Nathaniel Hawthorne in the Discourse of the Popular Religious Culture of the Second Great Awakening

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Abstract

The article explores the modern issues of scholarly analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne's literary work in the discursive space of American religious reformism that was an essential part of popular democratic culture in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century. Due to the recent discovery of numerous elements from the religious discourse of The Second Great Awakening throughout Hawthorne's work, contemporary scholars are only beginning to comprehend the significant connections between Hawthorne and the national discursive practices of the age in which he lived, the American Renaissance.

Key words: *popular democratic culture, North-American Romanticism, religious reformism, discursive practices*

In the majority of scholarly publications (which have been an important, if not a constitutive element of academic research of the North American Romanticism) on various aspects of Nathaniel Hawthorne's creative development, it is possible to identify one particular issue that traditionally inspires contentious scholarly debates. It is the religious substrate of the writer's creative heritage and his specific religious worldview.

A large number of critics and scholars emphasize the powerful connection of Hawthorne's creative thought to the ethical norms and theological dogmas of Calvinism. In *Hawthorne and Puritanism* (1948), which clearly reflected the state of affairs of American Hawthorne studies at that time, Professor Barriss Mills assertively identified the writer with famous American theologians who practiced Calvinism. For instance, he referred to him as "a spiritual contemporary of Cotton Mather born out of his time." (78)

A conceptual resonance of such opinions can be found even in *The Foreign Literature of the XIX century: The Age of Romanticism* — one of the most widespread Ukrainian history books on the North-American

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Romantic movement, which has become an indispensable study guide for modern students-philologists.

The authors of that work also point out the correlation of Hawthorne's creativity to "the puritan religious thought and worldview" and emphasize his "Calvinistic outlook". In general, those Ukrainian scholars, who explore Hawthorne's propensity towards American Puritanism, do not suppress his negative attitude towards certain aspects of that dogma, but they invariably accentuate that he always remained under the heavy influence of the Puritan religious culture.

At the same time, there exists a contradictory point of view. One of the most prominent Hawthorne scholars in the United States, Professor Frederick Crews, was the first American academic who openly challenged the notion of Hawthorne as a Calvinistic author, criticizing the excessive concentration of his predecessors on spiritual and intellectual connections of the writer with the religious practices of the puritans of New England. In a rather facetious tone, he characterized the previous generation of scholars, who laid the foundation of American Hawthorne studies, as adepts of "churchly symbol mongering that had plagued the literary academy." (1989: 274). In his groundbreaking study, *The Sins of the Fathers* (1966), Crews completely abandoned all the theological subjects and focused his primary critical attention on a complex combination of artistic psychology with the rudiments of Puritan culture and worldview which are manifested in Hawthorne's major fiction.

It should be noted that Professor Crews has had a highly authoritative status in the modern academic circles of the United States. As an editor and research advisor, he was directly involved in the creation of the majority of American university anthologies and student textbooks on Hawthorne's life and works. Along with the head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Lynne Cheney, and William John Bennett (who served as the Secretary of Education and an adviser of President Reagan), Crews actively participated in the process of reformation of the national system of higher education, initiated by the Federal government in the 1970s. Consequently, it is not surprising that Crew's *The Sins of the Fathers* established the fashion for the anti-religious sentiment of literary interpretations of Hawthorne's illustrious "Puritan worldview" in American universities at the end of the twentieth century. According to the editors of *The Cambridge History of American Literature* (1995), American Puritanism, and Calvinism as its confessional foundation, transformed into some amorphous "ideology" (674) that lacked any meaningful associations

with the national religious symbolism, and thus it was isolated from its social and cultural environments of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Although their evaluations differed considerably, such famous American critics as Barriss Mills, Yvor Winters, Richard Chase and Leslie Fiedler agreed that the American Puritanism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was an essentially religious element of Hawthorne's fiction. On the contrary, the next generation of scholars (Henderson, Foster, Bercovitch and others), who followed the critical pattern established by Professor Crews, concentrated on anything but religion, and even if they did touch that subject in their analysis, it was transformed into something that resembled modern psychology or sociology. The immediate result of such intentional secularization was the general disregard of the academic community towards any historically conditioned associations of Hawthorne with the religious discourse of the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century. It became simply unnecessary to search for the true cultural origins of his subjects, characters and symbolic images amidst the "metaphysical" complexity of eclectic critical theories, which created the imaginary "useable past" (in Russell Reising's terms) of American letters of the 1800s, with critics completely estranged from the real context of the writer's national discursive environment.

