not silent from any mistaken pity and tenderness for him; for, believe me, Hester, though he were to step down from a high place, and stand there beside thee on thy pedestal of shame.²

At the beginning, Arthur Dimmesdale prefers to live keeping secret his adultery with Hester. His high place as a man of God pushes him to save his social status, and let his

beloved face her community alone. “Dimmesdale seeks to hide his sin, and to learn from it believing in rightness of his ministry”³.

The story goes on for the most part between the lover and the husband, the tormented young Puritan minister, who carries the secret of his own lapse from pastoral purity, locked up beneath an exterior that commends itself to the reverence of his flock, while he sees the softer partner of his guilt standing in the full glare of exposure and humbling herself to the misery of atonement between this more wretched and pitiable culprit, to whom dishonor would come as a comfort and the pillory as a relief.⁴

According to Henri James, “In spite of the relation between Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale, no story of love was surely ever less of a “love story”⁵. Besides, Dimmesdale’s dilemma, either to continue in his ministry, or share Hester’s shame costs him great suffering. Throughout the novel, he is revealed as a man for whom work and public role are more important than private life. However, he gradually convinces himself that his private affections to Hester are more important. In other words, he comes to believe that his private life can be reconciled with his public life by confession,

What a strange, sad man is he!" said the child, as if speaking partly to herself. 'In the dark night-time he calls us to him, and holds thy hand and mine, as when we stood with him on the scaffold yonder. And in the deep forest, where only the old trees can hear, and the strip of sky see it, he talks with thee, sitting on a heap of moss! And he kisses my forehead, too, so that the little brook would hardly wash it off! But here, in the sunny day, and among all the people, he knows us not; nor must we know him! A strange, sad man is he, with his hand always over his heart!'.⁶

At the end of the novel, Dimmesdale decides to share Hester’s shame, and accepts to stand with his beloved and his daughter on the same public scaffold that witnessed Hester’s shame and disgrace. At last, the tormented Minister chooses to be condemned with Hester rather than suffer alone, “Ye have both been here before, but I was not with you. Come up hither once again, and we will stand all three together!”⁷

Stendhal also develops through Julien Sorel the hypocrisy of the bourgeois society. The hero is portrayed as a complex character; he is full of contradictions. “ les conquêtes de Mme de Rênal est de Mathilde de la Mole sont des enjeux à la fois amoureux et sociaux.”⁸

Indeed, from the opening pages of the novel, Sorel's life is marked by deep passion, ambition and hypocrisy for Mrs. Rênal. He dreams of becoming a new kind of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Julien obtint ce qu'il avait désiré avec tant de passion pendant les deux premières. Un peu plus tôt arrivés, le retour aux sentiments tendres, l'éclipse des remords chez madame de Rênal eussent été un bonheur divin ; ainsi obtenus avec art, ce ne fut qu'un plaisir. Julien voulut absolument contre les instances de son amie.⁹

Besides, he succeeds to seduce Mrs. Rênal, and to occupy a high position in society. He reaches the point where he tries to kill Mrs. Rênal who succeeds to stop his marriage with Mathilde, but at the end, he regrets what he has done. He even recognizes that he has loved her.

L'ambition était morte en son cœur, une autre passion y était sortie de ses cendres; il l'appelait le remords d'avoir assassiné Mme de Rênal. Dans le fait, il en était éperdument amoureux...il était éperdument amoureux. Il trouvait un bonheur singulier quand, laissé absolument seul...au souvenir des journées heureuses qu'il avait passées jadis à Verrières ou à Vergy.¹⁰

When Julien encounters Mrs. Rênal for the first time, he is surprised by her beauty, and he admires her very much. He even forgets what he drives him to the Rênal home. “étonné de sa beauté, il oublia tout, même ce qu'il venait faire...Julien n'avait jamais vu un être aussi bien vêtu et surtout une femme avec un teint si éblouissant, lui parler d'un air doux.”¹¹

At the Rênal home, Julien's ambition and desire to gain status as an important member of the society begins to change by owing a great love to Mrs. Rênal. After a short time, his liaison

with his mistress changes his life which has acquired sense than before. With her, Julien begins to enjoy his life, and learns that love is more important than money and social status,

Dans ses moments d'oubli d'ambition, Julien admirait avec transport jusqu'aux chapeaux, jusqu'aux robes de Mme de Rênal. Il ne pouvait se rassasier du plaisir de sentir leur parfum. Il ouvrait son armoire de glace et restait des heures entières admirant la beauté et l'arrangement de tout ce qu'il y trouvait. Son amie, appuyée sur lui, le regardait ; lui regardait ces bijoux, ces chiffons qui, la veille d'un mariage, emplissent une corbeille de noce. [...] Pour Julien, jamais il ne s'était trouvé aussi près de ces terribles instruments de l'artillerie féminine.¹²

