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MAN AND WOMAN: COUPLES IN NATHANIEL
HAWTHORNE'S *TWICE-TOLD TALES*

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ANOTACE

Cílem této práce je zaměřit se blíže na vztah mužů a žen v povídkách ze souboru *Převyprávěné příběhy* (*Twice-Told Tales*) Nathaniela Hawthorna. Každý pár čelí určitým překážkám, s nimiž se musí vypořádat. Jednotlivé postavy se nacházejí v různých stádiích vztahu a liší se i věkově. Proto je práce rozdělena do čtyřech hlavních částí s ohledem na fázi, v níž se daný pár nachází, tj. zasnoubení, svatební den, manželství a období po smrti toho druhého. Každé období představují dva páry, které jsou blíže prozkoumány a srovnány. Závěr je pokusem o představení principů, které, jak se zdá, z těchto srovnání vyplývají.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to focus on the relationships between men and women in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*. Every couple is presented with a problem which has to be solved or an obstacle that must be overcome. The characters are in various stages of their relationships and they vary in their age, too. Therefore the thesis is divided into four main parts regarding the period the characters represent, that is engagement, wedding day, marriage and the period of mourning. Every period is represented by two couples that are analysed and compared. The conclusion is an attempt to present the principles that seem to emerge from the comparison.

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1. Introduction

This thesis discusses the relationships between men and women, namely couples that are portrayed in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, a collection of short stories published in two volumes in 1837 and 1842. There are many couples in his short stories, and they are depicted in various stages of their lives and their relationships.

Some of them are going to be married; others have already had a long history of marriage. Still, others were unable to be with their partners due to unhappy circumstances, and are forced to fight the dangers of life on their own. They are young and old, married and widowed, loving and hopeful. They are many and they are diverse. The work is divided to cover the basic stages of life and to show at least two examples from every period.

Its aim is to see how Hawthorne saw men and women, along with their life and their problems that tend to arise. This can be seen in the way the writer treats his characters and lets them deal with those life situations and problems they have to face.

The first part focuses on stories dealing with the beginning of the relationship and the period that usually leads to the wedding. In this stage, young people deepen their relationships, and begin to plan and to see a bright future waiting for them. They expect the best, but unfortunately, that does not always happen. The characters of "The Three-fold Destiny" and "The Shaker Bridal" will serve as examples of this period.

The wedding ceremony, or rather, the wedding day, is the subject of the second part. The short stories "The Wedding-knell" and "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" are good depictions of the wedding day. This day is very important not only in the life of the couple, but also for the community that surrounds them and witnesses this act.

The third section presents a much longer lapse of time since it focuses on the stories dealing with the marriage itself. This can have various forms depending on the characters of the husband and the wife, and on the external circumstances, such as, the political situation in the country, or the financial state of the household. These forms can be illustrated in the short stories called "Wakefield" and "The Prophetic Pictures".

The last part is concerned with the theme of loneliness, and the stories where death separates the lovers or the married couple. The person who remains alive must come to terms with the situation and must decide what his or her life will be like in the years to

come. The focus is on the protagonists of “Edward Fane’s Rosebud” and “The Minister’s Black Veil”.

There are two main secondary sources used in this thesis. L. S. Person writes *The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne*, and it provides general information on Hawthorne concerning his life and works, as well as, careful analysis of his novels and significant short stories. Another substantial source is *Hawthorne’s Early Tales: A Critical Study* by N. F. Doubleday. This supplies more background information on Hawthorne’s sources and literary movements that influenced him. Doubleday analyses all short stories that are found in the *Twice-Told Tales*.

2. Expectations

2.1 “The Three-fold Destiny”

The word, expectations, expresses the nature of the period of life when two people meet and decide if they want to spend their life together or not. They expect the best, and they hope for happiness. They hope that he or she is the right one for them, and that their mutual love will overcome all the difficulties that could appear in the future. Everything seems to be positive, and the couple is happy.

The first short story, which illustrates this period of human life, is “The Three-fold Destiny”. It tells the story of a young man, Ralph Cranfield, who “from his youth upward had felt himself marked out for a high destiny. He had imbibed the idea ... that three marvellous events of his life were to be confirmed to him by three signs” (Hawthorne, *Twice-Told Tales*¹).

First, he will find a girl that is destined for him. There will be a particular symbol that she would have, and particular words with which he will address her, and she will answer. Second, he will find a treasure that will make him rich. Again, the place will be marked with a particular symbol and a sign. Third, three men will meet him, and bring him an opportunity to be influential among other people and to rule them. So, he sets out in the world to find his three-fold destiny.

The story begins the moment he returns to his native village after ten years of futile traveling and seeking. He arrives changed, and, of course, the village and its inhabitants have changed; too. In the garden of his mother’s house, he sees a tree into which he carved a sign when he was a boy. That sign should mark the place that encloses his treasure, and if he were a credulous man, he would dig right there. Then he meets his mother, and the next day many neighbors come to visit him. The last to come are three venerable men who make an offer to him. They think that he would be the right person to occupy the position of the local teacher. He is surprised because, again, the particular signs and gestures, which should mark the three prophetic men, appear here as well. He promises to consider the offer.

¹ All the following quotes where the source given is just (Hawthorne) are always from *Twice-Told Tales*. Quotes from other works of Nathaniel Hawthorne will be followed with the reference to the particular work.

In the evening, he walks around the village and he meets his old friend, Faith Egerton. He sees that she has the symbol he imagined his destined lady should have. He speaks the special words, and she answers exactly the way she should, according to his ideas. He hugs her joyfully because he understands that his long quest has finally ended.

The last two paragraphs of the story are dedicated to the moral of the story. The young man was looking everywhere, but what he had wanted to find, he at last found at home, in the place where he had started his journey. The writer concludes saying that many people are like this young man, and if they just looked around, they would find what they were looking for.

In this story, the looking for and finding the match destined for life is one of the main goals of the young man. He imagines that somewhere in the world there is at least one woman who meets his requirements. His requirements are represented by a jewel in the shape of a heart, but a very particular one. Then the words:

“Maiden, I have brought you a heavy heart. May I rest its weight on you?” And if she were his fated bride ... she would reply, with her finger on the heart-shaped jewel, “This token which I have worn so long, is the assurance that you may” (Hawthorne).

When he sees that Faith has the heart-shaped jewel, he speaks the words and she answers. And thus he knows he found the right woman to marry.

It is interesting that the signs Ralph imagines must occur to confirm the predestined events that he imagined when he was just a boy. When Ralph arrives to his mother’s house, he sees a tree into which he carved a sign of a hand when he was a boy. Even then, he was beginning to imagine the signs that would bring happiness to him. Thus, the sign that showed him where his treasure lied was actually made by him.

Surprisingly, the same applies to the woman he would like to marry. He imagined a particular heart jewel. When he sees the jewel Faith is wearing, he immediately recognizes it as the one. It is no wonder that he does; he made it himself before he set out on his journey, and gave it to Faith as his parting present. The question is: was the heart made in likeness to the predestined jewel, or did the predestined jewel slowly changed into the shape of the gift he gave to his best friend? The answer is characteristic for many of Hawthorne’s stories. He usually tends to give more than one possible explanation or he questions them. For example, in *The Scarlet Letter*:

Most of the spectators testified to having seen, on the breast of the unhappy minister, a scarlet letter. ... It is singular, nevertheless, that certain persons ... denied

that there was any mark whatever on his breast, more than on a new-born infant's (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, ch. 24).

It is the same with Ralph. Both answers are possible, and perhaps both are interwoven into one in the young man's mind.

Thus, the man found his destiny in his village, and his ideas were fulfilled. He believed that there was somebody who perfectly matched him in the way nobody else would or could, and his journey was a quest to find the ideal match; the best that existed and that could have been attainable. He managed to fulfill his dream and did not give up when he had to face difficulties and years of travelling. The fact that Ralph succeeded could perhaps be consequence of him being the only measure. It was he who decided what words the destined woman should utter, and it was he who decided what the sign should be that showed him where his treasure was. And in such case it is easy to change the conditions and requirements. If he did not change his ideal, it makes his success even more valuable because reaching a specified goal is more difficult than a vague one.

