

# Dissenting Female Voices: A Comparative Reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Fadia Faqir's *My Name Is Salma*

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**Abstract**—The female protagonists in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Fadia Faqir's *My Name Is Salma* (2007) face similar themes and explore the effects of adultery on women. Despite their different temporal, geographical, and cultural contexts, the novels fight oppression and marginalization. The authors carefully and delicately place the stories in a framework of crimes, marginalization, and dissent. The researchers use feminist critical analysis of the two texts to build an innovative argument that highlights the texts' many dissents. Hester Prynne's and Salma Ibrahim El-Musa's internal and external battles about giving up their lives, identities, and daughters disrupt cultural and religious standards. Hester commits adultery, refuses to reveal her daughter's biological father, and is, therefore, punished. Likewise, an illegitimate premarital affair impregnates Salma, and thus she is at risk of an honor murder. Hester and Salma resist being hushed, abused, and marginalized.

**Index Terms**—adultery, alienation, dissent, gender, honor

## I. INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, millions of women are victims of various forms of physical and psychological violence, which leaves permanent scars and limits their potential. According to Cixous (1981), women are compelled to embrace their subordination as depicted through the metaphor of “decapitation” within the realm of cultural education. Women are commonly portrayed as silenced individuals who severely experience the brunt of patriarchal society and religious constraints, regardless of temporal or geographical contexts. O'Malley (2015) mentions that “the speech of Hawthorne's self-motivated and articulate men is tied to their penchant for facility with governance, capital, and self-actualization, while his women, no matter how vibrant, eventually fall silent” (p. 657). In patriarchal societies, women are often seen as subservient and inferior to men.

Puritans severely prohibited extramarital sex and placed a high value on marriage and family. but they treated sinning men and women differently, as demonstrated in Hawthorn's *The Scarlet Letter* where Hester is punished, and Dimmesdale is left without questioning. Except in extreme circumstances of assault, adultery, and desertion, divorce was rare among the Puritans. This is a double-edged sword, as many women were denied of the most basic rights of happiness and liberty. Reading both texts, one can decipher the myriad of correspondences between them resulting from the analogous sociocultural contexts—the Puritans' treatment of women is much like some contemporary Arabs' perspectives on gender hierarchies. Culture and customs still impede Arab women's independence in the 21st century Women's responsibilities to society have traditionally been confined to marriage, childbearing, and helping men cultivate and raise animals to support their families. In the Arab region, patriarchal societies prevent women from exercising their numerous social and political rights. Sisters, daughters, and wives are perceived as men's property. Both novels present very strong female figures who endorse revolutionary views on different aspects of life and liberty.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

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Since its publication in 1850, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* has garnered significant attention and scrutiny from scholars and literary critics alike. While Wulansari (2017) focuses on adultery, Jayasimha (2014) deals with disloyalty and shame conflicts. Kilborne (2003) interprets the novel as a pure feminist piece. Wang (2010) prioritizes the Postmodern feminist aspects of the novel. Zayed (2023) demonstrates the influence of Puritan culture on American society, the concepts of self-sufficiency, independence, repentance, and penitence. Taylor (2005) tackles aspects of individuality and community.

Faqir's *My Name is Salam*, on the other hand, serves as a platform for exploring a range of cultural, socioeconomic, and feminist themes about Arab women, with a particular emphasis on Bedouin culture. Additionally, Sarnou (2015) and Sarnou (2017) delve into the analysis of various themes about Arab women, including their alienation, invisibility, marginalization, oppression, and lack of agency. Moreover, Lasri and Mouro (2019) and Aziz (2018) explore the concepts of identity and diaspora within the Arab context as well as the interplay between identity and modernity. Ghasemi et al. (2021) examine the theme of post-traumatic stress disorder. Hussein (2019) provides an analysis of Salma's predicament and her struggle to navigate the conflicting forces of her past and present circumstances. Salma endeavors to emancipate herself from the customs prevalent in her conservative neighborhood, exhibiting little assimilation into English culture and enduring a marginalized existence as a citizen of secondary status.

Although the novels' primary female characters have been analyzed from every conceivable angle, we have not found a single study demonstrating any intersections or conclusive relationships between both texts. Hester and Salma are stigmatized by society for engaging in adultery, which is in direct opposition to the rules and ideals of their respective traditional communities. As a result, they are labeled as sinners and face expulsion from their communities. Nevertheless, both characters demonstrate various forms and strategies of resistance to these imposed systems of oppression, which distinguishes them as symbols of powerful female figures.