Throughout the novel, we notice that Julien Sorel's love to Mrs. Rênal is stronger than his ambition. He is very happy with her, and he regrets that he treats her with coldness. Furthermore, he becomes sad because of her suffering, "Assis à cote d'une femme qu'il adorait, la serrant presque dans ses bras, dans cette chambre ou il avait été si heureux... il eut malheur de devenir un froid politique, presque aussi calculant."¹³

When Julien returns to his mistress at Verrières after a long absence, he recognizes that his love to Mrs. Rênal is real. He sees her as being more beautiful than before, and he realises that he can never find a woman like her. She has all what a man can desire in woman; a strong character and personality,

Julien la serra dans ses bras avec la plus vive passion ; jamais elle ne lui avait semblé si belle. Même à Paris, se disait-il confusément, je ne pourrai rencontrer un plus grand caractère. Elle avait toute la gaucherie d'une femme peu accoutumée à ses sortes de soins, et même temps le vrai courage d'un être qui ne craint que des dangers d'un autre ordre et bien autrement terrible.¹⁴

At the end of the novel, Julien's love for his mistress Mrs. Rênal is more evident than before. When his community sentences him to death, he accepts his fate. However, he regrets what he has done to his mistress, and he wishes to have the chance to live only to be with Mrs. Rênal,

je mourrai à vingt-trois ans. Donnez- moi cinq années de vie de plus, pour vivre avec madame de Rênal...Ah ! s'il existait...hélas ! je tomberais à ses pieds. J'ai mérite la mort, lui dirai-je ; mais, grand Dieu, Dieu bon, Dieu indulgent, rend- moi celle que j'aime.¹⁵

In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, the story opens with Hester Prynne who stands on the public pillory scaffold with her daughter in her arms. Hester is punished by her society for committing adultery. She is condemned to wear a scarlet "A" on her breast as a mark of her sin and shame because she does not accept to reveal the name of her child's father. "All the light and graceful foliage of her character had been withered up by this red-hot brand, and had long ago fallen away, leaving a bare and harsh outline"¹⁶

From the first scene of the novel, the heroine is ashamed and humiliated publically, and her love to Arthur Dimmesdale brings her tragic fate. She is isolated from the society, which casts her out from the town to live alone in the forest with her daughter.

Much of the marble coldness of Hester's impression was to be attributed to the circumstance that her life had turned in a great measure, from passion and feeling, to thought. Standing alone in the world, alone, as to any dependence on society, and with little Pearl to be guided and protected, alone and hopeless of retrieving her position.¹⁷

Throughout the story, Hester Prynne is portrayed as a strong woman who struggles to protect her love. She is the victim of her earliest marriage with Chillingworth for whom she has no feelings. Hence, once she experiences this love with Arthur Dimmesdale, she accepts to be punished and humiliated by her society rather than to reveal his identity. Thus, when the minister asks her to reveal the name of the man with whom she has sinned, Hester replies;

Never! Replied Hester Prynne looking not at Mr. Wilson, but into the deep and troubled eyes of the younger clergyman [Dimmesdale]. 'It is too deeply branded. Ye cannot take it off. And would that I might endure his agony, as well as mine!'¹⁸

Later on, Hester learns to live by accepting her fate, to have the strength, the courage to regain the respect of her society after seven years of suffering. At the end, she succeeds, and the symbol “A” of adultery becomes the one of Able, Angle.

As in *The Scarlet Letter*, The first love that is revealed in *Le Rouge et le Noir* is the affectionate relationship between Mrs. Rênal and Julien Sorel. This relationship blends multiple feelings, such as maternal and passionate secret love that leads to adultery.

In Northrop Frye’s theory of Tragedy extended in his book *Anatomy of Criticism*, the second phase is related to the youth of the romantic hero or to the tragedy of innocence. According to Frye, the tragic hero is very young; he has no experience and he is confused by his first contact with an adult situation. Hester Prynne and Mrs. Rênal are women who have been victims of their youth and recklessness. The two women married when they were very young with men older than them.¹⁹

Like Hester, the heroine of *Le Rouge et le Noir*, Mrs Rênal, is a woman who has no affection towards her husband. She is a wealthy woman who has inherited a fortune from her aunt. She married at the age of sixteen the Mayor of Verrières for whom she has no feelings,

Elle n'avait de sa vie éprouvé, ni vu rien, qui ressemblât le moins du monde à l'amour. Mais elle ne déteste pas non plus son mari: elle l'accepte, et le trouve même beaucoup moins ennuyeux que tous les hommes de sa connaissance.²⁰

