

**Dark Romanticism in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*  
(1850) and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851): A Comparative  
Study**

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**Abstract**

This thesis explores the genre of Dark Romanticism through a comparative examination of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Melville's epic narrative prominently displays the ambiguity surrounding the concepts of good and evil. This ambiguity is exemplified by characters like, Captain Ahab, whose all-consuming fixation blurs the lines of moral dignity, and Queequeg and Starbuck, whose actions cover the entire range of human morality. The inclusion of supernatural aspects, such as predictions and the symbolism of the white whale and harpoon, function as powerful metaphors that represent the profound fear of existence and the mysterious powers that influence the duration of human fate. In contrast, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* explores the essence of sin and psychosomatic motifs by means of the portrayal of individuals such as Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth. The scarlet letter 'A' serves as a potent emblem of public condemnation and personal torment, exploring the intricate

psychological aspects of guilt, humiliation, and redemption. The presence of hypocrisy and the difficulty of reconciling society standards with personal morality add complexity to the story, questioning traditional ideas of virtue and ethics.

This thesis examines the common thematic concerns of Dark Romanticism, while emphasizing the unique narrative styles employed by Hawthorne and Melville. The thesis attempts to demonstrate the lasting significance and deep insights provided by these influential classics in American literature. This comparative analysis delves into the moral ambiguities in *Moby Dick* and the psychological intricacies of *The Scarlet Letter*. It offers a subtle exploration of human experience, urging readers to examine the complexities of sin, guilt, and redemption in a world filled with moral ambiguity and moral uncertainty.

Keywords: Dark Romanticism, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Moby Dick*, Comparative study, Revenge, Good and Evil