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History in the Novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Undergraduate Thesis

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně s
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ABSTRACT

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The thesis deals with historical motives in two novels and several selected short stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne. Its aim is to show Hawthorne's inspiration in New England history and his biography also. The thesis is divided into four parts. Hawthorne's biography is the topic of the first part. Each of the following parts tries to give evidence about the historical connections in the particular literary work. The second part is dedicated to *The Scarlet Letter*. The third part deals with *The House of the Seven Gables*, and the last one with the selected short stories.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	2
1. BIOGRAPHY.....	3
2. <i>THE SCARLET LETTER</i>	13
3. <i>THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES</i>	20
4. THE SHORT STORIES.....	29
CONCLUSION.....	39
WORKS CITED.....	41
SUMMARY IN CZECH.....	44

INTRODUCTION

Hawthorne's literary work consists of great number of short stories and several novels or romances which are usually somehow related to history. The connection with history is created through historical persons, places, or events appearing in his stories. But these connections are explored not only through historical books.

Hawthorne's works are influenced by his biography also, and its connection with early American history and the history of his family connected with the beginning of New England existence. He was born into the family of Hathorne, one of the oldest American families, the members of which provided models for some of his characters. The Puritan society of his ancestors with its rigid rules is criticized by their 19th century descendant. To his contemporaries, however, Hawthorne is not very benevolent either; this is demonstrated predominantly in his works concerned his experience with Transcendentalism.

The thesis will concentrate on these connections in order to show that the works can be considered historical. For this purpose Hawthorne's most famous novels *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* and selected short stories will be examined. The first chapter will deal with his life, emphasizing those situations and events which later influenced his works. *The Scarlet Letter* is the topic of the second chapter, where the history of New England will be revealed to be the greatest inspiration. The third chapter about *The House of the Seven Gables* will try to give evidence of importance of Hawthorne's life and family for this romance. The selected short stories in the last part of the thesis will concentrate on showing the diversity of themes that Hawthorne were able to connect with history. Through the whole thesis there will also be an effort to reveal his tendency to incorporate his favourite theme – the criticism of Puritan way of life – into almost every one of his works.

1. BIOGRAPHY

Nathaniel Hawthorne's biography is an important component of his literary works. He was inspired by his dwelling places, persons he had met, events he had taken part in, books he had read and not least by his own family history. His birth place was Salem, Massachusetts, to which he returned in many stories he later wrote. He was descended paternally from one of the oldest American family, the Hathornes, and maternally from the Mannings; both these families provided models for characters in Hawthorne's writings, and their long tradition may have been the first impulse which led young Nathaniel to be interested in early American history.

Elisabeth Clarke Manning, Nathaniel's mother, was born in a family coming to New World in 1679. Men of Mannings were traditionally blacksmiths and it is said that figures of blacksmiths and iron workers in Hawthorne's work were influenced by them ("The Family").

Ancestors of his father, however, had much greater impact on his work. Hawthorne himself claims in his diaries that they came from Wigcastle in Wilton, Wiltshire, but no such castle has been confirmed to exist (Lathrop 20).

The first Hathorne who became an American was Major William Hathorne, Nathaniel's great-great-great-grandfather, who most likely came in 1630 on the Arbella with Winthrop. In terms of the year of his arrival sources slightly differ in opinions, but contemporary documents testify that in 1634 he was a freeholder in Dorchester and then he probably moved to Salem in 1636 or 1637 (Stearns). While living in Salem Major Hathorne was among the most important persons of the colony, maybe the most important next to Governor Winthrop (Stearns). He is also associated with the persecution of the Quakers, as he was a member of the Colonial Assembly during the period of persecution, though it has been never confirmed that he supported it (Stearns). Hawthorne in the preface to *The Scarlet Letter*

referred to his ancestor as a persecutor of Quakers. He also wrote about this man in his notebooks:

The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present to my boyish imagination as far back as I can remember. It still haunts me, and induces a sort of home-feeling with the past, which I scarcely claim in reference to the present, phase of the town. I seem to have a stronger claim to a residence here on account of this grave, bearded, sable-cloaked and steeple-crowned progenitor — who came so early, with his Bible and his sword, and trod the unworn street with such a stately port, and make so large a figure as a man of war and peace — a stronger claim than for myself, whose name is seldom heard and my face hardly known. He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a bitter persecutor, as witness the Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity towards a woman of their sect which will last longer, it is to be feared, than any of his better deeds, though these were many. (qtd. in James 8)

Of even worse reputation was Hawthorne's great-great-grandfather, Justice John Hathorne, best known as the 'witch judge'. He was also a prosperous merchant of Salem, a judge on the Superior Court and commander-in-chief against the Indians in 1696, but throughout his work as a magistrate of Oyer and Terminer and the chief interrogator of witches during the Salem witchcraft hysteria in 1692 he stepped into history ("The Paternal"). Nevertheless, Lathrop defends him by saying that the belief in witchcraft had a strong tradition and Justice Hathorne had the misfortune to be the judge in Salem at that time and that many people would have probably behave the same way if they had been him (9). People

of 17th century America believed that their pains were caused by their neighbours and their intolerance, and the only way to solve the problems was accusation of witchcraft: “They feared the Indians, the wild beasts, and most of all one another, for society was not yet sufficiently organized to afford that repose and contentment of spirit which they had left behind in the Old World. They had come to America to escape despotism, but they had brought despotism in their own hearts” (Lathrop 9). Without doubt the majority agreed with John Hathorne’s position.

Hawthorne was also descended from Phelps, as his grandmother was Rachel Phelps Hathorne. The second wife of Rachel’s father Hannah and her first husband Nicholas were both arrested in Salem for being Quakers. Thus Hawthorne may have felt a connection to the persecuted (“The Paternal”).

Nathaniel’s father and son of Daniel Hathorne and Rachel Phelps, Nathaniel Hathorne Sr., was a sailor and from 1804 even the Captain. Most of his son’s early years he was on a sea voyage. He did not come back from his last one in 1808 as he died from yellow fever (“The Paternal”). At that time Nathaniel Jr. was only 4 years old. James Fields claims in *Yesterdays with Authors* that his friend, who knew Hathornes well, describes Hawthorne’s father as a man “inclined to melancholy” and as “a great reader, employing all his leisure time at sea over books”. Young Nathaniel was, like his father, attracted by fantastic stories the books offered, and he was engaged with the classics in his childhood and early manhood, which led to his later fondness for allegory in his writing.

Fields claims that he was told by the same Hathorne family friend that young Nathaniel’s favourite book was *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan. The book is a Christian allegory, written in 1678 and widely read in 17th century colonies. “No one ever thought of asking how much of it he understood. I think it one of the happiest circumstances of his training, that nothing was ever explained to him.....His mind developed itself; intentional

cultivation might have spoiled it....”(Fields). Thus, Hawthorne studied the book on his own; later he drew inspiration for his work from the book. At least his short story “The Celestial Railroad” is said to be based on it. Further examples of Hawthorne’s masterly use of allegory in his stories are “Dr. Heidegger Experiment” from *Twice-Told Tales*, or “The Birthmark” and “Rappaccini’s Daughter” published in *Mosses from an Old Manse*.

