

## “What I am! A fiend!”- An Analysis of Chillingworth’s Character in *The Scarlet Letter* in the light of Ghazalian *Nafs e Ammara* and Freudian *Id*

Shumaila Mazhar\* Samina Amin Qadir†



**Abstract** *The present study attempts to explore the intricacies of human mind, as portrayed through Chillingworth’s character in The Scarlet Letter by Hawthorne. For an in-depth analysis, two legendary intellectuals i.e., Ghazali, the famous 11<sup>th</sup> century scholar of the Muslim world and Freud, the genius of 20<sup>th</sup> century, have provided the theoretical framework. The research design is based on thematic analysis of the selected novel. A detailed study of Ghazalian nafs e ammara and Freudian id guided the interpretation of the selected novel. The analysis of Chillingworth’s perverted behaviour and degrading moral standards inside the parameter of the selected theories reveals Hawthorne’s psychological insight. Besides, it also provides a cognizance into the current relevance of the psychological issues in modern world, thus, strengthening our belief in the similar workings of human mind, regardless of the variances in time and space. Moreover, the evidence from this study suggests that the incorporation of Eastern and Western insights for studying literary character has the potential of becoming an effective critical approach for psychological analysis in the realm of English literature.*

### Key Words:

Psychoanalysis,  
Unconscious,  
Conscience,  
*Nafs E  
ammara, Id*

### Introduction

The present study aims at analyzing Chillingworth’s character in Hawthorne’s novel *The Scarlet Letter* in the light of Ghazalian *nafs e ammara* and Freudian *id*. Hawthorne’s portrayal of Chillingworth’s mind offers a probing vision into human thought and behavior as he exhibits similarities with the theories offered by Ghazali (1058-1111) and Freud (1856-1939) who attempt to highlight the

\* Assistant Professor, English Department, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University, Quetta, Baluchistan, Pakistan. Email: [shumyalaadnan786@gmail.com](mailto:shumyalaadnan786@gmail.com)

† Vice Chancellor, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

veiled truths of the unconscious mind. Moreover, it is also significant to note that the selected theorists, despite the differences and variations in eras, geological settings and religious beliefs, provide somewhat similar insight regarding “the most probing inquiry into the dynamics of psychic life” (Brooks, 1984, p.90). For this reason, the present article has been built on the assumption that the concept of *nafs e ammara* in Ghazalian theory of soul and *id* in Freudian psychoanalysis can provide valuable in-depth analysis of Chillingworth’s character. Furthermore, it is also expected that this exploration of character’s thoughts, feelings and actions through diverse perspectives, may open new panoramas of understanding in the realm of English literature.

Of vital significance is the fact that there have been various studies analyzing certain personality features of Chillingworth, highlighting his malicious nature. Abel (1953) perceives him as a symbol of " goodness perverted" (p.370); Stein (1953) berates him as "an unrepentant sinner"(p.113). Similarly, Fairbanks (1956) observes that the mysterious working of Divine will, which could have converted the sin into good, left no stain upon the evil nature of Dr. Chillingworth. While Abel (1953) describes Chillingworth as "a Miltonic Satan .... the damned one, scrutinizing and trying to ruin the beautiful and the saved" (p.370). Whereas, Waggoner (1963) explores Chillingworth’s character and finds him conducting a “psychological experiment on the heart of a young girl and 'wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated her soul, in the process" (p.144). The views of these critics reveal how Chillingworth has been victimized by his evil passions and revengfull desires which ultimately bring about his mental and physical deterioration. Thus, the current study aspires to make an in-depth textual data analysis of Chillingworth’s character through the lens of Ghazalian *nafs e ammara* and Freudian *id*. Besides, it is also expected that this exploration of character’s thoughts, feelings and actions through diverse perspectives, may open new panoramas of understanding in the realm of English literature.