She is described as a beautiful woman of thirty years old. At the same time, she is portrayed as timid, modest, and as having a strong personality. “ elle n’avait aucune expérience de la vie, et ne se souciait pas de parler”²¹. She is inexperienced; she devotes her life to her family. “ Elle aimait surtout M de Rênal quand il lui parlait de ses projets sur leurs enfants”.²²

When her husband the Mayor of Verriere decides to take Julien Sorel as a tutor to her children, Mrs. Rênal's life begins to change. After the young teacher arrives to the mayor's house, he meets Mrs. Rênal. The young teacher is surprised by the woman's character, and beautiful look. At the same time, Mrs. Rênal also admires Julien's character, but she considers him as being still very young. Afterwards, Julien begins to seduce the mother of the children. At first, she refuses him, but Julien succeeds to take a very important place in the heart of Mrs. Rênal. She even reaches the point where she cannot live without him.

Sa vie fut le ciel et l'enfer : l'enfer quand elle ne voyait pas Julien, le ciel quand elle était à ses pieds...je suis damnée, irrémisiblement damnée. ...Mais au fond, je ne me repens point. Je commettrais de nouveau ma faute si elle était à commettre ... La méfiance et l'orgueil souffrant de Julien ... Il adorait Mme de Rênal. Elle a beau être noble, et moi le fils d'un ouvrier, elle m'aime... Je ne suis pas auprès d'elle un valet de chambre chargé des fonctions d'amant. Cette crainte éloignée, Julien tomba dans toutes les folies de l'amour, dans ses incertitudes mortelles...Son amour ne fut plus seulement de l'admiration pour la beauté, l'orgueil de la posséder. [...] Leur bonheur avait quelquefois la physionomie du crime.²³

Similar to Hester, Mrs. Rênal's love to Julien pushes her to do everything to be with him. She accepts to suffer, to be humiliated and ashamed publically rather than to be far from her lover. Julien has become much more than a lover to her; she confesses that she loves him more than her own children and that she finds in him her sole source of strength.

Je souffrirai, tant mieux... je m'humilie moi-même, je me jette dans la fange... Cette humiliation, aux yeux de tous, c'est peut-être une pénitence publique? Autant que ma faiblesse peut en juger, n'est-ce pas le plus grand sacrifice que je puisse faire à Dieu?... Peut-être daignera-t-il prendre mon humiliation et me laisser mon fils! Indique-moi un autre sacrifice plus pénible, et j'y cours. Laisse-moi me punir... tu l'aimes, toi, dit Mme de Rênal, en se relevant et se jetant dans ses bras... Je te crois! Je te crois! Continua-t-elle ...; ô mon unique ami! ô pourquoi n'es-tu pas le père de Stanislas? Alors ce ne serait pas un horrible péché de t'aimer mieux que ton fils. ... Julien fondait en larmes. Je t'obéirai, dit-il, en tombant à ses pieds, je t'obéirai quoi que tu m'ordonnes; c'est tout ce qui me reste à faire.²⁴

Like Hester, Mrs. Rênal betrays her husband by having a love affair with the tutor of her children. In reality, Mr. Rênal is not interested in his wife; he is interested more in his affairs. For this reason Mrs. Rênal becomes more concerned with Julien, she has no affection for her husband, and she does not care if he discovers her relation with Julien because she prefers to die with Julien rather than to be with him,

voici la fin de tout, s'écria madame de Renal, en se jetant dans les bras de Julien. Il va nous tuer tous les deux. Il ne croit pas aux voleurs ; je vais mourir dans tes bras, plus heureuse a ma mort que je ne fus de la vie. Elle ne répondait nullement a son mari qui se fâchait, elle embrassait Julien avec passion.²⁵

Unmistakably, at the end of Stendhal's novel, Mrs. Rênal's love for Julien is evident. In spite of everything that Julien commits against her, his attempt to kill her, and his marriage with Mathilde, she forgives him, and struggles to help him. Mrs. Rênal confesses that her love for Julien is stronger than before and she reaches the point where she believes that the feelings she owes to Julien are like the ones that she owes to God.

Des que je te vois, tous les devoirs disparaissent, je ne suis plus qu'amour pour toi, ou plutôt, le mot amour est trop faible. Je sens pour toi ce que je devrais sentir uniquement pour Dieu : un mélange de respect, d'amour, d'obéissance...En vérité, je ne sais pas ce que tu m'inspires.²⁶

Mathilde de la Molle is another important woman character in *Le Rouge et le Noir*. Through the character of Mathilde, Henri Stendhal develops the theme of love in a different way from the first. She is the typical image of a young Parisian aristocratic woman; she is beautiful, independent, and audacious. She is regarded as a queen by the aristocratic society. She falls in love with Julien from the first meeting. The latter; leaves Verrières to Paris to work as a secretary in the Marquis' home; the wealthy father of Mathilde.