After the death of his father, Nathaniel moved together with his mother and two sisters into the house of his mother’s brother Robert Manning where he had access to the greatest literary works including already mentioned *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Here he also opened Scott’s novels for the first time and even spent much time over Spencer’s *Faerie Queene*; both the writers’ influence may be found in Hawthorne writings (Stearns). He shares the ability to present truth in allegory with Bunyan and Spenser (Halleck 148), and was so fascinated by the latter’s works that he called his daughter Una and gave the name of Lion to her cat – both these names inspired by *Faerie Queene* (Halleck 149). Hawthorne’s first romance, *Fanshawe*, was said to be his attempt to write a novel in the style of Sir Walter Scott.

His literary talent revealed already in his childhood by composing poems, but after he entered the Bowdoin College the efforts passed, though he spent years with Longfellow there. Nevertheless, the year he entered the college Hawthorne seemed to have decided what to do in later life. The letter written to his mother in 1821 contains the following: “What do you think of my becoming an author, and relying for support upon my pen? Indeed, I think the illegibility of my hand is very author-like” (qtd. in Stearns). He already had some practice as he started an imaginary family newspaper called *The Spectator* with help of his sister Louisa in the summer of 1820 (Stearns). It contained poetry, domestic news, essays, and advertisements. Nathaniel entered and graduated from the college, where he met many later famous people (writers or politicians), under the name of Hathorne, but soon after leaving the college changed the name for Hawthorne (Stearns). The reasons for him doing it have never

been determined. There are speculations that it had something to do with his family history he would not want to be associated with, but there is no clear evidence to support it (“The Family”).

After leaving the college he returned into the family house and during following years made several efforts in literature. Both the short story collection proposed be published under the name of *We Are Seven*, commonly known as *Seven Tales of My Native Land*, and novelette *Fanshawe* did not become successful. The ‘Seven Tales’ were not even published at all and Hawthorne later destroyed them. It is said that already this first collection contained a short story with witchcraft theme, which is so typical for his historical stories. As a result of the publishers’ reluctance he decided to publish *Fanshawe* himself, but the book was not noticed by the public. Consequently, the disappointed author destroyed all the copies he was able to get back from sale (Stearns). There was still no herald of his later fame and Hawthorne became even more introverted (Lathrop 64). Though they were not successful, these early efforts in literature already show his lifelong habit of searching for inspiration in reality as *Seven Tales of My Native Land* were inspired by history and *Fanshawe* by Hawthorne’s college experience.

Great change in his life came with making an acquaintance with Sophia Peabody, his future wife, in 1836. It is said that they were already engaged in 1837, but certain is that they did not marry until 1842. Peabody’s were very cultivated and respected family in Salem, and Hawthorne, desiring to make enough money to be able to marry Sophia, accepted job at Boston Custom House. In 1841 they together set their life among Transcendentalists in Brook Farm (investing a thousand dollars in it) and joined their desire for “leisure to live in all the faculties of the soul” (*The Dial*, qtd. in Halleck 96). Nevertheless, Brook Farm was not an ideal place for a writer to live in as there remained no desire to write after ten hours working a day. Hawthorne withstood the living among Transcendentalist only for a year; the Brook

Farm itself ended its existence 5 years later. He incorporated the experience from living among this society especially into *The Blithedale Romance* and wrote about it openly in his *Note Books*. He never returns to this episode of his life in very flattering way in his works. As Brook Farm is considered the only transcendentalist community which had a certain importance for American history, Hawthorne's treatment of this theme could be seen as his taste for incorporating historically based facts into his stories also, but in fact the inspiration came from his own experience.

Nathaniel and Sophia finally said their vows on 9 July, 1842 in Boston. The couple consequently moved to The Old Manse in Concord, the house with centuries long tradition, where they lived for three years. Here Hawthorne wrote most of the tales collected in *The Mosses from an Old Manse* (James 95), and these years spent in The Old Manse seems to be the happiest period of his life. However, while his private life was satisfactory, not so much was his life of a writer. Literary men already appreciated his *Twice-Told Tales*, the short story collection published in 1837, but the Bostonians (with some exceptions) were of another opinion, which was caused more by the low education of the society than Hawthorne's skills (Stearns). Nevertheless, his self-confidence further declined. Fortunately, The Old Manse was full of inspiration for the author, even though not always through pleasant experiences. On the first anniversary of Hawthorne's wedding, a poet and Nathaniel's friend Ellery Channing came to The Old Manse for help with searching for a corpse of a local girl, who drowned herself in the river. Hawthorne were among these who found her and he later processed this terrible experience in *The Blithedale Romance* (Stearns).

Though he spent great years in Concord, Hawthorne never ceased to consider Salem his home. He wrote about it in his diary:

This old town of Salem – my native place, though I have dwelt much away from it, both in boyhood and mature years – possesses, or did possess, a hold

on my affections, the force of which I have never realized during my seasons of actual residence here....And yet, though invariably happiest elsewhere, there is within me a feeling for old Salem, which, in lack of a better phrase, I must be content to call affection....But the sentiment has likewise its moral quality. The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present to my boyish imagination as far back as I can remember. It still haunts me, and induces a kind of home-feeling with the past, which I scarcely claim in reference to the present phase of the town. (qtd. in Lathrop 5)

Eventually, Salem seems to be Hawthorne's very favourite place to live and write in. His connection to this old town through family history certainly had its magic and he felt probably closer to the romantic times of founding America, as Salem was of the first settlements formed on New England coast together with Boston and Plymouth. It soon became the second most important city after Boston and the family of Hawthorne were witnesses of the Salem prosperity. The leading citizens, to which the Hawthornes belonged, were wealthy and they developed a cultivated and well educated aristocracy (Stearns). Unfortunately, their education did not prevent the society treat other people badly. This first generation started the fights with Indians and later the persecution of "the peace-loving Quakers, who opposed a paid clergy and a tax-supported Church" (Bailey 30). The Church said them to be under the influence of Satan, and they suffered many injustice (Bailey 30). Beside the common conviction about Quakers, the society was supported in revealing witches. This was brought to the colonies from Europe, where thousands of suspected witches were hanged or burnt in the 16th and 17th centuries (Bailey 32). Nevertheless, the first American generation was not so extreme, because they were predominantly well educated men and women (Stearns). The next generation, who did not have the same opportunity to develop their minds, became obsessed with witchcraft. The people engaged in hard work of

clearing the land were afraid of one another and accusing of witchcraft reached the top in 1692 in Salem. People and even dogs were hanged or pressed to death when convicted for practicing witchcraft (Bailey 32). This gloomiest period of American history became inspirational for the descendent of the family the members of which were presented there and even took part in some cases.

Of course, this happened many years before Nathaniel lived here, but still he was always interested in historical events and let himself be inspired by them in his works. Historical Salem repeatedly became Hawthorne's dwelling place. After the years spent in the Old Manse he returned to his birth-place in 1846, where he was offered a place at Salem Custom House, which he consequently accepted (James 106). Hawthorne worked as the Surveyor for the District of Salem and Beverly and Inspector of the Revenue for the Port of Salem for three years, during which was not able to write anything to be published, but he capitalized this experience in Custom-House – the preface to *The Scarlet Letter*. He was disembodied from the position because of political reasons in 1849 ("Biographical"). After this experience and the death of Hawthorne's beloved mother he decided to leave Salem and never come back, because there left nothing to stay for and his birth place was not inspirational anymore. By this time he had already returned to his work of writer, but still was not convinced to publish anything.