From the time of the publication of the revisionist work of Frederic Crews, his numerous followers have been deliberately cleansing the life and works of Hawthorne of any significant religious traits. In the course of this reconsideration, Puritanism was transformed into something quite secular by many in the academic community. In his book *Their Solitary Way: The Puritan Social Ethic in the First Century of Settlement in New England*, Stephen Foster described the Puritan movement as "a form of social organization beyond the bounds of the church" (1972: 19); Harry B. Henderson characterized it as "a complex system of moral and ethical education" (1974: 82) in *Versions of the Past: The Historical Imagination in American Fiction*; finally, Sacvan Bercovitch, in his renowned works *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* and *The American Jeremiad* argued that American Puritanism was nothing else but a preliminary form of the national ideology. Bercovitch also stressed that any creative contacts between Hawthorne and the culture of New England cannot be determined by his artistic attention towards the national religious practices. Professor Alexey Aksenov, one of the main representatives of Hawthorne studies in the Russian federation, claimed in his essay *Nathaniel Hawthorne and American Puritanism: the antinomy of the creative thought* (that "the writer's

attitude towards the puritan religion was the attitude of the person who had nothing to do with the church." (2006: 28)

In a paradoxical manner, all the modern attempts to isolate Hawthorne from the religious context of the United States of the 1800s resemble the old scholarly methodology of the Soviet American Studies, given that it was obligatory to substantiate that just about every talented American author unavoidably had to suffer from acute spiritual isolation in his native land. For instance, Professor Yuri Kovalev in his book *From the Spy to the Confidence Man* called the writer "a strange American", who was "hardly influenced by the dynamics of the age in his creative development". (2003: 123) Thus, it is necessary to acknowledge the non-constructivity of the dominant critical tendencies of interpretation of the religious components of Hawthorne's fiction. Any scholarly efforts to completely immerse the writer into American Puritanism are just as erroneous, as are the attempts to entirely free him of the influence of the national religious environment. In both cases, we come across the vestiges of classical scientific paradigm of the humanities, marked by the implications of ideology, and inattentive to the innate connections of the art of letters with the discursive practices of a society.

It follows that there is a need to apply modern methods of discursive analysis, which developed out of post-classical scholarship, in relation to the literary heritage of Hawthorne. His literary activities were connected with that period of American history known in our time as the Second Great Awakening (1790–1840). The absolute majority of the population of the United States (from the presidents to the enslaved African-Americans at the plantations of the South) created and participated in that nation-wide religious revival which embraced the entire country. Accordingly, Hawthorne could not have possibly existed outside of that discursive continuum. Therefore, a truly modern interpretation of his major works should be conducted beyond the bounds of that old binary opposition "religious vs. secular", which encouraged the scholars to participate in endless and unproductive debates over whether or not Hawthorne was an ardent partisan of Puritanism.

To this end, it seems necessary to uncover at least some of the elements of the national religious discourse during the 1800s in Hawthorne's novels and short stories. Taking into account the long-lived attempts of the American academic community to either deliberately secularize his fiction, or transform his works into an artistic manifestation of sacred puritanical dogmas, it is justifiable to speak about a novel vector

of critical comprehension of complex creative connections between the writer and the national discursive practices of the popular democratic culture and religion of the United States. Critics and scholars willingly or unintentionally disregarded what Hawthorne's close friend and the central representative of American Renaissance, the writer Herman Melville in his famous critical essay *Hawthorne and His Mosses* (1850) characterized as an inseparable discursive relation of a true artist with his national cultural environment, when he wrote: "great geniuses are parts of the times, they themselves are the times, and possess a corresponding coloring". It is in the discourse of popular democratic religion of the independent American nation of the nineteenth century that we may find Hawthorne's "corresponding coloring" in relation to the religious substrate of his fiction.

