

DEPARTAMENT DE FILOLOGIA ANGLESA

GOTHIC CHIAROSCURO IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S
THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES AND TONI
MORRISON'S *BELOVED*.

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**DEPARTAMENT DE
FILOLOGIA ANGLESA I ALEMANYA**



Gothic Chiaroscuro in
Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*
and
Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Presentada por:

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València, 2010

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NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S
THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES
AND
TONI MORRISON'S BELOVED*

Para mi familia

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INTRODUCTION

The Gothic is at the core of American fiction. As Leslie Fiedler says: “our own [fiction] is most deeply influenced by the gothic, is *almost essentially a gothic one*” (142; emphasis added). He describes how great American writers sought out gothic themes, since “special guilts awaited projection in the gothic form” (143). Among others, Hawthorne and Morrison have seen in the Gothic the best literary mode to convey the darkness of the New World. In this comparative study I will examine how these two writers have appropriated the Gothic in their novels *The House of the Seven Gables* and *Beloved*. Both of them are different expressions of this very productive literary genre whose roots can be traced back to England and whose popularity has increased over the years. Hawthorne draws many of his Gothic elements from the English novel of terror to provide his romances with psychological depth. On the other hand, Morrison’s narrative, framed in the African American tradition, depicts slavery with Gothic images. In this thesis I will first explore the gothic aspects of these two novels and then compare and contrast them, analyzing how each of these two great American writers has used the mode in his or her own original ways.

However, first of all I would like to explain my critical perspective and why I think it is interesting to make a comparative analysis of two so different novels. Throughout this study, as I will discuss more thoroughly at the end of this introduction, I will argue for a reading of the gothic which tries to present White and Black Gothic as interlaced traditions. I will delve into the gothic genre through Morrison’s transgressive revisiting of American canonical texts. Interpreting Morrison’s romance in the light of a typical Gothic novel of one of the great nineteenth-century white male writers, Hawthorne, contributes to a reappraisal and reassessment of the gothic. I will argue, as Sonser does in her comparative analysis between *The Scarlet Letter* and *Beloved*, that even though my intertextual revision could seem bizarre or even illogical, (why compare two

narratives which apparently have nothing in common and which are separated by a literary abyss: different plot, authorial voice, historical context, development of characters, structure) it “may [. . .] serve to disturb traditional interpretations of the gothic and its place in the canon” (16-17). It may shed a new light on the Gothic genre.

Seven Gables and *Beloved* share a common ground: the essential of the Gothic soul remains in both novels. Hawthorne and Morrison recreate in their novels the metaphor which is at the core of the Gothic romance, a fragmented Gothic individual is haunted by the ghosts of American history, which drags along with its colonial legacy: an alienated and sinful self who lives the nightmares of the patriarchal western family and society. The ghosts which inhabit these novels are associated with the guilty mind and its repressions, whose origin is in our past. These specters achieve historical resonance in their connection with our ancestors’ misdeeds. *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* depict the redemptive journey of the American self. These romances are marked with the distinctive tragic and dark nature of the Gothic, while expressing some hope for the future. The sins of the past can be partially redeemed.

Despite the fact that Hawthorne’s and Morrison’s approaches to the gothic are connected to their genders, races and historical contexts, which distance them while shaping their unique literary texts, they share basic characteristics of the gothic genre in their dealings with the “otherness” to the American culture. They are fully committed to showing the evil in American life. They are “plagued by a hunger for the inexplicable, a need of the marvelous” (Fiedler: 138). Hawthorne and Morrison’s novels share the symbolic nature of Gothic fiction. They deal with “the depths of the mind”, as Fiedler says, which are represented in the text itself, symbolizing in outward terms an inward reality (141). Not only do they express the concerns of the American self, but they also convey the American national experience in familial and social terms. Both authors deal with the most persistent Gothic themes and symbols: the isolated individual confronted with the world; the haunted house as the prison of the self; the wicked villain, fused with the image of Faust, and the innocent maiden.

I would also like to mention some issues about these two novels that I consider to be important. To begin with, these two authors draw some material for their romances from their personal experiences. Hawthorne was inspired by his own family, local history and autobiography. The Puritan past of his ancestors, in its darkest aspects, forms part of *Seven Gables*. He offers a historical glimpse of the Puritan New England society and the witchcraft trials, which have an important role in the development of the narrative. Another biographical element that I would like to mention is that, after leaving college, Hawthorne lived a secluded life in the attic of his mother’s house for twelve years to master the art of writing, an experience that he transmits to his isolated

characters. On the other hand, Morrison and her family experienced the racism of the South. In fact, they moved to Ohio to escape from it. She also suffered some discrimination later on in her life. Morrison's mother was a church-going woman who sang in the choir. Thus Morrison knew many songs and tales of Southern black folklore, and these have influenced her romance.

Unlike Hawthorne, Morrison borrowed the events of her novel from the real story of Margaret Garner. In 1851, Margaret Garner, like *Beloved's* main character, Sethe, escaped with her children to Ohio from her master in Kentucky. When she was about to be re-captured in Ohio, she tried to kill her children rather than return them to the life of slavery. Only one of her children died and Margaret was imprisoned for her deed. She refused to show remorse, saying she was "unwilling to have her children suffer as she had done".¹ On the contrary, Hawthorne clearly stated in the preface of *The House of Seven Gables* that his romance was completely fictitious: "the book may be read strictly as a Romance, having a great deal more to do with the clouds overhead, than with any portion of the actual soil of the County of Essex" (Gables: 3).

Seven Gables and *Beloved* are set approximately in the mid-nineteenth century New England and Ohio respectively; however, some important episodes take place in a remote past. In *Beloved* we know the past from the fragmented memories of the different characters. As Margaret Atwood writes, Morrison's novel is set after the end of the Civil War, during the period of Reconstruction. There was still a great deal of violence against blacks, both those freed by Emancipation and those who had been freed earlier on. However, the flashbacks of the story go back to an earlier period when slavery was still in effect on a slave-holding plantation in Kentucky called, ironically, Sweet Home, from which the characters escape 18 years before the present moment (143). On the other hand, *Seven Gables* begins with the history of the Pyncheon house, which extends over two centuries. The house was constructed during the Puritan era in New England by the prominent Colonel Pyncheon, who had appropriated the spot through dubious means, as its original owner, Matthew Maule, was hanged as a wizard in the Salem witchcraft trials. At the present the house is inhabited by Hepzibah Pyncheon, an old spinster, who decides to open a cent shop to provide for her brother, Clifford, who is going to be released from prison. The past will come to haunt them by means of their kin, Judge Pyncheon, the true reincarnation of his ancestor.

¹ These events appeared in a news article called "Stampede of Slaves. A Tale of Horror!" published in *The Cincinnati Enquirer* on 29 January, 1856. This article was used as a historical fact for the collection of black history memorabilia called *The Black Book*. See: Tony Morrison (ed.) (1974). "Behind the Making of *The Black Book*". *Black World* (February): 86-90. For more information, see: <http://www.enquirer.com>, <http://www.africana.com> and <http://digitalhistory.uh.edu>.

Before I start my dissertation and explore Hawthorne's and Morrison's Gothic metaphor, I would like to delve briefly into some important general aspects that are necessary for the understanding of my thesis.

1. Delineating the American Gothic

Along with Louis Gross, I argue that the Gothic is both a mode of perception and a mode of representation, and virtually everything in life can be incorporated into this vision (92). According to Claude Cohen-Safir, "In contemporary America [. . .] Gothic is everywhere" (98). Its conventions have changed from its beginning, adapting to new circumstances. However, this genre has preserved the darkness that characterized traditional Gothicism and haunted the enlightened European countries in the late eighteenth century. The Gothic centers on these "areas of darkness." As Kathy Prendergast writes, from its very beginning the Gothic romance put the emphasis on emotion and intended to produce a magical impression in the receiver, evoking a sense of awe, terror, insignificance and vulnerability (online). To the rationality of realism, it opposed a supernatural power. The Gothic dealt with the world of the unconscious, its dreams and spirits; with the mystery and evil of human life. Chiaroscuro, the contrast between the light and blackness of life, is the metaphor that stands for its very essence. Peter Buitenhuis uses this term "chiaroscuro" to describe the symbolic quality, the lights and shadows, of *Seven Gables* (1991: 9), while Jeanne P. Laurel writes that the conventions of the Gothic dictate that "Beloved's coming and goings remain mysterious, as if draped in chiaroscuro" (online). The contrast between light and darkness represents the dark vision of America and the hidden blackness of the human soul.

In crossing the Atlantic, the English Gothic tradition undergoes a transformation. American writers adapted the gothic mode to convey the deeper meanings of the national experience, highlighting the psychological and symbolical dimension of the genre. They resort to supernatural devices to pose questions about human identity and society. American Gothic follows in the footsteps of British Gothic, but it shows strong changes in the form it acquires, which reflects the specific ghosts of the national experience: "the gothic disrupts the dream world of national myth with the nightmares of history" (Goddu: 10). The United States, a nation with disturbing origins, well received this literary style: "It is the gothic form that has been most fruitful in the hands of our best writers: the gothic symbolically understood, its machinery and décor translated into metaphors for a terror psychological, social, and metaphysical" (Fiedler: 28). Most of the great American writers use the Gothic to explore the "dark side" of nineteenth-century America. The reasons why the gothic was so attractive to

Americans can be found in the history of the country and its contradictions. Even though many facts support the essential optimism of the nineteenth century, America faced new and special guilts, such as slavery and its legacy, the genocide of Native Americans and their deprivation of land and power, the contradictory feelings towards immigrants, etc., which led its writers to resort to the Gothic romance.

As Fiedler says, once the American dream of innocence, which had sent many Europeans across the Atlantic, ended, the Faustian nightmare began: "The naturalized Faust legend becomes in the United States a way of denying hell in the act of seeming to accept it, of suggesting that it is merely a scary word, a bugaboo, a forbidding description of freedom itself!" (143). The fears and anxiety that Americans confronted found their best form of expression in the gothic romance. In contrast with the spirit of the new man and new America, the sources of this gothic literature are to be located in the Old World. The Gothic conveys a dark world full of terror, oppression and perversity; thus contradicting the optimistic view of America as a New Eden. Fiedler calls American Gothic "a literature of darkness and the grotesque in a land of light and affirmation" (29). American Gothic gives a gloomy account of past events which shows the disparity between an innocent vision and the real history of the nation, thus revealing "the artificial foundations of the American identity" (Goddu: 10). The Gothic genre reflects the American experience and confronts the reader with disturbing cultural images.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to define or analyze this genre, which the critics have found one of the most perplexing and controversial literary modes. As Robert Hume and Robert Platzner say, "the 'generic character' of the Gothic novel is hard to deal with" (qtd. in Goddu: 5).² Maggie Kilgour writes, "one of the factors that makes the gothic so shadowy and nebulous a genre, as difficult to define as any gothic ghost, is that it cannot be seen in abstraction from other literary forms from whose grave it arises [. . .]. The form is thus itself a Frankenstein's monster, assembled out of the bits and pieces of the past" (qtd. in Goddu: 5).³ As Teresa Goddu writes, British Gothic has been considered easier to define than its American counterpart, since it was developed during a specific period of time; there was a group of writers who could be clearly recognized as Gothic and it had a strong formulaic and conventional nature (3-5). As Louis S. Gross claims, American Gothic is less romantic, but more disturbing than English Gothic (24), which was seen as apart from the mainstream of English narrative, and it has a more central position and a stronger cultural resonance in "American

² Original text quoted: Hume's and Platzner (1971). "'Gothic versus Romantic': A Rejoinder". *PMLA* 86: 266-274.