At the beginning of Julien's work at the Marquis's house, he encounters Mathilde, but he does not give her any importance. "Julien était un dandy maintenant, et comprenait l'art de vivre a Paris, il fut d'une froideur parfaite envers mademoiselle de La

Mole”.²⁷ In fact, Julien’s first meeting with Mathilde is different from that with Mrs. Rênal. The impression Mrs. Rênal had on him was stronger than the feeling he gets when he first encounters the girl of the Marquis,

Presque en même temps il aperçut une jeune personne, extrêmement blonde et fort bien faite, qui vint s’asseoir vis-à-vis de lui. Elle ne lui plut point ; cependant, en la regardant attentivement, il pensa qu’il n’avait jamais vu des yeux aussi beaux ; mais ils annonçaient une grande froideur d’ame...Madame de Renal avait cependant de bien beaux yeux, se disait-il .²⁸

While Julien is not interested in her, Mathilde tries to seduce him; “ Elle suivait machinalement de l’œil Julien, qui c’était éloigné d’un air respectueux, mais fière et mécontent”.²⁹

After a short time in Mathilde’s home, Julien begins to see the beautiful young woman differently. She is different from Mrs. Rênal and younger than she is. For Julien “ sa beauté a de la jeunesse”²⁸. And among all the women, the young aristocratic girl is, for Julien, different with her character “Mademoiselle de la Mole a l’air d’être maitresse du plaisir que lui fait son triomphe, dont elle s’aperçoit fort bien. On dirait qu’elle craint de plaire a qui lui parle”³⁰

Thus, after living with Mathilde, Julien begins to admire her, and even to love her. He begins to seduce her, and lives with her a different love story of that of Mrs. Rênal. “Ses yeux exprimaient le feu de la conscience et le mépris des vains jugements des hommes”³⁰.

Mathilde, in her turn, begins to owe to Julien a great love. Many men of high rank want to be with her but Mathilde does not care for them, and prefers to be with Julien. She even reaches the point where she cannot live without him. More to this point, she accepts to be his servant,

Punis-moi de mon orgueil atroce, lui disait-elle, en le serrant dans ses bras de façon à l'étouffer ; tu es mon maître, je suis ton esclave, il faut que je te demande pardon à genoux d'avoir voulu me révolter. Elle quittait ses bras pour tomber à ses pieds. Oui, tu es mon maître, lui disait-elle encore ivre de bonheur et d'amour ; règne à jamais sur moi, punis sévèrement ton esclave quand elle voudra se révolter.³¹

Mathilde's love for Julien grows stronger than before. Moreover, even Julien's love for her seems greater than before. His life with Mathilde begins to change his conception of things. In fact, with her, Julien starts to forget all about his past life and enjoy being with Mathilde,

Mathilde lui semblait adorable, toute parole est faible pour exprimer l'excès de son admiration. En se promenant à côté d'elle, il regardait à la dérobée ses mains, ses bras, son port de reine. Il était sur le point de tomber à ses pieds, anéanti d'amour et de malheur, et en criant : Pitié !³²

Julien's relation with Mathilde's comes to be more serious than before, and it reaches the point where Julien decides to marry Mathilde because of her pregnancy. Mathilde is very happy with Julien because it seems to her that he loves her and that she is the only one who owes great love, "Mathilde fut bien heureuse. Julien avait suivi son rôle avec tant d'application, qu'il était parvenu à lui faire penser qu'elle était celle avec qui avait le plus d'amour".³³

Besides, Mathilde becomes Julien's beloved who shares his solitude, and helps him forget Mrs. Rênal. When Julien goes to Strasbourg, he suffers from Mathilde's absence and the thought that she had abandoned him.

Je souffrais bien autrement durant mon premier voyage à Strasbourg, quand je me croyais abandonné par Mathilde...Et pouvoir dire que j'ai désiré avec tant de passion cette intimité parfaite qui aujourd'hui me laisse si froid !³⁴

Mrs. Rênal's letter to the Marquis de la Molle changes things by interrupting Mathilde's dreams. Out of jealousy, Mrs. Rênal writes to the Marquis about Julien's ambition and his desire to gain social status. Mathilde's father decides to stop their marriage. As a

result, Julien decides to kill Mrs. Rênal by shutting her in the church. “Après une telle action, comment la persuader que je l’aime uniquement? Car enfin j’ai voulu la tuer par ambition ou par amour pour Mathilde”.³⁵

In *Anatomy of Criticism* Frye states that in Tragedy the heroes are released, but their release is hampered because of the order of nature, In full tragedy, the main characters are emancipated from dream, an emancipation which is at the same time a restriction, because the order of nature is present³⁶

Hence, in *The Scarlet Letter* and in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, the heroes and the heroines’ love affair is doomed to destruction and death because of the order of nature. The reasons for their failure are both psychological and social. The Puritan and the bourgeois social and moral values have an important role for the failure of the characters. At that time, love and marriage in France and America may be at some point the same. Love seemed to be inexistent and if it existed, it is restricted to married couples. Besides, both societies seemed to maintain the holiness of the contract of marriage, and it is easy to see in both works the desire of the characters to escape the sad and ugly reality of the society in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Le Rouge et le Noir*.

