



## التمييز الطبقي في البيت ذو السبع جملونات ل ناثانيل هوثورون

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ماجستير في الادب الإنكليزي / مدرس

### ملخص البحث:

من المعروف جيداً للعديد من النقاد أن كتابات ناثانيل هوثورون غالباً ما تكون مستوحاة من حياته والأحداث والمفاهيم التي مر بها، وبالطبع فإن بيت السبع جملونات ليس مستثنى من هذه القاعدة. بنيت فكرة الرواية على أحداث ومفاهيم سمعها الكاتب عن أسلافه الذين اعتبروا من الطبقة العليا ونظرتهم العنصرية للطبقات الدنيا. إن شخصية الديكتاتور والظالم المتجسدة في شخصية الكولونيل هي في الحقيقة تجسيد لأحد أسلافه، الذين عرفوا بغطرستهم وظلمهم واستبدادهم، والأهم من ذلك كله، نظرتهم المتغترسة والساخرة للفقراء بلا رحمة ولا شفقة.

من الواضح أن تعليقات هوثورون في الرواية تناقش فكرة عدم المساواة والطبقية التي حكمت المجتمع في ذلك الوقت، وهو يشعر بالاشمئزاز من هذه العقلية الأرستقراطية المتخلفة.

يناقش البحث فكرة التمايز الطبقي التي تجسدها شخصيات الرواية مع فكرة أن هذا التمايز يمكن أن ينتهي ويصبح شيئاً من الماضي إذا شعرت الأجيال الجديدة بالحب والاحترام تجاه بعضها البعض حيث يتجسد ذلك المفهوم في شخصيات هولغريف وفيبي.

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# Class-Distinction in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The House of the Seven Gables

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**Abstract**

It is well known to many critics that Nathaniel Hawthorne's writings are often inspired by his life and the events and concepts he went through, and The House of the Seven Gables is of course not exempt from this rule. The idea of the novel is built on events and news that the writer heard about his upper class ancestors and their racist view towards the lower classes.

The character of the dictator and the oppressor in the novel is well embodied in the personality of Colonel Pyncheon.. infact the Colonel reflects the thoughts and beliefs of Hawthorne's ancestors, who were known for their arrogance, injustice and tyranny with poor and simple people.

It is clear that Hawthorne's comments in the novel are mostly about the idea of the class inequality that ruled society at the time, and his rejection to that backward aristocratic mentality.

The research discusses the idea of class distinction embodied by the characters of the novel with the idea that this differentiation can be ended and become a thing of the past if the new generations feel love and respect towards each other as this is embodied in characters of Holgrave and Phoebe.

## INTRODUCTION

The House of the Seven Gables was Hawthorne's follow-up to his highly successful novel *The Scarlet Letter*. He began writing it while living in Lenox, Massachusetts in August 1850. By October, he had chosen the title and it was advertised as forthcoming, though the author complained of his slow progress a month later: "I write diligently, but not so rapidly as I hoped... I find the book requires more care and thought than the 'Scarlet Letter'"<sup>1</sup>. The novel was published in April 1851 by Ticknor & Fields of Boston.

His wife Sophia Hawthorne reported to her mother on January 27 that he had read her the ending the night before: "There is unspeakable grace and beauty in the conclusion, throwing back upon the sterner tragedy of the commencement an ethereal light, and a dear home-loveliness and satisfaction"<sup>2</sup>. In the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne describes his romance-writing as using "atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture"<sup>3</sup>.

*The House of the Gables* is a gothic romance novel, a type of novel that spread in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Gothic novels often involve confusing mysteries and supernatural attitudes and their events are always located in faraway, remote and isolated places. The characters in this type of writings are always in danger and apprehension and in a state of waiting for a terrifying thing that may occur. Sometimes these novels may have some violent scenes and bloody situations.

It is believed that the genre was actually derived from the English author Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*, later subtitled "A Gothic Story"; early contributors to this kind of novels Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliffe, William Thomas Beckford and Matthew Lewis. However, the Gothic novel reaches its highest point in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the literary works of E. T. A. Hoffmann, Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and *Dracula* by Bram Stoker.

1 Mellow, James R, Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), 368.

2 Miller, E.H. Salem Is My Dwelling Place: A Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne (University of Iowa Press, 1991), 320, <https://books.google.iq/books?id=NNBaAAAAMAAJ>.