³ Original text quoted: Maggie Kilgour (1995). *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. London: Routledge. Teresa Goddu claims the gothic genre's extremely mutable character and insists on its generic instability (5).

fiction than in any other national literature" (2). According to Fiedler, "Until the gothic had been discovered, the serious American novel could not begin; and as long as that novel lasts, the gothic cannot die" (143). Its cultural resonance is, at least in part, the result of the American Gothic's use of familiar surroundings and a time near the readers, "Unlike English readers who turned the Gothic vision outward to another people and another age, our Gothic turns inward to illuminate its own people and their age" (Louis Gross: 24).

The Gothic has become a bafflement for many critics because, among other reasons, it merges with other literary forms, especially Romanticism: "the gothic seeps into other genres and appears in unlikely places" (Goddu: 8). American Gothic has proved to be very mutable, unstable and impure as a literary mode, blending different forms and transgressing boundaries: "a definition of the American gothic depends less on the particular set of conventions it establishes than on those it disrupts" (Goddu: 4). Some critics, such as Eric Savoy, do not think that American Gothic can be considered as a proper genre. He prefers to talk of the Gothic turn: "the gothic is a fluid tendency rather than a discrete literary 'mode,' an impulse rather than a literary artifact" (6). Nevertheless, he recognizes a strong gothic tendency in American culture, which is organized around what is unsuccessfully repressed and thus must be repeated, "a mode of narrative that is organized around semiotic gaps or 'rifts'" (7). Anne Williams emphasizes that the "'Gothic' is a 'something' that goes beyond the merely literary. Similarly, it is more than a 'mode' or a tradition, or a set of conventions. Perhaps like the Freudian concept of 'unconscious,' Gothic implies a phenomenon long present but until recently not described" (23).

However, I will argue in this comparative study that there is something essential that has not changed since the origins of the Gothic. As Anne Williams suggests in *Art of Darkness*, the Gothic conventions which emerged toward the end of the eighteenth century are crucially concerned with exploring the "rules" of patriarchy, such as the relative powers and qualities of the masculine and the feminine and the interrelated and mutually supportive social structures like the family, the monarchy, and the church (35). I would claim that the Gothic, both in England and America, is developed around the concept of "otherness" in the patriarchal culture. As Anne Williams says, "'Gothic systematically represents 'otherness'" (18). The mutable character of the Gothic is due to the fact that "otherness" changes with place and time and is different for men and women: "the heterogeneous (and always changing) set of Gothic conventions expresses many dimensions of 'otherness'" (Anne Williams: 19). This "otherness" usually has in its roots something that has been rejected or unacknowledged by consciousness: the "return of the repressed" is essential in the dynamics of Gothic

narratives (Clemens: 3-4). The ghostly element, and through it, the expression of the inner world of the psyche, gives this “otherness” its unique Gothic quality. On the other hand, the Gothic’s concern with the “otherness” of the culture would explain its most relevant emotion, fear, and it would also account for the fact that the “Gothic appears shocking and subversive, delighting in the forbidden and trafficking in the unspeakable” (Clemens: 4). The historical malleability of the locus of fear (Prendergast: online) is connected to the changeable character of the concept of “otherness” and the consequent mutability of the Gothic literary mode.⁴

The Gothic has not only been successful in representing “otherness”, it has become its best form of expression. American Gothic’s uniqueness is the result of its attempt to narrate the singular “otherness” of the specific national experience. Consequently, “otherness” takes different forms, such as the American landscape, American history, woman, sexuality and the figure of the black American. I argue along with Anne Williams that Americans needed a ground, the past, against which they could construct their definition of national identity. Thus, historically, the “other” is the past, which explains the Gothic’s interest in the old times: “In formulating a history of oneself either personal or public, for oneself or one’s country, that other is necessarily the ‘past’” (32).

As the product of “marginal” groups of writers, such as the female and the African American, the Gothic conveys an alternative view to that of the dominant culture.⁵ Who could better deal with “otherness” than those who are regarded as the “others” by the Western patriarchal system? As Louis Gross observes, their overwhelming presence enables us “to perceive the genre as an alternative expression of social, sexual, and political projections to the Great Tradition view of English fiction” (2). Consequently, in social terms, the “other” of our Western culture is often associated with the female (race is another very important factor of “otherness”, at least in American fiction), “the most powerful and persistent ‘other’ of Western culture” (Anne Williams: 19). In *The Second Sex* (1952), Simone de Beauvoir writes that “Woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other” (qtd. in Dearborn: 5). I claim along with Anne Williams that the myth informing the Gothic category of “otherness” is the patriarchal family (22). That is why the Gothic romance is usually a family romance (22-23).

⁴ Kathy Prendergast (online) and Kim Michasiw (242) points out the adaptability of the objects of fear. Louis Gross (79) and Nicola Nixon (224), on the other hand, claim how the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Gothic fiction discovers the uncanny potential of the ordinary.

⁵ See: Goddu (11) and Louis Gross (2).

Morrison's revisioning of the Gothic must take into account her double marginality, being both black and a woman. In the next two sections I will discuss the basic elements of the "feminine" and "black" tradition of the Gothic, since they are at the core of Morrison's rewriting of the American canon. These elements are an essential part of my analysis of Morrison's and Hawthorne's gender and racial perspectives.

2. Female Gothic and Female Ghost Stories

Nineteenth-century American fiction seems to be "white-centered" as well as "male-centered"; determined, as Kristin Herzog claims, by Lewis's American Adam (xvi), a self-reliant individualistic man, without history or heritage. However, in contrast to the manliness of this American fiction, the Gothic genre has been frequently considered as intimately associated with a certain "feminine" cultural perception. Anne Williams observes, "In the past two decades [. . .] feminist critics have emphasized and valorized Gothic as an inherently 'female' tradition" (7).⁶ In agreement with many feminist theorists, Marianne Noble believes that the gothic is a site in which the repressive construction of gender roles is produced: "Gothic implements of torture [. . .] represent the terror tactics of gender construction, and the genre's characteristically perverse cravings and anxieties represent identifications and desires whose repression is essential for appropriate genders" (165).

Many reasons have been given to explain the appeal the gothic genre had for women, both writers and readers. In *Literary Women* Ellen Moers claims, "For Mrs. Radcliffe, the Gothic novel was a device to send maidens on distant and exciting journeys without offending the proprieties [. . .]. In Mrs. Radcliffe's hands, the Gothic novel became a feminine substitute for the picturesque, where heroines could enjoy all the adventures and alarms that masculine heroes had long experienced, far from home, in fiction" (qtd. in Louis Gross: 37).⁷ Fleenor suggests the importance of the mother-daughter conflict in the Gothic narrative and the confrontation within "the female self" as possible motives for the allure of these novels among women (1983a: 15-16). I will argue here that the Gothic genre seemed the best narrative mode for females, as we can see in Morrison's fiction, since it addresses "the terrors lurking for women within patriarchal social arrangements" (Anne Williams: 7). As Fleenor states: "Female Gothicists had adopted the anti-rationalistic Gothic both to reproduce and yet challenge

⁶ Other critics, such as Juliann E. Fleenor (1983a: 7) and Claude Cohen-Safir (98), share Anne Williams's views. Besides, Louis Gross believes that the power of the Dark Woman illuminates the American Gothic novel, which has been frequently considered as too male-centered and lacking in complex female characters (42).

⁷ Original text quoted: Moers (1977). *Literary Women*. Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Press / Doubleday.

the patriarchal world in which they lived, and the horror they conveyed was at their own bodies and even their rebellion” (1983a: 13).⁸

The success of the Gothic among women writers and readers gives rise to a new plot, the story of the female struggling in an essentially patriarchal society: a story that affirms the power of woman and the maternal. This “feminine” and sentimental literature contrasts to the Richardsonian novel of sensibility, since the too sensitive heroine is criticized. Against the woman as sexual prey, these writers contrast the female whose personality and spirit are more important than her physical perfection. However, these sentimental romances mostly express the “Cult of True Womanhood”, the standard at the time, portraying pious, pure, passive and submissive females devoted to the domestic world, while men had the economic and social power. These Gothic stories usually convey conventional middle-class domestic values while suggesting other transgressive and less conventional meanings: they began to imply that the late-eighteenth-century home was not always as safe for women’s purity as it was supposed to be. Besides, they also started to recognize feminine sexual desire. The Gothic, as Radcliffe first imagined it, not only provided women with a female myth, but also with “a fictional language and a set of conventions within which ‘respectable’ feminine sexuality might find expression” (Wolff: 207).⁹

At the time females had an important moral role of ennobling men, being recognized as purer as a consequence of motherhood: spiritual women were the salvation of the sensual male. As Valdine Clemens points out their function was “to preserve the sanctity of the home life, the private sphere to which their mates could return and be refreshed after venturing out into the contaminating world of commercial competition”. The importance of females at home compensated for their exclusion from the public arena and provided the purity that the state of motherhood required (43). The nineteenth-century vision of woman as mother and a pure angel of the house was based on a desexualizing image that the Gothic refutes. As I will show throughout this dissertation, Hawthorne and Morrison deal with this female myth in different ways.

The differences which have been established between “feminine” and “masculine” Gothic traditions frequently fail due to the mutable character of this genre. Many of these distinctive traits can only be applied to the early works of the genre. For instance, Male Gothic narratives have tragic plots, the hero villain is chastened for his violation of the Law; their plot focuses on the woman’s suffering and takes pleasure in her victimization; they take delight in sexual frankness and perversity, free of any

⁸ Fleenor thinks that “in the Female Gothic the ambivalence toward the female (good and evil) has been internalized [. . .] lead[ing] to feelings of self-disgust [and self-fear rather than fear and disgust of something outside her” (1983a: 11).

⁹ For more information, see Moers’s *Literary Women*.

repression or social control; it may come close to “pornography”. In this comparative study, I will claim, as Eugenia C. DeLamotte does in *Perils of the Night* (1990), that the differences between the so-called Male and Female Gothic lie in the male and the female subject’s sense of self in the patriarchal culture. Men and women conceive of themselves and their relationships to others in different ways,

The Female Gothic plot in fact presents an alternative to the Oedipal crisis in the formation of the speaking subject, then it portrays a subject with different desires, who sees the world with a different eye/I. Since the ‘female’ gaze has *not* been created through conflict, division, and abrupt separation, she has a different relation to her own mother and to that cultural (m)other repressed in her access to the Symbolic. She also may have a different experience of ‘Mother’ Nature” (Anne Williams: 139).

Consequently, “The male [. . .] experiences his psychological boundaries as fixed and distinct, while the female feels more permeable, indeterminate, and problematic” (qtd. in Anne Williams: 100).

However, I do not support Anne Williams’s division of the genre into two parallel traditions. Williams points out that there must be two modes of the Gothic, since “the ‘I’ gendered male and the ‘I’ gendered female have different dreams and different fears; they express different perceptions of the structure itself” (175). I believe that the Gothic is just one versatile literary mode. Still, I will argue that, as the Gothic is based on the “otherness” from the dominant culture, there will be different results depending on the social perspective chosen, feminine or masculine, as there will be a different outcome if the story is conveyed from a white or black view. That does not mean that these ensuing literary texts cannot be regarded as part of the same many-sided tradition, the Gothic. Even if I do not think that Male and Female Gothic are two separate literary modes, I will use these terms in my dissertation to refer to “masculine” and “feminine” Gothic works.

We can see Morrison’s novel as a “feminine” rewriting of the patriarchal society in which the speaking subject is, at least partly, outside the Law of the Father, thus providing a different version of American identity and national experience,

[. . .] it [the female plot] does not merely protest the conditions and assumptions of patriarchal culture it unconsciously and spontaneously rewrites them. The self portrayed there offers a more fully human version of a self gendered female; it offers an alternative to the “universal” pattern of the Oedipal structure, the myth that psychoanalysis has privileged as the creator of speaking subjects. (Anne Williams: 138-139)

Even though, as Anne Williams says, the “female” position in the patriarchal culture is more likely to emerge through women’s writings, it is not necessarily limited to them (139). In a narrative organized round the feminine perspective, the man is usually seen as “other” (141); while in the masculine gaze, as many feminist critics have claimed,

the “other” is often identified as the “female”, which is recognized in everything, not only the heroines: feelings, landscapes, death, language.