The author clearly states at the beginning of the story that it is just a hypothesis, an allegory, a contemplation of the possibilities, how a fairy tale would mix with the reality of America in the nineteenth century. With this statement, the story of Ralph and Faith can be rightfully seen as an allegory. Already the name of the girl, Faith, refers to the symbolic meaning. If taken from such point of view, the ideal or predestined woman for him was Faith. He was looking for faith and he actually found it: faith in what, in whom, in the good of other people, faith that everything will be all right, religious faith?

Nevertheless, this Faith reminds us of another Faith of Hawthorne's, Faith from "Young Goodman Brown". She is married to the main character, a young man who goes into the forest, probably to take part in the witches' sabbath. It seems to him that he meets many people whom he has known well and taken them for very pious and very religious people. In the forest, he even sees, or thinks that he sees, his own wife, Faith. He manages to return home unscratched, but his mind has been affected, his faith shaken.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting? Be it so if you will; but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream (Hawthorne, *Mosses from an Old Manse*).

Here, Goodman Brown loses his faith even if he still has it, in his wife. Ralph manages to find his wife, but will he be able to keep her? Life will test his faith as well as his love and his character. Ralph and Faith are in fact at the beginning of their common journey.

However, they have one very important advantage: they grew up together and they know each other relatively well. They were friends since childhood and very close ones. It could be that they felt something more. Nevertheless, he decided to leave his village, his family, and Faith to find his dreamed ideal. It could be that in the time before he left, he began to dream about his three-fold destiny. He shared his dreams with his close friend, Faith, and he told her about the woman, the treasure, and the three old men. He described to her the particular symbols and words which were to accompany the events. It might be that his ideas about these events were changing gradually, maybe even during his journey, but Faith must have known them, or they could not change that much, at least the words and symbols concerning the woman, since she voiced them in the way Ralph had imagined.

This shows that Faith must have loved Ralph when he was away and maybe even before he left. Otherwise, she would not have waited for him for ten long years. It is important to note that she was not waiting passively but was working as a local teacher and thus earning a living. She had no guarantee that he would ever return because he went on his journey with the purpose of not returning. Maybe he felt something for her as well, since he gave her the heart as they were parting. His heart. Maybe the thought about the heart he gave to his Faith was something that was coming into his mind every time when he was looking at a woman with a heart-shaped jewel and wondering if she was the right one.

From the man's point of view, the story is about looking for ideals and the ideal woman represents a part of this dream. He has certain requirements concerning the woman that must be satisfied so he can recognize her as the destined one. He finds his idea in the place he left, in the person of his friend. She voices the words and wears the jewel the ideal woman should have. The reason probably is because he told her about his dreams when he was a boy.

The woman is seen only at the end of the story. She has been waiting all those years for the man to come, but she was not that passive and she was supporting herself. In the end, she got what she wanted; the man she had been waiting for.

The main theme in this story, at least with regard to the couple, could be the separation and the quest for perfection. Strangely enough the separation has helped them to strengthen their relationship, it has not destroyed it. It can be even seen as something positive. It tested them and there was something that had linked them through the years; the heart Ralph gave to Faith.

The quest for perfection was the reason why he left Faith. It is the age-old idea that surely there must be something better than what one has now. The story illustrates well the futility of such quests. Seldom better things are found outside, in the world because everything has its positives and negatives. But at least one can take a lesson from such quest.

2.2 “The Shaker Bridal”

The second story, “The Shaker Bridal”, is about a young man, Adam Colburn, and a young woman, Martha Pierson. They grew up together as children and they had loved each other since childhood. Nevertheless, before they matured and could have gotten married, their financial situation had changed and marriage was not possible. Both of them were compelled to earn for their own bread and so, the wedding was postponed. They did not part, and remained faithful to each other, even if they could have married somebody else and improve their social position. After several years, when it was clear to Adam, that nothing would change, he decided to enter the community of Shakers and persuaded Martha to do the same.

The Shakers ... enforced a strict rule of celibacy upon their membership, which was made up of both men and women. ... Their number was recruited from persons willing to leave the world and its affairs, and sometimes from orphaned children cared for by the community. Any member was free to leave the community at any time (Doubleday 138-139).

Adam and Martha became part of the community and soon became important, maybe even leading characters in the village.

The story begins as the couple stands in the presence of the leader of the village and other elders. The leader is already old and dying and decides that Adam and Martha should become the leaders of the community; they will be the father and the mother of the village. The elders of other Shaker villages question the couple regarding their ability to perform such an important task. Adam answers that he is ready and that it is

true that he loved Martha. However, after entering the Shakers community, his love for her ceased, and he now sees her only as a sister. Martha is afraid to answer, but then she says she is ready to enter this position as well. They are told to join their hands, and are pronounced the father and the mother of the village. Adam lets Martha's hand go and he seems to be satisfied with himself, whereas, Martha collapses, apparently dead.

The relationship between Martha and Adam is seen more clearly, and the expectations are much stronger here than it was with Ralph and Faith. As was said before, they loved each other since early childhood, and as they grew older, their love changed and matured. However, the circumstances intervened, and even though they loved each other, they had to wait.

It is also clear that Adam was an ambitious man, and did not want to make a compromise between his ideals and the reality that was available. His ideal was to get married with Martha after he got enough money to support her. What is significant is the fact that he did not manage to do it. Martha would have gladly married him, but he decided that money must come first and then marriage and then love.

When he came to Martha and suggested entering the community of Shakers, she followed him because she could not imagine losing the hope of his love, or losing him completely. If she went with him, there was always the hope that one day, he would decide their love was of more value to him than money, or, rather, that they could do without that much money as he had envisioned.

Unfortunately, for Martha, it did not happen. The community life provided an opportunity for Adam to rise in the society. He was not able to succeed in the everyday life, by fulfilling the so-called American dream, but the Shaker community offered an opportunity for him, and he was a capable man. Therefore, he climbed the social ladder quickly and soon became an important and leading member of the community.

The same happened to Martha in the female sphere of the community. The only difference was the absence of ambition in Martha's mind. It is hard to believe that Martha was an ambitious woman. She did not care about money or prestige. Before they entered the community, Adam did not want to marry her because they he did not have money. Yet, she "would probably have consented to unite her fate with Adam Colburn's, and secure of the bliss of mutual love, would patiently have awaited the less important gifts of Fortune" (Hawthorne). Later, she remained faithful to Adam even if she "might have been the wife of a man who sat among the senators of his native State" (Hawthorne).

Finally, when they became members of the Shakers' community, her success in the community was a natural outcome of her abilities, rather than an effort to gain power. She became a leading female Shaker and was to become the Mother of Shakers. She hardly ever dreamt of that and hardly ever wanted such an honor. It seems that her only ambition and motive in life was to survive and get her love, Adam. Everything she does in the story is motivated by her love and her desire to have her love returned, but Adam denies her:

There was but one earthly affection in my breast, and it had grown calmer since my youth; so that I was satisfied to bring Martha to be my sister in our new abode. We are brother and sister, nor would I have it otherwise. And in this peaceful village I have found all that I hope for – all that I desire. ... My conscience is not doubtful in this matter (Hawthorne).

When they stand together in front of the elders, Adam reaches his goal of becoming the Father of the community. There is nowhere else to go, as he has achieved the highest mark possible. For Martha, it is different. She probably would have never entered the community if it were not for Adam. She did not have ambitions here. She came only thinking about Adam and hoping that one-day he would decide to leave the community and get married.

The Shakers, whose rule was to forget any relationship among men and women, except as brothers and sisters, were an obstacle for her. The movement up the social ladder, was an unwanted outcome. Who knows how far her loyalty to Adam extended. She must have known he was an ambitious man, and that he was looking for success and money. She must have been aware of the fact that whatever position he would reach among the Shakers, it would never bring happiness to her because they were forbidden to each other as man and woman.