Religion was truly a moving force of social and cultural progress in the young democratic republic of the first half of the nineteenth century. In the period before the beginning of the Civil War, the number of officially registered protestant churches and sects increased by at least 600 percent. The pioneer of American cultural studies, the French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) was deeply amazed at the atmosphere of pervasive religiosity that dominated the cultural and social life of the United States. According to him, there was no country in the world where the Christian religion retained a greater influence over the souls of men than in America.

In the North American lands, Christianity was startlingly heterogeneous and variable. Among the most powerful church organizations that had over 500,000 members were the Methodists, the Baptists, the Catholics, the Presbyterians and the Lutherans. However, next to them were many dozens of other churches, associations, cults and sects, and their overall influence on the religious life of the country was no less powerful and important. Religious tolerance, as one of the fundamental principles of American democracy, provided an opportunity for legal establishment and proliferation of the most fantastic dogmas and spiritual practices. Through the streets of Washington D.C. walked the followers of Robert Matthews who proclaimed himself the living God. The farmer Joseph Smith from the state of New York claimed that angels had given him the new Bible — the Book of Mormon. All over the states traveled the adepts of William Miller — the self-proclaimed prophet of Apocalypses, who persuaded thousands of American citizens to prepare for the inevitable end of days that was supposed to commence in the near future. Foreign guests, who were shocked by this astonishing diversity of democratic religion, often asked Americans, how it was possible to retain

sanity in their strange country, where a new church or another sect was created practically every day.

In the times of the Second Great Awakening, the majority of believers in the United States had already abandoned the strict Calvinistic doctrine of Puritanism, and many were searching for new religious inspirations. In American democratic churches, the path to salvation was open to everyone: the pursuit of self-perfection, charity, and the sense of personal spiritual unity with God were viewed as the essential characteristics of the renewed Christian faith. Public worship and popular religious literature were supposed to help the society to establish a stronger spiritual connection with the divine powers, but it was widely believed that the most important assurance of the promised redemption was the participation in the mass sacred ceremonies of the so-called "conversions", or "spiritual awakenings".

The rapid growth of the number of parishioners and the spread of new church organizations had led to the creation of a new profession of "circuit riders" — self-employed clergymen who journeyed to the farthest populated areas of the Frontier—who preached before the congregations of inhabitants of wild American borderlands. Their fiery "popular" sermons, which combined such elements as sensational stories, vivid biblical allegories and "lowbrow" humor, subverted the traditions of American Calvinism. The expressive and shrewd democratic rhetoric of their speeches (and popular publications, as in many cases the sermons of circuit riders were also printed and sold as religious pamphlets) inevitably attracted attention of several major writers of the age of American Renaissance. The title of Walt Whitman's celebrated collection of poetry *The Leaves of Grass* originated under the influence of the author's early acquaintance with the head of the sect of American Quakers from Long Island, Elias Hicks, who employed the sacred images of "divine leaves of grass" in his sermons and theological tractates. Likewise, the prototype of the characters of Captain Ahab and Father Maple in Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick* was Reverend Edward Taylor, an outspoken Methodist minister from Boston, who was regarded as one of the most popular American preachers of the Second Great Awakening.

Even though some literary historians prefer to portray Hawthorne as "the recluse from Salem" (see, for example, the newest American biographies of the writer by Brenda Wineapple and Milton Meltzer), he actively participated in the social and political life of his country, and, similar to other canonical representatives of American romanticism, he

attentively followed the development of the national religious culture. The writer published more than a dozen of his stories in *The Democratic Review*. The chief editor of that authoritative journal, John L. O'Sullivan, was the creator of one of the most popular religious and political doctrines of Americanism — the Manifest Destiny. He described Hawthorne as one of the sincerest and most spiritual American authors of his times. (2008: 264) This appraisal was in many ways conditioned by the writer's special attention towards the subject of contemporary American beliefs and religious practices.