End Notes

- ¹ Leslie A Fiedler. *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Stein and Day, 1997), 495.
- ² Nathaniel Hawthorne, (1994), *The Scarlet Letter* (New York: Penguin books, 1850), 57.
- ³ Ruland.R and Bradburry. M, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 146.
- ⁴ Henri James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, Vol 01, (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 403-404.
- ⁵ James, *Literary Criticism*, 403.
- ⁶ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 209
- ⁷ Ibid.;140.
- ⁸ Vaillant, A et all, *Histoire de la Littérature Française du XIX^E Siecle* (Rennes Cedex : Press Universitaires de Rennes, 2006), 159.
- ⁹ Henri Stendhal, *Le Rouge et Le Noir, Le livre de poche* (Paris : Brodard et Taupin, 1961), 228.
- ¹⁰ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 474.
- ¹¹ Ibid.; 33.
- ¹² Ibid.; 97.
- ¹³ Ibid.; 227.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.; 233.

¹⁵ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 505.

¹⁶ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 149-50.

¹⁷ Ibid.; 150

¹⁸ Ibid.; 64

¹⁹ Northrop Frye, (1990), *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Penguin books, 1957), 220.

²⁰ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 157.

²¹ Ibid.; 74

²² Ibid.; 21.

²³ Ibid.; 121-122.

²⁴ Ibid.; 120.

²⁵ Ibid.; 234.

²⁶ Ibid.; 495.

²⁷ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 287.

²⁸ Ibid. ; 291

²⁹ Ibid., 290.

³⁰ Ibid.; 301.

³¹ Ibid.; 366.

³² Ibid.; 357.

³³ Ibid.; 436.

³⁴ Ibid.; 477.

³⁵ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 488.

³⁶ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 206-207.

III. The Representation of The Theme of Tragic Fate in the two Novels

As we have said before, *The Scarlet Letter* and *Le Rouge et le Noir* are regarded to be as critiques to their societies. Through the two novels, Hawthorne and Stendhal highlight two major themes. In addition to love, tragic fate is another prominent theme that **govern** the reading of the novels.

In relation to Frey's theory of tragedy, he argues that in the fifth phase of tragedy the ironic element increases whereas the heroic decreases. "we know that the tragic hero cannot simply rub a lamp and summon a genie to get him out of his trouble."¹ In this phase, the characters have lower freedom; they cannot do things as they want because they act according to the conditions or laws of the society.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne attempts to portray through the characters, especially Hester Prynne the harshness and the rigid laws of the Puritan society. He manages through Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale to give the image of the Puritan community in the seventeenth century. According to Suzan Brown, Arthur Dimmesdale is a tragic hero; he is a noble man, a man of God who commits a sin which leads him to fall down. Therefore, *The Scarlet Letter* is,

an overall structure like the Greek tragedy, in which a noble figure, Dimmesdale, is ruined by a flaw or sin, while a chorus watches only half-comprehendingly.²

Dimmesdale is a leader and hardworking member of his congregation, and whose tragic flaw is his great fear of weakness and failure in losing his place among the Puritans. He is a member of high status and holds a prominent position in his community. His hard work had made him a recognized individual amongst the settlers of New England.

Dimmesdale's fear leads him to let Hester stand alone on the public scaffold. But, his life during the five years was dominated by fear and anguish. His suffering was not external, but lay deep within himself, "The only truth that continued to give Mr. Dimmesdale a real existence on this earth was the anguish in his inmost soul".³

At the beginning of Hawthorne's novel, the first scene opens with Hester's public condemnation, but at the end of the novel, the second scaffold scene, is a dramatic vision of *The scarlet Letter*. In this scene, Hawthorne's hero accepts his fate by public confession. The hero accepts to stand on the scaffold with Hester and his daughter to be condemned,

Hester Prynne," cried he, with a piercing earnestness...I withheld myself from doing seven years ago, come hither now, and twine thy strength about me! Thy strength, Hester; but let it be guided by the will which God hath granted me...Come, Hester, come! Support me up yonder scaffold!..⁴

Arthur Dimmesdale recognizes his fault, and he believes that he should stand on the scaffold with Hester. In other words, he regrets to have let Hester face the Puritan community alone seven years ago without assisting her, or share the shame with her. He confesses to his loving community of Puritans;