She was watching him becoming more and more important in the community and having less and less interest in her. His success was, in fact, mortal to her. The higher the success the less probable it became that he would ever leave the Shakers. She saw that Adam was satisfied with it and did not want to change anything. Eventually, she admitted the truth to herself and saw it plainly. Since she had spent her life waiting and expecting Adam to change, she could not endure more and “sank down at the feet of her early lover; for, after many trials firmly borne, her heart could endure the weight of its desolate agony no longer” (Hawthorne).

In this story, the man is very ambitious and stubborn. He has his goals set, and he does not permit anybody to interfere. When he cannot get what he wants, he moves into a community where the conditions are more favorable, and he will have to make much less of an effort to become somebody. Except that, his ultimate goal, marriage, will not be possible here. Nevertheless, it does not bother him. He wants a position and the respect of the others. To gain it, he actually gives up the woman.

The woman is ambitious as well, but only in one aspect. She wants to get the man and to have her love returned. She waits and hopes all her life, but nothing changes for the better. She even goes with her beloved among the Shakers, where marriage is forbidden, because she still has hope. In the end, she understands that the man prefers power to her, and that there will be no change. This causes her death because she apparently did not have any other goal in her life.

As seen in the first story, the couple began with friendship that grew into love, but the hardships of life and ambitions prevented anything more from happening. The following sentence summarizes it well: "It is still the story of a man for whom love is but one motive, and of a woman for whom love is all of love" (Doubleday 140).

The main theme of this story could be ambitions and priorities or blind love. The promising relationship between Adam and Martha was destroyed by his ambitions and priorities. His position and success were more important to him than the woman. It is important to have the priorities set in the right order before it is too late. Perhaps, it was the right order for Adam; only Martha was not able to see it.

In her case, the problem was that she seemed to depend too much on Adam. She lived with the hope that he would eventually realize he loved her, and she was not able to see the reality. She was blinded by love.

2.3 Summary

Both stories do not appear to have anything in common at first, but that is not true. In both stories, Hawthorne presents a couple in love that wants to get married. In the first case, this is prevented by the quest for the ideal; nevertheless, the man returns and finds his ideal at home. In the second case, the obstacle is again found in the man. It is, in fact, very similar to Ralph's quest, only this time; he is not looking for an ideal woman, but he is looking for the ideal amount of money or the ideal social position. That is not found, therefore, the happy ending cannot follow.

Both men have a dreams and ambitions, but they differ in their attitudes. Ralph is resolved to get the woman of his heart and does not give up after the first week or month of his quest, not even after the first year. Whereas, Adam, seeing his dream cannot possibly come true, changes its terms and fulfills it, but only because he makes it easier for himself.

The women are patient, loving and waiting in both stories. They seem not to have any other goal in their lives, but to get their man. Nevertheless, they are not passive, they fight the hardships of life, and are able to take care of themselves.

In fact, both stories are almost the same, the ideals and requirements represent the obstacles for the couples. While the first couple happens to overcome it, the second does not. Their surrounding, their society, and perhaps their luck affect their lives. It is the disposition and character that they have, which decides their fate. Ralph is persistent and refuses to give up. Meanwhile, Adam adjusts his dream to the circumstances, but in doing so he loses Martha, and with her that is what really matters.

3. Wedding

3.1 “The Wedding Knell”

The wedding day is a gate that marks a profound change in the life of the couple. They choose to be together: for better, for worse, until death parts them. It is a decision for life. The day is not only special for the couple, the bridegroom and the bride, but also for their friends, for their family, and their community. The wedding ceremony is the sign that they are simply no more man and woman, but they are husband and wife. They belong to each other and they are treated in accordance with that.

The first short story that is concerned with the wedding is called “The Wedding-Knell”. It tells the story of the wedding of Mr. Ellenwood and Mrs. Delaney. Their union “might be considered as the result of an early engagement, though there had been two intermediate weddings on the lady’s part and forty years of celibacy on that of the gentleman” (Hawthorne).

In fact, Mrs. Delaney, as a young girl, was compelled to break her engagement to Mr. Ellenwood and marry somebody else. After the death of her first husband, whose great amount of money she inherited, she married again. The first marriage was undisturbed, whereas, the second one was more difficult because her second husband did not treat her well. When he died, she returned to her hometown, and after some time, the wedding between Mr. Ellenwood and Mrs. Delaney was announced.

As for Mr. Ellenwood, he remained a bachelor for forty years. He was considered a bit mad and strange, but “it was the consequence, and not the cause, of an aimless and abortive life” (Hawthorne).

On the day of the wedding, the bride and her friends arrived to the church earlier than the bridegroom. Moreover, when she entered the church, the bell began to toll the death knell. Everybody was frightened, but the bride continued her way down the aisle and then tried to turn the bad omen into a joke.

After a while, a strange group entered the church. It was a group of old people dressed as if for a funeral and going down the aisle as well. The bride recognized many old friends among them. The last of them was the bridegroom, who looked like a corpse dressed in a shroud. He said he was coming for his bride, and they would go to the grave together.

Everybody was horrified, and they thought that the bridegroom had lost his mind after all. He reasoned that he was right because the bride let her previous husbands enjoy her youth, and for him, only the grave was left. She then admitted that he was right and decided to proceed with the ceremony and to be married for eternity, where time does not mean anything.

Hawthorne's idea to let his characters live their lives separately and then present them as a bizarre engaged couple is an interesting one. It allows us to see how their relationship has changed during the forty years and how each of them has been affected by living separate lives.

The reader is not told much about the beginning of the relationship between Mr. Ellenwood and Mrs. Delaney. They fell in love and got engaged, however, the girl was "compelled to relinquish her ... engagement" (Hawthorne) and married somebody else.

Her motives, or rather her parents' motives to do so are easy to see. It has always been the question of money and prestige. Her parents had probably planned a completely different future for her than the one she chose in the person of Mr. Ellenwood. She might have been already promised to somebody else, or Mr. Ellenwood simply was not rich enough for her, and there was already a better prospective husband. The girl was, therefore, pressed to break the engagement and marry another man. Or her family might have had financial difficulties that only the marriage of the daughter would solve. The reasons are not clear, but the fact is, that she broke her engagement and obeyed her parents, notwithstanding her own ideas about the matter or those of her former fiancé.

It is said that "she became an exemplary wife" (Hawthorne) to her first husband, though that union is also called "cold duty" (Hawthorne), which suggests that Mrs. Delaney's affections were not involved in the matter. When she widowed, she married again, a man "considerably younger than herself" (Hawthorne) who was difficult to live with.

After the death of her first husband, the natural decision would be to return to her former lover, especially if he remained a bachelor. Nevertheless, she chose not to do so. Very likely, because it was she who had broken their engagement. Soon another man won her heart; she was madly in love with him and followed him.

The second marriage taught her a lesson. When her husband died, she returned home to be married soon a third time.

Superficial observers, and deeper ones, seemed to concur in supposing that the lady must have borne no inactive part in arranging the affair; there were considerations of expediency which she would be far more likely to appreciate than Mr. Ellenwood, and there was just the specious phantom of sentiment and romance in this late union of two early lovers which sometimes makes a fool of a woman who has lost her true feelings among the accidents of life (Hawthorne).

The general belief was that Mrs. Delaney got Mr. Ellenwood to marry her because it would bring her advantages, and that it was almost impossible for the union to be based on mutual affection or even love. Perhaps, money played a significant role in her decision again, or her second husband left her without means. Nevertheless, they agreed to get married and to meet in the church.

The late arrival of the bridegroom, caused the bride to walk the aisle first and wait for him, which even, strengthens the strange reversal of the roles in this wedding. The bridegroom is usually the active one. He proposes; he is the first one in the church; he waits for the bride. Not so here. It seems that the bride was more dominant here; she appears to make him marry her.