## Theoretical Framework

The basis of theoretical framework for the present study is the theories propounded by Ghazali (1058-1111) and Freud (1856-1939), whose concepts, regarding the workings of human mind are greatly connected. If in the West, Sigmund Freud has enriched the world with his psychoanalytic theories; in the Eastern world, there have been various approaches that render great help in understanding an individual’s personality. Among them, Ghazalian theory of soul skillfully illustrates a distinctive model of a person’s growth and development. After making a profound analysis of human nature, he discovered the existence of two peculiar tendencies, one that incites a person towards evil and produces such qualities like “impurity, deceit, deception, treachery” (Ghazali,1993, p.12); the second tendency is divine and produces good qualities such as “wisdom,

knowledge, certain faith.....pardon, contentment, self-satisfaction, asceticism, piety” (Ghazali, 1993, p.12). These two tendencies makes three potentialities govern human soul, namely; *nafs e ammara*, *nafs e lawwama* and *nafs e mutmainna*. Time and again, Ghazali elaborated the true nature of these human potentialities by stating that if the lower self or *nafs e ammara* gets stronger, it makes the divine elements of human soul subject to evil, which affect his behaviour and action. On the contrary, if the divine elements of *nafs al-lawwama* get strong hold by becoming highly conscious of God, the evil elements yield to goodness. In this way, evil elements are substituted with goodness, and it finally culminates in the tranquil state of human soul or *nafs e mutmainna* (Ghazali, 1993). The personality of *al-Ammara* or evil-instigating soul is the base of all desires inflamed by passions and lust. It always urges a person to “immediate gratification, irrespective of moral consequences” (Ahmed, 1992, p.11), it develops when the evil has successfully dominated the human soul. This “evil commanding psyche” (Hisham, 2012, p.329) forms the most integral component of *nafs*. Since the working of *nafs e ammara* is unconscious, its existence can be comprehended from certain feelings, thoughts and behaviours which have been considered as “workings of Satan” by Ghazali, whose central function is to incite man to evil (Khosravi, 2006, p.165).

In the similar vein, the psychoanalytic discovery of Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, in the realm of unconscious, laid the foundation of modern psychology as one of the intellectual signposts of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Schwartz & Solomon, 1974). Freudian interpretation of human mind, encompassing its three structures - the *id*, *ego* and *superego* –explored new vistas of insights into modern psychology. Besides, this theory has been extensively applied to the field of literary analysis. In the first stage, Freud argued about the presence of the unconscious, buried under the conscious (McMartin, 1995, p.18), in his magnum opus *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). In the second stage, he introduced his structural model using terms like *id*, *ego* and *superego* in his essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in 1920. Of vital significance is the fact that these entities were not discrete states that divide human mind, rather they had been employed by Freud as theoretical constructs, unfolding numerous functions of human mind.

In 1923, Freud provided a more exhaustive description on the working of human mind in his essay *The Ego and the Id*. Since the present study confines itself to the impact of *id* on human psyche, so it needs to be elaborated. Freudian explanation of *id* refers to that dark and inaccessible part of human mind which comprises raw forces and represents elemental drives (Harper, 1959). It is the “biological and instinctual” part of human personality (McMartin, 1995, p.21). In order to satisfy the basic instincts under pleasure principle, *id* transforms the biological needs into psychological tensions. At the time of birth, these inner forces have not been influenced by the external world, so they remain unsocialized (Friedman & Schustack, 1999). The hidden forces present in *id* are

driven by the pleasure principle, which tend to strive for the immediate gratification of its instincts “to survive and reproduce” (Myers, 2004, p.577), motivating an individual to adopt socially unacceptable destructive behavior (Boozer, 1960).

## **Research Methodology**

The present work adopts the qualitative research paradigm focusing on textual data analysis of the novel. Before the application of the above technique, an in depth thematic analysis of Ghazalain and Freudian theories have been undertaken. Since the selected text comprises Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* so its thematic resemblances with the selected theorists have also profoundly been explored. An extensive use of secondary data, obtained from Ghazali and Freud, has been made.

## **Data Analysis**

Chillingworth has been presented as “a man chiefly accustomed to look inward, and to whom external matters are of little value and import, unless they bear relation to something within his mind” (TSL p.80). His first references occur in Hester’s thought when she stands in public disgrace at the scaffold. She recalls him as a “man well stricken in years” with “a pale, thin, scholar-like visage” (TSL p.77), “slightly deformed, with the left shoulder a trifle higher than the right” (TSL p.78). These physical traits symbolically indicate that his inner soul may be as malformed as his outer body. Throughout the course of events, Chillingworth has been under the influence of *nafs e ammara* or *id*, the evil force, governing human behaviour. As he primarily regards himself as the wronged husband, he does not ponder over his own madness and evil passions. Therefore, he loses all chances for genuine penitence. His imprisonment by diabolic intentions to avenge, makes him “the devil figure” (Abel, 1953; Abele, 2013; Waggoner, 1963). Moreover, since *nafs e ammara* or *id* does not take either anxiety or fear into consideration, it gives unrestrained expression to its purpose, notwithstanding the consequences of its actions on others and on its own “self-preservation” (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992, p.25), so Chillingworth presents a more appropriate embodiment of these evil forces in the novel.