Ye, that have loved me!-ye, that have deemed me holy! Behold me here, the one sinner of the world! At last!-at last! - I stand upon the spot where, seven years since, I should have stood; here with this woman.⁵

By holding the hand of Hester Prynne and Pearl, Dimmesdale stands on the public scaffold and faces the Puritan community. He prefers to address all the people of New England by confessing his crime publically rather than suffer alone,

Partly supported by Hester Prynne, and holding one hand of little Pearl's, the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale turned to the dignified and venerable rulers; to the holy ministers, who were his brethren; to the people...yet overflowing with tearful

sympathy, as knowing that some deep life-matter which, if full of sin, was full of anguish and repentance likewise was now to be laid open to them... "People of New England!" cried he, with a voice that rose over them, high, solemn, and majestic, yet had always a tremor through it, and sometimes a shriek, struggling up out of a fathomless depth of remorse and woe yet, that have loved me! ye, that have deemed me holy! Behold me her, the one sinner of the world! At last! at last! I stand upon the spot where, seven years since, I should have stood; here, with this woman.⁶

After long suffering, Dimmesdale believes that his death will be a solution for all his problems. His love relationship with Hester is impossible to be fulfilled, so he aspires to die, because he believes that through death, they may free themselves from the worldly suffering, and live their love freely in the other world. "Shall we not spend our immortal life together? Surely, surely, we have ransomed one another with woe! Thou lookest far into eternity, with those bright dying eyes!"⁷

Standing on the scaffold, Hester Prynne and her daughter Pearl support Dimmesdale, and remain with him until his last breath. Dimmesdale acknowledges that he has violated God's laws. By his public confession the Reverend aspires to put an end to his worldly suffering and hopes for God's forgiveness because he knows that their love is doomed to destruction in this world. At his last breath, Pearl kisses him and her tears fall on her father's cheeks,

Then, down he sank upon the scaffold! Hester partly raised him, and supported his head against her bosom... "My God forgive thee!" said the minister. "Thou, too, hast deeply sinned!". He withdrew his dying eyes from the old man, and fixed them on the woman and the child... Pearl kissed his lips. The great scene of grief... and as her tears fell upon her father's cheek... Praised be His name! His will be done! Farewell!" That final word came forth with the minister's expiring breath.⁸

In his theory of Tragedy, Northrop Frye argues that tragedy is based on a single individual, or the hero who is confused either to follow his status or to live as all humans. More to this, the tragic hero is greater or of high status compared to other people,

tragedy is more concentrated on a single individual... the typical tragic hero is somewhere between the divine and the "all too human."... The tragic hero is very great as compared with us, but there is something else, something on the side of him opposite the audience... This something else may be called God, gods, fate, accident, fortune.⁹

In Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*, Dimmesdale is a tragic hero. He is educated as compared to the others and he is regarded as a man of God. His tragic flaw is his sin in committing adultery with Hester Prynne. His other weakness is his inability to decide whether to be with Hester and share her shame, or save his public status and reputation. It is this inability to choose between public and private life that brings the reverend's tragic end.

Similarly, In Henri Stendhal's novel, *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, Julien Sorel performs the role of a tragic hero. He lives a life full of contradictions. His main goal in life is to never give up until he becomes successful by gaining his place in his society. yet, his ambition leads him to end up sentenced to death.

The protagonist of *Le Rouge et le Noir* is introduced in the novel as a poor man from low social class who has no rights or opportunities as those belonging to high class. His ambition and hypocrisy to gain status in his society brings up his failure and eventually his death. Critic D. L. Gobert states that Julien is a representative of the alienated individual. He writes that Julien,

represents the individual alienated from and pitted against society, whose vileness and corruption offend his idealism and integrity as an individual... He is a tragic figure in that he is superior to the force that destroys him, and to the extent that he has assumed his own death, he cheats the guillotine. It is possible that Julien's amoral pose may be more acceptable than the immorality of the society that has forced him to adopt it.¹⁰

Like Dimmesdale, Julien Sorel accepts his fate; he accepts to be condemned and prefers to die rather than live in a society where he has no place. "Son âme était calme. Il ne trouvait rien que de simple dans son affaire : j'ai voulu tuer, je dois être tué"¹¹

In other words, the hero does not want to live in a world where there is no social justice, liberty and equality between human beings, in a world where the poor has no hope and humans are viewed according to their social class. The hero confesses that he has committed a fault against the person with whom he has a great moments in his life, with a beautiful woman for whom he has a strong passion and desire.