On the other hand, his arrival on the scene is spectacular. All the guests pay attention to him, and the bride, standing already in front of the minister, has nowhere to escape. She must listen to him. She is shocked when he arrives with the funeral procession, dressed in a shroud and talking about graves and coffins. Apparently, he wants to teach her a lesson and to make himself understood regarding his own feelings. "In youth you deprived me of my happiness, my hopes, my aims. ... But after forty years, when I have built my tomb and would not give up the thought of resting there ... you call me to the altar" (Hawthorne).

He says he suffered a lot and that her act caused him living alone for several decades. In fact, he wasted his life just because of her. She broke her promise to him, no matter if it was willingly or not. He never had another woman; he was probably afraid that the sad history of the engagement and abandoning would repeat.

His speech at the church is very bitter. "Other husbands have enjoyed your youth, your beauty, your warmth of heart and all that could be termed your life. What is there for me but your decay and death" (Hawthorne)? The bride remains speechless at the beginning, but then she admits her mistake. He was right. Such a moment would be a true trial of any relationship and the motives of the people who enter it.

The man in this story is portrayed as a rather passive character. A woman once betrayed him, and since then, he never fully recovered. The character represents a person who continues living in the past and cannot step into the future, because it frightens him. Fortunately, he is forced to take initiative when he is made to marry the woman who betrayed him. He manages to express his notions, which helps him to step out of the past and into the present.

The woman is dominant here; she decides the crucial things concerning their relationship. It is she who leaves him, and again, it is she who seems to be active in the proposal to be married. She portrays various types: a loving woman who comes back to her lover; a woman who cannot accept the changes coming with age and thinks that, yet, another wedding will rejuvenate her; a pragmatic woman who marries just because of money. She is a woman that is able to admit her mistake, learn her lesson, and go on.

The couple in this story is untypical, not only in their age, but also with the reversal of the traditional roles of man and woman. True, they are old and the wedding scene is sad and bitter as the bridegroom talks his harsh words to the bride, yet, the final outcome is very positive. Both of them admit their mistakes and forgive each other. "It was not frenzy, it was not merely the drunkenness of strong emotion in a heart unused to it, that now wrought upon the bride. The stern lesson of the day had done its work" (Hawthorne). The bridegroom answers it this way:

"Beloved of my youth ... The despair of my whole lifetime had returned at once and maddened me. Forgive and be forgiven. ... Let us join our hands before the altar as lovers whom adverse circumstances have separated through life, yet who meet again as they are leaving it and find their earthly affection changed into something holy as religion. And what is time to the married of eternity?" (Hawthorne)?

The themes in this story could be communication and forgiveness. Perhaps, there was a break of forty years because the couple was not able to communicate, to overcome the hurts of the past and to talk about their problems. There was not forgiveness to heal the wounds. So, it took forty years, and the shock of a coming marriage to overcome it and to communicate again; to express the feelings.

The outcome of the story is: as long as a person is alive, it is never too late to start again.

3.2 “The May-Pole of Merry Mount”

The second couple is taken from the tale called “The May-Pole of Merry Mount”. The Merry Mount colony really existed:

Based on the settlement at Mount Wollaston that Thomas Morton established in 1627 in opposition to the Plymouth Colony, Merry Mount posed a threat to Puritan hegemony and was eventually burned to the ground by order of Massachusetts Bay Governor John Winthrop. Hawthorne’s story is based on an earlier event, when John Endicott invaded the settlement and cut down the maypole that Morton had erected (Person 44).

At the beginning of the story, the group of the Merry Mount colonists, dressed in various costumes, is shown celebrating and dancing around the Maypole at the Midsummer eve. Among them are: the Lord and the Lady of May, and a young couple, adorned with flowers who is going to be married that day. Nobody is aware of the fact that the surrounding forest conceals the Puritans.

After a brief outline of the history and relationships between the two colonies, the reader is taken to the Merry Mount again. It is the evening of the same day that the group is seized by the Puritans and their leader, John Endicott. The reason of the attack was that “Maypoles were understood as holdovers from pagan fertility rites ... associated with a number of traditional activities the Anglican church fostered but the Puritans abominated” (Doubleday 99). The Puritans are planning to punish the dancers for their participation in the Pagan rites. At last, they discuss the fate of the young couple, Edith and Edgar.

Someone suggests double punishment for them because “they seem to be of high station among these misdoers” (Hawthorne). However, the young man pleads for the girl to be spared. His idea is rejected, but then John Endicott asks the girl if her “bridegroom [should] suffer [her] share of the penalty besides his own” (Hawthorne). Edith’s answer is very similar to her husband’s. “Be it death ... and lay it all on me” (Hawthorne). John Endicott is touched by their love and decides to take them among the Puritans and see if they could learn to live properly. At the end it is said that they never looked back toward the Merry Mount.

Edith and Edgar is a couple that is tested right at the beginning of their common journey and in a very harsh way. In the story, they are also referred to as the Lord and the Lady of May. The titles are connected only with the feast and “must be laid down at sunset” (Hawthorne).

When the reader first notices them, both of them think about the present and the future and feel that “this is [their] golden time ... for it may be that nothing of futurity will be brighter than the mere remembrance of what is now passing” (Hawthorne). Unfortunately, they are right in their premonition.

Once the Puritans attack the company, there is not much the couple could do to avoid their destiny, as they are not armed or prepared for the attack. Perhaps, there was some possibility for escape, and maybe at least one of them could have left the place unharmed, but it did not happen. Apparently, they did not want to separate or abandon each other. They remained to bear their destiny together. It must have taken courage to stay, considering the hostility the Puritans felt toward them and how they treated people who differed in their beliefs, as shown in the Hawthorne’s story “Endicott and the Red Cross”:

Among the crowd were several whose punishment would be lifelong – some whose ears had been cropped like those of puppy-dogs, others whose cheeks had been branded with the initials of their misdemeanors; one with his nostrils slit and seared, and another with a halter about his neck, which he was forbidden ever to take off or to conceal beneath his garments (Hawthorne).

One of the Puritans suggested double lashing for both the Lord and the Lady of May because they were held in the highest regard at the day. Both of them would agree to take each other’s punishment, making it four times more than the average Merry Mount colonist would get. Therefore, the girl was right when saying, “be it death” (Hawthorne) because for her it would certainly be the death.

Puritans closely observed the Bible, which states that the man flogged cannot get “more than forty lashes” (*New International Version Bible*, Deut. 25.3). Even if the Puritans did not mean to go to the maximum of the lashes with their prisoners, four times more lashes would be a deadly verdict for the couple. Yet, they were not afraid to stand for each other, even if it meant death.

They not only stood by each other, but also none of them renounced their faith. It is true, they were not openly asked to do it, but if they hurried to repent as soon as the Puritans appeared, their penalty could have been less severe. On the other hand, they were probably aware that it would be useless, knowing how the Puritans treated their own people, as seen in the quote above. It is sympathetic that they did not change their minds as soon as the opposition and persecution appeared. It shows the strength of their characters.

The last question concerns the future of Edgar and Edith. Endicott decided that they would be taken to the Puritan colony because there was still hope that they could be taught to become good and obedient colonists and Puritans. “There be qualities in the youth which may make him valiant to fight and sober to toil and pious to pray, and in the maiden that may fit her to become a mother in our Israel, bringing up babes in better nurture than her own hath been” (Hawthorne).

Surely, some kind of punishment awaited them, even if not so severe as the one proposed on the Merry Mount. Then the process is of re-education. It is quite possible that they, or rather the Puritans, would succeed, and Edgar and Edith would become good Puritans as well.

However, the final result would also depend on the attitude of the community toward Edgar and Edith. They were once the Lord and the Lady of May, members of pagan community on the Merry Mount, that would not be forgotten. With this stigma on them, it would be virtually impossible for the couple to fully integrate into the new community. The Puritans, careful about their own members, will suspect the couple even more because of their past. Once the faith is shaken, as can be seen in “Young Goodman Brown”, it is very hard to build it again. Whenever there is suspicion raised among the Puritans concerning any evil deed, such as, witchcraft, murder, blasphemy, the eyes of the community will first turn to the couple, and then to other people who used to be at the Merry Mount.