### III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

#### A. *Sinner Puritan Woman in The Scarlet Letter*

When Hester Prynne is first introduced in the novel, we know that she is the silenced object of gaze who endures profound emotional and physical turmoil from her community. She initiates the trajectory of her social alienation, commencing from the jail entrance and extending to the marketplace, as she traverses the lane that guides her towards the scaffold or "pedestal of ignominy." This ignominious platform is surrounded by a gathering of individuals, including children, women, and men. Pearl, a three-month-old neonate, is carried by Hester, who is wearing the scarlet stigmata of an adulteress on her chest. The rigidity of Puritan women's attitudes toward an adulteress is reflected in their conversation; a fifty-year-old woman believes that the magistrates' verdict against "the hussy" is insufficient to deter other women from committing sins. Another autumnal matriarch insults Hester by referring to her as "naughty baggage," implying that she is an immoral, dishonorable, and worthless woman (p. 38). She states that putting a hot iron on Hester's face is the very least that the judges of the town should do (p. 38). The ugliest and most merciless woman in this group believes that Hester should be executed because she disgraces all women in her community. She believes that there should be a law in "the Scripture and the statute book" to uphold her position (p. 39). A young wife with a child comments that shame will remain in Hester's heart whether she hides or displays the scarlet letter.

The townspeople are "stern enough to look upon her death" (p. 42). The solemn and serious assembly exhibits a callousness that compels them to advocate for Hester's execution, without considering the severity of their condemnation against her. Notable is the fact that Hester does not solicit pity from the crowd. She instead maintains her composure and does not shed a tear. The Puritan forefathers (Governor Bellingham, Reverend John Wilson, and Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale) consider Hester a sinner and press for her to confess the truth about the baby's father so that her earthly punishment can be alleviated. Despite their duress, Hester remains firm and silent regarding the identity of the baby's father. Instead of showing weakness, her silence renders her immune to the hostile environment around her.

Hester is compelled to withstand the cruelty of social judgment and to face the insults and of people in her town. Following her period of confinement and subsequent public humiliation, she experiences a profound deterioration in both her emotional and physical well-being. She expresses desire for death and prayed for it. Paradoxically, the Puritans' stringent laws, which chastise and restrict her, free Hester. Here, she is presented with the option of returning to her homeland or any country in Europe. Nevertheless, she decides to stay in the Puritan settlement due to her conviction that by staying in the very same town where she embodies "the figure, the body, the reality of sin" (p. 60), she atones for her sin. Hester thinks that the shame display would be as her punishment on the earth, and it should purify her soul.

An additional facet of social ostracism experienced by the protagonist Hester is her residence in a deserted, modest, and thatched hamlet situated on the periphery of the community. Under the scrutiny of the town's magistrates, she is granted permission to create a solitary dwelling for both her daughter and herself, as well as pursue a sewing profession. According to Tassi (1998), "even though the only restraint the Puritans in the romance impose on Hester is the necessity of wearing the scarlet letter, the author puts her in a figurative prison; the wilderness - ordinarily a symbol of freedom - becomes for Hester a form of confinement, banishment, and exile from society" (p. 28). The act of Hester being released from prison results in an increase in her level of differentiation of self. Her decision-making process is primarily influenced by her cognitive faculties rather than her emotional state. The peripheries of the town, arid landscapes, and

wooded areas are commonly associated with notions of liberation, yet for Hester, they serve as settings of alienation and psychological confinement.

Even in her needlework, her sole means of livelihood, Hester is excluded from making the pristine bridal veil. Hester is barred from the realm of womanhood, and her embroidery is displayed exclusively on the ruff worn by the Governor, as well as gloves, scarves worn by military personnel, and infants' caps. However, "the scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread" (p. 246). Hester is a rebellious female figure whose perseverance and resistance help her survive and resist community standards. Tassi (1998) affirms that "a prison, however, freely entered, is still a prison. Hester remains alive because she resists staying in every prison in which she is confined" (p. 35).