For instance, in *Main Street* and *Earth's Holocaust* (both short stories were published in *Mosses From An Old Manse*), Hawthorne with evident sympathy recreated the circumstance of a typical ceremony of "spiritual awakening", which were organized by the American circuit riders. As in most cases such worships were held outside of church buildings, which could not possibly accommodate all the attendees who came to listen to popular sermons, large congregations of believers assembled in nearby woods: "With the alternative of kneeling beneath the awful vault of the firmament, it is strange that men should creep into this pent-up nook, and expect God's presence there." (*Main Street*, online) When the circuit riders preached before the inhabitants of American borderlands, church meetings (often called religious "camp-meetings") were conducted in the very heart of the forest, mostly at night, so that the frontiersmen would not be distracted from hard work during the daytime: "All is well, the wood-paths shall be the aisles of our cathedral, the firmament itself shall be its ceiling. What needs an earthly roof between the Deity and his worshippers? Our faith can well afford to lose all the drapery that even the holiest men have thrown around it, and be only the more sublime in its simplicity." (*Earth's Holocaust*, online) As most biographers of the writer tend to agree, Hawthorne was not a frequent churchgoer, but for many years it was his professional habit to visit various locations of religious gatherings in the open air, where he could easily observe and learn their all the special rites of conduct of American believers.

According to the testimonies of many contemporaries, who witnessed the ceremonies of "spiritual awakening", those popular religious services resembled horrifying pagan rituals or satanic orgies. At first, the congregation loudly sang Christian church hymns, but then the participants started to scream furiously, curse like crazy, and howl, as if they were wild forest animals. It was believed that in the process of "spiritual awakening", in their souls and minds commenced the final battle

between God and Devil, who was supposed to make an obligatory appearance at the site of camp-meetings to prevent the newly-converted individuals from achieving salvation. Consequently, wild songs and crazy screams were called special "spiritual exercises", which helped the partakers of the rituals to defend themselves against the satanic forces. Frances Trollope, an English Novelist, who explored the democratic religious culture of the Second Great Awakening, attempted to explain to her British readers her experience of the first American camp-meeting she went to: "But how am I to describe the sounds that proceeded from this strange mass of human beings? I know no words which convey an idea of it. Hysterical sobbings, convulsive groans, shrieks and screams the most appalling, burst forth on all sides. I felt sick with horror."(1832: 54) Although she was already familiar with some bizarre customs of contemporary European sectarianism, what Trollope found particularly astonishing was that mass democratic worship under the open sky were dramatically different from anything she had ever witnessed in the Old World. Attended by many thousands of believers, they were so loud and wild that the European visitor felt completely overwhelmed. It is not surprising that such popular rituals of American democratic church were also represented in Hawthorne's fiction.

In *Young Goodman Brown* (1835) we come across a vivid description of a comparable religious ceremony. The young farmer Brown, the main character of the story, travels to the local forest in the middle of the night to participate in a mysterious religious service. After wondering the forest paths for a while, Brown finally unexpectedly hears some strange sounds: "He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance, with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness, pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out; and his cry was lost to his own ear, by its unison with the cry of the desert." (online) It is in fragments such as this one we can observe that Hawthorne's concerns with the national religious practice is quite obvious. However, as it was asserted earlier, the previous generation of American scholars had dismissed this aspect of his work. Frederic Crew, for example, interpreted Hawthorne's religious scenes in *Young Goodman Brown* as a symbolic (and wholly secular) embodiment of "the classic Oedipal pattern", while the abovementioned passage, in his opinion, was

nothing but the imaginary subconscious expression of "Brown's own horror of adulthood", as this mature (and married!) man virtually "remains the little boy who has heard rumors about the polluted pleasures of adults, and who wants to learn more about them despite or because he finds them disgusting." (1989: 105)