The couple could prevent this suspicion with eagerness and zeal. If Edgar becomes a zealous Puritan, who surpasses others in his enthusiasm, and if Edith is an exemplary wife, the process of integration can be different. Simply, to out-Herod Herod, as the proverb says when it illustrates that converts tend to be more zealous than the original believers.

It is the decision of the couple that will determine their future. It is their consciousness that will permit them to become more or less devout and zealous Puritans. Whatever happened in their future, they “never wasted one regretful thought on the vanities of Merry Mount” (Hawthorne).

In this story, the relationship among the couple is not seen much, they are rather defined by their behavior and attitude when life-threatening difficulties arise. The theme of the story could be self-sacrifice; shown in the scene where Edgar and Edith offer to take each other’s punishment. It is one thing to confess everlasting love when

everything seems to be like heaven on earth, but it is a completely different matter if love is to be confirmed by deeds that can hurt and even kill the person one loves.

The matter of religious freedom and consciousness can be seen here as well. The Puritans who were persecuted in England soon forgot the past and began to persecute those who differed from them in the New World. It is very important for the person who once could not voice his ideas openly to be able to do so, to say what he or she actually thinks. It is of greater importance, however, to be able to stand for one's own reasons and beliefs.

3.3 Summary

The two stories have the wedding day in common. In everything else, they are probably different. The first couple is old, they are getting married in a church and they have already lived a life full of troubles. The second couple is young, and the ceremony takes place in nature, and it is of pagan character.

The relationship among the couples is different as well. The first couple has a history of betrayal and of incomprehension, and they have to deal with that during the wedding. The result is mutual forgiveness, which allows them to start again.

It could be said that the younger couple is at the beginning of their life. Yet, there is no bright future waiting for them, and the happiest moments in their life, as they say, are already gone. Their life would not be that bad, if they did not look back.

Perhaps, both stories show how people face troubles and problems which strongly affect and change their future. Life is short, and it would be a waste to spend it regretting the past as Mr. Ellenwood did. Forgiveness is very important because nobody is perfect. Forgiveness gives people the possibility to begin again. Even if the future does not look well, as in the case of Edith and Edgar, it is good to realize that one has a faithful partner, who will share it with him or her.

4. Ordinary life

4.1 “Wakefield”

The wedding is a special day, a special occasion, a celebration followed by ordinary days with routine and even boredom. The husband works and provides money; the wife takes care of the household and the children. It seems that not much happens, and life passes by very quickly. The relationship between the husband and the wife keeps changing over the years: Their love can grow or die; a crisis can strengthen their relationship or end it. They may come closer to each other or become alienated.

The first story is called “Wakefield”. Hawthorne introduces it with a recollection of an article that mentioned a man who had left his house for twenty years. After twenty years, he returned. He never told his wife where he had been or what he had done. Then, the story proceeds with a reflection on the man’s possible motives and what his life was like during those two decades.

[Wakefield] was now in the meridian of life; his matrimonial affections, never violent, were sobered into a calm, habitual sentiment ... Had his acquaintances been asked who was the man in London the surest to perform nothing today which should be remembered on the morrow, they would have thought of Wakefield (Hawthorne).

One day, he told his wife that he was leaving the city for several days, but that he would soon return. Instead of leaving the city, he quickly went to the nearby lane where he rented a room. Mr. Wakefield wanted to observe the behavior of his wife, and “how the little sphere of creatures and circumstances in which he was a central object will be affected by his removal” (Hawthorne). The following day, he almost returned home. He stopped just in time in front of his house. He quickly returned before anyone saw him because he did not want his project to come to an end before he could find out what happened. He immediately changed his clothes and bought a wig to change his identity, so as to avoid being recognized. He did not return in given time which caused a severe shock to Mrs. Wakefield. Mr. Wakefield considered his return, but he quickly rejected the idea because he did not want to disturb her. He kept postponing it.

“It is but in the next street,” he sometimes says. Fool! it is in another world. Hitherto he has put off his return from one particular day to another; henceforward

he leaves the precise time undetermined – not to-morrow; probably next week; pretty soon. Poor man! The dead have nearly as much chance of revisiting their earthly homes as the self-banished Wakefield (Hawthorne).

After twenty years of absence, he once observed his house and thought that if he went there, he would get something to eat and dry clothes. So, he decided to do just that, and he entered the house with the same smile he had left the house with two decades earlier.

Mr. Wakefield's behavior resembles hide-and-seek in a way. He left his house and his wife because he expected to be missed. He also wanted to see how his wife would deal with this situation. At the beginning, he planned to be absent only for several days, but whenever the time to go home came, he always postponed his return. There was always some excuse to stay, the first one being Mrs. Wakefield's illness. He observed his house and its inhabitants and must have been aware of the fact that not much had changed in their lives. They learned to cope without him. Perhaps, even this idea kept him from going home.

There was also the feeling that everybody knows when he or she has a secret or plans to surprise somebody. One voice in his mind tells him to tell the secret or to surprise others as soon as possible. The second voice has different idea, though. It wishes to postpone it, to prolong the tension, to enjoy it a bit more. With Mr. Wakefield, the second voice won. He continued his experiment because he still felt that something special could happen, and that it was too early to stop it. It could even be said, that it was an addiction to him because he could not stop it. It became an obsession.

Mr. Wakefield's motive to leave his home remains a mystery to the reader. That is, if Mr. Wakefield himself had any notion as to why he was doing it. Some suggest that the story "elaborates a similar idea in the form of a common fantasy – to die or disappear but retain the power to see what effect your absence has on the people and the world you left behind" (Person 49). The author himself confirms it, stating that "morbid vanity ... lies nearest the bottom of the affair." Wakefield simply wanted to see how others would cope without him. Even his wife noticed "a quiet selfishness ... a peculiar sort of vanity" and "a little strangeness" (Hawthorne). Maybe, there was also desire to do something extraordinary, to have some adventure.

His experiment ended in a similar way as it had began because "his decision [to return home] seems a product of whim" (Person 50). It was not intentional. It was just a

matter of coincidence that he returned home then and not the first week of his absence when he suddenly found himself standing at the door of his house.

During those years, he did not see how much he had changed. He deemed “himself the same man as ever” (Hawthorne), and he “would look on the affair as no more than an interlude in the main business of his life” (Hawthorne). He will be surprised a lot when he realizes that people and affairs had changed profoundly.

In regard to his former friends and family, he will be like Washington Irving’s “Rip Van Winkle” who “sleeps through the Revolutionary War before returning to the town that he left twenty years before” (Person 49). Rip Van Winkle stepped into, what seemed to him, a brand new world, but Wakefield spent his two decades watching the world around him. Yet, there were multitudes of things he could not see and could not watch because they took place inside the buildings and during private conversations. It will be very difficult for him to find his way back among his friends and toward his wife. As Hawthorne remarks, “it is perilous to make a chasm in human affections – not that they gape so long and wide, but so quickly close again.”

He left his home to see what would happen. What is the outcome of his experiment, then? He saw that everything went well; even without him, and his wife mourned him, but she managed to live on. Whatever it was he wanted to prove, he surely must have proven it in the scope of twenty years.

At the beginning, Wakefield’s relationship toward his wife was described as “a calm, habitual sentiment,” (Hawthorne). Even when his wife got ill because he did not return and she mourned him, he calmly observed her and let her suffer. He even thought “she must not be disturbed at such a juncture” (Hawthorne).

When he returns, she will, no doubt, question him regarding his absence. What will he be able to say? Nothing. He cannot tell her the truth because it is too ridiculous, and it would hurt her to know that he was observing her all those years, seeing her suffer and did not come. Yet, even if she is not told what happened, his silence on the matter will only encourage her curiosity, and she will spend a lot of time thinking what might have happened in those years and why her husband does not want to tell her. Women are always curious to know everything.