## **Chillingworth’s Obsession for Revenge**

Chillingworth’s wild and passionate feelings of revenge have been proved tremendously injurious to his own life and personality and there occurs his gradual descend from a high-minded philosopher to a monster, under the influence of the forces of *nafs e ammara* or *id*. Brodhead (1976) while calling our

attention to Chillingworth's dehumanization says that in his attempt to give himself freely to his evil purpose, he makes himself "more wretched than his victims" (TSL p.61). This has been predicted since his very first appearance in the scaffold scene, when standing by the scaffold, he tries to suppress the "writhing horror" which "twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them" (TSL p.80), and gestures Hester to keep silence.

Later, he meets Hester in the prison and compels her to make "thy husband be to the world as one already dead, and of whom no tidings shall ever come" (TSL p.97). As she agrees, he degenerates into a "fiend" who seeks "home" (TSL p.97) in the secret recesses of her heart where her co-adulterer resides. When Hester realizes his intention of devouring the soul of her paramour, she could not restrain herself from asking "Art thou like the Black Man that haunts the forest round about us? Hast thou enticed me into a bond that will prove the ruin of my soul?" (TSL p.98).

It is significant to note that Chillingworth, refuses to ask for Church's intervention for punishing the sinners mainly owing to his belief that "Heaven's own method of retribution" exists within each mind and not in "the gripe of human law" (TSL p.96). The way Hawthorne delineates his feelings of hatred and revenge, is outstanding. His mad desire of taking revenge from Dimmesdale, makes him a leech, as Davis (2005) analyses, "not only in the sense of being a physician, but also as a vampire, a member of the legions of the walking dead" (p.83). Instead of inflicting some brutal punishment, he chooses to enter an extremely subtle region of torture. As he makes his intentions clear to Hester when she expresses her apprehension that he might avenge the child, he replies that she needs not to fear about poisoning her child or causing injury to her, rather "I have left thee to the scarlet letter" (TSL p.97). In this way, he reveals his cunningness and unrestrained passions of revenge to Hester.

### **Chillingworth's Satanic Disposition**

There are times in the novel when Chillingworth's satanic intentions and disposition are revealed. As on his first meeting with Hester in prison, he ironically disguises himself as a physician, while throughout the course of the events, his role is to aggravate the sufferings of others, instead of relieving them, more importantly, Dimmesdale. The description of his first appearance in Boston throws light on his very nature, as he is "clad in a strange disarray of civilized and savage costume" (TSL p.79). That vernacular, specifically the word "savage," reveals Chillingworth's contaminated soul influenced by heathenish sin. Hawthorne, frequently makes strange combination of the terms "civilized" and "savage" in portraying Chillingworth, whose civilized cunningness has been combined with his savage hatred. Meanwhile, he has also been accompanied by a "savage companion" (TSL p.80), the fact which could be analyzed in the light of

his later savage companionship of Dimmesdale. Moreover, when in the prison scene, he lays his “long forefinger on the scarlet letter to scorch Hester’s breast, as if it had been red-hot” (TSL p. 93), as Hawthorne mentions, “there came a glare of red light out of his eyes, as if the old man’s soul were on fire and kept on smouldering duskily within his breast, until by some casual puff of passion it was blown into a momentary flame” (TSL p.205). Even he himself tells Hester that he “came out of the large and dismal forest” (TSL p.94).

Besides, Hawthorne describes him as “old Roger Chillingworth” (TSL p. 97) - a name which has clear satanic overtones. Hester, in concluding her dialogue associates him with “Black Man” (another name for Satan) and asks whether he plans to pursue “the ruin of [her] soul” (TSL p.98), which Chillingworth responds with a mysterious smile, “Not thy soul. ... No, not thine!” (TSL p.98). Apparently, he suggests the ruin of Dimmesdale’s soul, but later on, the soul in danger of being destroyed is his own. Similarly, there spread an opinion among townspeople regarding Dimmesdale’s deteriorating health that he has been “haunted, either by Satan himself or Satan’s emissary, in the guise of old Chillingworth” (TSL p.155).