The gothic becomes the perfect medium to express women’s cultural and social anxieties, as we will see in Morrison’s novel. Contrary to the idealized feminine status of the traditional domestic novel, Bette B. Roberts claims, “the gothic novel provided an outlet for the literary expression of repressed female wishes and fears resultant from a restrictive milieu” (qtd. in Clemens: 50).¹⁰ The Gothic has allowed women writers to explore, from their position of “otherness”, those aspects of their lives which had been formerly unspeakable: to reveal “the ‘unspeakable’ thorough the gaze of the Other” (Schreiber: online). It deals with the woman’s experience, delving into the conflict over the female self: the ambivalence concerning the feminine roles of wife, mother, lover; the discord over the expression and existence of female sexuality. The Female Gothic romance often depicts women’s conflict with their bodies, through the identification of the female physical self with the house. In the heroine’s entrapment in the Gothic dwelling, both she and the house are vulnerable to penetration: it can “be read as an exploration of her [the heroine’s] relation to the maternal body which she too shares, to the femaleness of experience, with all its connotations of power over, and vulnerability to, forces within and without” (Kahane: 243). According to Patricia M. Spacks, Female Gothic shows a distinctive discourse in which women are alienated and feel powerless: “the Radcliffean maiden may act courageously [. . .] but finally she, too, reveals woman’s socially enforced weakness” (qtd. in Anne Williams: 136).¹¹ Fleenor summarizes the Female Gothic in the following words:

It is essentially formless, except as a quest; it uses the traditional spatial symbolism of the ruined castle or an enclosed room to symbolize both the culture and the heroine; as a psychological form, it provokes various feelings of terror, anger, awe, and sometimes self-fear and self-disgust directed toward the female role, female sexuality, female physiology, and procreation; and it frequently uses a narrative form which questions the validity of the narration itself. It reflects the patriarchal paradigm that women are motherless yet fathered and that women are defective because they are not males. (1983a: 15)

In her feminine approach Morrison is not only indebted to Female Gothic romances, but also to the ghost tale written by women, in which “hauntings are tied to domestic gender politics” (Carpenter and Kolmar: 3).¹² Lynette Carpenter and Wendy Kolmar argue that “Among the American women writing novels that one might classify

¹⁰ Original text quoted: Bette B. Roberts (1980). *The Gothic Romance: Its Appeal to Women Writers and Readers in Late Eighteenth-Century England*. New York: Arno.

¹¹ Original text quoted: Patricia M. Spacks (1989). “Female Orders of Narrative: *Clarissa* and *The Italian*”. *Rhetorics of Order/Ordering Rhetorics in English Neoclassical Literature*. Eds. J. Douglas Canfield and J. Paul Hunter. Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press: 158-171.

¹² When I say ghost story, I also refer to novels about the supernatural, which, in the nineteenth century, was one of the genres dominated by women writers, with a female readership and focused on females’ concerns.

as ghost stories, many now are women of color: Toni Morrison [. . .]” (10). From the Female Gothic, these women writers “inherited a series of themes and images—of women victimized by violence in their own homes, of women dispossessed of homes and property, of the necessity of understanding female history, and of the bonds between women, living and dead, which help to ensure women’s survival” (Carpenter and Kolmar: 10). These female writers resorted to ghost stories to criticize male culture, values and tradition, providing women with “a literary form capable of dealing with fear and repression, terror and entrapment, the supernatural tale made it possible for women writers to express their nightmares as well as their dreams” (Bendixen 1985: 4). It is not surprising that women writers of ghost stories were interested in a genre in which the patriarch was the main threat and the haunted house was so central, since the home had always been the woman’s sphere. The Gothic provided them with a context which Kate F. Ellis calls the “failed home” and a precedent to speak of themes that were difficult to deal with openly: “The conventions of the Gothic novel, then, speak of what in the polite world of middle-class culture cannot be spoken” (qtd. in Carpenter and Kolmar: 10).¹³ The ghost story enabled female writers to evade the marriage plots, which dominated the earlier Radcliffean Female Gothic, and thus they could express more radically a critique of patriarchy than the Gothic novel had done before.

3. Black-American Gothic

This section addresses, in general terms, how American literature is haunted by the black presence and how African Americans, specifically black women writers, have appropriated the Gothic mode to express “otherness”. Unquestionably, American Gothic is haunted by race. According to Mary V. Dearborn, to deal with ethnicity in literature allows us to see in a new light how “otherness” is a distinctive feature of American culture and literature (4). In fact, many critics, such as Werner Sollors, have emphasized their ethnic quality: “Ethnicity as a tenuous ancestry and the interplay of different ancestries may be the most crucial aspect of the American national character” (qtd. in Dearborn: 4).¹⁴ The black figure occupies the extreme position of “otherness” regarding the dominant white Western American society. Louis Gross thinks that “While women and sexual minority representation in the Gothic narrative is dependent on notions of differentiation, there are still tangential links to the ‘Us’ which constitutes the defining culture. Women are considered ‘different,’ as are gay men because they are

¹³ Original text quoted: Kate F. Ellis (1989). *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology*. Urbana: Illinois UP.

¹⁴ Original text quoted: Werner Sollors (1980). “Literature and Ethnicity”. *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*. Ed. Stephan Thernstrom. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

defined as woman-like, but the black in American culture, by reason of his race, is wholly Other” (74).

Morrison argues that the gothic romance and Melville’s “power of darkness” cannot be separated. I argue, as Morrison does, that “the haunting black presence [. . .] hovers in the absences and silences of America’s greatest romances—remembers American literature as the site of racial hauntings and the locus of a racial history (qtd. in Goddu: 156). The American Gothic tradition has not stopped confronting the problem of the Negro in great authors like Poe, Melville, Twain or Faulkner. American Gothic discovers the black man as a literary subject in Poe’s fiction (Fiedler: 397). In *The Power of Blackness*, Harry Levin argues that even though for “Hawthorne, black and white more or less conventionally symbolize theological and moral values, for Poe, whose symbols claim to be actualities, they are charged with basic associations which are psychological and social” (qtd. in Goddu: 75).¹⁵ Gothic novels symbolically use the opposition between black and white, even though writers have frequently denied their racial referents. Robert Hemenway argues that the gothic’s “color imagery [. . .] coincide[s] with the mythology of race prevalent in Western culture [. . .] racial fantasies [. . .] reverberate in the Gothic effect” [. . .] and its oppositional symbolism carries “a sociological burden even when there is no conscious intention of racial statement” (qtd. in Goddu: 74).¹⁶

In Poe’s works, American Gothic and race become inextricably identified with the South. Goddu states that Poe “is made to take up the burden of race” (76) and that he might reveal a more “authentic” American literature (77). She argues that when reading “Poe’s gothic tales as the projections of his own peculiar psychology instead of as a comment on his culture, critics easily contain his disturbing vision of American society” (78). Thus “the American literary tradition neutralizes the gothic’s threat to national identity” (Goddu: 76). In fact, I argue along with Morrison that the African presence and its fantasies inform America literature and, more specifically, gothic fiction. She says about the black presences in Hawthorne’s fiction: “They’re in Hawthorne’s preoccupation with blackness. They’re in all the dark symbols. They’re in the haunting one senses in his fiction. What’s he haunted by? What is the guilt? What is the real sin that is really worrying Hawthorne all his life? They’re there” (Moyers: 264).

On the other hand, there is a strong connection between the African-American experience—the horror and consequent haunting of the legacy of slavery—, and the gothic. Black writers have found in the Gothic genre a perfect form to express the

¹⁵ Original text quoted: Harry Levin (1958). *The Power of Blackness: Hawthorne, Poe, Melville*. New York: Knopf.

¹⁶ Original text quoted: Robert Hemenway (1974). “Gothic Sociology: Charles Chestnutt and the Gothic Mode”. *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 7: 101-119.

haunting of race and have helped to rewrite it: “While the more culturally ‘safe’ genres could restrict authentic minority discourse, a view of American society that confronts life as based on fear and repression finds room for elaboration in the Gothic genre. The sense of imprisonment and hopelessness the traditional Gothics of Radcliffe and Maturin contain transfers powerfully to the representation of black life in a racist culture” (Louis Gross: 65).¹⁷ Jan Stryz, citing Jane Campbell’s observation, argues that since the nineteenth century black authors have found the literary domain of the Romance useful in “transform[ing] history and culture as whites have presented them into history and culture as blacks envision them [. . .]. Romance elements can redefine space and time and our most basic perceptions, hence serving to articulate [. . .] an African American aesthetic (140).¹⁸

In fact, I claim along with Teresa Goddu that some features of the Gothic: the “focus on the terror of possession, the iconography of imprisonment, the fear of retribution, and the weight of sin provided a useful vocabulary and register of images by which to represent the scene of America’s greatest guilt: slavery” (133). In *The Heroic Ideal in American Literature*, Theodore Gross claims that, during the antebellum American period, slavery was represented as a gothic narrative: “Negro writing has instinctively adopted the Gothic tradition of American literature and given its more supernatural and surrealistic characteristics a realistic basis, founded on actual lives often lived in the Gothic manner, that is indeed terrifying: the nightmare world of Poe or Hawthorne has become the Monday morning of the Negro author [. . .]” (qtd. in Goddu: 133).¹⁹ Slavery is very easily transferred into gothic terms, since its historical facts already embody cruelty and horror: “African American Gothic [. . .] should be perceived [. . .] not only as already established and deeply rooted by the twentieth century but as deliberately articulating profound social horrors” (Hogle: 218).

There are clear connections between slave narratives and the Gothic. Jerrold E. Hogle argues that

Kari J. Winter has discovered (*Subjects*) some remarkable parallels between, on the one hand, the parts of Radcliffean Gothic that point to the archaic confinement of women and, on the other, nineteenth-century American slave narratives by freed black women, best epitomized by Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* [. . .] not to mention the most Gothically charged moments in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (218).

¹⁷ David Dudley thinks that the “Gothic [. . .] is well suited to such discourse [based on fear and repression] and, [. . .] has been used by black writers from the time of slave narrators such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs” (296).

¹⁸ For more information, see: Jane Campbell and M. Stone (1955-68). *Primitive Mythology*, vol. 1 of *The Masks of God*. New York: Viking.

¹⁹ Original text quoted: Theodore L. Gross (1971). *The Heroic Ideal in American Literature*. New York: The Free Press.

The slave narrative, or modern revisions of the genre such as *Beloved*, records “a horror beyond the pale of most gothic romances, the slave narrative could be read within the gothic’s fictional conventions” (Goddu: 136).

As we can see in *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*, gender and ethnicity provide a different approach to American Gothic: “African American writing, much of it by women [. . .] parallels and complicates the white American Gothic” (Hogle: 217). As Dearborn says,

If the “other” is always and inevitably a part of culture, it is useful and necessary to listen to what she has to say about that culture. And those ethnic women who followed Pocahontas have insistently reminded us of her presence—and tried to fill her silence with words. (193)

4. The Gothic Strain in Hawthorne and Morrison

In this section I briefly discuss how Hawthorne and Morrison appropriate the gothic genre in their fiction. As far as Hawthorne is concerned, he himself claims his Gothicism when he identifies *The House of the Seven Gables* as a Romance. As Nina Baym has pointed out, before 1860 the term romance in America connoted characteristics now associated with the gothic: romance designated “pre-modern types of novels [. . .] which depended on supernatural and marvelous events to resolve their plots and to achieve their effects (qtd. in Goddu: 6). In fact, although some nineteenth-century reviewers used the terms romance and novel interchangeably, Hawthorne establishes a distinction between the two kinds of fiction in his preface to *Seven Gables*:

When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man’s experience. The former—while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer’s own choosing of creation. If he think fit, also, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture. He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and especially to mingle the Marvellous rather as slight, delicate, and evanescent flavour, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the public. He can hardly be said, however, to commit a literary crime, even if he disregard this caution. (1)

Hawthorne conceives of romance “as the place of mind where boundaries are blurred and the capacity to resee the mind—and by that reseeing to revise it—is recovered” (Millington 1992: 54). Donald Ringe point out that he makes the uncertain light of his settings, the marvelous, not a source of delusion which the power of reason might dispel, “but the condition under which the mind might perceive a world neither

wholly fanciful nor wholly real" (1982: 156). His stories try to find a domain where imagination can be possible and the haunted and guilty mind can have its best expression.