Mr. Wakefield was a common man who yielded to temptation in order to see what the people who surround him would do in his absence and how they would react when they thought he was gone. His experiment got out of his control, and he spent twenty years watching his house and unable to return. Mrs. Wakefield is presented as loving

and patient wife. She is seen only through Wakefield's eyes so nothing more is really known about her.

The main theme of the story concerning, the relationship between the husband and the wife, could be trust. Wakefield leaves because he is tempted to prove something: perhaps, his doubts or questions; perhaps, he does not trust his wife and wants to satisfy his curiosity on the matter. After twenty years of absence, the roles will be reversed; Mrs. Wakefield will be required to trust her husband and his silence. Trust is very important; it means that the person is reliable and dependable. Again, it is linked with the ability to communicate with others; first one has to come to know somebody to really trust him.

4.2 "The Prophetic Pictures"

The second couple is taken from "The Prophetic Pictures". Walter Ludlow and Elinor, his fiancée, were engaged and to be married soon. There was a famous painter in their town, and they wanted to be portrayed by him. People "say he paints not merely a man's features, but his mind and heart. He catches the secret sentiments and passions and throws them upon the canvas" (Hawthorne). Still others, frightened by his art, "were inclined to consider the painter as a magician, or perhaps the famous Black Man of old witch-times plotting mischief in a new guise" (Hawthorne). Everybody wanted to be painted by him, but the painter was careful in choosing the people. The person to be painted must have been interesting, there must have been something special about him or her. Money or reputation did not matter with the painter.

When Walter and Elinor came into his studio, they saw many portraits of people they were well acquainted with, and they were surprised that the pictures seemed to be full of life. "The whole mind and character were brought out on the countenance and concentrated into a single look; so that ... the originals hardly resembled themselves so strikingly as the portraits did" (Hawthorne).

The painter came and agreed to paint them. At the beginning, he proposed to paint them in one picture, but due to the lack of the space in their house, they decided on two separate pictures. He painted both pictures at the same time, and in meantime, he made a sketch of the couple.

The pictures were soon ready, and the couple came to the atelier to see them. First, they thought it to be a perfect resemblance of themselves, but then something about the

pictures startled them. Walter observed Elinor's picture, and he thought she looked sadder than she was. Elinor looked at Walter's picture, and she felt that there was something strange about it as well. When Walter looked at her, he beheld the same expression on her face that startled him in the picture. The painter then took Elinor away and showed her the sketch he was working on during the time he was portraying them. She was frightened. Elinor noticed that Walter was close enough to see the sketch, but she was not sure if he really did.

The pictures hung in their house next to each other, and everybody admired them. People were deeply touched when looking at them. As time went by, Elinor seemed to be more and more like her picture, while there was difference between Walter and his portrait. After some time, Elinor covered the pictures with a curtain.

Several months or years later, the painter returned to the town and wished to see the couple and the portraits. He entered the house unnoticed and saw the couple standing in front of their pictures and looking at them. Suddenly Walter, with the words "Our fate is upon us! ... Die!" (Hawthorne) drew out a knife and wanted to stab his wife. Fortunately, he was prevented by the painter. It was exactly the same scene which the painter had sketched and showed to Elinor. Then the painter asked why she married Walter despite the fact that she had been warned by the sketch. She answered that she had loved Walter.

The core of this story is the possibility of predicting or influencing the lives and fates of other people. The painter had the reputation of a man who could have painted things hidden to other people, he was even suspected to be in connection with the evil. After the first reading of the story it, could be said that he influenced or forecast the young couple's future, but it is more complicated than that.

Hawthorne showed Elinor being uncertain about something even before the visit at the studio. When Walter visited Elinor, in one moment he noticed that she seemed "frightened to death, and very sad besides" (Hawthorne). She said it was nothing but after his departure she had "a sad and anxious look, little in accordance with what should have been the feelings of a maiden on the eve of wedlock" (Hawthorne).

Certainly, there must have been something about Walter and his character that made her contemplate her decision to marry him. Maybe, it was something about his family history, or something dubious she had heard about him, or maybe it was something he had said. Either way, it was just a feeling, and she decided to ignore it.

When she was looking at Walter's picture at the studio, she had the feeling again. Then, the painter showed her his sketch of the attempted murder, and he suggested that he knew about her doubts when he asked "if you have no secret cause to trust my delineation of the other" (Hawthorne). She probably remembered what Walter had told her about the painter; "that after he has once got possession of a person's face and figure he may paint him in any act or situation whatever, and the picture will be prophetic" (Hawthorne). Was the murder prophesized, then? Will it happen? Moreover, Walter might have seen the sketch, too.

On the other hand, the painter could be a clever manipulator who used his reputation to play with people and take advantage of their credulity and superstition. Why would he paint the sketch? No wonder Elinor decided not to pay attention to those "warnings".

Doubleday suggests that the painter "thinks he foreknows an action (Doubleday 112) but in fact, "his skill does enable him to show forth in his sitters' portraits their essential characters" (Doubleday 114). This seems to be a logic and sound explanation of the story. The painter had an insight and saw something that was hidden to others, he saw what people were like. If there were some really strong features in a person, he could perhaps foresee what could happen, but only as a possibility, not as something that was certain to happen.

It would explain Elinor's uneasiness. Human character does not develop overnight. So, there was something about Walter that alarmed her; the painter had confirmed her suspicions. The easiest way to explain Walter would be by some mental disorder that was visible enough for the painter to see but not for others and that developed during the marriage. Perhaps, it was the illness that made him to try to kill Elinor, and he could not help it so he had to do it.

Then there is the question, if Walter saw the sketch or not. If he did not, the scene of murder was purely accidental, and it only confirmed the painter's ability to see the characters of people. The reader cannot be sure what happened, and "if Walter has seen the sketch - even if we suppose the painter has no real insight into futurity - the painter may still have a responsibility for Walter's attempt on Elinor's life, so far as his sketch influences an unstable person" (Doubleday 115).

The painter still might be convicted as a manipulator. He had an insight into people; he saw that Walter was not all right; perhaps he had some type of disorder. He might have let him see the sketch on purpose, to see what would happen. He must have been

aware of his reputation, so even if he did not hear Walter talking about the painter's ability to determine the acts of people he painted, he could have anticipated such ideas. No wonder Walter would try to stab Elinor, he felt he was forced to, feeling that his fate was not in his hands anymore.

It can be compared to a situation when a person goes to a fortune-teller. It does not matter if he or she is told good or bad things or if he or she believes in what they are told or not; they have heard their possible future, and it will always be in their mind. It will always influence them, for worse or for better, even if unconsciously. Perhaps, something similar happened to Walter, he saw the sketch, it was imprinted into his mind, it tormented him, he tried to get rid of it by fulfilling it.

As for the two pictures of Walter and Elinor, they seemed to be intertwined with the couple much more than the common portraits. First, it seemed to reflect the present expression of the person whose image it bore, as in case of Elinor. When Walter thought her picture was not faithful to her, the painter told him to look at her and Walter saw that "Elinor's face had assumed precisely the expression of which he had just been complaining" (Hawthorne). This proves to be a coincidence.

However, when the pictures hang at their home, the visitors thought that "day by day Elinor's face was assuming a deeper shade of pensiveness which threatened soon to render her too true a counterpart of her melancholy picture" (Hawthorne). Elinor's picture could be seen as a certain prediction, too. While Walter was foreseen in the look that disturbed Elinor and the sketch, Elinor's future laid in her own picture.

Maybe, that was the reason why Elinor covered the portraits. She was too aware that they revealed the secrets of their minds, their hearts, and their future. No wonder she did not want her visitors to notice that.

This tale also strongly resembles another story of a man and his picture – *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. In his case, the picture kept changing, depending on his evil doings, while Dorian Gray remained a young and handsome man, not affected by them. The pictures of Walter and Elinor were not changing, yet they were too expressive not to be covered. As soon as Dorian Gray realized what was going on, he hid his portrait so nobody knew what he really looked like. He hid his filthy soul. Perhaps, Elinor hid their portraits because they made her uneasy; they reminded her too much of the foretold future. Dorian killed himself by stabbing his picture. Would something have happened to Walter and the pictures if he had managed to kill Elinor?