James T. Fields described in *Yesterdays with Authors* the outset of a great change in Hawthorne's life. In winter of 1849, after his release from Custom House, Fields visited him because of illness he was suffering from and tried to convince him to publish something. "Who would risk publishing a book for *me*, the most unpopular writer in America?" was the answer (qtd. in Fields). Nevertheless, during his visit Fields noticed some papers in Hawthorne's drawer. After first rejection, the author changed his mind: "How in Heaven's name did you know this thing was there? As you have found me out, take what I have written,

and tell me, after you get home and have time to read it, if it is good for anything. It is either very good or very bad — I don't know which" (qtd. in Fields). So it happened that the germ of "The Scarlet Letter" came into publisher's hands.

In May of 1850, the Hawthornes moved to Lenox, Massachusetts. Here Hawthorne met one of his important friends, Melville. Soon he returned to Boston to meet his family there and then to Concord (Stearns). At this time he was already recognized author after publishing *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. In 1853 the family left for Liverpool, England, where Nathaniel was appointed Consul by his former classmate, at that time President, Franklin Pierce ("Biographical"). Hawthorne was able to draw inspiration from his surrounding wherever he was; that is why his places of dwelling are so important for his literary career. Concord prompted *Mosses from an Old Manse*, Europe provided inspiration for *The Marble Faun*, and there were several other places important for Hawthorne's writing like his inexhaustible source of inspiration – Salem. His last dwelling place became Concord, where he settled after coming back from Europe. During his last years he suffered from illnesses and on May 18, 1864 he died in sleep while on tour of the White Mountains with Franklin Pierce ("Biographical").

Though Nathaniel Hawthorne was only 60 years old when died, he lived a full live with his loving and beloved wife Sophia and their three children Una, Julian, and Rose. As he was among his best biographers because of his diaries, the public learns much of his experiences through them, and the diaries can be compared with his prose. He drew inspiration for his books from this experiences as well as from the previous two centuries of American history to which he gained access through reading books and family narrations. His ancestors William and John Hathorne are the connections with the Puritan times, to which his criticism often relates, but they are not the only ones who served the author as models, because Hawthorne's many contemporaries appear in his writings too. The history of

America, as well as its present and future, was at the centre of Hawthorne's thoughts and he was not able to produce a piece of literature without connecting it with past or present reality.

2. *THE SCARLET LETTER*

Between the years 1846 and 1850, one of the most widely read novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, was written. It was the first romance which made him widely known (Lathrop 98). The book tells the story of Hester Prynne, a woman living in 17th century Massachusetts, punished for adultery by obligation to wear the scarlet letter A on her chest.

Before the author starts to narrate the story, he gives the reader an opportunity to look into his own life and see the motives which lead him to write it in a preface called “The Custom-House”. According to his words he found a Puritan scarlet letter during his work at Boston Custom House, and he insists that the scroll of paper discovered together with the letter was the inspiration for writing. He says that on the paper there was a narrative of his predecessor, the former surveyor Mr. Pue, about a woman who lived at the time of founding of Massachusetts. The problem with this statement is that no evidence was ever found to prove it. G. P. Lathrop says in his *Study of Hawthorne* that “the papers of Mr. Pue were probably the pure invention of the author’s” (98). However, at least the vision of the letter worn by sinners is historically based. According to Timothy Green in 1704 the General Court of Massachusetts Bay passed the following law:

Convicted before the Justice of Assize, – both Man and Woman to be set on the Gallows an Hour with a Rope about their Necks and the other end cast over the Gallowses. And in the way from thence to the common Gaol, to be Scourged not exceeding Forty Stripes. And forever after to wear a Capital A of two inches long, of a contrary colour to their cloathes, sewed on their upper Garments, on the Back or Arm, in open view. And as often as they appear without it, openly to be Scourged, not exceeding Fifteen Stripes. (qtd. in Stearns)

The credibility of the story is further supported by using real historical persons as characters – especially Richard Bellingham, the real governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, or Ann Hibbins, Bellingham’s sister, later executed for witchcraft – according to “Governor” as the last of five women executed in Boston. Both of these figures are real parts of the story, even though they stay beyond the main thought of it. Of course, they were also distorted – especially Hibbins – by Hawthorne’s imagination. She is depicted as a witch who tries to convince Hester to practice witchcraft and is repeatedly refused by her. In fact she “spent her life, as was expected of women of the time, caring for the home” (“Governor”). Her only problem was, that she, as a strong-minded woman, was not afraid to defend her position even against the church. This led to her excommunication and later, after the death of her husband, execution. The distinction between Hibbins and others accused of witchcraft is that she was socially prominent and wealthy, and during the life of her husband protected by his social position (“Governor”). Governor Bellingham was a powerful man, but unable to save his sister. Even in the book he is depicted as a man who cares about what people think about him, than a man with great mind and authority, which can be felt from the following quotation: “The impression made by his aspect, so rigid and severe, and frost-bitten with more than autumnal age, was hardly in keeping with the appliances of worldly enjoyment wherewith he had evidently done his utmost to surround himself” (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 100). They both are mentioned several times in the book, never in very flattering context:

The affair being so satisfactory concluded, Hester Prynne, with Pearl, departed from the house. As they descended the steps, it is averred that the lattice of a chamber window was thrown open, and forth into the sunny day was thrust the face of Mistress Hibbins, Governor Bellingham’s bitter-tempered sister, and the same who, a few years later, was executed as a witch. (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 105)

Not only these two, but several other real names known from the half of 17th century appear through the whole novel (Winthrop, Hutchinson, etc.).

In spite of the fact that the book first appeared in 1850, the story is set in Massachusetts of the time of founding first colonies in America. Though Hawthorne's ancestors were members of it, the Puritan society of 17th century Massachusetts is not depicted positively. At the very beginning of the book Hawthorne offers a paradoxical view on their thinking: "The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison" (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 47). Real criticism comes later when he describes the way hypocrisy permeated through the whole society. Everyone in Boston looked down on Hester and thought her a great sinner; no one seemed to sympathize with her – although without doubt she was not the only sinner in the whole town. There is also the idea that she was not punished so much for the adultery itself as for the fact that she refused to reveal publicly the name of her accessory. The society were confident they had undeniable right to know it and then judge the guilty ones: "A blessing on the righteous colony of the Massachusetts, where iniquity is dragged out into the sunshine!" (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 54) According to what was written the founders were very religious people; they believed in God's justice but also took it into their own hands on Earth.

Power over the people fell into two branches in the novel – the church, represented by Mr. Roger Wilson, and state, represented by Governor Bellingham. Both these branches cooperated in every situation, never went against each other. There was probably no reason for arguing, because the laws and rules were very clear and rigid, and also very strict, but no one protested against the strictness - not only because they seemed to be satisfied with it, but also because no one wanted to deviate from the majority. Not to deviate from the whole was

even one of the basic rules of the time. According to Michael Sandel, the political philosopher, Americans throughout their history have “a sense of belonging to, a concern with the whole, a moral bond with the community whose fate is at stake” (qtd. in Bercovitch). The Puritans felt a strong need to be very cohesive, for this reason the good of the society was much more important than personal ambitions of individual. The fact that Hester was found to endanger the cohesiveness of the group too much is the reason why she was punished so strictly. Not to deviate from the majority meant for the mid-17th century woman to take the roles of mother and wife (Baym). Though, as Baym says in her essay, there is a certain hint of future possibility for women not to be stigmatized by society, at her time Hester endangered her role of wife by adultery, which was considered mockery of sacred values and of all the good Bostonian people.