As a result of Hester's subtle resistance, benevolence, and altruism, particularly during the pandemic, the scarlet letter is no longer associated with *adultery* but rather with *ability*. The townspeople boast that "It is our Hester, the town's own Hester, who is kind to the poor, so helpful to the sick, so comfortable to the afflicted" (p. 121). Hester's view of the scarlet letter and her relationship to it are potent and distinct. The presence of the letter "A" on her breast has deeply affected her causing great self-distance and an emotional vacuum; it tortures her conscience, increases her guilt, dries up her love, and numbs her heart. Still and most importantly, it made her independent and self-reliant, making her "majestic and statue-like" (p. 122). Hester's life has "changed from passion and feeling to thought" (p. 122). Thus, the Puritans punished any thoughtful woman, not just infidelity. Jahan and Abidi (2016) explain that Hester's self-confidence and her absolute affection to her daughter and Dimmesdale help her to stand in front of the strict Puritan society.

### B. *Adultery and Honor Killing in My Name Is Salam*

Salma, the protagonist of Faqir's *My Name is Salma*, is a little girl of Bedouin descent hailing from the region of Hima. She embarks on her narrative as a shepherdess who engages in the art of playing the reed pipe and resides in a state of profound contentment within her rural community. She develops romantic feelings for Hamdan, a youth from her local community. Upon her pregnancy, she discloses this information to Hamdan, who subsequently evades his obligations towards her. To avoid the potential harm posed by her brother Mahmoud, she solicits guidance from her teacher, who provides her counseling, suggesting that she approach the police authorities to request custody. Just like the Puritan forefathers attempt to take Hester's baby, Salma's infant Layla is taken from her mother. Layla's cries remain in her auditory system forever.

Salma escapes prison and goes to Lebanon and England with Miss Asher's adoption and renaming as Sally Asher. She asks the port detention officer for social, political, or religious asylum. She adapts to the new culture, adopts the traditions, becomes an English citizen, works as a tailoress, studies English at university, marries her English professor, has a son, and returns to Hima to find her daughter killed by her brother. Salma is exiled locally in Hima for being a sinner and physically in England for being an immigrant. Her relationship with Hamdan haunts her memory and life in exile. Her grandma Shahla tells her to follow her heart. Salma enslaves herself to Hamdan because she thinks he will be her husband and protect her from her family if they find out. Hamdan has always seen her as his concubine or prostitute, not his wife. He said, "Salma, you're a woman now ... you are mine, my slave girl" (Faqir, 2007, p. 36). He tells her, "You are my courtesan, my slave" (p. 50), and Salma calls him master.

Bedouin culture, as harsh as the Puritan townspeople, punishes adultery with death or honor killing. Viewing honor killing as domestic violence against women, Salma's father, siblings, family, and tribe follow her to erase her disgrace. Her family executes her in the name of honor, regardless of religion or law. Salma recalls giving birth to her daughter on the filthy floor of Islah prison where criminal, whores, and alcohol addicted women observe her.

Just like Hester, Salma works as a seamstress and maintains a minimum standard of living, showering every two weeks and eating legumes every morning and evening. The community calls Salma and the other prisoners, "whores" and "sluts". When they sang one night, the evening watch guard shouted, "You are all whores! No one cares about you. You are just cheap sluts so why don't you shut up?" [...] If I shoot one of you, your families would thank me" (p. 117). Salma's community is more traditional than religious. Her father consults with the mosque Imam on most life decisions before selling olive crates. However, he does not consult the Imam regarding the religious sentence of adultery. When she was six years old, her father encouraged her by requesting her mother to prepare "this clever girl" (p. 43) a special cup of tea with extra sugar. However, he is a tribal male who adheres to the traditional norms of his community. When Salma returns to Hima after seventeen years, Salma knows from her mother that her father "suddenly turned into an old man walking with difficulty and leaning on a stick" (p. 324). This indicates that Salma's father carries the burden of her shame on his shoulders to the extent that he appears as a very old man with a white beard. She saw once more her native village in Old England, as well as her father's house, a dilapidated grey-stone dwelling with a destitute appearance but retaining a half-obliterated coat of arms above the entrance as a sign of ancient gentility.