The theme of the story is not only the possibility to predict or influence the future of others, but that domestic violence and the processes that can turn a loving person into a hateful aggressor.

The painter used his insight, nothing more, that later proved to be true. The couple's future was influenced in the way they let themselves to be influenced, but Walter's instability must be taken into account as well. Such predictions lie on the verge of manipulation. Especially, when the couple was shown their future and there was a superstitious belief concerning the painter. It is better to be unaware of one's future than to be tormented with the things that could happen but that are not sure to happen.

The matter of violence and cases when a person profoundly changes are hard to talk about. It is advisable to rely on the advices and knowledge of other people and consider everything. Even all the doubts before one gets married. Sometimes love cannot change everything, and it is better to use the cold logic.

4.3 Summary

Both of the stories, "Wakefield" and "The Prophetic Pictures" deal with insecurity. Wakefield is not sure what others will do in his absence, how they will behave. His experiment is a success, but at the same time he loses his wife and his friends because the gap of twenty years cannot be easily filled. Elinor is not sure about Walter. There are hints, but they are rather vague and unclear. She decides to ignore them, but later they prove to be true.

The question is; when can one rely on others, on their information and their judgment of a situation, and when is it better to take matters into one's own hands? Walter decided to prove the matter for himself, and his project cannot be a called successful one. Elinor decided to trust her feelings, and she almost died.

Perhaps, the moral of both stories is to use common sense and to talk things over with trustworthy people before making any important decisions.

5. Loneliness

5.1 “Edward Fane’s Rosebud”

Death and loneliness are an inevitable part of the human life. Death can affect humans in all the stages of life: in childhood, in youth, in adulthood, or even in old age. Naturally, it is most connected with the elderly people. It affects not only the people closest to the deceased person, such as, the spouse and children, but it affects the rest of the family and friends as well. Death takes a person away, and it leaves a vacant spot, which takes time to fill or sometimes it is not filled at all.

One of Hawthorne’s stories that illustrates the impact of death on people is called “Edward Fane’s Rosebud”. The main character is Rose Toothaker. Who, since the death of her husband, is called widow Toothaker or nurse Toothaker. When she was a young girl, she was in love with Edward Fane, but his mother did not approve of the relationship and they were forced to be apart. Rose soon married another man who was much older than she was, Mr. Toothaker. She did it “with the revengeful hope of breaking her false lover’s heart” (Hawthorne).

She soon fell in love with her husband and was a good wife to him. However, he began to wither away very soon. At the beginning he could walk with the help of his staff and of his wife. After some time, he was forced to take to his bed. Rose was taking care of him during those years and nursing him. Death eluded them, but when it came, Rose did not feel better.

She learned to love him and she learned to love the kind of life they had together, even when he was sick. “By her watchings and continual cares her heart had become knit to her first husband with a constancy which changed its very nature and made her love him for his infirmities” (Hawthorne).

“On his painful pillow he had cast a spell around her; his groans and misery had proved more captivating charms than gayety and youthful grace, in his semblance Disease itself had won the Rosebud for a bride, nor could his death dissolve the nuptials (Hawthorne).

She never married again because she could not get over her dead husband and she got used to nursing others. She began to nurse others who were sick and dying. Some

people called her an awful woman because death followed her wherever she went. Although, it would be better to say that she followed death wherever it went.

The narrator introduced his story about Rose Toothaker, already an old woman, with her seating in her chamber and having a rest. After he told her story in retrospective, there came a knocking on the door, and somebody was calling her to attend general Fane's chamber. He was dying and he wanted her to nurse him. She immediately arose and thought: "'Edward Fane! And has he sent for me at last? I am ready. ... Edward Fane remembers his Rosebud'" (Hawthorne).

Rose Toothaker experienced loneliness two times in her life. The first time was when Edward Fane was forced to break their engagement. The second time was after the death of her husband, Mr. Toothaker. When Edward left her, she was angry, and she decided to marry Mr. Toothaker just to upset Edward. Fortunately, it worked for Rose. She married Mr. Toothaker without having any affection toward him; all she felt was some regard and respect, probably. Yet, they managed to build a working relationship, whereas many couples that entered the marriage deeply in love could not endure the hardships that arrived later.

On the other hand, Rose and Mr. Toothaker, due to his illness, did not live together for a very long time. It was just several years and Mr. Toothaker was seriously ill so their relationship was not common. When one is sick, he is usually treated in a different way than when he is healthy. It is easy to imagine that Mrs. Toothaker fulfilled every desire of her sick husband. Their life might have been different if he had not become ill.

Nevertheless, they lived a normal life in the first two years and it worked for them. They proved, in a way, that a relationship does not necessarily have to grow out of being deeply in love. Sometimes, it is enough when mutual respect is present and when the couple works hard to overcome the hardships.

After the death of Mr. Toothaker, Rose was not able and did not want to marry again. She felt that her heart was with her late husband. She might have considered her future, and what she could do and how she could spend her life: she did not want to marry again, she did not want to waste her life either; there were not many options left.

The nursing was the most logical solution to her because she had spent a long time nursing Mr. Toothaker. She knew what was necessary to do it, and she knew how to act in the presence of an ill and dying person.

People, who are left alone in a sense that death takes their partners, are left with a vacant place on their side and with a need to redirect and refocus their life. Many are

able to do it, but there are always some people who for some reason cannot or do not want to change their ways. Nurse Toothaker was one of them.

Rose decided to be a nurse because she was used to it. “She missed the fragrance of the doctor’s stuff. She walked the chamber with a noiseless footfall. ... She spoke in soft and soothing accents” (Hawthorne). It was also a way to spend her life and be useful to other people.

Another woman among Hawthorne’s characters who devoted a significant part of her life to the nursing of others was Hester Prynne from *The Scarlet Letter*. Her reasons were distinct. She was an outcast because she had an illegitimate child. She embroidered clothes for a living, and whenever she could find spare time she nursed the ill, helped the poor, and made clothes for them. “She came, not as a guest, but as a rightful inmate, into the household that was darkened by trouble, as if its gloomy twilight were a medium in which she was entitled to hold intercourse with her fellow-creature” (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, ch. 13).

She could have easily just taken care of herself and her daughter, but she wanted to be useful. For her, the main reason was redemption. She wanted to purify herself in the eyes of the community, but most of all, she wanted to purify her conscience. With others she succeeded, after several years of humility and charity “individuals ... had quite forgiven Hester Prynne for her frailty” (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, ch. 13).

However, Hester was not successful with herself as she revealed when she replied to the suggestion to remove her scarlet letter. “It lies not in the pleasure of the magistrates to take off the badge ... Were I worthy to be quit of it, it would fall away of its own nature” (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, ch. 14).

Both women, Rose and Hester, became a personification of an angel, of mercy, by living their lives for others and doing the work that was admired by others because they themselves would not do it. It is not easy to live among the sick and be a companion of death. Both of them were lonely, both of them devoted their lives to be useful to the community. Only their motivation was different.

The theme of this story is loneliness and the ability to cope with it as one finds a new sense of life. The first time Rose was left alone, she decided to solve it by getting married. Next time, she decided to be her own mistress and devote her time to her profession, so to say.

This suggests how a loss of a close person can be handled. Some people prefer to build new relationships; others immerse themselves into their professional lives. Neither

of them is wrong, but it must be remembered to deal with the loss first. Do not try to bury it or suppress it by business work or feverish activity.

5.2 “The Minister’s Black Veil”

The second story that can be used as an example of loneliness is called “The Minister’s Black Veil”. It tells the story of Mr. Hooper, a clergyman, who one day appeared in front of his congregation with his face covered with a black veil. Mr. Hooper was a man of thirty years, a bachelor and a minister in a village. One day he came to the church and all people were surprised.

There was but one thing remarkable in his appearance. Swathed about his forehead and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil. ... which entirely concealed his features except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight further than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things (Hawthorne).