There is the paradox that Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, though they were sinners at the same level as Hester, enjoyed the affection of society, because their sins were not publicly acknowledged. The same view offers Mistress Hibbins’ sentence: “Many a church-member saw I, walking behind the music, that has danced in the same measure with me” (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 242). Here she notes that not all the ‘good religious people’ are really so good as they pretend to be, which is very plausible as it is like this anywhere in any time.

Even though the author’s aim obviously was to create historically believable atmosphere in the novel and he was even by many regarded as lost “in the shadows of history” (Matthiessen 192), according to Henry James “the historical colouring is rather weak than otherwise” (114). Bercovitch expresses a similar opinion when he says that because Hawthorne studied Puritan texts and New England history, “his Puritans are the community that, for all its faults, provided exactly the sort of moral foundation he considered crucial for the mid-nineteenth-century republic”. Henry James further says that there is no concentration on detail – for example the figures do not speak the English of the period (114). It could be

said, in Hawthorne's defence, that there are some evident efforts to bring the reader closer into the age of the first colonies by depicting the time dressing, crowding the people at the marketplace and exchanging their opinions, showing Puritan children's games and many other signs of Puritan society, all described in their absurdity.

The most unimaginable for the common reader and in the same time the most sombre of all are just the grim games of the children's – "playing at going to church, perchance, or at scourging Quakers, or taking scalps in a sham fight with the Indians, or scaring one another with freaks of imitative witchcraft" (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 83) were considered to be a good preparation for life. They learnt what to consider good or evil and what is felt to be a sin from the very young age. At 6 or 7 they were able to judge Hester and Pearl and treat them as sinful and not worthy of living in society:

The truth was, that the little Puritans, being of the most intolerant brood that ever lived, had got a vague idea of something outlandish, unearthly, or at variance with ordinary fashions, in the mother and child, and therefore scorned them in their hearts, and not unfrequently reviled them with their tongues.
(Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 84)

There is clearly shown the general belief about hereditary sin and the predisposition of individual to evil. Hester was considered to be a sinner and for this reason Pearl was the same for the narrow-minded society, especially if she was brought up by her mother. Even Hester herself often doubts her little child and its character, in which she projects her sin. Pearl crowns the apprehensions of clergymen and others when she replies the question who her father is that she "was plucked by her mother off the bush of wild roses" (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 112) – that she has no father and she was not made by God; this sentence is taken as an evidence that Pearl have had no proper religious education. The same attitude to the human sinfulness could be seen in speeches of a witch, Mistress Hibbins – throughout the

whole book she believes Hester is the right person to join the witchcraft, because once she sinned, there is no possibility to turn it back anyhow: “And be the stern and sad truth spoken that the breach which guilt has once made into the human soul is never, in this mortal state, repaired” (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 200).

In the description of dressing the hypocrisy of the people is strongly criticised. Though the good men considered Pearl’s dresses too extravagant and fancy and they preached about renunciation of luxury, they did not avoid luxury themselves :

But it is an error to suppose that our great forefathers—though accustomed to speak and think of human existence as a state merely of trial had warfare, and though unfeignedly prepared to sacrifice goods and life at the behest of duty—made it a matter of conscience to reject such means of comfort, or even luxury, as lay fairly within their grasp. (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 108)

It can be felt from the context of the book that the primary aim of writing it was to show the Puritan society, their life, religion and beliefs. The story about Hester is more a means of achieving this. Despite the criticism of Puritanism, Hawthorne “possessed an insight that understood it” (Matthiessen 199). He saw also merits of Puritan conviction and principles, to which unfortunately Puritans not always adhered (Matthiessen 199). The last chapters bring optimism into the tale by depicting celebrations and submitting the statement that the first generation of people living in New England was not so much different from the Englishmen living in Elizabethan times. However, the author cannot retain an optimistic point of view for the next generations: “Their immediate posterity, the generation next to the early emigrants, wore the blackest shade of Puritanism, and so darkened the national visage with it, that all the subsequent years have not sufficed to clear it up. We have yet to learn again the forgotten art of gaiety” (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 131). Anyway, as Bercovitch states in “The Scarlet Letter: A Twice-Told Tales”, “the Puritans live [in 1995 as in 1850] in a contract

society built on voluntary association, the work ethic, free enterprise, government by law, and governorship by election". The fact is that a certain strictness of law and clear rules had their function and were probably necessary to maintain order; nowadays it is difficult to judge the society retrospectively.

Despite his efforts, Nathaniel Hawthorne, as he was not a very self-confident man, was afraid *The Scarlet Letter* would be refused by readers because of its dark atmosphere. He even wrote to his publisher about his plan to add some tales later published in *The Snow Image* and title the whole as *Old Times Legend, together with Sketches Experimental and Ideal* (G. P. Lathrop 99). This was refused and the book was published as *The Scarlet Letter*, was accepted by audience, and became an American classic. In 1879, Henry James junior says in his *Hawthorne (English Men of Letters)*:

The *Scarlet Letter* contains little enough of gaiety or of hopefulness. It is densely dark, with a single spot of vivid colour in it; and it will probably long remain the most consistently gloomy of English novels of the first order. But I must now call it the author's masterpiece, and I imagine it will continue to be, for other generations than ours, his most substantial title to fame. (110)

As Henry James predicted more than a century ago, *The Scarlet Letter* is definitely considered Nathaniel Hawthorne's masterpiece and still belongs to the most appreciated pieces of American literature. Undoubtedly it owes its popularity to a large extent to the historical theme.

3. *THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES*

Historical themes are found not only in *The Scarlet Letter*, but also in Hawthorne's other works. The connections to real buildings and persons, manners of 17th century New England inhabitants, and of course Hawthorne's family history and their connection with witchcraft – this all found in *The House of the Seven Gables* also.

The new romance *The House of the Seven Gables* appeared not long after the success of *The Scarlet Letter*. It took Nathaniel Hawthorne about five months to write it (Stearns); the book was finished in January 1851. In this romance the author concentrates much more on the characters, their psychology, and their mutual relations. As the name of the book reveals, an important part of the story is the house of 'Seven Gables' itself, which is at the centre of the centuries-long story.

The characters are predominantly members of the old wealthy dynasty of New England, the Pyncheons, who connected their lives with this house. Mysterious deaths appear in the family through the centuries and the author brings in the idea of a witch curse imposed on them by the family of Maule, from which they unlawfully obtained the land the house stands on.

In contrast with *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne set the story close to present – the mid-nineteenth century – and he was also more confident it would be well accepted by the public. He wrote to his publisher: "My prevailing idea is, that the book ought to succeed better than *The Scarlet Letter*, though I have no idea that it will" (Fields). At the same time he saw the darker side of depicting the atmosphere of recent past: "It has undoubtedly one disadvantage, in being brought so close to the present time; whereby its romantic improbabilities become more glaring" (Fields). It could be the reason why in the preface he emphasized that the book was written and should be read as a romance – a story just very slightly, if at all, inspired by real historical events. Despite this statement there are some historical connections worth

mentioning. Henry James even states that *The House of the Seven Gables* has “more literal actuality than the others” and “comes nearer being a picture of contemporary American life” than the other Hawthorne’s novels, though “the reader must look for his local and national quality between the lines” (125).