Like Hester, Salma finds herself emotional relief by remembering her kind mother at Hima. On the scaffold of the pillory, Hester creates "an instinctive device of her spirit, to relieve itself, by the exhibition of these phantasmagoric forms" of her infancy in Old England, her father's face with a reverend white beard, and her mother with the look of heedful and anxious love" (*The Scarlet Letter*, p. 43). Salma has a caring mother who teaches her Bedouin customs and conduct. Salma spends much time with her mother who calls every mistake shameful rather than forbidden (or Haram). Salma's mother balances her love for her with their customs. Salma's mother warns her against swimming in the spring: "If they see you, they will kill me ... Only loose women show off their clothes and swim in public. Men may see you, she warned, pulling up her black face mask, hesitating, then adding, Be quick!" (p. 287). After discovering Salma's pregnancy, her

mother encourages her to run since her brother “will shoot [Salma] between the eyes with his English rifle” (p. 91). She then “ran her rough fingers over [Salma’s] face, murmured Qur’an verses, kissed [her] then pushed [her] away” (p. 91). Salma’s mother tells her that she wants her to have a better life than she did. Salma’s “tuft of wool has always been different from the other girls of the tribe,” (p. 59) so she dyed it scarlet to draw attention. Salma’s crimson wool tuft contrasts Hester’s scarlet letter as the most vivid symbol of passion and sin.

Due to her unwed pregnancy, Salma, in parallel with Hester, is emotionally and socially exiled from her family and tribe. Salma’s reputation affects not only her father and sibling but also her entire tribe. Salma informs the Little Sister at the Ailiyya convent, Francoise, that she “stained [her] family’s name with mud” (p. 83). The family name is related to the name of the tribe. Consequently, the males of Salma’s tribe are responsible for her murder. She mentions that “My tribe had decided to kill me, they had spilt my blood among them, and all the young men were sniffing the earth” (p. 53). Salma is cast out by her brother, her father, and the young males in her tribe. Even Officer Salim, who represents legal regulations, knows Salma will be slain in front of the prison gates if released. Officer Salim informs Salma that she is in jail to protect her family. He does not break state law by releasing Salma because she is “innocent” under the law of offenses. Officer Salim said a conservative, traditional community cannot be judged by the law.

Salma recalls hearing whispers at a wedding celebration in Hima that her schoolmate Sabha had been shot. Then she hears whispers and hearsay that became a bullet to Sabha’s head. This bullet is intentional to clean the shame of the tribe with Sabha’s blood. The scene of honor killing in Hima is frequent, and it is traditionally inherited as “an old woman” believes that the tribe wash their disgrace with Sabha’s blood. There are no religious conceptions such as “washing shame” or “honor killing” because it is forbidden to kill an innocent soul. In addition, the washing shame bullet is aimed at women, not men: Although both Hamdan and Salma are guilty, Hamdan departs with relative ease, while Salma suffers for the remainder of her life.

Salma is liberated from prison with the assistance of Officer Salim and Sister Khairiyya so she can flee to Lebanon. Salma resides in a convent and works alongside the nuns in agriculture and handicrafts. She departs for England after learning that her brother Mahmoud is aware of her prison break. The English Miss Asher prepares the adoption paperwork for Salma. Salma enters a new phase of her existence as Sally. As an Arab Muslim woman with a head hijab, she is socially isolated. She believes the community will welcome her if she alters her appearance and removes her head covering. However, her olive complexion, large brown eyes, crooked nose, and long, thick, unkempt dark hair confirm her Eastern origin. In bars, she wears short skirts and requests a half cup of apple juice so that anyone who approaches her will believe she is “open-minded, not an inflexible Muslim immigrant” (p. 66). Sally requests membership at the Exeter Public Library, but the librarian determines, based on Sally’s appearance, that she is an “alien” without a national insurance number; therefore, Sally is denied membership. She informs the librarian that she is British citizen “not a temporary-visa holder” (p. 98). When Salma decides to return to Hima in quest of her daughter, her Pakistani friend reminds her to consider her skin tone and that she is a second-rate Briton. Accordingly, Salma is triply alienated from society—as a sinner, a woman, and a foreigner.