On repeated occasions, Hawthorne also addressed in his works those dramatic interfaith controversies, which accompanied the process of rapid development of democratic religion. Charles G. Finney, the most popular American preacher of the 1830s, often claimed that the modern American church was no place for complex theological concepts of "Old Divinity" Calvinism. The solid foundation of the renewed American faith was to consist of clear and simple, "popular" concepts, oriented towards the mass democratic audience: "Many ministers are finding it out already, that a Methodist preacher, without the advantages of a liberal education will draw a congregation around him which a Presbyterian minister, with perhaps ten times as much learning, cannot equal, because he has not the earnest manner of the other, and does not pour out fire upon his hearers when he preachers."(1835: 182) At that time, the Presbyterians — the last upholders of archaic dogmas of Puritanism of the previous century, were clearly losing the confessional battle for the heart and minds of American believers. The membership of their churches was decreasing rapidly, while their main competitors from American democratic churches enjoyed a steady stream of new converts. Their burning rhetoric — that "fire" which was "poured upon" the hearers, was exactly what the congregation wanted to hear, as Charles G. Finney reasonably pointed out. On the contrary, most Americans were completely unwilling to listen to "highbrow" preaching from the drowsy Presbyterian pulpit. That spiritual fire, transformed into the symbol of the renewed Christian faith, was likely the most significant symbol of popular American religion of the 1800s. Charles Finney was confident that only by the implementation of the "fire" of unrestrained emotionalism, ignited in the souls of men by the rituals of "spiritual awakening", was it possible to achieve complete absolution from sin and at last unite with the merciful God. So it is not without reason that the northern part of the state of New York, where such "fiery" religious sermons originated, was given the expressive name of "the burned over district" by the penny-press. Hawthorne was fully aware of this popular shift that had taken place in the contemporary religious life of his country, and attempted to represent some of its essential characteristics in his works.

The mysterious preacher from the story about the nighttime adventure of young Brown also arranges for his congregation an impressive fire ritual: "At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage, that had overgrown the summit of the rock, was all on fire, blazing high into the night, and fitfully illuminating the whole field… As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once." (1835)

It should be noted that the wild emotionalism of such religious rituals was repeatedly condemned by many recognized American preachers, who also strived for liberalization of theological dogmas of Calvinism but were convinced that popular forms of worship could not arouse truly deep and lasting religious feelings in the souls of the democratic congregation. William Ellery Channing proclaimed: "We do not judge of the bent of men's minds by their raptures, any more than we judge of the direction of a tree during a storm. We rather suspect loud profession, for we have observed, that deep feeling is generally noiseless, and least seeks display." (1903: 272)

Still, the formation of the negative reputation of popular democratic religion among "moderate" American Christians was to an even greater extent intensified by numerous eyewitness accounts of the unrestrained immoral behavior of the participants of mass worships. As a means to support the spiritual energy of their parishioners, some preachers and circuit riders did not hesitate to use strong liquors, which they openly sold to the people. In a state of religious euphoria, enhanced by alcohol, men and women hardly paid attention to moral conventions. Contemporary American journalists even joked that during the forest ceremonies of "spiritual awakenings" as many new souls were conceived as were saved. Deeply shocked by moral relativism of the adepts of popular democratic religion, the main character of *Young Goodman Brown* exclaims in desperation: "My Faith is lost!" (1835). It is easy to perceive this statement as something of an indication of the author's disillusionment in religious matters. However, it is clear that Hawthorne did not abandon the subject of popular practices of American democratic church in his later works. He continued to explore various aspects of the national religious culture from different perspectives not as "the person who had nothing to do with the

church" (as it was declared in A. Aksenov's *Nathaniel Hawthorne and American Puritanism: the antinomy of the creative though* and Y. Kovalev's *From the Spy to the Confidence Man*), but as an American writer who could realize his creative intentions only in the complex and contradictory discursive environment of the Second Great Awakening.

The theme of alcohol abuse among the parishioners of democratic churches attracted the attention of several other American writers of the 1800s. For instance, the publication of *Deacon Giles' Distillery* (1835), which was written by Hawthorne's fellow student George B. Cheever, initiated heated nationwide debates among critics and readers since the author went so far as to claim that the spread of alcoholism in his country was directly related to destructive religious practices of popular preachers, whom he identified with "devils". Hawthorne also did not stand aside from the "anti-alcohol" theme. In his satirical story *A Rill from the Town Pump* (1837), the writer describes desperate (but fruitless) attempts of contemporary temperance advocates to persuade the Christian democratic community to limit their daily consumption to "milk and water." As a professional writer with an eye on the mass democratic audience, Hawthorne wanted to attract the interest of American consumer of popular printed products by producing literary works on the sensational subject of alcohol abuse in the religious environment of his country, which was simultaneously culturally determined and fascinating for the reading public. Still, there were other sensational aspects of the national religious discourse that attracted the writer's attention.

