Traditionalist View Of Scarlet Letter Essay, Research Paper

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter describes the life of Hester Prynne and how her sins hurt not only herself but also everybody else whom she was ever close to. The point of view that seems to be most supported, logical, and believable is the traditional view. Traditionalists believe that Hester sinned through blind passion and her sin caused tragedy.

The romantic view claims that Hester has no shame or remorse for her sin and that she is even proud of it. This is untrue because “judging that one token of her shame would but poorly serve to hide another” is a perfect example of her acknowledging her sin as something that she isn’t proud of. The romantic view also says that Hester gave everything to love. This is also untrue because if she truly loved Dimmesdale she would have told him that Chillingworth was her husband from the very beginning. She should not have made the promise to conceal Chillingworth’s identity when she knew all along that Chillingworth’s only intent was to torture Dimmesdale. The final and most obvious reason that the romantic view is flawed is that to hold the romantic view one must discount the final chapter. If you discount the final chapter then it isn’t the same story.

The transcendentalist point of view is by far the most pathetic defense for Hester’s actions. The transcendentalists believe that Hester was not really married in the sight of God and that she had never truly been married. Whether you like it or not, when you take your wedding vows you are officially married in the sight of God. Hester never should have married Chillingworth in the first place if she didn’t love him. He might have tried to force her into marriage but every person is responsible for his or her own actions and can decide for themselves whether or not they want to get married. Another point of the transcendentalist view that seems absurd is that they believe she sinned against her own conscience. All along she knew what she did was wrong or she would not have come back to the town where she lived and continued to wear the scarlet letter on her chest.

The Puritan community was un-Christian in its attitude and behavior but it was not un-Christian in its doctrine. The women of the town are all gossips that have no feeling for Hester. “This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die.” As Hester is about to be punished for her sin the lady commits a sin by judging her for her actions. The women sit and mock Hester even when she is in remorse for her sin. Another example of the townspeople being cruel and un-Christian towards Hester is when they throw stones at Hester and Pearl as they walk to and from their home. The punishment placed upon Hester for her sin is not too harsh or too light, she always has it upon her to remind her of the sin she commit but when she goes into the forest with Pearl she can be free from the hateful members of her village.

Although she sinned less than her hypocritical lover and her vengeful husband, the “law” broken by Hester and Arthur Dimmesdale was the Seventh Commandment of the Decalogue. “He betrayed me! He has done me worse wrong than I did him.” This is true because Chillingworth’s sin was pre-meditated and he hurt her as well as her lover Dimmesdale while she only hurt Chillingworth. Though she didn’t hurt Dimmesdale directly she could be held responsible for hurting him indirectly when she helped him cover for his sin, only leading to more pain for him. When added up, Dimmesdale’s sins were almost as bad as Chillingworth’s; he tried to cover for his sin of adultery and he considered running away with Hester and never having to confess or be publicly humiliated as Hester was.

Though Hester sinned less than Dimmesdale and Chillingworth she was probably the only one that felt remorse for her sin and was punished the most. She was publicly humiliated at the scaffold, she could not “come into the sunshine” and be with Pearl, and both Chillingworth and Dimmesdale died leaving her alone to deal with life and its harsh cruelties on her own.

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