Messieurs, je n'ai point l'honneur d'appartenir à votre classe, vous voyez en moi un paysan qui s'est révolté contre la bassesse de sa fortune. Je ne vous demande aucune grâce. Je ne me fais point d'illusion; la mort m'attend, elle sera juste. J'ai pu attenter aux jours de la femme la plus digne de tout le respect, de tous les hommages. Madame de Rênal avait été pour moi comme une mère. Mon crime est atroce, et il fut prémédité. J'ai donc mérité la mort, messieurs les jurés.¹²

At the end of the novel, Julien Sorel is arrested by the French government. He is judged and condemned publically. In the day of his trial, there is a great movement; the judges decide that Julien is able to kill, and that he has intended to kill Mrs. Rênal with premeditation. For this reason, they come to decide that Julien deserves to die,

Comme deux heures venaient de sonner, un grand mouvement se fit entendre. La petite porte de la chambre des jurés s'ouvrit. M. le baron de Valenod s'avança d'un pas grave et théâtral, il était suivi de tous les jurés. Il toussa, puis déclara qu'en son âme et conscience la déclaration unanime du jury était que Julien Sorel était coupable de meurtre, et de meurtre avec préméditation : cette déclaration entraînait la peine de mort; elle fut prononcée un instant après.¹³

When he hears that he is condemned to death, Julien doesn't care and he shows a great courage and resignation. He accepts his condemnation; he even believes that his death will be a rest for him from suffering,

Le jour où on lui annonça qu'il fallait mourir, un beau soleil réjouissait la nature, et Julien était en veine de courage. Marcher au grand air fut pour lui une sensation délicieuse... Qui sait? Peut-être avons-nous encore des sensations après notre mort,

disait-il un jour a Fouqué. J'aimerais assez a reposer, puisque reposer est le mot.¹⁴

After some days, Julien's sentence is executed ; they end up his life by cutting his head "Il lui montra du doigt un grand manteau bleu sur le plancher; la était enveloppé ce qui restait de Julien"¹⁵

The two mistresses whom Julien loved Mrs. Rênal, and Mathilde de la Mole follow Julien's execution until the end. At the end of the novel, the two women accept each other, and both suffer after his death,

Elles tomberont dans les bras l'une de l'autre, ou se témoigneront une haine mortelle. Dans les deux cas, les pauvres femmes seront un peu distraites de leur affreuse douleur.¹⁶

Northrop Frey asserts in his theory of Tragedy that in the fifth phase, the tragic hero is isolated from his society, humiliated and punished publically. In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne is isolated from the puritans, humiliated and punished publically. Likewise, Mrs. Rênal the heroine of Stendhal's novel is sent far from Verrieres to her aunt's house, and she accepts to be humiliated publically to save Julien Sorel from death.¹⁷

In Hawthorne's novel, Hester Prynne's love story with Arthur Dimmesdale forms a pitiable tragedy. The heroine accepts her fate, keeping the identity of her partner secret and faces the puritan community alone. Hester prefers to stand on the scaffold with her little Pearl, and to be punished to save her love. "Hester pursues the pure love with her strong bravery and rebellion. However, her ideal was influenced by various factors and thus performed a pitiable tragedy."¹⁸.

Hester Prynne, at the beginning of the novel, prefers to be punished alone by her community to save Dimmesdale's place and reputation clean in his community. But, at the end of the novel when Dimmesdale stands on the scaffold, she decides to die with him. "I

know not! I know not!” she hurriedly replied. “Better? Yea; so we may both die and little Pearl die with us!”¹⁹.

Like Hester, Mrs. Rênal’s story with Julien Sorel is also seen as a tragedy of love. At the end of the novel Mrs. Rênal, like Hester, accepts to be humiliated or condemned publically with Julien rather than accept his death. She even decides to ask the king to help Julien and tells him that Julien is her beloved,

J’irai au roi, j’avouerai hautement que tu es mon amant: la vie d’un home et d’un home tel que Julien doit l’emporter sur toutes les considérations. Je dirai que c’est par jalousie que tu as attenté a ma vie.²⁰

Indeed, Mrs. Rênal assumes that she does not deserve anything in the world, and she only wishes to save Julien from death. Because she cannot live with the idea that perhaps she will be responsible for the death of her lover; she assumes that her life will have no sense if she will be.

Je ne désire qu’une chose au monde et avec passion, c’est qu’il soit sauvé. N’en doutez point, l’affreuse idée qu’à cause de moi un innocent a été conduit à la mort empoisonnerait le reste de ma vie et sans doute l’abrègerait. Comment pourrez- vous le condamner à mort, tandis que moi je vis ? Non, sans doute, la société n’a point le droit d’arracher la vie, et surtout à un être tel que Julien Sorel.²¹

After the death of Julien, Mrs. Rênal keeps her promise to him. She accepts to take care of Julien’s child from Mathilde, and to save her life by not managing to kill herself. But, three days after Julien’s execution, she dies kissing her children.