In the early 1840s, the rapid spread of popular sectarian movements encouraged the formation of a new image of the democratic church as the center of sexual licentiousness in the collective social consciousness of the American nation. It seemed that the puritan moral restrain of the previous century had vanished without a trace. The founders of the most powerful sectarian organizations in the United States, Jacob Cochran, Michael Hull Barton, Isaac Bullard, Elijah Pierson, Robert Metthews, and John Smith, openly propagated polygamy and considered free sexual relations among parishioners and preachers as an essential component of the renewed democratic religion. The self-proclaimed "Messiah" Jacob Cochran, a married man and the father of three children, was very proud of the fact that he had seven more "spiritual wives" among his female followers. John Smith had to construct several additional buildings to house his large "divine family" which consisted of 33 wives and more than 60 children. Many of the women who lived there previously abandoned their husbands

and families to unite with their religious leader. Against such a cultural background, the story of adultery committed by Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmsdale seemed like an immediate continuation of numerous sensational accounts concerning sexual life of licentious American clergymen and their female parishioners.

In his novel *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne attempted to find the answer to the question: can the American nation of the age of the Second Great Awakening perceive at least a minute indication of a moral crime in adultery, committed by a minister and a married woman from his parish? In order to enhance the effect of moral condemnation, the writer employed in his novel the historical decorations of the bygone puritan culture. In Hawthorne's opinion, his American contemporaries could realize that love in marriage and traditional family values did not lose their social significance only by comparison of the old-fashioned spiritual conventions of Puritanism with the unrestrained immorality of the modern democratic church. However, it is safe to say that the writer's generation largely ignored his moral didacticism, as they had bought only about 35 thousand copies of *The Scarlet Letter*. At the same time, American readers purchased over 700 thousand copies of sensational novels of such popular authors as Maria Monk, George Lippard and George Thompson, who celebrated sensual laxity and sexual crimes, which dominated in the democratic church.

Hawthorne's novel *The Marble Fawn* was his last tempt of gaining artistic control over the wildness and moral relativism of American religious environment. Realizing that the spiritual authority of Protestantism and sectarianism was too powerful for a direct confrontation, he turned to exploration of an alternative religious movement, the Catholic Church, which was regarded as the main adversary of the national confessions in the tense competitive struggle over the salvation of the souls of American believers. As Catholicism was able to effectively oppose the chaos of religious reforms over many centuries, it became something of a safety valve that allowed releasing of the wild energies of democratic religious consciousness in a secure and controlled manner.

Still, that artistic "conversion" to the Catholic faith should not be interpreted as the writer's attempt to isolate himself from the influence of the national religious atmosphere. In *The Marble Fawn*, Hawthorne simply described one of the processes of transformation of the democratic religious consciousness in the times of the Second Great Awakening. For instance, many of the former founders of the utopian reform community of Brook Farm, whom Hawthorne depicted in *The Blithedale Romance*, finally became

so disillusioned in popular democratic religion that they willingly converted to Catholicism. Such prominent literary figures as Orestes Brownson and Isaac Hecker, who had been searching for many years for true "spiritual awakening" amidst the kaleidoscopic multiplicity of American Protestantism, did not just convert to the Catholic faith, but were officially ordained and became priests.

Nevertheless, unlike those protestant turncoats, who maintained friendship with Hawthorne till the end of his life, the writer never considered Catholicism as his last spiritual resort. In the rough draft of his unfinished novel *The American Claimant Manuscript*, which he started in 1864, Hawthorne once more attempted to stand up to the challenge of many-sided and controversial religious life of the young American nation.

Even a short review of the roots of Hawthorne's fiction in the North American religious discourse of the first half of the nineteenth century attests the unproductiveness of the traditional binary opposition "religious vs. secular", within the limits of which the academic community has been interpreting Hawthorne's creative development. The situation is far more complex: the immersion in the discourse of religious reformism of the Protestant church of the United States enabled the writer to conduct daring and conscientious artistic experiments in his search for the true spiritual and moral essence of democracy, manifested in the wild and fiery nature of popular American religion of his age. In his fiction, Hawthorne willingly attempted to discover the efficacy of the spiritual potential of popular democratic religion of the Second Great Awakening, which engulfed the entire country as a wildfire. Further discursive studies of his creative work in that context will open wide new horizons for literary analysis.

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