3 Wineapple, Brenda, Hawthorne: A Life (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2004), 237.

Actually, *The House of the Seven Gables* is Nathaniel Hawthorne's third novel. It is a Gothic novel or Gothic Romance that belongs to Dark Romanticism: all Hawthorne's works belong to romanticism or, more specifically, dark romanticism:<sup>4</sup>

"Dark romanticism is a literary subgenre that emerged from the Transcendental philosophical movement popular in nineteenth-century America. Dark Romantics believed humans gravitate to evil and self-destruction (striving for a utopian society is a waste of time). Dark Romantics focus on human fallibility, self-destruction, judgement, punishment, as well as the psychological effects of guilt and sin".

it is worth mentioning that When Hawthorne was a young man at the beginning of his literary life, he was a follower of the group of Transcendentalists, who believed that man is a good being by nature; His later writings also reflect his negative view of the Transcendentalism movement<sup>5</sup>.

"often Transcendentalism, a literary and philosophical Movement arising in 19th-century New England, associated with Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller and asserting the existence of an ideal spiritual reality that transcends empirical 'and scientific reality and is knowable through intuition. transcendentalism revolves around the self, specifically, the betterment of the self. Emerson and his followers believed that human beings had innate knowledge and could connect with God directly rather than through an institution such as an organized religion"<sup>6</sup>.

It seems that Nathaniel Hawthorne's later profound experience with nature of people, made him change his thought about man's nature and refused the positive view of transcendentalism. It seems that Hawthorne "cared for the deeper psychology, and that, in his way, he tried to become familiar with it."<sup>7</sup> He believed that man in nature tends to commit sins and mistakes and is quick to drift into evil. Moreover, a person, as Hawthorne thought, can even hide his evil under the cover of religion, striking all red lines that prevent him from exploiting the name of reli-

4 Reynolds, David S, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 524.

5 Reynolds, 525.

6 Encyclopedia, "The House of the Seven Gables," accessed September 5, 2021, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazines/house-seven-gables>.

7 Porte, Joel. *The Romance in America: Studies in Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and James* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), 97.

gion in inhuman or immoral situations. It is clear that this intellectual transformation of the writer did not come from a nowhere, but rather from a reality that the writer lived honestly and this was reflected on his literary ideas. On the bloody and violent history of his predecessors, Hawthorne wrote about one of them, saying:

"He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the Puritanical traits, both good and evil. He was likewise 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 record of his better deeds, although these were many. His son, too, inherited the persecuting spirit, and made himself so conspicuous in the martyrdom of the witches, that their blood may fairly be said to have left a stain upon him. So deep a stain, indeed, that his dry old bones, in the Charter Street burial-ground, must still retain it, if they have not crumbled utterly to dust!"<sup>8</sup>

Hawthorne was very angry with his ancestors that he added the "w" to his name as an adult, so as not to belong to them.

Of his critics, Hawthorne himself was likely one of the strongest. In the introduction to *Hawthorne: The Critical Heritage*, J. Donald Crowley quotes Hawthorne writing to Longfellow:

"As to my literary efforts, I do not think much of them—neither is it worthwhile to be ashamed of them. They would have been better, I trust, if written under more favorable circumstances. I have no external excitement—no consciousness that the public would like what I wrote, nor much hope, nor a very passionate desire that they should do so. Nevertheless, having nothing else to be ambitious of, I have felt considerably interested in literature"<sup>9</sup>.

The novel was an inspiration for horror fiction writer H. P. Lovecraft, who called it "New England's greatest contribution to weird literature" in his essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature". The House Seven Gables likely influenced

8 Leland S Person, "Bibliographical Essay: Hawthorne and History," *A Historical Guide to Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 2001, 34.

9 John Crowley, "The Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities," *International Political Science Review* 20, no. 1 (2001): 22.

Lovecraft's short stories "The Picture in the House", "The Shunned House" and novella The Case of Charles Dexter Ward<sup>10</sup>.