First is the existence of the house itself. Stearns is clear on the matter: “There is no such house in Salem, exactly as he describes it; but an odd, antiquated-looking structure at No. 54 Turner Street is supposed to have served him for the suggestion of it. The name is picturesque and well suited to introduce the reader to a homely suburban romance”. Nevertheless, there are more theories beside this one. G. P. Lathrop summarized them in *A Study of Hawthorne*:

Mr. Hawthorne himself said distinctly that he had no particular house in mind, and it is also a fact that none is recalled which fulfils all the conditions of that of the “Seven Gables.” Nevertheless, one party has maintained that the old Philip English house, pulled down many years since, was the veritable model; and others support the Ingresoll house, which still stands. The Corwin, called “Witch House” appears,, to have had requisite number of peaks at a remote date;....(110)

Jonathan Corwin House, also known as “Witch House” has a certain connection with history of family of Hawthorne, since his owner Corwin served with John Hawthorne as the magistrates of Salem Town and on the Court of Oyer and Terminer in 1692 – at the first position issuing warrants to arrest people accused of witchcraft, at the latter sentencing them to death (“Images”). But the theory that the Corwin House is also the one of the ‘Seven Gables’ is quite rare.

The most frequently mentioned house in connection with ‘Seven Gables’ is Ingresoll or Turner house, sometimes also called Turner-Ingresoll Mansion. It is a wooden house, built

in 1668 for John Turner, a wealthy merchant. The house is associated with Hawthorne's novel at least from 1870 ("House" 4). What speaks for the historical model in Turner-Ingresoll house is the fact that Ingresolls, who became owners of the house immediately after Turner family, were Hawthorne's relatives. Young Nathaniel was often invited into the house to visit his cousin Susannah. At the time the house had only three gables, but the family knew the history of the house (when the seven gables had been present) and probably narrated it to Nathaniel (John). There were also still remains of the original gables in the attic based on which the gables (except one) were later built anew ("Images"). It follows that the house was all the same inspired by reality.

Nevertheless, in the novel the house is not only a building but it is also a reflection of what happens around and in fact a metaphor of the noble race. Generation after generation inherits the house together with the heavy burden of its history, which left marks on the house as well as on the family themselves. The fate of the Pyncheons is reflected in the garden too – the family of rare fowls is also a clear metaphor for the noble family of Pyncheon and even the garden spring reflects the sins of the past. According to *The History of American Literature* the turning point is the death of Jaffrey Pyncheon (117). As the soul of the Judge leaves the house, the posies of Alice Pyncheon on the roof start to bloom and the sins of the past seem to be resolved.

Lawrence Sargent Hall in *Nathaniel Hawthorne: Comprehensive Research and study Guide* states that the house symbolizes the conflict between aristocracy and democracy in American history, here represented by separation of the Pyncheons from the Maules (49), and later solved by marriage of their descendants. He further claims that by comparison of the relation of Phoebe and Holgrave with the one of Alice Pyncheon and Matthew Maule Hawthorne shows that "the past can be escaped" (56).

The Pyncheon family themselves seem to have roots in reality. The critics speculate that the author borrowed the name from early American history; actually the family name was Pynchon and they were from the oldest families immigrated to the New World. William Pynchon, who landed in Massachusetts in 1630 with his wife Anne and their four children was first founder of the American family, but their roots reach several centuries further back. The name Pynchon was brought to England by the Normans in 1066. It is said that there were many spelling variations of the name through the centuries including Pyncheon. The family are ancestors of American writer Thomas Pynchon (“Pynchon Family Crest and Name History”).

The theory about borrowing one of the names of American early history seems logical, though Hawthorne clearly denied it in the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*. However, the Preface was not present in the first edition – it was added later after the complaint Nathaniel Hawthorne received from a representative of the family of Pyncheon. He wrote to his publisher on the 5 June 1851:

I have just received a letter from still another claimant of the Pyncheon estate. I wonder if ever and how soon, I shall get a just estimate of how many jackasses there are in this ridiculous world. My correspondent, by the way, estimates the number of these Pyncheons about twenty; I am doubtless to be remonstrated with by each individual. After exchanging shots with all of them, I shall get you to publish the whole correspondence, in a style to match that of my other works, and I anticipate a great run for the volume. (qtd. in Fields).

Later in the same letter he inclines to the idea that the name should be changed in the novel. On the in August of the same year he wrote: “You are going to publish another thousand of the Seven Gables. I promised those Pyncheons a preface. What if you insert the following?” The part of the preface where the author insists that he “was unaware of the existence of such

a family in New England” (Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*). The letter ends: “Insert it or not. I have done with the matter” (qtd. in Fields). Eventually, his publishers decided to add the preface to the novel and the family of Pyncheons might be satisfied.

An important family would not like to be associated with parts of the story. Apart from the depiction of Pyncheons as crooks, the most defamatory aspect concerns character of Judge Pyncheon. Someone even wrote Nathaniel that he made his grandfather, Judge Pynchon, according to the words of his descendant the exemplary old gentleman, infamous (Lathrop 110).

In fact Hawthorne perhaps did not have to go far for inspiration, since according to many sources his ancestor John Hathorne was a model for this character. According to others Jaffrey Pyncheon was created as a reflection of Judge Royall Tyler or Rev. Charles Upham. Thomas St. John says that the character seems to be a blend of all three of them. He further claims in his *Studies in The House of the Seven Gables* that in 1838 Hawthorne wrote into his notebook about a plan to create a fiction about Judge Royall Tyler: “A political or other satire might be describing a show of wax-figures of the prominent public men; and, by the remarks of the showman and the spectators, their characters and public standing might be expressed. And the incident of Judge Tyler as related by E— might be introduced” (qtd. in John). Nathaniel Hawthorne’s mother-in-law, Elizabeth Palmer, in 1833 wrote about Tyler for the *Christian Examiner* an article called “Seduction” and accused him of “seducing the woman, whose children would have corrupted, caused the suicide of a wife and mother, and afterwards married the daughter of that victim” (qtd. in John). Though his action, Judge Tyler enjoyed a great position in society and this is where the connection with the character of Jaffrey Pyncheon is. Everyone in the book has strange feelings about him, the reader knows that there is something bad about him, but he is the Judge, so he is recognized. There is also one more fact which creates the connection – Judge Tyler suffered from a wasting disease

which affected his face beginning in 1814 – first the nose, then the jaw, and the eye” (John), which could be the inspiration for Maule’s curse: “God will give him blood to drink!” (Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*)

Nevertheless, authors of *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature* state that the curse was inspired by Hawthorne’s family history and that such a curse “was pronounced on his own ancestor, John Hawthorne, or Hathorne, a severe magistrate in witchcraft times” (“Later Romances” 6). John Hawthorne was the third son and fifth child born to Major William and Anna Hathorne. With Judge Tyler and Jaffrey Pyncheon he has in common that he was a respected man during his life, but he also stepped into history as the “witch judge” (“The Paternal”).