### C. “Mother and Daughter Together in the Same Circle of Seclusion From Human Society” in *The Scarlet Letter*

Pearl is her mother’s companion, treasure, anguish, and blessing—the animated moving scarlet letter and Hester’s *raison d’être* is to guide and protect her daughter, Pearl. Pearl is her mother’s emotional guardian, reminding her of sin, while Hester is Pearl’s legal guardian. When the town magistrates determine to remove Pearl from her mother’s custody, Hester appeals: “God gave me the child! [...] she is my happiness! She is my torture [...] Pearl punishes me too! [...] I will not give her up!” (*The Scarlet Letter*, p. 84). Pearl is her mother’s retribution and restitution. Hester requests her spiritual Pastor Dimmesdale to defend her right as a mother, asking, “And what are a mother’s rights, and how much stronger are they when that mother has only her child and the scarlet letter?” (p. 85). Hester keeps the mother-daughter bond as a major emotional boundary. She fights to sustain this relationship in a community that humiliates her.

Hester’s emotional attachment to Pearl is reflected in the garment she creates for her. Even though Pearl’s attire is tailored to her attractiveness, in scarlet red garment that is embroidered with golden strings, it evokes the scarlet letter, as if Pearl is the token of torture and guilt. The three-year-old Pearl appears as a crimson vision, “little bird of scarlet plumage,” and golden rays at the old Governor Bellingham’s Hall. She responds to Minister Wilson “I am my mother’s child, and my name is Pearl” (p. 82). Judging her colors, the Minister responds, “Pearl? Ruby, rather! Or Coral! Or red rose” (p. 82). However, the Puritans consider her an elf child for her association with Hester and for she is the production of adultery. Pearl, Hester, and Salma are compelled to social exclusion and seclusion. In this regard, Cuddy (1986) argues that the conflicting forces within the mother are reflected in Pearl’s “identification with mother [as she] expresses all of Hester’s needs, desires, fears, anxiety, and rage” (p. 102). She is an exceptionally intelligent and perceptive child for her age. She comprehends her solitude and “the destiny that had drawn an inviolable circle round about her” (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 70). Her artistic ability enables her to become “spiritually adapted to whatever drama occupied the stage of her inner world” (71). Pearl prefers playing with objects such as grass, a bouquet, a pole, and rags to a large and diverse group of friends while she is at her mother’s home.

### D. *Pulled Between Arab Salma and English Sally, Hima and England, and Layla and Herself*

Salma is caught between the unavoidable past and murky present, dark memories and light desires, Hima and England, and most crucially, Layla and herself. Her Hima memories torment her, compelling her to consult a therapist. The therapist

advises her to let go of the past, as she is now living in England and must adapt to its culture. She can never forget how her mother pulled her hair and yelled, “little slut, what have you done? ... You smeared our name with tar” (Faqr, 2007, pp. 36- 37). Salma’s mother tries to get rid of the baby by requesting an abortion from a midwife, but she claims that the baby “is still clinging to [Salma’s] womb like a real bastard. ... If [her] father or brother finds out they will kill [her]” (p. 47). She imagines Mahmoud, “the lone assassin” (p. 144) following her to Lord’s Tailor in Exeter, where she works.

Her imprisonment is both psychological and physical. She is placed in solitary confinement for five months for her security before being transferred to a cell with other inmates. Salma is employed as a seamstress in the penitentiary, and she acts like a sewing machine. She desires to correct the course of her life by telling herself she is “a slut” rather than being pure, jasmine, or transparent honey. Her mother gave her the name Salma, which signifies safety, disaster survivor, or soft-handed girl. However, she experiences neither safety nor survival. She could not evade her thoughts of Mahmoud shooting or dragging her to death. Despite being physically separated from her family, particularly her brother Mahmoud, Salma remains emotionally entrapped in the scene of being pursued and murdered. She projects the bloody scene as if she hears the bubbling of her warm blood, her mother’s screams and beatings on her bosom, and the “ululation” of washing away her humiliation.

The mother-daughter bond is Salma’s and Hester’s biggest link to life, as both state that their daughters keep them alive. Salma admires the features, fingers, and toes of the baby while holding her: “Her soft fingers curled around my forefinger like a tender vine that had just burst open” (p. 247), but the prison superintendent took her from her mother, preventing her from breastfeeding. Salma throws herself against the wall to protest her child’s removal, but her friends, Madam Lamaa and Noura, pay the prison warden Naima to promptly remove the child to the illegal children’s institution. Salma gives her the name Layla, sews her a prison dress, gives her a face, talks to her, and sends her phony letters explaining why she left. She thinks she “dressed her up, combed her hair, gave her a bath, and kissed her a thousand times goodnight” (p. 123). She imagines 3-year-old Layla chasing the hens. Layla arrives, afraid about her first day at school.