Hawthorne claims a specific literary domain that he tries to explain in his different long romances. In "The Custom-House" he formulates the metaphor of "a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the 'other'. Ghosts might enter here, without affrighting us" (28).²⁰ In fact, in *The Marble Faun*, he chooses a European gothic setting:

Italy, as the site of his Romance, was chiefly valuable to him as affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon, as they are, and must needs be, in America. No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a Romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a common-place prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land (3).

According to Terence Martin, the nature of this neutral ground is related to a disengaged experience "exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it" (74). Richard Millington writes, "To enter romance's neutral territory, [. . .] is to effect a revolution of mind; one emerges with the capacity to overturn customary and conventional ways of seeing" (1992: 53). Terence Martin summarizes some of the most important characteristics of this new narrative form that Hawthorne chooses for his fiction:

a sense of the romance as an enabling theory of narrative equipped with memorable and facilitating metaphors [. . .] a mode of fiction that presents extravagance and courts the "disengaged" [. . .] a fiction of intensity that feeds on caricature and seeks to confront the absolute. The consequence is a diverse set of narratives, gothic, magical, and psychological (frequently tending toward the allegorical and symbolic) unparalleled as expressive vehicles of revenge. (74)²¹

Hawthorne loves the Gothic twilight effect because it deepens and enriches the shadows. According to Donald Ringe, "the dark view expressed through Gothic imagery is only part of Hawthorne's vision of reality, and any conclusion one may draw about his beliefs must include the light as well as the dark" (1982: 175).

Even though Hawthorne keeps the most typical Gothic devices used by Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis, Maturin, and Godwin (haunted houses, mysterious portraits,

²⁰ Similar concern is expressed in *The Blithedale Romance*, "to establish a theatre, a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the creatures of [the author's] brain may lay their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives" (1-2).

²¹ Marjorie Elder claims that Transcendentalists influenced Hawthorne in his idea of romance (72). Hawthorne mingles actuality and imagination just as Emerson's work of art partakes of both the actual world and truth.

enchanted mirrors, etc), he transforms them into symbols. He succeeds in marking the traditional gothic mode with a distinctive stamp. Paul Kaufman writes:

[. . .] into traditional form he infused profound brooding and achieved the distinction of making romance profoundly subjective. Hitherto this genre both in prose and verse had been in the psychological phrase of our day of extrovert nature. He created an original introvert form true to his own character, thus introducing the recent romantic preoccupation with individual feeling and imagination into the traditional type (qtd. in Lundblad: 31).²²

Hawthorne employs traditional gothic to create a psychological and symbolic dimension, researching the inner world of his characters and the dramatic conflicts of their consciences. Besides, Hawthorne resorts to the Gothic genre to depict, in his view, the sense of darkness about American's past as a national experience.

On the other hand, it is my impression that critics are very reluctant to explore Morrison's novels from a Gothic perspective: "critics tend to balk at analyzing the gothic elements in *Beloved*" (Booher: 117). I think white critics are reticent about delving into Morrison's work from a specifically white tradition like the Gothic for different reasons. First, as the white literature instructor Toni A. H. McNaron points out, "New Criticism by any more current name does particular disservice to representational fictions that portray cultures different from our own" (35). Second, white critics seem to feel some resistance and suspicion of a "theory which—as a result of its Euro-American provenance—is deemed to be inevitably complicit with the very structures and histories of racial domination that black writing seeks to interrogate and dismantle" (Plasa: 9).²³ Finally, the black critic Barbara Christian believes that Morrison's work must be understood as an expression of African American forms and traditions, and is concerned that "the power of this novel as a specifically African American text is being blunted" as it is being appropriated by white academic discourse (qtd. in Kimberly Davis: online).²⁴ Morrison herself insists upon her identity as an African-American woman writer whose project is "to create 'irrevocably, indisputably Black' literature" (Woidat: 539): claiming her Black language and style (Jones and Vinson: 179-180); the

²² Original text quoted: Paul Kaufman (1928). "The Romantic Movement". *Reinterpretation of American Literature*. Ed. Norman Foerster. New York.

²³ Carl Plasa writes about the critical debate generated around the politics of reading, in relation not only to Morrison's work but also to that of other "non-white" writers, which is directly addressed by Catherine Belsey. Belsey (1994). *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell. Plasa claims that "Belsey's sense of 'inhibition' as a white feminist reader of an African-American feminist text is well-grounded, both historically and politically, and can only be redoubled for those critics of *Beloved* who—like this editor—are not only white but also male. Yet it is questionable whether reading and writing on *Beloved* from a white perspective, whether as male or female, is likely, in 1994, to 'pre-empt' a black critical response to *Beloved*" (7).

²⁴ Original text quoted: Barbara Christian (1993). "Fixing Methodologies: *Beloved*". *Cultural Critique* 24 (Spring): 5-15.

debt of her novels to Black music, jazz (McKay 1994: 155)²⁵. Besides, she dislikes the association of her novels with the Gothic or Western literary traditions, since it seems that she wants the blackness of her novels to be recognized by her readers and critics.

Morrison's revisioning of the gothic appropriates and subverts gothic canonical writings and places them in the context of black culture: "Morrison's texts do not 'clash with' the canonical texts which they recall, but do contend with the nature of their authority in recalling them, while at the same time asserting the relationship of black literature to the other 'Literature'" (Stryz: 156).²⁶ Even though I agree with Sonser that Morrison departs from the sentimental gothic, written by female writers such as Ann Radcliffe and the Brontë sisters (with the exception of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*), I do not completely support her argument that Morrison subverts the heritage generated *principally* by male writers, such as Brockden Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Faulkner (6; emphasis added). In my opinion, Morrison is undoubtedly influenced by gothic male writers; however, she is also decidedly indebted to the Female Gothic and its inheritor, the ghost tale by women writers. Morrison questions the traditional gothic romance and offers her own genuine interpretation of the Gothic: her "revisioning of the texts of Hawthorne and Faulkner [. . .] is playing a far more dangerous game, one that unsettles a national literature by unashamedly emphasizing its gothic, rather than its more acceptable 'romantic,' nature" (Sonser: 6).

5. *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* as Gothic Romances

The Gothicism of *Seven Gables* has been generally accepted. Hawthorne's novel fulfills many of the requirements to be considered a Gothic romance.

The use of the elements of mystery, suspense, and horror in *The House of Seven Gables* creates the atmosphere common to a Gothic novel. The use of the supernatural and other mysterious events, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, also compose the elements present in Gothic literature. By presenting the elements through the setting and plot, *The House of the Seven Gables* contains all requirements of a Gothic novel, claiming its spot in dark halls of the Gothic literature genre. (Niles: online)

In fact, according to Buitenhuis, in *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne parodies Gothic conventions: "Within the realistic framework of the novel, it [the Gothic romance tradition] becomes a kind of comic element: instead of the traditional door, it is the machinery that creaks; the ghost turns out to be human; the magical powers are renounced; the aristocratic foundation of the romance is made to look absurd and

²⁵ Gail Caldwell says that Morrison insists on being called a black woman novelist: "As a black and a woman, I have had access to a range of emotions and perception that were unavailable to people who were neither" (243)

²⁶ Caroline M. Woidat thinks that "Morrison [. . .] revises both black and white nineteenth-century texts, offering a counter-narrative to women's slave narratives and to the works of the 'schoolmasters' of young America" (530).

outmoded; and a light-filled democratic realism takes over from a dusky, pestiferous past” (1991: 45).

On the other hand, as with the rest of Morrison’s fiction, many critics have insisted that *Beloved* should be analyzed within the African-American tradition. For Barbara Christian the figuration of Beloved as a spirit that presents itself as a body removes Morrison’s novel from the contexts of Euro-American Gothic and “classical folklore” and, consequently, *Beloved* should be interpreted considering African belief systems (qtd. in Plasa: 21).²⁷ However, as Mischelle Booher says: “the Gothic has, from its Walpolean inception, been an unconventional prose narrative, *included fleshly hauntings*, and participated in a cultural work” (121; emphasis added). There are different ghostly apparitions in Walpole’s *Otranto*: the giant black-plumed knight’s helmet; at the end of the story a ghostly figure (the helmet’s owner); there is also another ghost with “fleshless jaws and empty socket of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit’s cowl”. Besides, as in *Otranto* and many other Gothic novels, ghostly presences are never rationally explained.

Beloved exploits many of the conventions that mark the Gothic tradition. Like Hawthorne’s *Seven Gables*, it is full of gothic devices: a spooky house; a Gothic maiden, Sethe, who flees from the tyrannical villain, Schoolteacher; supernatural events, especially ghosts. Thomas R. Edwards argues: “Kate Ferguson Ellis’s description of the characteristics of Gothic novels—with their ‘houses in which people are locked in and locked out’ and concern with a ‘violence done to familial bonds that is frequently directed against women’—is extremely germane to *Beloved*” (21). Morrison’s novel not only takes the simple gothic conventions, but shares the most pervading themes of the mode: the burden of the past on the present; guilt as a result of a terrible family crime, expressed through the return of the repressed; the vulnerable isolated human soul; the dysfunctional family and the severed bonds of family members; anxiety over motherhood; the importance of the mother-daughter relationship; the gothic quest for the self; madness and violence at the core of the black experience:

Beloved is filled with the trappings of the Gothic, including an angry, poltergeist-like ghost who shatters mirrors, overturns cook pots, and moves furniture, as well as the later physical manifestation of that same spirit in the girl Beloved, characterized by critics as both succubus and vampire. The novel, however, qualifies as Gothic even more for its themes than for its haunted house and grisly secrets from a past too terrible to remember or discuss. (Dudley: 295)

In my opinion, *Beloved* is Morrison’s full-fledged Gothic novel. As Booher states: “Ultimately, rather than being a novel with Gothic elements, Morrison creates a

²⁷ For more information, see: Barbara Christian (1993). “Fixing Methodologies: *Beloved*”. *Cultural Critique* 24 (Spring): 5-15.

twentieth-century Gothic vision which continues a tradition that has always addressed issues about outsiders and subverted cultural mores" (117).²⁸

Beloved as a Gothic romance is, as Horace Walpole puts it in his preface to *Otranto*, a blending of "imagination and improbability" (9); or in Hawthorne's definition, the neutral realm where the actual and the imaginary can meet without conflict:²⁹ the appropriate domain for ghosts and their haunting. In *Beloved* Morrison creates a reincarnated ghost, but Sethe seems as disembodied as her eerie daughter, cursed to live among her community fellows, alone as if she inhabited another sphere. Her evil deed invests her with the ghostly character of doom. However, not only the imaginary, but also the actual finds its place in *Beloved*. Venetria K. Patton asserts that Morrison attempts to imagine and re-present the real, the interior life of the blacks (122), their experience in the aftermath of slavery. In *Beloved* the real adopts the form of a ghost story.