Moreover, Hawthorne, time and again, describes that Chillingworth’s appearance gradually blackens as he keeps on destroying the secret lover of his wife. In the course of time, the blackness of his spirit and revengeful passions become distinct on his face, indicating the darkening of his soul. This malicious transformation inhibits his perception about self as indicated in the novel, “The unfortunate physician ... lifted his hands with a look of horror, as if he had beheld some frightful shape, which he could not recognize, usurping the place of his own image in glass” (TSL p.207). He fails to recognize himself as “Chillingworth” when he looks at the mirror, (TSL p.155), as he has compelled himself to discard his true identity as Prynne. In accepting this new identity, he surrenders to evil and rejects all hope for mystical redemption. This transformation forces him to grow deeper into solitude and secrecy until finally, as Calinescu (1994) observes, he relies on “the darkness of secrecy for his own dark purposes: public knowledge of what he knows about Hester and Dimmesdale would defeat these purposes and would, as it does in the end, bring about his own death” (TSL p.451).

### **Chillingworth as Treasure-Seeker in a Dark Cavern**

Chillingworth avails the opportunity of Dimmesdale’s worsening health and proves himself a learned doctor in the puritan community and becomes his “medical advisor” (TSL p.149). On witnessing Dimmesdale’s intense protection for Hester’s right to keep Pearl with her, his doubt intensifies. He does not hesitate “to go deep into his patient’s bosom, delving among his principles,

prying into his recollections, and probing everything with a cautious touch, like a treasure-seeker in a dark cavern” (TSL p.151).

This profane search into Dimmesdale’s heart is deeply associated with Chillingworth's professional knowledge. Alchemy is linked with paranormal power, and there are indications that he might have "joined in the incantations of the savage priests to learn their medical secrets during his Indian captivity"(TSL p.146). This makes Kilborne (2005) analyze his character as “heckling, prying, sadistic, and eviscerated busybody Chillingworth” (p.472).

In addition to this, Chillingworth’s decision of not killing Dimmesdale has been due to his determination to prolong his suffering by torturing him. Quite tactically, he poisons Dimmesdale which causes a chronic pain, similar to the torment that he suffers at the moment when he finds his wife with a child not of his own. His enmity unfortunately could not satisfy him and unconsciously destroys himself, not only physically or mentally but also spiritually. Stein (1953) personifies Chillingworth as the combination of Faust and Mephistopheles and explores that his devilish nature compels him to cross the boundaries of earthly revenge. Hawthorne has frequently portrayed him in the “gloomy maze of evil” (TSL p.209), assuming the role of a “potent necromancer” (TSL p.309). Moreover, on Hester’s apprehension regarding his being the Black man, haunting the forest to ruin their soul, he sarcastically replies “Not thy soul! ...No, not thine!” (TSL p.98). In this way, he truly transforms himself into a devil, undertaking the journey towards hell.

### **Chillingworth Dwelling upon Evil Intentions**

Chillingworth is the most malignant figure in the novel who neither forgives nor forgets the wrongdoings of others. At first, he merely plans to pursue truth with “calm, meditative, scholar-like expressions” (TSL p.155). But soon he is overcome by his evil intentions, which poignantly lead him to his doom. The passionate hatred he experiences for his victims, endows him with a malicious sympathy. During the course of events, he seems to be surprisingly sympathetic. Even Hester is prone to accept that his intents may not be utterly vindictive and considers them his “humanity or principle”, while entertaining the slight possibility of its being a “refined cruelty” (TSL p.94).

Since he has been robbed of his wife, his plot of revenge does not aim at reforming the criminals or bringing good to society, rather it is simple and pure revenge.

I come to the inquest with other senses than they possess. I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books: as I have sought gold in alchemy. There is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him. I shall see him tremble. I shall feel myself shudder, suddenly and unawares. Sooner or later, he must needs be mine (TSL p.96).

From the way, Hawthorne depicts his character, it is quite clear that Chillingworth's darkening appearance parallels the darkening of his soul. His sinfulness seems to multiply the longer he hides his real identity from society and desperately remains in quest of recognizing Hester's co-adulterer.

Chillingworth devotes all his life for a single purpose to take revenge which becomes a mania and occupies every single second of his life. Feidelson, (1953) observes that Chillingworth afflicts himself with the same psychosomatic malady, he intends to treat Dimmesdale; during this process his body and mind transform, turning him into a devil from the scholar. As Dimmesdale is not exposed by the puritan society, Chillingworth takes the responsibility of afflicting pain to him. Similarly, James (1967) suggests that Chillingworth becomes devil because he not only perpetrates pain on Dimmesdale, but also stabs the inner mysteries of his heart, even he "revels in his unsuspected knowledge of these things and stimulates them by malignant arts" (p.110). While Crowley (1971) points out that in the course of his revengeful journey, Chillingworth looks Faust-like figure, craving for more knowledge and power.