Supporting this, Stearns claims that “it has been affirmed that Hawthorne made use of the Honorable Mr. Upham, the excellent historian of Salem witchcraft, as a model for Judge Pyncheon”. Charles Upham was primarily responsible for Nathaniel Hawthorne losing his job at Salem Custom House.

Henry James did not incline to any of the theories, but he supported the idea that Jaffrey Pyncheon might have been based on a historical person: “It is difficult to say whether Hawthorne followed a model in describing Judge Pyncheon; but it is tolerably obvious that the picture is an impression – a copious impression – of an individual” (130).

Critics agree that Hawthorne made use of a historical person when creating Judge Pyncheon (Stearns, James). It is nevertheless possible that Hawthorne was not inspired by reality when this character was formed, as any exact model has never been certainly confirmed. However, Judge Pyncheon really seems to have features of the above-mentioned. After all, according to what was said, Hawthorne had many models to choose from when wanted to make a negative character exist. Also Hawthorne takes frequent inspiration from real persons from American early history is quite common in Hawthorne’s works, and he lets

the persons, often the dreaded ones, live again through his writings. The author is also often thought to be dealing with his family history through his writings, which explains at least the presence of John Hathorne in the 'short list'.

Of the other characters, young Holgrave is according to critics the only one who could be connected with history, as he is the only one who has real human features. Stearns suggest that a young man with whom Hawthorne lived in Brook farm could be a model for him. Henry James on the contrary claims that Holgrave "is not sharply enough characterized; he lacks features; he is not an individual, but a type" (130). He adds that, in his opinion, Holgrave is a clean model of young American of the time:

Holgrave, the modern young man, who has been a Jack-of-all-traders and is at the period of the story a daguerrotypist, as an attempt to render a kind of national type – that of young citizen of the United States whose fortune is simply in his lively intelligence, and who stands naked, as it were, unbiased and unencumbered alike, in the centre of far-stretching level of American life. (130)

Bercovitch in *The Cambridge History of American Literature* goes farthest suggesting that Holgrave was created as an opposite to Hawthorne himself. This idea comes from Hawthorne's letters for Sophia Peabody, in which he wonders about living two lives simultaneously and considers it impossible. In contrast to this Holgrave by the age of twenty-two has to switch between many roles and still "had never lost his identity" (710).

His other connection with history is the daguerreotype itself, which was in fact the first invention of photography introduced in 1839 by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (Rosenblum). Also mesmerism carried on by members of Maule's family connects him with the one of Hawthorne's forbears. As Hawthorne offers the idea that Maules really were devotees of witchcraft (by telling the story about Holgrave's ancestor and Alice Pyncheon

who became a victim of his action), it relates also to the seventeenth-century witch trials. He admits that his ancestors were involved in the judging of witches (Lathrop 111).

Together with witchcraft, the idea of sin persisting through generations was inspired by the Hawthorne family past. James supports the idea of witch curse when he says that “his witch-judging ancestor was reported to have incurred a malediction from one of his victims, in consequence of which the prosperity of the race faded utterly away” (9). Basil Davenport explains this statement in “Introduction to *The House of the Seven Gables*” saying that historically one woman who was sentenced to death by Justice Hathorne “maintained on the scaffold that God would avenge her”; in consequence the family who started to lose their property attributed the misfortunes to the witch curse. James further claims that the two first generations of Hathorne were “people of importance and responsibility”, but their reputation was destroyed by the third one (10). Hawthorne himself was persuaded that the guilt for crimes committed by ancestors is a part of heritage (Matthiessen 191), and he was not proud of his family history connected with witchcraft. In his own life he solved the problem by changing his name from Hathorne to Hawthorne. In the book the hereditary curse was figuratively deleted by marriage of Maule and Pyncheon descendants. At the end of the story he explains all the supernatural things about the curse by hereditary disease and this together with the marriage makes the book more optimistic. Nevertheless, Matthiessen claims that the marriage is “meant finally to transcend the old brutal separation of classes”, but the idea is not developed properly (331).

Giving these connections between the romance and history, *The House of the Seven Gables* can be considered a historical novel, although some links with history found in the story by critics could be just speculations invented by them while Hawthorne really did not mean anything deeper. In contrary to *The Scarlet Letter* this book can offer much more than history to a common reader, including love story, mystery, or beautiful long decoratively

descriptive parts; this could be the reason why the book, although it was not considered to reach the qualities of the previous novel, eventually succeeded.

4. SHORT STORIES

.....there are three sorts of tales, each one of which has an original stamp. There are, to begin with, the stories of fantasy and allegory..... which on the whole, are the most original.....Then there are the little tales of New England history, which are scarcely less admirable, and of which *The Grey Champion*, *The Maypole of Merry Mount*, and the four beautiful *Legends of the Province House*, as they are called, are the most successful specimens. Lastly come the slender sketches of actual scenes and of the objects and manners about him....Among these things *A Rill from the Town Pump*, *The Village Uncle*, *The Toll-Gatherer's Day*, the *Chippings with a Chisel*, may most naturally be mentioned. (James 57)

The short stories of Hawthorne deal with an even wider range of historical events and connections than his novels. Some concern events of American history, and these are usually viewed quite critically and in detail. The injustice of the past is common theme there. Furthermore there appear stories about historical personalities, places, and habits, and sketches from the author's life are not infrequent either. The stories are numerous; beside others those published in collections *Twice-Told Tales*, *Mosses from an Old Manse* or *The Snow-Image, and Other Twice-Told Tales* are worth mentioning.

4. 1. *Twice-Told Tales*

“His little tales have the air of confessions which the soul makes to itself; they are so many little slaps which the author applies to our face” (Montêgut, qtd. in James 60).

“They have been gathered fresh from the secret places of a peaceful and gentle heart” (Longfellow).

Twice-Told Tales, a collection of short stories, together first published in 1837, drew such different and contrasting criticism. In 1842, after publishing the second edition in 1841, Edgar Allan Poe suggested that much more suitable would be the title Thrice-Told Tales, as the stories were all published twice before, in previous collected edition and in Magazines or Annuals (“Twice-Told Tales: A Review”).

The tales used in *Twice-Told Tales* were published in magazines during a period of ten or twelve years (Hawthorne, *Twice-Told Tales*). Consequently, the stories are drawn from “the whole of the writer's young manhood, without making (so far as he has ever been aware) the slightest impression on the Public” (Hawthorne, *Twice-Told Tales*). This shows the author’s doubts about the effect his work on the public, but even more interestingly — it reveals the length of the period during which he gained experience and got inspiration for his stories. The historical tales demonstrate the broad perspective and knowledge of history of the young author, the ones of present then his perception of the world developing in time.

Hawthorne, in the Preface, is self-critical explaining his attitude to the tales: “They are not a talk of a secluded man with his own mind and heart (had it been so they could hardly have failed to be more deeply and permanently valuable), but his attempts, and very imperfectly successful ones, to open an intercourse with the world” (Hawthorne, *Twice-Told Tales*). It seems as though Hawthorne expected a response from the world, maybe a promise that the old injustices would never recur, but his readers seemed indifferent to his works, which led to his great disappointment.