#### Class-Distinction in The House of the Seven Gables

The novel opens with the checkered history of the eponymous house. The house was constructed during the Puritan era, in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, in New England by the prominent Colonel Pyncheon. "The Pyncheon family actually existed and were ancestors of American novelist Thomas Pynchon"<sup>11</sup> "Hawthorne considered changing the fictional family's name or adding a disclaimer in the preface"<sup>12</sup>. Colonel Pyncheon acquired his property through dubious means: the property on which the house was built was originally owned by Matthew Maule, a relatively obscure man who was often called a wizard. The house of the seven gables is located in one of New England towns; "halfway down a by-street of one of our New England towns stands a rusty wooden house, with seven acutely peaked gables, facing towards various points of the compass, and a huge, clustered chimney in the midst." The narrator tells us that the house: "has always affected [him] like a human countenance, bearing the traces not merely of outward storm and sunshine, but expressive also, of the long lapse of mortal life, and accompanying vicissitudes that have passed within". In the mid-1600s, a poor farmer named Matthew Maule (the elder) had bought a homestead and settled in the County of Essex. Colonel Pyncheon decided to take over the piece of land from Maule and built his own house the house of the seven gables, on it. Maule refused to surrender his land, but the Colonel took over the land by a trick that led to Maule's death. Colonel Pyncheon claimed that Maule was practicing witchcraft and poor Maule was hanged for that reason. When Maule was about to die, he cursed Pyncheon by saying, "God will give him blood to drink." Not for long time and the prophesy of Maule becoming true, Colonel was found dead with blood dripping from his mouth. Many years pass, and thirty years before the beginning of the novel's action, another wealthy Pyncheon (Jaffrey Pyncheon, the elder) died.

10 Joshi, s.t and schults, david E, An H P Lovecraft Encyclopedia (Hippocampus Press (1 Mar. 2004), 107.

11 Joseph A Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2001), 248.

12 Mellow, Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times, 368.

For years, the Pyncheon-Maule dispute carried on. The long line of Pyncheons struggled to keep the land from their rivals. However, the curse of Maul never finished, the long line of Puncheon suffered too much, some of them died and some are still suffering. The current residents of the house of the seven gables were proud but poor Hepzibah Pyncheon and her brother Clifford, the granddaughter and grandson of Jaffery Pyncheon. Hepzibah opened a little shop to spare herself and her brother Clifford the suffering of poverty and need. She grieved for her brother, Clifford, who had been put in the jail and completed a thirty-year sentence for false accusation arranged by Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon. Hapzibah also wanted to abandon her illusion of aristocracy. One day, a distant relative named Phoebe arrived and insisted on staying. Hepzibah was reluctant at first, as her brother, Clifford was due to return soon. But Phoebe quickly brightened up the place and proved to be a good addition to the shop. Clifford returned, and it was revealed that he had been in prison for many years. Phoebe began to care for him as he was mentally unfit from his suffering. Frequently, the sibling's vicious cousin Judge Pyncheon visits insisting on talking to Clifford. One day, while Phoebe was away, the Judge finally managed to get into the house and as Hepzibah was looking for her brother, she discovered that the Judge had been killed. Hepzibah and Clifford flee, so not to be accused of the murder, only to return shortly later and reveal that the Judge had died of a heart attack and had been the one to falsely accuse Clifford of the murder of their uncle.

On the other hand, there is Holgrave, one of Maul's lineage. Holgrave is an attractive and intellectual young man with modern views and notions. Phoebe is Holgrave and Phoebe, Pyncheon's relative, fall in love with each other. Clifford inherits the Judge's assets and the family with Holgrave and Phoebe move into the Judge's country estate, leaving the house of the seven gables to continue rotting away.

The idea of class distinctions permeates The House of the Seven Gables. Right from the beginning of the story there is an immediate contrast between the wealthy Colonel Pyncheon and the farmer, Matthew Maule; when Colonel Pyncheon is having a housewarming party, the guests are either going to the kitchen or to the home's more stately rooms depending on "the high or low degree" of each person;

"Just within the entrance, however, stood twoserving-men, pointing some of the guests to the neighborhood of the kitchen and ushering others into the statelier rooms,— hospitable alike to all, but still with a scrutinizing regard to the high or low degree of each. Velvet garments sombre but rich, stiffly plaited ruffs and bands, embroidered gloves, venerable beards, the mien and countenance of authority, made it easy to distinguish the gentleman of worship, at that period, from the tradesman, with his plodding air, or the laborer, in his leathern jerkin, stealing awe-stricken into the house which he had perhaps helped to build"<sup>13</sup>.