The pearl-encrusted white baby girl gown Salma spends hours making in prison and brings to Britain is precious. Salma envisions her daughter as a “white-water lily” draped in pearlescent dewdrops. She desires for her daughter’s life to be “happier and whiter” than her own. Just like Pearl, Layla is her mother’s most prized gift. In England, Salma is standing in front of an infant clothing store when she glances at a white garment glistening with pearls that “shone like tears of joy. It was a promise of a reunion” (p. 17). Whiteness and pearls remind Salma of her purity and her devotion to Layla, her only valuable asset. This white dress represents a pledge of reunion and return, a symbol of home. When Salma was a child, her mother would tell her, “Your tears are pearls, diamond, don’t let anyone see them” (p. 324).

Salma’s move to the UK, education, marriage to her English professor John Robson, the birth of her son Imran, car, large home, and friendships don’t make up for Layla’s loss. She leaves England to find Layla, but her elderly and newly blind mother states, “She was innocent. She filled our hearts with delight, so fresh, so beautiful” (p. 325). However, her uncle Mahmoud threw her into the well. Her grandfather and friend Jadaan buried her against the tribe’s wishes. Salma walks to her death to find Layla’s black-iris-surrounded graveyard burial. Her father has placed “a makeshift, rotting wooden box with ‘Died 1990’ carved into it” (p. 326). Then she hears Mahmoud say, “Dishonor can only be wiped off with blood” (p. 327) and feels his bullet strike her between the eyes.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* and Faqr’s *My Name is Salma* depict two female victims of oppressive patriarchal societies. Yet, they undermine repressive systems imposed upon them and fight for equality and purpose in life. Thus, despite emanating from two completely different cultures, they represent strikingly comparable dissenting voices in their interpretations of their community codes and standards, particularly in defending their rights to be with their daughters against the constraints of their communities. Both socially and emotionally banished and restricted protagonists—Hester Prynne and Salma El-Musa—make great sacrifices in order to achieve freedom and stay with their daughters against the wishes of their patriarchal surroundings. Intriguingly, they both commit adultery, are imprisoned, have daughters, are estranged, ostracized, and stigmatized, remain silent about their lovers’ identities, face public contempt, work in sewing and embroidery, and barely adapt to their surroundings because, except for their feelings for their daughters, they are emotionless.

Hester is required by Puritan law and society to wear a badge of shame eternally. While the audience, particularly the women, demands that Hester be executed for bringing dishonor to everyone, Hester remains silent. Similarly, Salma’s affair with Hamdan and her pregnancy violate cultural and religious norms. Salma’s family and tribe intend to kill her for committing a sexual offense; therefore, she is imprisoned to prevent an honor killing. Her daughter Layla is born in captivity and taken to an unauthorized facility for children. Moving to Lebanon and England saves her from death.

Passion, determination, sagacity, and mental fortitude assist Hester in altering the perception of her within the community. The women who have ridiculed Hester find solace in her tenderness and compassion. She governs her life with wisdom and perseverance, even if she commits adultery out of emotion. Salma’s tribal community does not, however, afford her the same opportunity to reclaim her family and tribe and retain the guardianship of her daughter. Being separated from her daughter muddles her Hima and England life, so she continues to dread murder. While Hester never discloses the identity of Pearl’s father Arthur Dimmesdale out of love and discretion, Dimmesdale’s profound guilt imprisons him and exacerbates his illness. In contrast to Dimmesdale, Hamdan, Layla’s neglectful father who abandons

Salma instead of assisting her, accepts no responsibility. Both Hester and Salma are denied the aid of their lovers, which worsens their circumstances but makes them stronger. Hester's prudence allows her to confront society, particularly with her daughter by her side. Salma abandons her community and spends the remainder of her life living in fear far from her daughter. Hester remains in her community despite widespread condemnation because she has the fortitude to resist. However, Salma was unable to confront her transgression in a threatening traditional community. With her daughter on her side, Hester overcomes Puritan norms, but Salma's lack of self-confidence and her daughter's mortality leads to her self-destruction at the hands of society. In a rigid, patriarchal culture in which women are socially constrained but men are not, Hester and Salma are viewed as violators of societal norms. Hester dies emotionally and spiritually due to Puritan restrictions, whereas Salma dies emotionally and physically.

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