Like the novels, Hawthorne’s short stories often reflect colonial history of America. Henry W. Longfellow even claims in his “Review of *Twice-Told Tales*” that the fact that “they are national in their character” is among their most prominent characteristics. James even praises Hawthorne as the only American writer, who successfully reflected American history in fiction and says about his short stories that “they are full of a vivid and delightful

sense of the New England past; they have, moreover, the distinction, little tales of a dozen and fifteen pages as they are, of being the only successful attempts at historical fiction that have been made in the United States” (59).

Twice-Told Tales are often considered the greatest historical short stories Hawthorne ever wrote. Of the tales of this kind could be named “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” as James suggested.

“The May-Pole of Merry Mount”

The tale was inspired by real historical events of 1628, when Puritans burst into Merry Mount to punish people, whose behaviour they didn’t approve of.

Hawthorne describes the May feast as a celebration of young couple – Lord and Lady of May – by peaceful people who did not commit any crime; they just offended unreasonable rules of predominant society. In contrast to the Merry Mount people Hawthorne depicted Puritans in an unflattering way: “Their weapons were always at hand, to shoot down the straggling savage. Their festivals were fast-day....Woe to the youth or maiden, who did but dream of dance!” (*Tales and Sketches* 365).

May-day was originally a Pagan tradition, for this reason it was not suitable for new Christian inhabitants of New England. “May-day and May-day festivities, accordingly, were things to be altogether reformed” (Morton 18). Besides other contemporaries Bradford and Morton depicted the feast, each of them in a very different way. What is common to both accounts are inhabitants of Merry Mount singing and drinking around the May-Pole. The difference rises from the fact that Morton himself was present when the May-Pole of Merry Mount was erected, while Bradford considered him “A Lord of Misrule and Riot and Sin” (qtd. in McWilliams 60). Morton claims that there was already long May-Pole tradition in

England by the time (Morton 17). Nevertheless, in 1628 such a feast was considered a serious break of Puritan rules.

According to McWilliams, the proceeding against Merry Mount was the culmination of longer effort to dispose of dissidents, of who Thomas Morton was the most undesirable. Three main names appearing in the process are Bradford, Endicott, and Winthrop, who “strove to eliminate from New England all that Merry Mount might represent...” (McWilliams 44).

The second named appears in Hawthorne’s short story. “The leader of the hostile party...was the Puritan of Puritans; it was Endicott himself!” (Hawthorne, *Tales and Sketches* 367)

McWilliams predicted that “in historical memory Merry Mount would, phoenix-like, rise from its own ashes again and again to symbolize cultural values that New England had rightly eliminated or self-righteously lost” (45). Obviously Hawthorne thought the Merry Mount affair worth of it too.

The story is a typical example of Hawthorne’s conviction about Puritan cruelty to people of another belief. It is not only a conviction, but a historically based fact which Nathaniel Hawthorne was not afraid to point out to the nineteenth-century Americans, who were often proud of their ancestors. What is different from his novels here is that there were more victims of Puritan acts. They could have defended themselves, even if unsuccessfully, but they did not even try, and gave up too easily. In contrast to this, Hawthorne gave Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* a strong mind and let her stand alone against the rest of the town. Still she fought against the odds by all available means. It may have been meant to suggest that people gave up anymore because they were afraid of Puritans; they even did not try to protect their culture, which allowed Puritans to control them easily. As in the novels, the author uses real

historical names to support the credibility, which makes the reader feel the atmosphere of the time closer.

This exemplifies Hawthorne's tendency to use historical events to develop criticism of old times in intriguing stories. The collection *Twice-Told Tales* is full of tales more or less connected with history, author's life or specific location. Edgar Allan Poe marked "The Hollow of the Three Hills", "The Minister's Black Veil", "Wakefield" or "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" among the best ("Twice-Told Tales: A Review"). All these allegorical stories are in fact a criticism of human nature, of individuals as well as of the whole society, and these stories are often the most appreciated. Nevertheless, Hawthorne's criticism of history is of the same kind. He returns centuries back to show the injustices committed by New Englanders on native inhabitants, and also their fellow citizens, originally Englishmen. Indians, Quakers, witches – they were the underprivileged of the 17th century, often convicted without evidence.

Leaving aside its quality, much of Hawthorne's writing is considered his way of dealing with his own past or, more precisely, the one of his family. Critics claim that he inserts historical events including witch trials into the tales in order to shrive his ancestors' sin (James 59; Matthiessen 342; Stearns). James states that Hawthorne is not the only one to feel this way and that there are more ways of dealing with this kind of feeling spread in the population. He admits that he considers Hawthorne's way "the best, for he contrived, by an exquisite process, best known to himself, to transmute this heavy moral burden into the very substance of the imagination, to make it evaporate in the light and charming fumes of artistic production" (59). James says by this that Hawthorne may have felt relieved when he put the blame on his ancestors in his works. According to this, Hawthorne was able to keep a distance from his family past by incorporating it into his writings. The fact that the human psyche is

projected in his writing has been already proved, but in Hawthorne's time his motivation could have been the traditional idea of shaming of sin.

4. 2. *The Mosses from an Old Manse*

One of the best examples of the story James is talking about is "Young Goodman Brown", from Hawthorne's next short story collection, *Mosses from an Old Manse*.

After the publication of this book in 1846, Poe wrote about Hawthorne: "He is definitely too fond of allegory, and can never hope for popularity so long as he persist in it" ("Tale-Writing: A Review"). Nevertheless, his sense of allegory was appreciated by other critics, and publication of *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850 was even enough to arouse interest of the wide public in his earlier writings.

Most of the tales were written in Concord, where Nathaniel and Sophia spent their first three years after marriage, living in the Manse. "It had been the dwelling-place of generations of Presbyterian ministers, ancestors of the celebrated Emerson, who had himself spent his early manhood and written some of his most beautiful essays there" (James 95). The Manse must have been inspirational for Hawthorne too, because *Mosses from an Old Manse* was well received. Melville even wrote that "whatever Nathaniel Hawthorne may hereafter write, 'Mosses from an Old Manse' will be ultimately accounted his masterpiece" ("Hawthorne and His Mosses").

What is especially admirable about Hawthorne's stories is his ability to combine unreal and fantastic elements with historical facts in a work.

“Young Goodman Brown”

“Hawthorne’s tale, through localized by history and myth, shows little evidence of the local color writer’s concern with the particulars of regional landscape, dialect speech, or economy...”(Zanger in *Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Young Goodman Brown* 48).

Although the reader is not sure of the status of events as a dream or reality, the tale has some links to history, especially to Hawthorne’s favourite topics – Puritan times, witchcraft hysteria in Salem, and the idea of Original Sin. This all is depicted here in the gloomiest way. Melville said about this tale: “it is, in itself, such a strong positive illustration of that blackness in Hawthorne, which I had assumed from the mere occasional shadows of it, as revealed in several of the other sketches” (“Hawthorne and His Mosses”).

The main character, Brown, balances between good and evil when he joins a traveller (understood as the Devil) on his way into woods. Zanger says about him: “Brown, a creature of Original Sin, is appropriately aware of the role of past in shaping the present. When he proposes to act virtuously, he bases his virtue on that of his ancestors” (50). The author immediately deletes the idea about ancestor’s virtue letting the traveller say: “I was as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that’s no trifle to say” (Hawthorne, *Tales and Sketches* 278). Not only the Brown’s family but many religious people are revealed to be the followers of devil in woods. This shows Hawthorne’s opinion of Puritan hypocrisy once more.