Apparently Hawthorne carries a lot of contempt for the people who think themselves superior to others just because they are rich. Moreover, they do not care where the wealth came from, even though it came from theft, as in case of the Colonel. although Colonel Pyncheon knows what is the truth of himself and recognizes the enormity of his crime, he is still arrogant and very proud of himself. Colonel Pyncheon, exemplifies all that is reprehensible in men of questionable morals, who are self-indulgent and motivated simply by the desire to build their estates, figuratively and literally. However, Hawthorne also gives the reader an idea of the hypocrisy and pretense of a group of people who are claiming to be of the noble class or aristocracy.

At the same time, the character of Hepzibah serves to point out the lack of purpose or function that can sometimes epitomize the upper classes. There is a kind of irony for the rich class to which Hepzibah belongs. It seems that those belonging to upper class do not have any goals or useful work to do, especially when they lost their wealth and become poor, as happened with Hepzibah. The wealthy people feel that their lives have stopped and are of no use to the point that they may wish to die. Further, when the narrator notes her "accomplishments", sarcastically of course, which include "having formerly thrummed on a harpsichord, and walked a minuet, and worked an antique tapestry-stitch on her sampler", one can almost hear the laughter in the description. Of the shop opening, Hepzibah tells Mr. Holgrave:

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13 Hawthorne, Nathaniel The House of the Seven Gables (New York: Global Grey, n.d.), 14.



"Ah, Mr. Holgrave", cried she, as soon as she could speak, "I never can go through with it Never, never, never I wish I were dead, and in the old family tomb, with all my forefathers! With my father, and my mother, and mysister. Yes, and with my brother, who had far better find me there than here! The world is too chill and hard,—and I am too old, and too feeble, and too hopeless!"<sup>14</sup>.

She no longer regards herself a respected lady of gentility and worries that she has brought a dreadful shame upon her family. Yet, through Hepzibah's dialogue with Holgrave, readers discover a different perspective embraced by Hawthorne, Holgrave, the poor man, encourages Hepzibah in such a very polite manner:

"But I was not born a gentleman; neither have I lived like one," said Holgrave, slightly smiling; "so, my dear madam, you will hardly expect me to sympathize with sensibilities of this kind; though, unless I deceive myself, I have some imperfect comprehension of them. These names of gentleman and lady had a meaning, in the past history of the world, and conferred privileges, desirable or otherwise, on those entitled to bear them. In the present—and still more in the future condition of society—they imply, not privilege, but restriction!"<sup>15</sup>.

He further assures her:

"Let it go You are the better without it. I speak frankly, my dear Miss Pyncheon! for are we not friends? I look upon this as one of the fortunate days of your life. It ends an epoch and begins one"<sup>16</sup>.

When Hawthorne described Holgrave for the first time, he describes him as a kind and likable person with all his attributes externally and internally. Hawthorne surely speak out his own personal belief towards working class people. Hawthorne is able, through Holgrave's personality, to say that Holgrave is one of the beneficiaries of the poor class, yet he is a good and wise person like any other human being. In fact, Hawthorne believes that morality and humanity have nothing to do with class status:"The applicant, by this time, stood within the doorway. Coming freshly, as he did, out of the morning light, he appeared to have brought some of its cheery influences into the shop along with him. It was a

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14 Hawthorne, 40.

15 Hawthorne, 41.

16 Hawthorne, 39\_40.

slender young man, not more than one or two and twenty years old, with rather a grave and thoughtful expression for his years, but likewise a springy alacrity and vigor. These qualities were not only perceptible, physically, in his make and motions, but made themselves felt almost immediately in his character. A brown beard, not too silken in its texture, fringed his chin, but as yet without completely hiding it; he wore a short mustache, too, and his dark, high-featured countenance looked all the better for these natural ornaments. As for his dress, it was of the simplest kind; a summer" <sup>17</sup>

The image of the simple man who is far from all aspects of luxury and wealth has been beautifully associated with the meaning of freedom and a vibrant life of hard work and joy. The life of the simple differs by its nature from the life of the rich, which is based on the ancient history of the ancestors. The idea of beginning a new era away from history is well- depicted in Clifford's decision to leave the old house, which symbolizes everything that is old and obsolete, and goes to mix with simple people. Clifford tastes the true meaning of life and freedom. As a matter of fact, Clifford is happy to be freed from his inner prison as a man belongs to the noble class:

"They met few people abroad, even on passing from the retired neighborhood of the the house of the seven gables into what was ordinarily the more thronged and busier portion of the town...In the way of movement and human life, there was the hasty rattle of a cab or coach, its driver protected by a waterproof cap over his head and shoulders; the forlorn figure of an old man, who seemed to have crept out of some subterranean sewer,... a merchant or two, at the door of the post office, together with an editor and a miscellaneous politician..."<sup>18</sup>

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17 Hawthorne, 39.

18 Hawthorne, 213\_214.

Clifford admits that man is created simple but later he who makes life harder  
In the early epochs:

"our race, men dwelt in temporary huts, of bowers of branches, as easily constructed as a bird's-nest, and which they built,—if it should be called building, when such sweet homes of a summer solstice rather grew than were made with hands,—which Nature, we will say, assisted them to rear where fruit abounded, where fish and game were plentiful, or, most especially, where the sense of beauty was to be gratified by a lovelier shade than elsewhere, and a more exquisite arrangement of lake, wood, and hill. This life possessed a charm which, ever since man quitted it, has vanished from existence... Why should he make himself a prisoner for life in brick, and stone...?"<sup>19</sup>

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19 Hawthorne, 218\_219.

## Conclusion

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica "Social class, also called class, a group of people within a society who possess the same socioeconomic status". Literature that deals with social class issues is surely a reflection of the community in which its author lives. In fact, themes of class struggle always serve to inspire the victims and the victimizers to leave and reject the hatred and prejudice that burdens them both.

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne criticizes nineteenth-century New England society's interest in class distinctions. His critique of class status becomes strong when he makes Hepzibah decide to open the store. The real character of a wealthy woman, symbolized by Hepzibah, is realistically revealed through the incident of the store. She appears to be very fragile without her money, however, it is worth mentioning that most of Hawthorne's "female's characters serves as allegorical figures"<sup>20</sup>. The animosity between the Pyncheons and the Mauls is a class conflict of its own—a simple, poor farming family against a rich, well-known family. Matthew Maule is a simple and poor farmer sent to death with relative ease by Colonel Pyncheon, a rich and privileged landowner. Although Colonel Pyncheon is supposed to be a follower of law, what has done is against law and religion. Hawthorne believes that even law cannot protect the poor as long as there are men like Pyncheon who can buy it with his money. *The House of the Seven Gables* ends with optimistic mood when the new generations of the two families refuse all old arrogant thoughts and starting a new life based on humanity. The interaction between the two younger generations makes this class distinction even more disgusted and unacceptable. Through the important theme of the novel Hawthorne expressed his moral concerns about his society. He mostly put his characters in difficult moral situations to make them take their fateful decisions which ultimately lead him to their goodness.

Last but not least, *The House of The seven Gables* is well received by Hawthorne's friends and critics: Hawthorne's friend Henry Wadsworth Longfellow called it "a weird, wild book, like all he writes"<sup>21</sup>. Fanny Kemble reported that "the

20 Van Doren, Mark Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Critical Biography (New York: vintage, 1957), 19.

21 Wineapple, Hawthorne: A Life, 232.

book caused a sensation in England equal to Jane Eyre"<sup>22</sup>.

Contemporary response praised his sentimentality and moral purity while more modern evaluations focus on the dark psychological complexity<sup>23</sup>. Person, Herman Melville wrote a passionate review of *Mosses from an Old Manse*, titled "Hawthorne and His Mosses", arguing that Hawthorne "is one of the new, and far better generation of your writers." Melville describes an affinity for Hawthorne that would only increase: "I feel that this Hawthorne has dropped germinous seeds into my soul. He expands and deepens down, the more I contemplate him; and further, and further, shoots his strong New-England roots into the hot soil of my Southern soul"<sup>24</sup>.

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22 Wineapple, 233.

23 Person, "Bibliographical Essay: Hawthorne and History," 187.

24 McFarland Philip, *Hawthorne in Concord: Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Open Road+ Grove/Atlantic, 2004), 88.

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