Like Mrs. Rênal and Hester Prynne, Mathilde also accepts her fate and prefers to die with Julien rather than live without him. “S’il meurt, je meurs après lui, se disait-elle avec toute la bonne foi possible.”²²

Mathilde also owes a great love to Julien. After Julien is condemned to death, she decides to die with him. More to the point, she tries to help Julien by convincing people especially women of his innocence, using her social status and money to save the life of the father of her child,

Il se livra avec délices à l'amour de Mathilde ; c'était de la folie, de la grandeur d'âme, tout ce qu'il y a de plus singulier. Elle lui proposa sérieusement de se tuer avec lui...Mathilde courait seule à pied, dans les rues de Besançon...Sa folie songeait à faire révolter pour sauver Julien marchant à la mort.²³

Following Julien's execution, Mathilde has the courage to be with her partner until his last breath; she holds his head, kisses it, and decides to take it by herself on her knees until his tomb. She follows Julien's funeral until the end, and even chooses the place of his burial.

Il entendit Mathilde marcher avec précipitation dans la chambre. Elle allumait plusieurs bougies. Lorsque Fouqué eut la force de la regarder, elle avait placé sur une petite table de marbre, devant elle, la tête de Julien, et la baisait au front. Mathilde suivait son amant jusqu'au tombeau qu'il s'était choisi... elle porta sur ses genoux la tête de l'homme qu'elle avait tant aimé.²⁴

Even after the death of Julien Sorel, Mathilde remains faithful to her love. She takes care of his tomb and even decorates it with marble sculpture, "par les soins de Mathilde, cette grotte sauvage fut ornée de marbres sculptés à grands frais en Italie".²⁵

Throughout this section we have studied the theme of tragic fate in Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* and Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir*. We have reached the conclusion that the two stories are tragedies of love because the two love stories are doomed to destruction and death. We have used Northrop Frye's theory, *Anatomy of Criticism* to show the extent to which the characters and themes in the novels meet the requirement of Frey's conception of Tragedy in his *Mythos of Winter*.

General Conclusion

To conclude our comparison of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830), we may say that even though the events of the two novels are set in different places, the two stories have many points in common.

The two works aim to reflect the image of society in the America of the seventeenth and nineteenth century France. Both Hawthorne and Stendhal illustrate how society plays an important role in shaping the characters' life and fate and in hindering their pursuit of happiness. Through the tragic love stories in the novels, the two authors give the reader glimpse into the mores of the Puritans and the French Bourgeois society in the 17th and 19th centuries.

To achieve our aim we have conducted our work through the IMRAD method. Accordingly, we had started our work with an introduction that highlighted our subject, and reviewed some of the most outstanding criticism on the novels and novelists.

To compare the two novels, we relied on Northrop Frey's theory of tragedy as it is developed in his book *Anatomy of Criticism* to show how fiction plays an important role in revealing the issues of love and tragic fate in relation to morality. After that, in the material section, we have provided short summaries of the two novels. In the most important part of our analysis which is the discussion section, we dealt with the comparative study of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir* through the study of their socio- historical backgrounds, characters and the theme of love and tragic fate.

However, we did not have the chance to study in depth Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* and Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir*. Indeed, this work calls for further investigations, and it is still noteworthy with workable themes.

Therefore, this topic is important for students who want to explore the world of literature to deal with the comparative study of the two novels including some other common aspects such as the plot, women representation, the theme of class and gender and so on.

End Notes

- ¹ Northrop Frye , (1990), *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Penguin books, 1957), 207.
- ² Suzanne Brown, (1995), *York notes on the Scarlet Letter* (Singapore: Longman, 1981), 60.
- ³ Nathaniel Hawthorne , (1994), *The Scarlet Letter* (New York: Penguin books, 1850), 134.
- ⁴ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 230.
- ⁵ Ibid.; 231.
- ⁶ Ibid.; 231.
- ⁷ Ibid.; 233
- ⁸ Ibid.; 232-234.
- ⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 207.
- ¹⁰ Gobert , D.L, *Cliffs Notes on Stendhal's The Red and The Black* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Cliffs Notes, Inc.1967), 56.
- ¹¹ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 461.
- ¹² Ibid.; 485-486.
- ¹³ Ibid.; 487.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.; 510-511.
- ¹⁵ Ibid. ; 511.
- ¹⁶ Ibid. ; 510.
- ¹⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 221.

¹⁸ Luo Lanlan , *On the Tragedy of Love in The Scarlet Letter* (China: University of Economics and Law, 2011), 83.

¹⁹ Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, 231.

²⁰ Stendhal, *Rouge et Le Noir*, 509.

²¹ Ibid. ; 480.

²³ Ibid.; 475.

²⁴ Ibid.; 468-469.

²⁵ Ibid. ; 511

²⁶ Ibid. ; 512.

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