This all happens in Salem and its environs. Another link with Hawthorne’s birth place is the usage of real names which appeared in Salem witch trials – Goody (Sarah) Cloyse, Goody (Martha) Cory, Deacon Gookin, or Martha Carrier. For the last one even the designation “Queen of Hell” comes from former sources. It is said that Cotton Mather, a Puritan minister of the time, used this in his diary (Norton 182).

“Young Goodman Brown” is prized predominantly for its allegorical value, but it has much to offer with respect to New England history. Hawthorne masterly summarized his opinions and ideas about Puritan society, suitable even for building a story for a novel on them, in one short story. It presents the idea that Puritans had the ability to convince every individual to give up their beliefs in anything better than their community could offer, and conform to the majority. As Hawthorne depicts the majority as hypocritical followers of Devil, the incidental good individuals had no chance to succeed. On the other hands, if the midnight scene was only a dream, Goodman Brown would change for the worse, becoming a man who sees evil in good people and suspects them of taking part in Sabbaths. Anyway, in the forest the good people of Salem are mixed with the ones later executed for witchcraft which shows Hawthorne’s conviction that all the Puritans were responsible for this gloomy epoch of American history.

There are many tales dealing with history in his writing, but Hawthorne was fascinated by its impact on the present and the present itself in the same way.

Concerned primarily with the actual world before him, he found a natural use for the past in the explanation it might give of the present, but the present was to him just as naturally the more important moment, and most interesting of all was the occasional hint or prophecy of that to which time through its past and present changes might be tending. (*The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, “Hawthorne - His Close Observation of Life” 8)

There are also what could be called “narrative essays” or “sketches” in Hawthorne’s collections (Halleck 122). These sketches are combinations of narrative and descriptive styles, and they concern just the present events and situations.

“The Old Manse”

“The Old Manse” is the example of what Halleck calls sketches. It is a descriptive essay more than a tale. It depicts surroundings, nature, and present life, but also connects to American history.

The author starts with a more general description of the surroundings to show the present atmosphere, then touches the history of the Mansion: “A priest had built it; a priest had succeeded to it; other priestly men dwelt in it; and children born in its chambers, had grown up to assume the priestly character” (Hawthorne, *Tales and Sketches* 1124). He further mentions Emerson, the previous inhabitant of the house, and his “delightful little nook of study” where Emerson wrote his *Nature* (Hawthorne, *Tales and Sketches* 1124).

The reader, “whom [the author] cannot help considering as [his] guest in Old Manse” visits the house through his narration (Hawthorne, *Tales and Sketches* 1125). While describing it, his resentment of the Puritan ages is demonstrated again, when he admits that all Puritan prints decorating the study room in former times vanished after his arrival.

When Hawthorne takes the reader with him to the river, he points out where the American Revolution broke out. When the author shares Lowell’s tale about British soldiers, the poet is just one of many others – Hawthorne’s contemporaries as well as historical persons – who are to be met by the reader before the story ends. It shows his perception of Nature in connection with history. Hawthorne sees the persons as well as historical events in the surroundings and feels the combination shape the American society.

Ellery Channing, a transcendentalist poet, is one of them when he joins Hawthorne on his journey up the Assabeth River. Channing is the one to join him in the sketch, through according to Hawthorne’s journals the situation closely corresponds to his trip with Thoreau on 1 September 1842:

After dinner....Mr. Thoreau and I walked up the bank of the river; and, at a certain point, he shouted for his boat. Forthwith, a young man paddled it across the river, and Mr. Thoreau and I voyaged farther up the stream, which soon became more beautiful than any picture, with its dark and quiet sheet of water, half shaded, half sunny, between high and wooded banks. (Hawthorne, “Mr. Thoreau”)

The sketch seems to be an ode to the Old Manse and the natural beauties which surround it, but there is something more to find between the lines. The sketch partly shows the importance of history, partly describes the present – both leaving traces in Nature. Hawthorne sees the present as a result of the past, and forming of the future in present decisions and way of acting of people. Every ostensibly insignificant decision can step into history and change the lives of many people. That the role of individual can overshadow the role of mass is shown in the story about soldiers Hawthorne claims to be told by Lowell.

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short stories demonstrate his great interest in American history and his profound knowledge. The centres of his attention are usually the darkest periods of American past and he also submits the contemplation about the impact of the past on present. The historical stories vary by the subject of interest – this is a certain person, event or place, but what is common for all of them is the fact that the subject he concentrates on are viewed critically and the guilty ones are usually Puritans and their narrowness. Hawthorne’s antipathy to Puritans and his inclination to prove it in his works are obvious, and the short stories provided the great opportunity for this purpose.

CONCLUSION

The works of Nathaniel Hawthorne were considerably influenced by his life experience and history of his native land. He often deals with early American history, especially the 17th century, which is viewed critically by him. The American Puritan community is nearly always depicted as a narrow and hypocritical society which did not tolerate any deviation or free thinking, and offenders were usually severely punished. Hawthorne returns to this Puritan theme in novels as well as in short stories, often connecting this with witchcraft hysteria and persecution of Quakers. For these topics he draws inspiration from his family history, particularly from the lives of William and John Hathorne as was shown in the first chapter and later in the thesis.

The second chapter provided evidence of the inspiration Hawthorne drew from inhabitants of New England of the 17th century. Their life and opinions were revealed to be the main theme of *The Scarlet Letter*. The same theme – the life of Puritan society – appears also in *The House of the Seven Gables*, as well as the short stories. There further appear names of real historical persons in *The Scarlet Letter* and short stories, which connects the stories with this certain period of American history.

The House of the Seven Gables concentrates more on individuals. This work contains more connections with Hawthorne's family – the house, the curse, and the character of Judge Pyncheon are examples.

The short stories examined in the fourth chapter were selected to show the further ways in which Hawthorne dealt with history. "The May Pole of Merry-Mount" is a romantic depiction of a real event, probably based on contemporaneous narratives. "Young Goodman Brown" is an allegorical story, in which, however, historical persons appear. Both tales are connected through by their criticism of Puritan society, and at least a mention of them must be present even in the sketch "The Old Manse", which is predominantly based on depicting

Hawthorne's present. The theme of Puritans is really Hawthorne's favourite and it appears in the vast majority of his works.

The novels and short stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne contain many connections with history of America; this leads to a clear conviction that they can and should be seen as historical.

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SUMMARY IN CZECH

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá několika díly amerického spisovatele Nathaniela Hawthorna, konkrétně romány *Šarlatové písmeno* a *Dům se sedmi štíty* a vybranými povídkami. V těchto dílech se pak snaží najít souvislosti s ranými dějinami Ameriky a také se životem samotného spisovatele. Ten se v těchto oblastech inspiroval nejen pro zápletky svých románů, ale i pro vytvoření postav nebo umístění děje svých příběhů. První kapitola předkládá spisovatelův život, jeho rodinnou historii a obrázek americké společnosti 17. století jako motivy objevující se v jeho dílech. Druhá, třetí a čtvrtá kapitola se věnují hledání konkrétních spojitostí v jednotlivých dílech.