Despite the unmistakable Gothic character of *Beloved*, one should recognize, as Morrison herself states, the importance that African cosmology has in it:

I [. . .] blend the acceptance of the supernatural and a profound rootedness in the real world at the same time with neither taking precedence over the other. It is indicative of the cosmology, the way in which Black people looked at the world. We are very practical people, very down-to-earth, even shrewd people. But within that practicality we also accepted what I suppose could be called superstition and magic, which is another way of knowing things [. . .]. And some of those things were "discredited knowledge" that Black people had; discredited only because Black people were discredited [. . .]. That kind of knowledge has a very strong place in my work. (qtd. in Plasa: 57)³⁰

Unlike Hawthorne's *Seven Gables*, Morrison's *Beloved*, like the rest of her works of fiction, is a culturally hybrid text, which, as Kari J. Winter claims, spectacularly combines white and black literary traditions—Euro-American female Gothic, on the one hand, and African American slave narratives, on the other—but also "reconstructs and illuminates" both at the same time (qtd. in Plasa: 9).³¹ Laurel agrees with her, "*Beloved* literally draws upon the slave narrative, as well as the gothic novel, in its retelling of the actions of an escaped slave who attempted to murder her children rather than be returned with them to slavery" (online). Liliane Weissberg states that:

Introducing *Beloved* in *Beloved*, Morrison is, indeed, not only restoring Black history via Black folklore, but also reworking the white tradition of Gothic literature in writing the history of its ghosts [. . .]. Morrison's reframing is, therefore, a political

²⁸ Other critics assert *Beloved's* Gothicism: David Dudley points out that Morrison "uses the [Gothic] genre superbly in *Beloved*" (298); Clifton Spargo also claims that "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, through its turn to Gothic tradition, recovers an untold history of suffering" (online).

²⁹ "The Custom-House" (28).

³⁰ Original text quoted: Toni Morrison (1984). "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation". *Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation*. Ed. Mari Evans. Garden City, NY: Doubleday: 339-345.

³¹ For more information, see: Kari J. Winter (1992). *Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change: Women and Power in Gothic Novels and Slave Narratives, 1790-1865*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

one, and it has consequences not only for the contemporary Black novel, but also for a new evaluation of the British literature of the past (115-116).

As in the rest of her novels, in *Beloved* the idea of double consciousness is essential.³² “Both elements—white and black, Western and African—combine to create a complete whole, *sine qua non* it is impossible to understand African American literature” (Gallego 2003: 14). *Beloved* is the result of the crossbred influences that were part of Morrison’s life and artistic background. Sonser argues, quoting Spillers, that “*Beloved* reveals the intertextual practices which offer both ‘a matrix of literary discontinuities’ and an alternative literary legacy” (16).

Beloved draws on the traditional gothic, but effects “a rewriting or revisioning of the American canon through inscriptions of race [which] involves a radical redefinition of the subjectivity and experience of ‘blackness [. . .]’” (Sonser: 16). Morrison focuses on the Africanist presence that haunted canonical American literature. In *Beloved* Morrison revisits the American literary canon in gothic terms to express the nightmares of its racial history. Slavery and racial oppression must be acknowledged, the unspeakable must be spoken: “She [Morrison] argues for a rereading of texts by white authors to discover the ‘unspeakable things unspoken’, ‘a search, in other words, for the ghost in the machine’ [. . .]. Afro-American literature responds to the white tradition in and by subversion; by a renaming and retelling of the story” (qtd. in Weissberg: 116). In *Beloved* Morrison rewrites the gothic genre in racial terms:

The genre offers the idiom to express what has remained inexpressible through a ghost story while simultaneously dismantling hegemonic narrative processes. The rhetorical and symbolic processes integral to the gothic, the disregard for “natural” and physical laws, serve both as a challenge to the realist aesthetic and as an alternate interpretive space for the interrogation of racial identity. (Sonser: 18)

6. Brief Description of the Chapters’ Contents. Methodology

In this study I will bring forward some of the most important aspects of the Gothic that both romances share, showing a clear common ground between these two masterpieces of American literature. First of all, chapter 1 examines one of the most complex themes of these two gothic romances, the past and its haunting. As Wesley Britton argues, “the thematic exploration of the past and its sins shared by both novels are also accompanied by similar imagery, characterization, relationships, and settings” (11). Whereas in *Seven Gables* the theme of the past is linked with the decline of

³² Iyunolu Osagie believes that Morrison lays claim to the double status of the African American as a split subject: “Morrison constructs the ‘interiority’ of a slave experience in *Beloved* by straddling the ontological borders of race. She utilizes her double heritage (African American), her ‘double consciousness,’ as W. E. B. Du Bois puts it [. . .] to rewrite the history of slavery (online). Original text quoted: W. E. B. Du Bois (1990). *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Vintage Books.

“aristocracy”³³ (colonialism) and growth of democracy; in *Beloved* it is closely associated with the theme of race. Both stories are haunted by the ghosts of the colonial past. This chapter also addresses the connections between colonialism and the black presence in *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*. While Africanism is subtly woven into *Seven Gables*, *Beloved* focuses on the historical effect that slavery had on African-Americans. The fourth section of chapter 1 discusses the ethical repercussions of human scientific endeavors for the soul and the anxieties about Western rational discourse. Both Hawthorne and Morrison depict the danger of the Faustian scientist’s pursuits. In *Seven Gables*, nineteenth-century science and technology appear as a counterforce of the Gothic burden of the past and the American pastoral myth. *Beloved*, however, attacks the racist use of science in a rural, pre-industrial society, conveying in a Gothicized picture the complicity between slavery and science.

Chapter 2 deals with magic and the supernatural in *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*. Both Hawthorne and Morrison move between a realistic and fantastic world. They explore the supernatural and the connection between physical and spiritual life, fabricating a psychological and symbolical dimension through which they explore the Gothic self. However, Hawthorne’s dealings with magic can be framed in the superstitious Puritan beliefs of New England, whereas Morrison’s ghosts should be inscribed in the black tradition. Continuing with the supernatural, the second part of this chapter delves into the main features of the haunted house, which has been considered a defining element of the Gothic tradition. Both novels have as their primary settings the home where the characters live, the ruined Pyncheon mansion and the spiteful house at 124 Bluestone Road. The Gothic haunted house is a complex symbol and an organizing principle which Hawthorne and Morrison develop in three main aspects: psychologically, socially and historically. It becomes the unreal world where Gothic nightmares come true.

Chapter 3 delves into two important aspects, the patriarchal family as the source of the individual’s gothic nightmares in Western society and as a basic structure of the Gothic narrative and the individual’s identity, the fragmented Gothic self, its extreme feelings and its altered states of conscious. *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* deal with Gothic stereotypes, such as the Gothic villain, characterized as an artist-scientist figure who engages in a Faustian contract. They also examine the role of the Gothic heroine, both the Fair and the Dark Lady, and gender relations in their gothic romances. There

³³ In this essay I will frequently use, as many of Hawthorne’s critics or Hawthorne himself do, the term “aristocratic” or “aristocracy” to refer to the colonial elements that people of New England inherited from the Old World or its privileged social class, even though there was not any real aristocracy in the New World.

are other important gothic characterizations, such as the male friend and the old spinster.

Chapter 4 focuses on how sin and guilt are the shadows that darken the present life of the characters, symbolizing the tragedy of the sinful human soul. Both Hawthorne and Morrison explore how they are the main motivations of the characters' actions. In *Seven Gables*, as Britton says, "Slavery to the past was Hawthorne's great theme, particularly the shackling influence of hereditary sin and guilt" (7). The wicked past of the Pyncheon family haunts them and rests upon their present lives as a result of their ancestors' sins. *Beloved* draws clearly from Hawthorne's tradition of delving into the guilty mind and the all-powerful evil, which pervades his romances. Evil is at the core of the slave system and its aftermath. The second section of this chapter explores the relationship of the sinner with the community. Hawthorne and Morrison portray a Gothic world in which a guilty and ostracized individual engages in a search for self-definition. In both romances detachment from society is the result of a crime, while the continuity of the state of aloofness is due to the individual's proud attitude. Its final consequence is punishment. However, the only way to have a future and fight the grasp of the past is inside the community, "both Hawthorne's and Morrison's characters [. . .] must ultimately be reclaimed by the community in order to be exorcised of their respective hauntings" (Britton: 19). Finally, the last section of this chapter shows some of the regenerative elements these two romances address, nature and solidarity among community members. *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* are tales of expiation and retribution. After man's fall from paradise, the guilty individual must fulfill his/her retribution to gain redemption.

My critical method throughout this dissertation is quite eclectic, since I have drawn ideas from very different sources and have taken into account many different approaches: postmodern, psychoanalytical, historical, postcolonial, feminist.³⁴ Consequently, this particular reading of the American Gothic is informed by a great variety of critical perspectives. Some of them have been traditionally used to deal with Gothic fiction and are very useful to explain its concerns, such as the psychoanalytical

³⁴ I would like to include briefly some of the main contributions to this intertextual revision: general aspects of the Gothic: Anne Williams, Louis Gross, Leslie Fiedler, David Punter, Valdine Clemens, etc.; ethnicity: Mary V. Dearborn, Kristin Herzog, etc.; Female Gothic and Ghost Stories: Juliann Fleenor, Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar, etc.; postcolonialism: Gurleen Grewal, Linda Koolish, etc.; postmodern blackness: Kimberly C. Davis, Theo D'haen, etc.; *Beloved* as a Gothic novel: Anna Sonser, David Dudley, Mischelle Booher, etc.. There are other more specific topics, such as: trauma, Clifton Spargo; history and racial aspects: Theresa Goddu, etc. I would finally mention those critics who have a special importance: Peter Buitenhuis, since his insightful analysis of *Seven Gables* influences many of the ideas of this thesis; Ann Sonser, who interprets Morrison's romance in the light of one of Hawthorne's novels, *The Scarlet Letter* from a Gothic perspective; Wesley Briton, who also compares *Beloved* and *Seven Gables*, and whose ideas have been very helpful in some aspects of my thesis.

and historical analyses. Psychoanalysis has often provided fruitful dissections of Gothic texts, since as many critics have pointed out, there is a particular affinity between them. As William Patrick Day argues, “the two are cousins, responses to the problems of selfhood and identity, sexuality and pleasure, fear and anxiety, as they manifest themselves in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (qtd. in Kilgour: 41). Both Hawthorne and Morrison deal with the foundations of the individual’s identity, with the unconscious. They are concerned with the fragmented and double nature of the self and with extreme states of mind. The idea of repression, which is at the core of their novels, leads straight to the concerns of the classical Freudian psychoanalysis, with which the Gothic has always had a especial connection. However, the Gothic is not only concerned with psychological facts, but also with historical ones. Criticism has pointed out that the Gothic fiction is inextricably linked to an evident Gothic concern, the recapture of history, which is at the center of both Hawthorne and Morrison’s novels.

On the other hand, feminist, postcolonial and postmodern views are essential to fully understand Morrison’s Gothicism. Her interest in the black woman’s self and her history makes it necessary to adopt a feminist approach to analyze some basic aspects of her novel. Besides, as Gurleen Grewal asserts, Toni Morrison’s novels respond to imperatives of cultural critique, reclamation and redefinition, which can be broadly termed as postcolonial (1998: 6). Helen Tiffin defines the “‘dis/mantling, de/mystification and unmasking of European authority’ along with the endeavour to ‘define a denied or outlawed self’ as one of the main decolonizing endeavors of postcolonial literatures” (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 6-7).³⁵ Thus, “In the tradition of postcolonial writing [. . .] Morrison rewrites the nation from a perspective committed to what has been excised. Her novels mean to revise dominant historiography, reconsidering the scene of colonial violation from the inside, from subaltern perspectives hitherto ignored” (Grewal 1998: 8). Morrison’s fiction reflects the postcolonial subject’s position between two cultural systems. According to Stephen Slemon, in her novels

a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialect with the ‘other,’ a situation

³⁵ Original text quoted: Helen Tiffin (1988). “Post-Colonialism, Post-Modernism and the Rehabilitation of Post-Colonial History.” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, XXII: 169-181.

which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rendering them with gaps, absences, and silences [. . .]. (qtd. in Faris: 102-103)³⁶

Morrison's novels have "a decolonizing role, one in which new voices have emerged, an alternative to European realism" (Faris: 103).