He did everything in the most ordinary way, but people were horrified because the veil affected them so. They wondered what the motive of Mr. Hooper’s behavior could be. Some of them thought that he was mad; the opinion of others was that he was mourning. There was also an idea that the minister’s conscience was burdened with a sin so heavy that the minister decided to wear the veil, and still others, thought that the minister just strained his eyes and needed to shade them for some time.

People began to avoid the minister and they became restless, yet they did not dare to ask him directly. In the afternoon, the minister attended a funeral of a young woman. He still had on his veil, but “it was now an appropriate emblem” (Hawthorne). In the evening, a wedding was held, and the minister again, attended with his black veil covering his face. “Such was its immediate effect on the guests that a cloud seemed to have rolled duskily from beneath the black crape and dimmed the light of the candles” (Hawthorne).

The next day, people decided to send a group of delegates to ask the minister about the reason of the veil. The delegation did not dare to ask him, though. The minister had a fiancée, a young woman called Elizabeth. She wanted to know why he wore the veil and she also wanted to see his face but he refused. He told her that he was

bound to wear it ever, both in light and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will

see it withdrawn. This dismal shade must separate me from the world; even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it (Hawthorne).

When she saw he would not be moved, she left him and thus broke their engagement.

After that, nobody else dared to ask him about his veil. People and children avoided him and he even avoided himself. “His own antipathy to the veil was known to be so great that he never willingly passed before a mirror nor stooped to drink at a still fountain” (Hawthorne). However, his black veil made him an efficient minister and preacher.

After many years, when he was dying, he was asked again to remove his veil, but again he refused. When asked what secret sin he hid, he answered: “Why do you tremble at me alone? ... Tremble also at each other. ... I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a black veil” (Hawthorne)!

In this story, Mr. Hooper’s loneliness was his own choice. It was his idea to put on the black veil and to wear it. Nothing stopped him, not even the frightened looks of his congregation or the resolution of his fiancée to leave him if he did not remove his veil.

Hawthorne does not mention the minister’s motives but whatever it was it must have been something important to him because he valued it even more than his position in the community, the respect of others, their relationship with him or even the love of his betrothed. He became as lonely as a person could be; especially when it was his own decision, and it was not forced on him. It was the result of his own decision to wear the black veil that he repulsed everybody. It was not an easy thing for him, as he confessed to Elizabeth: “Oh, you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened to be alone behind my black veil” (Hawthorne)! Yet the black veil was worthy enough to go through that and to bear it.

The black veil can be seen as a predecessor of the scarlet letter Hester Prynne was forced to bear in *The Scarlet Letter*. In both cases, it repulsed other people and the bearer of the symbol lived as a true outcast, even if surrounded by other people. While in Hester’s case, the effect of the scarlet letter seemed to cease after several years of her exemplary behavior and charity, it was the contrary with the minister. The black veil had the same harmful influence on the community. As the years passed by, it was perhaps even worse because the people who had known him without the veil and who could have remembered him and imagined him without the veil were less and less

numerous. Since, his decision to wear the veil was voluntary, it made it even worse for him.

Doubleday also notices the similarity between Mr. Hooper and Mr. Dimmesdale, the minister from *The Scarlet Letter*:

Dimmesdale has attributes nearly identical with some of those of Mr. Hooper. ... The clerical efficiency of Mr. Dimmesdale is of the same kind as that of Mr. Hooper. Both, set apart from their parishioners, have yet by a secret sharing with them a special insight (Doubleday 177).

It was the burdened consciousness, in the case of Dimmesdale that made him a special minister, and it was the separation of the black veil and perhaps something more, since the motives are not known, that had a similar effect on Mr. Hooper.

One more thing that seems to be interesting in Doubleday's assessment of the tale, is his idea of the black veil as a symbol of human loneliness. "The citizens of Milford recognize, as everyone at least in some of his experience recognizes, how far alone each man and woman is" (Doubleday 175).

While it is true, it can go even deeper. It can mark that part of the human body or soul that is lonely simply because it needs more than just material things or relationship with other people. Nor, can it be filled with a career, hobbies or money. It is usually expressed in the religious faith, in the hope or experience of something that goes beyond logical explanations and material things. The Bible expresses it well: "[God] has also set eternity in the hearts of men" (Eccles. 3.11).

The theme of this short story could not only be loneliness, but also a voluntary sacrifice, a sacrifice for higher goals. Since, his motive for wearing the black veil is not clarified, and since, it was stronger than yearning for human society and relationship it can be easily concluded that it was of great importance for him. Thus, anyone can easily identify with Mr. Hooper and his voluntary denial in the name of greater cause.

However, it did not work for Mr. Hooper and his community because nobody knew the reason for the black veil. The clergyman sacrificed himself, but it was to no avail because he did not make himself understood. What is the sense of such a sacrifice when nobody is able to recognize it? It has its value only for the one who makes it.

5.3 Summary

Both stories have loneliness as the main feature in common. In the case of Rose Toothaker, it was involuntary, at least at the beginning, because it was the result of the death of her husband. Mr. Hooper's solitude was an outcome of the black veil, a deliberate act on his part.

Rose then decided to stay alone, and her solitude was broken only when she was nursing people who were close to death. The minister spent his time in a similar way, serving those in need. "Dying sinners cried aloud for Mr. Hooper ... though ever ... they shuddered at the veiled face" (Hawthorne). They spent their lives fulfilling what they considered as their vocation, to serve and to help those who needed them.

It is good when one in his or her own distress does not forget others whose troubles might be even greater. Selfishness and self-centeredness is not a recommendable solution for a person who is alone, voluntary or not, because it makes one's problem look even greater than it really is. These two characters show that helping others can be another way.

On the other hand, there was something more to it in Mr. Hooper's case. His black veil enabled him to be a better minister, but it was meant to be something more than just that. It was a symbol that was not understood, a symbol that was not explained. It was an estrangement from the society, voluntary and involuntary, at the same time.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this work was to present Nathaniel Hawthorne's view of the couples in his collection of short stories from *Twice-Told Tales* and to present the principles that can be concluded from each story.

It can be said that Hawthorne, despite the fact that his works are sometimes dark or even gloomy, is very positive about his characters. Notwithstanding what they experience or go through in life, there is always hope for them and very often even a happy life.

The couples in the first part present the problem of the clash between ideals and reality. The question they have to solve is that of: is better to adhere to the ideals or give them up when necessary? The surrounding society can be of fundamental significance, but in the end it is always the question of priorities people have.

The focus of the second part is on the hardships life can bring. They form and prove the character of everyone. Another aspect that is important in human life is that forgiveness should be applied whenever necessary because it heals the wounds people tend to inflict on each other, sometimes even unintentionally.

Insecurity and trust are the issues the couples of the third part. How can one distinguish when he has to rely on his own experience, and when he can simply trust the information given by another person? There is no simple answer, but it can be very helpful if one seeks advice of other people as well and does not only rely on his own ideas about the matter.

The last part is concerned with loneliness that is caused by the death of a family member, or the isolation from society and the period of human life. When new goals have to be found and the old ones redefined. It is useful to spend the transitory period not only focusing on one's own problems, but also on the needs of others and to really face the loss and not trying to overcome it only with work.

The female characters of Nathaniel Hawthorne deserve special attention. They are strong women who do what they must, and they are not afraid to face the problems and insecurities of life. They could have waited and seen what happened, or they could have relied on their male counterparts, but instead they decided to get the most from life.

Hawthorne's characters did not go through standard life situations, but still one can see and learn the principles that do not change and are valid in every generation of humankind. Honesty, mercy, love, trust, and other good qualities are worthy not only

because of their positive effect on human relationships but also for the credit of the one who causes them.

As the proverb says: “As you sow, so you shall reap.” If one spreads mercy and love, for example, he can be sure that sooner or later he will benefit from it. The world and the society may quite often seem bleak and dark but it is one’s decision if he chooses to spread light or darkness. What we have tomorrow is formed by the decisions we make today.

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