His *nafs e ammara* or *id* compels him to ignore Dimmesdale's certain good qualities in his obstinate attempt to take revenge and keeps on digging his heart: like a sexton delving into a grave.... Then after long search into the minister's dim interior, and turning over many precious materials, in the shape of high aspirations for the welfare of his race, warm love of souls, pure sentiments, natural piety, strengthened by thought and study, and illuminated by revelation--all of which invaluable gold was perhaps no better than rubbish to the seeker--he would turn back, discouraged, and begin his quest towards another point (TSL p.158).

Londhe (2012) while pointing out Chillingworth's "fiendish patience" to harm the soul of his enemy, comments that he has committed the most unpardonable sin on account of his lack of human sympathy (p.3). As he manipulates the strong faith of his victim, so he comes exceptionally near to reaching victory, i.e., Dimmesdale's death without confessing his sin. Thus, he desperately tries to stop Dimmesdale to confess his sin before his death but fails. However, he seems to not be entirely crushed because he has relished witnessing Dimmesdale wriggle beneath the torment, he has been executing upon him for years. Moreover, Chillingworth, to some extent, seems to be defeated because Dimmesdale finally saves himself from his torturous clutches as he dies with a hope for eternal redemption, the end Chillingworth has been trying to deter all the time. Thus, Hawthorne mentions,

All his strength and energy--all his vital and intellectual force--seemed at once to desert him, insomuch that he positively withered up, shrivelled away and almost vanished from mortal sight, like an uprooted weed that lies wilting in the sun (TSL p.311).



In this way, his evil intentions under the profound impact of *nafs e ammara* or *id* ultimately bring ruin to his body and soul.

### **Chillingworth's Pride**

Chillingworth's obstinate hunt for Dimmesdale's secret is also greatly linked with his wounded pride which paralyzes his reason. His decisions have been dominated by his pride throughout his life. In his very brief married life, pride misguides him as instead of showing passion, he seems to provide warmth to Hester, as he admits his lack of passion for her: "And so, Hester, I drew thee into my heart, into its innermost chamber, and sought to warm thee by the warmth which thy presence made there!" (TSL p.364). Moreover, the first step toward Chillingworth's distortion is taken when he expresses his pride in his abilities in the following remark:

But, as for me, I come to the inquest with other senses than they possess. I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy. Sooner or later, he must needs be mine! (TSL p. 364).

The final picture of Chillingworth's state of mind is that of a broken man "with a blank, dull countenance, out of which the life seemed to have departed" beside dying Dimmesdale (TSL p. 307). Even, in the final scene, Chillingworth admits that Dimmesdale has "escaped" (TSL p.307) from him and his vengeance is disenchanted. In his hopeless effort to stop the minister from the public confession of his sin, Chillingworth tries to appeal to Dimmesdale's pride by saying: "Do not blacken your fame, and perish in dishonour! I can yet save you! Would you bring infamy on your sacred profession?" (TSL p.303). Accused as a "tempter" (TSL p.303) by Dimmesdale, Chillingworth experiences the decaying of his pride in his power. He undergoes another "remarkable change" after Dimmesdale's demise: he "withered up, shrivelled away ... like an uprooted weed that lies wilting in the sun" (TSL p. 311). While Hawthorne attributes his sudden decay in health to the fact that "there was no more devil's work on earth for him to do" (TSL p.311), so ultimately, he vanished.

### **Conclusion**

An analysis of Chillingworth's character in the parameters of psychoanalytical interpretation of Freudian *id* and Ghazalian *nafs e ammara*, explicitly describes the profound impact of baser instincts in human nature. Hawthorne skillfully reveals that individuals can be influenced by order but ultimately ruined by instinctive cruelty and violence of absolute authority when left to their own devices. Ghazali and Freud, through their exploration of psychological disposition of human being, expose the fact that we must recognize the darkness that potentially resides in each of us otherwise the entire humanity will degenerate into bloodthirsty warriors. Besides, it can also be concluded that, although Chillingworth's character is not meant to explain Ghazalian or Freudian

theory on human psyche, but contributes extensively in the understanding of human thought and behaviour.

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