Postmodern elements also define Morrison's appropriation of the gothic.³⁷ As Sonser says, "their texts [Toni Morrison's, Anne Rice's, and Joyce Carol Oates'] are an amalgam of both northern and southern sensibilities, allusive in a way that is eclectic and parodic, that is, postmodern" (7-8). In fact, as Theo D'haen has written, the gothic is characterized by a common set of techniques and conventions that could be easily applied to a description of the postmodern: "self-reflexivity, metafiction, eclecticism, multiplicity, intertextuality, parody, pastiche, dissolution of character and narrative, erasure of boundaries, and the destabilization of the reader" (qtd. in Sonser: 8). He maintains that in the original gothic novel the dominant cultural order is ultimately reconfirmed because the supernatural is explained away whereas "the postmodern gothic does not allow for such rational resolution" (qtd. in Sonser: 8). A postmodern reading of Morrison should consider the "unreal" as a meaningful category" (D'haen: 289), a claim both to representation and to meaning(s)" (Sonser: 8). Finally, D'haen claims the connection between fantastic postmodernism and "the post-colonial", towards which that is heavily slanted, and thus it is related to marginal groups, which are marginalized by bourgeois capitalism, its dominant cultural order and its mainstream literature (290).

Besides, Morrison subverts the genre's discursive conventions using a fragmented postmodern narration with multiple points of views and a highly ambiguous closure, which affects the reader's gaze at the literary text. Critics have emphasized Morrison's aesthetic approach to literature. Rafael Pérez-Torres claims that *Beloved* is engaged with post-modernism "through the aesthetic play of the novel", its concern with linguistic expression, the production and meaning of language (1999: 180). He also states that "the novel thus evokes numerous forms of narrative as it melds together ancient and contemporary literary forms in a critical postmodern pastiche [. . .].]" (1998: 136). Chen Ping states that Morrison moves between two dominant

³⁶ Original text quoted: Stephen Slemon (1995). "'Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse". *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Eds. Louis Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris. Durham, NC: Duke University Press: 407-426.

³⁷ In "Postmodern Blackness" Kimberly C. Davis argues that "we should be wary of concluding that postmodernism is a 'white' phenomenon". She thinks that any claim that black people's lives have nothing to do with postmodernism ignores the complex historical interrelationship of black protest and liberal academic discourse. She continues, as Andreas Hysen, Kobena Mercer, and Linda Hutcheon had noted, racial liberation movements of the 1960s and 70s (as well as the feminist movement) contributed to the loosening of cultural boundaries that is seen as characteristically postmodern. Besides, white liberal theorists of postmodernism and African American critics often share an oppositional relationship to the bourgeois state or to the universalizing "objectivity" of some humanist intellectuals (online).

discourses: on one hand, she writes in a postmodern context; on the other hand, she keeps a social and political commitment to black people's culture: "The two discourses are somewhat opposing and interacting. One fashions her fiction as a kind of 'postmodern pastiche', the other draws her closer to history, society and the folk culture of the black people" (396).³⁸ Finally, Kimberly C. Davis agrees with Ping on Morrison's hybrid vision of history and time. She asserts, in "Postmodern Blackness", that *Beloved* can be seen as "a postmodernist questioning of metanarratives about history and time" (online). Despite the fact that I think *Beloved* has definite postmodern elements, I would like to mention that Morrison has not accepted that idea, defining herself in interviews as an anti-postmodernist author of black-topic texts, written to pass on agency to her black readers (qtd. in Kimberly Davis: online).

In this comparative study I have organized my ideas according to what Linden Peach describes as a syncretist model of dealing with African-American literature. He distinguishes between the "separatist" and "syncretist" models of addressing African-American texts (qtd. in Plasa: 8).³⁹ In the separatist model, African-American literature is to be addressed within an African cultural context. On the other hand, proponents of the syncretist model assert that African-American writing is more fruitfully analyzed as a culturally hybrid form (as I have previously explained), in which African and African-American traditions are mixed. As Jacquelin de Weever argues, "this new blend is just as firmly American as the novels previously defined as American because this flower can bloom nowhere else" (qtd. in Plasa: 9).⁴⁰ This model is consistent with the double consciousness which characterizes both Morrison, as a writer, and her fiction. According to Mar Gallego, Morrison "partakes of two cultural legacies: an intellectual inheritance stemming from the dominant Western ideology and the African heritage transmitted through the African American community" (2003: 14).⁴¹ Even though her inheritance is black, her academic training was in British and American literature and she wrote a master's thesis on Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner. Morrison participates in the cultural inheritance of the great American writers and has

³⁸ Morrison's commitment to black culture and her postmodernist approach may also be explained by D'haen's argumentation of postmodern Gothic. According to D'haen, fantastic postmodernism becomes a parallel tradition to aesthetic postmodernism, the mainstream literature, which has come to stand for the discourse of the dominant cultural order, whereas "fantastic postmodernism can speak of what its postmodern counterparts must needs be silent: of what it means to be the dominant culture's, or late capitalism's 'other'" (294).

³⁹ For more information, see: Linden Peach (1995). *Toni Morrison*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan: 11-12.

⁴⁰ Original text quoted: Jacquelin de Weever (1991). *Mythmaking and Metaphor in Black Women's Fiction*. New York: St. Martin's Press. Several critics have considered *Beloved* in these terms: Caroline M. Woidat and Charles Lewis; Richard C. Moreland and Sylvia Mayer.

⁴¹ For more information, about the idea of double consciousness, see: Gallego (2003: 14).

assimilated its Gothic strain.⁴² Consequently, as Wesley Britton points out, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Morrison “actually share a common cultural community less divided than the ghosts of old literary theories too often suggest” (22).

To conclude with, I would like to say that Morrison’s revisioning of the American Gothic tradition, which great writers such as Hawthorne appropriated to depict the ghosts of the New World, derives from her feminine, black and twentieth-century gaze at the genre. Morrison engages in rewriting, expanding and subverting American myths and traditions. She has become a new voice of the Gothic.

⁴² Jan Stryz compares Toni Morrison with Hurston, she says that Morrison never had Hurston’s freedom from the literary text as a result of Morrison’s formal education, which concentrated on canonical texts (140).

CHAPTER 1

Haunted by the Past: Gothic Colonial and Racial Reflections

1.1. The Haunting of the Past

The literature of horror is a form of historical romance which started before Walter Scott invented the historical novel. Gothic fiction deals with the past, which becomes, for the first time, an essential subject of fiction. As Louis S. Gross puts it: “Gothic narrative has always looked backward; the past is its beginning and end” (23).⁴³ Gothicists try to reproduce a sense of pastness. Thus the term “history” is key to the understanding of Gothic fiction. David Punter considers the Gothic’s recapture of history as “the essence of the Gothic cultural emphasis” (27). The Gothic presents an individual that is “imprisoned by the tyranny of an omnipotent but unseen past” (Watt: 41). As Louis Gross argues, past events cling to the minds of the characters with an oppressive force, involving them in guilt and madness. They are frequently made to suffer the sins or curses of their ancestors (29). There is a clear sense of return or repetition in the Gothic narrative. The past recurs in the present, typically as something dead coming back to life, as a ghostly visitation. Sometimes the characters are made to replicate gloomy past lives.

The primal Gothic romance, *The Castle of Otranto*, like later Gothic fiction, does not intend to depict the real life of the Middle Ages, but only to convey a broad sense of pastness. However, Walpole is really dealing with history and provides the reader with a view of the eighteenth-century England. According to Punter, Walpole:

[. . .] originates a genre in which the attractions of the past and of the supernatural become similarly connected, and, further, in which the supernatural itself becomes

⁴³ Clifton Spargo expresses similar views (online).

a symbol of our past rising against us, whether it be the psychological past—the realm of those primitive desires repressed by the demands of closely organised society—or the historical past, the realm of a social order characterized by absolute power and servitude. (47)

As Punter writes, in general all the successful kinds of fiction in the later eighteenth century owed their popularity to the fact that the middle classes clearly wanted to read about aristocrats. They felt a mixture of admiration, fear and curiosity toward feudalism (47). According to Mark Madoff, the gothic projects two antagonistic versions of the past:

On the one side was an imaginary epoch that surpassed the eighteenth century in elegance of manners, chivalry, chastity, social stability, proper hierarchical relations, vivid pageantry, and faith. On the other side, the material insecurity, tyranny, superstition, and sudden violence of dim ancestral times were potent objects of fear and fascination. (qtd. in Anne Williams: 33)⁴⁴

Anne Williams claims that as a consequence of this double vision,

The “Gothic” past as constructed by the eighteenth century was [. . .] a focus of ambivalence: good/bad, attractive/frightening, admirable/horrible. It could serve the present as a negative or positive source of energy and example. From our perspective, Gothic looks very much like the Freudian unconscious. And just as the unconscious is, according to Freud, the ground of individual identity, so Gothic furnished a supposedly historical ground for England's “present”. (33)

Early gothic novels are usually set in the medieval period because, at least in part, it was perceived as a time of oppression, both political and religious. According to Emma J. Clery, in the peaceful and well-ordered society of the eighteenth century, Gothic romances created anxiety because they implied somehow that there was something wrong with the contemporary social order and thus disturbed the comfortable vision of progress (xxv). In fact, the Gothic genre was mainly a reaction against the complacency of the bourgeoisie class, as well as against the political stability and economic progress of eighteenth-century England. Leslie Fiedler thinks that the gothic writer wants to shake the bourgeois class out of their “self-satisfied torpor,” a pursuit of the intellectuals of the end of the eighteenth-century who wanted “to shock the bourgeoisie into an awareness of what a chamber of horror its own smugly regarded world really was” (135). Gothic fiction arises when the bourgeoisie, which has gained social and economic power, tries to understand the history of its ascension. Gothic writings recapture history in order to explain present situations. In the industrialized urban society of the moment individuals feel disoriented and at the mercy of forces that they cannot comprehend. That is the reason why Gothic literature's key themes are madness, oppression and injustice, while it deals with the inexplicable, the forbidden and the irrational.

⁴⁴ Original text quoted: Mark Madoff (1979). “The Useful Myth of Gothic Ancestry”. *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 8: 337-350.

In its attack on the contemporary order, the Gothic novel denounces injustice in a variety of different areas. Gothic romancers criticize Continental absolutism, the Church and also the tyranny of feudal or brutal institutions in England.⁴⁵ According to Fiedler, the Gothic writers' vision of the past was not only avant-garde in their literary pursuits, its appeal to horror is sinister and disturbing, representing the "hopes and fears of a group of intellectuals turned toward the future at a moment of revolutionary readjustment" (136). They are radical in their political views. Their standpoint is Protestant, reflecting an image of the Church as evil: the depraved monk, the wicked Inquisitor, the malicious abbess. They also attack its rituals, politics and the ideal of celibacy, which they take to the most horrifying extremes: rape and incest.

American Gothic, like its European counterpart, has always looked backwards and felt the weight of the past as an oppressive burden on the present. American Gothic has a unique ability to revisit the past. While the English Gothic had a direct past to deal with, the American one had to deal with a distant past, a dreamlike and very frequently mythologized historical 'Europe'. The United States was Protestant and enlightened, but it did not have a proper past or history. That is why some critics have refused to make historical readings of American literature. They emphasize its symbolic, psychological and moral nature. Nina Baym points out that "specialists in American literature have accepted the idea that in the absence of history (or a sense of history) as well as a social field, our literature has consistently taken an ahistorical, mythical shape for which the term 'romance' is formally and historically appropriate" (qtd. in Goddu: 9).⁴⁶ From another point of view, Joseph Bodzioc asserts, "the American gothic replaced the social struggle of the European with a Manichean struggle between the moral forces of personal and communal order and the howling wilderness of chaos and moral depravity" (qtd. in Goddu: 9).⁴⁷

On the other hand, some critics, such as Goddu, insist on the historical reading of the literary mode. She believes that "American literature is infiltrated by the popular, the disturbing, and the hauntings of history" (8). She thinks that the American gothic moves in a specific site of historical haunting, slavery.⁴⁸ In *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison

⁴⁵ Punter argues that both Lewis and Radcliffe share anxieties regarding some social institutions such as the church and family (73). That was due to the fact that some psychological tendencies were encouraged by social institutions which, to some extent, would contribute to hypocrisy, lack of communication and bondage to convention. These institutions would also favor isolation—imaged as imprisonment.

⁴⁶ Original text quoted: Nina Baym (1984). "Concepts of the Romance in Hawthorne's America". *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 38: 426-443.

⁴⁷ Fiedler expresses similar views (160). Original text quoted: Joseph Bodzioc (1988). "Richard Wright and Afro-American Gothic". *Richard Wright: Myths and Realities*. Ed. C. James Trotman. New York: Garland: 27-42.

⁴⁸ Karen Halttunen (qtd. in Goddu: 9) and Lawrence Buell and Cathy Davidson (qtd. in Goddu: 9) also claim that the connection between American Gothic and history. For more information, see: Karen

claims that the romance is not an “evasion of history”. In fact, she believes that this is the literary form in which a “unique American prophylaxis” can take place (1992: 36). Romancers record past mistakes and misfortunes so they will not happen again. In her opinion,

Romance, an exploration of anxiety from the shadows of European culture, made possible the sometimes safe and other times risky embrace of quite specific, understandably human, fears: Americans’ fear of being outcast, of failing, of powerlessness; their fear of boundarylessness, of Nature unbridled and crouched for attack; their fear of the absence of so-called civilization; their fear of loneliness, of aggression both external and internal. In short, the terror of human freedom—the thing they coveted most of all. (36-37)

William Veeder claims that societies develop certain mechanisms to heal those wounds that communal life inflicts upon itself. Gothic fiction is one of them: “Not consciously and yet purposively, Anglo-American culture develops gothic in order to help heal the damage caused by our embrace of modernity” (21). The Gothic produces a displacement of the repressed desires onto the narrative so we can face them. It is in the displaced Other of the gothic that we can confront forbidden desires and there lays its curative power. He believes that Gothic narrative is not about a return of the repressed to haunt, but “the return of the projected to heal” (33).⁴⁹

American Gothic fiction is inseparable from its history and is intensely concerned with it. It has been considered as a rewriting of the optimistic narratives or myths of America. Louis S. Gross compares the Gothic narrative with a kind of demonic history text, “an alternative vision of American experience that reminds us of those marginal groups responsible for the guarding of the Gothic flame” (2).⁵⁰ These historical rewritings focus on those elements on which American identities appear to be founded, highlighting their darker aspects. Far from the settler occupying and cultivating the land of the optimistic narrative; in the gothic, the reader is confronted with the alienated individual in the wilderness. The Gothic embodies the anxieties of an industrialized

Haltunen (1993). “Early American Murder Narratives: The Birth of Horror”. *The Power of Culture: Critical Essays In American History*. Eds. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears. Chicago: Chicago UP; Lawrence Buell (1986). *New England Literary Culture: From Revolution Through Renaissance*. New York: Cambridge UP; Cathy Davidson (1986). *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*. New York: Oxford UP.

⁴⁹ Veeder speaks of “self-healing through terror”. He believes that the major gothic texts appeared after the French Revolution. He argues that it was the time when Anglo-American middle-class readership suffered a terrible injury, repression. In addition, it was also in the nineteenth century when carnival was increasingly suppressed. As a result three phenomena appeared: hysteria, psychoanalysis, and the ghost story revival, which became new mechanisms to cure society’s wounds. Gothic helps heal this repression by putting into play what has been repressed: “Through its thematic and representational insistence upon outré desires, gothic acts as a counterdiscursive formation that fosters pleasure in terms of both psyche and society by the release of repressed affects and by the exploration of foreclosed topics” (28). Maggie Kilgour also argues the cathartic condition of the Gothic narrative (40).

⁵⁰ According to Gross, the Gothic narrative is mainly the product of three groups of writers: women, gays and colonials (the colonials, in the English tradition, refer primarily to the Irish and Americans) (2).

Western culture. The horrors of history are unveiled through the Gothic text: the Indian massacre, the transformation of the marketplace or slavery. Gothic stories are closely connected with the American culture and highlight its contradictions, among others the discrepancy between the myth of a new world of innocence and its factual history. As Goddu argues, it shows the instability of America's self-representations and the artificial foundations of American national identity, "the gothic serves as the ghost that both helps to run the machine of national identity and disrupts it. The gothic can strengthen as well as critique an idealized national identity" (10).

1.1.1. The Past in *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*

It can be shown that Hawthorne's attitude toward the past springs directly from more "primordial" concerns; the history of the nation interests him *only* as it is metaphorical of individual mental strife.

FREDERICK C. CREWS, *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes*.

Both in *Seven Gables* and in *Beloved* there is a deep concern with reviewing the past within the Gothic mode. Morrison and Hawthorne, in their own personal and unique ways, reflect the deep marks of the past on the present and confront the ghosts of the past in their Gothic narratives. The relationship between past and present is as important for Hawthorne as it had been for the Gothic fiction tradition. Male believes that "Hawthorne was fascinated by the interaction of past and present, heredity and environment" (1967: 430). Evan Kleiman says that Hawthorne's practice of capturing people's images "presupposes a knowledge of how the past casts a spell upon the present, as it does in *The House of the Seven Gables* [. . .] if he [the artist] is to counteract this spell, he must become something of a magician or wizard himself" (289). The past is also given a crucial role to play in Morrison's fiction. It provides the context and motivation without which the characters' present actions cannot be fully comprehended: "To the extent that the present is always a product of the past, there seems little one can do to alter the past and perhaps even less that falls to one's own agency apart from the determinations of cultural and social history" (Spargo: online).

Hawthorne's approach to the theme of past and present cannot be fully understood without recalling the American intellectual scene in the nineteenth century just after the War of 1812. As R. W. B. Lewis writes in *The American Adam*, at that time there was "an air of hopefulness" in American life and literature. A "reformist spirit" emerged, and with it, a strong compulsion "to root out vestiges" of the past (the cultural legacy of the Old World) (13). It was the impulse to escape from old experiences in order to face life in completely new terms (14). Many, such as the elder Henry James, began to identify democracy with "denial and destruction" of the elements of the past (13). Thus the party of Hope saw life and history as just beginning and linked only to

the future.⁵¹ As the *Democratic Review* in 1839 claimed: “Our national birth was the beginning of a new history [. . .] which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only” (qtd. in R. W. B. Lewis: 5). Hawthorne himself, as R. W. B. Lewis writes, was aware of this reformist spirit that he depicts in a story he composed in 1844, “Earth’s Holocaust,” while expressing the reservations that certain Americans felt about this passion to destroy and eliminate the past (14).⁵²

R. W. B. Lewis points out that the American argument against institutional continuity drew its force from these ideas: the rights of future men could only be preserved if those of present men had only temporary validity. Thus the “sovereignty of the living”, formulated in the writings of Jefferson and Paine, is based on the principle that each generation should be independent of those who had lived and legislated before them, and as a consequence, Jefferson proposes a full review of the jurisprudence every nineteen years (16).⁵³ The laws and constitutions, R. W. B. Lewis argues, made by contemporary people could only be preserved if the majority of that age wanted to. Thus this principle of a sovereign present attempted to make the living the true rulers, but it did not mean a complete rejection of the values of the past (16).

R. W. B. Lewis claims that, in *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne makes Holgrave, an “ex-Fourierite” and an “earnest member of the party of the ‘hopeful’”, a plausible young reformer of the moment who is convinced of the idea of the sovereign present. He implements this principle in every aspect of human life and, like Jefferson, proposes a similar time-span for institutions, “I doubt whether even our public edifices [. . .] ought to be built of such permanent materials as stone or brick. It were better that they should crumble to ruin once *in twenty years* or thereabouts, as a hint to people to examine into and reform the institutions which they symbolize” (Gables: 184; emphasis added) (18-19).⁵⁴ Holgrave, a passionate defender of the idea of periodic “purification”, also wants to change the institution of the family, the basic traditional form of society. According to him, planting a family is at the bottom of most of the wrong and mischief men do, as the lunacies of the Pyncheons show. Houses should also be destroyed since they are connected to permanence, and consequently contradict the principle of the sovereignty

⁵¹ Emerson saw a split in American culture between two polarized parties: “the party of the Past and the party of the Future”. He sometimes called them the parties “of Memory and Hope” (qtd. in R.W.B Lewis: 7).

⁵² R. W. B. Lewis states that, in this story, “Hawthorne had articulated the need he detected in the atmosphere of the day for a purgatorial action—preceding, as it were, the life of the new Adam in the new earthly paradise” (14). Thoreau’s *Walden* was also a metaphor for the need to purify the American society, a very popular concept at the time: the need for periodic and radical change in its structures.

⁵³ For Jefferson, “legislation may not endure longer than the estimated life of the consenting generation”, then “a complete review of all laws should be made every nineteen years” (R. W. B. Lewis: 12).

⁵⁴ Nathaniel Hawthorne (1967). *The House of the Seven Gables*. Ed. Seymour L. Gross W.W. Norton & Company. New York & London (all subsequent quotations from this edition will be identified by the abbreviated title of the book “*Gables*” and the page number included in parentheses in the text).

of the living. In the young reformer's furious speech against the past, he says, "The house [the house of the seven gables] ought to be purified with fire—purified till only its ashes remain!" (Gables: 184).

Unlike the party of Hope, R. W. B. Lewis says, the gloomy dreamer Hawthorne could never truly believe in America as something entirely new, as many described it, "a divinely granted second chance for the human race, after the first chance had been so disastrously fumbled in the darkening Old World" (5). As Peter Buitenhuis has pointed out: "The weight of the past was heavy indeed for Hawthorne" as it is for *The House of the Seven Gables* (1991: 46). Hawthorne could never feel that America was a 'New' World (Matthiessen: 365). Even at Brook Farm, he was not able to share the idealistic belief that "the new age was the dawn of untried possibilities. Even there he had thought about how much old material enters into the freshest novelty, about the ages of experience that had passed over the world, about the fact that the very ground under their feet was 'fathom-deep with the dust of deluded generations, on every one of which, as on ourselves, the world had imposed itself as a hitherto unwedded bride'" (Matthiessen: 365).

In *Seven Gables* Hawthorne depicts the history of New England: "the successful Pyncheons and the defeated Maules are simply two faces of the Hawthorne generations in Salem, Massachusetts" (Fogle 1969: 113). The impact of the past on the present impressed him more than its newness: "Looking back over the whole history of his province, he [Hawthorne] was more struck by decay than by potentiality, by the broken ends to which the Puritan effort had finally come, by the rigidity that had been integral to its though at its best, by modes of life in which nothing beautiful had developed" (Matthiessen: 365). In fact, as Rudolph Von Abele claims, "Hawthorne [. . .] fell a victim to the power of the past—the New England past which was his heritage; nor was he able afterward to get out of it, and if he could, it would be only at the cost of surrendering his artistic soul" (1967: 403).

Buitenhuis asserts that Hawthorne felt the burden of his Puritan heritage, the economic, political, and religious history of his town, but also the part his family had played in it. His inheritance and legacy are an indisputable part of *Seven Gables*: "In making the ancestral Colonel Pyncheon of *Seven Gables* the accuser and destroyer of Matthew Maule, Hawthorne recasts family history as a form of confession and expiation" (1991: 31).⁵⁵ As Marcus Cunliffe argues, Hawthorne, like William Faulkner, "sought meaning in a tenuous heritage he could neither wholly admire nor wholly deplore. Each added a letter to his name (Hathorne: Hawthorne; Falkner: Faulkner) to

⁵⁵ Maurice Beebe expresses similar views (14).

differentiate himself from his ancestry” (1964: 100). He was aware of the declining of the Hawthornes’ fortunes, and may have contrasted his economic privations as a writer, with the wealth and influence that his family had once had in the town.

Hawthorne was fond of past matters and interested in the influences of time, even though he also showed some mistrust of ancient houses, old institutions and long family lines. R. W. B. Lewis points out that Hawthorne had a passion for sources and traditions and “resented” “the scantiness of histories” in America (123). He said that “human relations cast too slight a shadow in America for the artist’s purpose; that there was too little texture in American life; and that, besides the temper of his countrymen contained too little tragic expectancy” (117). Hawthorne drained the few American legends and traditions he could find. In fact, he might have “consented to go to Europe” as the representative of his government “to refurbish his stock” (123).

On the other hand, with *Beloved*, Morrison wants to put slavery back into the center of African-Americans’ culture. Not only white society, but also black society had moved away from slavery as if it had never existed. Morrison does not want history to be forgotten or those aspects of the past that could be difficult to assimilate denied. Nor does she want to romanticize the African past. According Toni Morrison:

We have abandoned a lot of valuable material. We live in a land where the past is always erased and America is the innocent future in which immigrants can come and start over, where the slate is clean. The past is absent or it’s romanticized. This culture doesn’t encourage dwelling on, let alone coming to terms with, the truth about the past. (qtd. in Plasa: 38)⁵⁶

Like Hawthorne, Morrison feels the need to go back to a past that had left traumatic marks on Black people. She has a strong need of historical memory. According to Morrison, the Middle Passage has been violently ignored, even Black people themselves have silenced it: “no one praised them [black slaves], nobody knows their names, nobody can remember them, nor [sic] in the United States nor in Africa”. During this terrible episode of black history, as Morrison explains, “millions of people disappeared without trace and there is not one monument, anywhere, to pay homage to them because they never arrived safely on shore. So it’s like a whole nation that is under the sea. A nameless, violent extermination” (Carabí 1993: 106-107). Morrison considers this omission understandable, since remembering can be agonizing and your terrible memories may numb you to such an extent that you cannot cope with your life.

In *Beloved* Morrison tries “to insert this memory that was unbearable and unspeakable into literature” (Carabí 1993: 105). She thought that it was necessary, since there was not much mention of this historic period in the folklore, songs or

⁵⁶ “Living Memory” [an interview with Toni Morrison]. *City Limits* (31 March to 7 April 1988): 10-11.

poems, until after the 60s. Spargo argues that Morrison uses the Gothic “to bring us to the brink of an unspoken history” as “a rupture of rationality”, to deliver an “unmentioned, unmentionable, or traumatically irreferential past”:

She [Morrison] uses the Gothic apparatus to invoke the specter of trauma—first, as a motivational force explaining the characters’ historical actions, and, second, as a figure for the act of a difficult transmission. As haunting performs the work of a figure, it poses a newness within language that hypothetically or temporarily alienates ordinary meaning and so forces a revision or reconsideration of the very possibilities of representation. (online)

Against a society which denied the terrible legacy of slavery, Morrison meant to pay homage to all those black slaves who died on their journey from Africa to America: “to invoke all those people who are ‘unburied, or at least unceremoniously buried’, and go about ‘properly, artistically, burying them’” (Rushdy 1998: 142).⁵⁷

While *Seven Gables* was Hawthorne’s act of family expiation, the writing of *Beloved* is an act of atonement, Morrison’s personal memorial to all those blacks who suffered enslavement, since there was no testimonial monument or place which could serve as a remembrance of that historic episode. As Morrison says in “A Bench by the Road”:

There is no place you or I can go, to think about or not to think about, to summon the presences of, or recollect the absences of slaves; nothing that reminds us of the ones who made the journey and of those who did not make it. There is no suitable memorial or plaque or wreath or wall or park or skyscraper lobby. There’s no 300 foot tower. There’s no small bench by the road. There is not even a tree scored, an initial that I can visit or you can visit in Charleston or Savannah or New York or Providence or, better still, on the banks of the Mississippi. And because such a place does not exist (that I know of), *the book had to*. (McKay 1999: 3; emphasis added)

To transform this Gothic romance into an act of remembering and homage, Morrison makes *Beloved* a symbol of a period that was unspoken. She is not just Sethe’s dead baby, she is also those black slaves, men and women, who died during the middle passage. As Mae Henderson writes, through *Beloved*, “Morrison sets out to give voice to the ‘disremembered and unaccounted for’—the women and children who left no written records” (82).

As we can see on its first page, Morrison dedicates *Beloved* to those who died in the Middle Passage, to “Sixty Million and more.” The fact that “Sixty” and “Million” are capitalized shows us, as some critics have pointed out, how the author is trying to give some sort of name to those forgotten and anonymous black slaves who were the first victims of the slave trade. The lines that follow these are also devoted to them:

I will call them my people,
which were not my people;
and her beloved,

⁵⁷ Kimberly C. Davis expresses similar views (online).

which was not beloved. (Romans 9:25)⁵⁸

These words taken by themselves could refer to the fact that Sethe was cast off from the black community or Beloved was truly loved. However, when we look at the context from which they are taken, the meaning is different. They belong to a chapter in which the Apostle Paul reflects on God's ways toward humanity, especially toward the Israelites. He talks about the fact that the gentiles, who have always been considered as sinners outside God's law, can be regarded as His people, while some Israelites cannot. As Peggy Ochoa comments, it seems that this passage wants to communicate hope for those who are not apparently the chosen people of God. In fact, the passage continues: "And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God" (Romans 9: 26). Morrison might be suggesting that these blacks who died in the Middle Passage will earn paradise, even though they might not be the 'apparent' people of God, whereas some others (white people) will not (Ochoa: online).⁵⁹

In *Seven Gables* Hawthorne writes a family history and explores the connections between ancestry and legacy through his fictional representation of generations of aristocratic Pyncheons. He recaptures the history and deterioration of his native town and his own family. Morrison, on the other hand, knows the importance of the past, of their ancestors, for the black community, whose African heritage is severely endangered by the threat of the white culture. It is necessary to remember not only as a healing and cathartic action, but also to reclaim an African American culture. If black people do not recall and attempt to recover their cultural heritage, it might easily vanish, since they are far from their homeland and submitted to the white Western culture; in Morrison's words, "The Ancestor lives as long as there are those who remember" (qtd. in Rushdy 1998: 149). John E. Wideman argues in the preface to his novel *Sent For You Yesterday*: "past lives in us, through us. Each of us harbours the spirits of the people who walked the earth before we did, and those spirits depend on us for continuing existence, just as we depend on their presence to live our lives to the

⁵⁸ According to Mae G. Henderson, "By citing a New Testament passage that echoes a passage from the Old Testament, the author not only problematizes the nature of the relation between the past and the present but also thematizes the importance of historical reclamation and repossession. As Jehovah reclaimed the Israelites after their apostasy (figured in Hosea as spiritual adultery), so Morrison seeks to repossess the African and slave ancestors after their historic violation (figured in *Beloved* as physical rape)" (82).

⁵⁹ Peggy Ochoa argues that "Morrison here aligns her 'beloved' blacks with early Christian martyrs, while simultaneously making an analogy between the hypocrisy of the self-righteous Pharisees and that of white Christian American, in effect, strategically 'othering' white Christianity as less than the ideal defined by Scripture" (online).

fullest” (qtd. in Rushdy 1998: 140).⁶⁰ Thus “remembering the ancestor” is “an act of historical recovery”: “roots are less a matter of geography than sense of shared history; less to do with place, than with inner space” (qtd. in Rushdy 1998: 149).

1.1.2. Romance and Historical Narrative

The double voice of the Gothacist who attempts to distance himself from his vision is as much a structural principle here as the disjunction between documented historical fact and the imaginative metaphors of familial and national identity that give the work its uniquely Gothic view of history.

LOUIS S. GROSS, *Redefining the American Gothic: From Wieland to Day of the Dead*.

Morrison and Hawthorne are both historians and romancers: “the elements of the ‘known record’ and the ‘deceit’ of the imaginative recreation merge in the act of inscription so that the individual character’s personal history becomes a metaphor for national history. When the ‘deceitful’ elements of the plot are distinctly Gothic, one discovers a radically different way of reading a ‘historical’ narrative” (Louis Gross: 24). Like *Seven Gables*, *Beloved* “is as much a story about history as it is a tale of ghosts and haunted houses” (Carol Henderson: 81). Hawthorne’s *Seven Gables* narrates a gloomy vision of American history and “Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* reconceptualizes American history” (Krumholz 1999: 107).⁶¹ It is in the blend between romance and history that both authors find the ultimate literary form to express their concerns about the past.

Hawthorne deals with a classic theme in the Gothic, “how history lives on into the present” (Buitenhuis 1991: 7). The introductory chapter of the novel narrates the colonial past of the town and many passages in the book refer to the Pyncheons’ family history. Even though, as Cunliffe says, Hawthorne “has as much difficulty as other Americans in making sense of the national development” (1964: 100), he is able to give us “a valid historical glimpse of New England society at that time—a society in decay, yet with prospects of change and renewal” (Buitenhuis 1991: 10). Buitenhuis claims that *Seven Gables* “blends the classical tragic theme of the family curse with New England Puritan history to create a powerful drama about how pride and ambition are brought to a downfall” (1991: 9). *The House of the Seven Gables* reflects on the effects of the Puritan and colonial New England society on the present. According to William Stein, through his romances, we experience “Hawthorne’s sensitive re-creation of the decline and disintegration of Puritan civilization [. . .]. Unknowingly, his prophetic insight embraces the modern world, its tragic moral dislocations and its loss of hope” (145).

⁶⁰ Original text quoted: John E. Wideman (1973). *Sent For You Yesterday*. (1983; rpt New York, 1988), prefatory page. Ed. John O’Brien. *Interviews With Black Writers*. New York: Avon.

⁶¹ Kimberly Davis insists that for Morrison history is always fictional, a representation (online).

Michael D. Bell asserts that the formula of historical meditation based on the doctrine of associations is very important for Hawthorne, as it had previously been for other writers, such as Washington Irving. According to the aesthetic theory of association, history was not a record of past events, but a sort of “imaginative evocation of the historical associations of present scenes and objects” (196). Thus the action moves from the contemplation of a contemporary situation to connections with bygone times, often in the form of a local legend. Hawthorne develops and exploits the legendary correlations of historically significant objects: “this ‘making a legend’ for an object is also the procedure of *The House of the Seven Gables*, in which the old house becomes the central object of historical meditation” (Michael Bell: 198). Puritan history provides a fictional scenario where imagination mixes with facts and thus the narrative conveys an illusion of reality.

While Hawthorne gives us a historical vision of Puritan New England, Morrison is committed to recording African American history, since she realizes how important it is to recover cultural memory to build a hopeful future for blacks. She aims to unveil the true history of the African American past, the inner life of the blacks and fill in the gaps of the constrained slave narratives. Morrison forges history through the African American slaves’ and ex-slaves’ experiences rather than through the perspective of the white society. In fact, the historical record regarding feminine slavery is sparse. If black women writers had not fictionalized the lives of African American female slaves, it would have been necessary to accept the lack of sources and, consequently, the historical absence of black women in the slavery period. Thus Morrison gives voice to the black female who had been suppressed in official histories.

Morrison approaches history as a storyteller. As Elizabeth L. Nutting points out, “this is not history as understood” by “Enlightenment-influenced progressive historicism” that establishes a movement from causal factors to effects and seems to advance toward a better future: “This progressive history, which looks ever-forward and sees its past only in terms of its present and future effects, omits mention of past injustices and facilitates the catastrophic devastation of the oppressed” (online). By replacing the story with information, only isolated events are explained. Thus past experiences cannot be embraced and “redemption becomes impossible” (online). On the other hand, as Nutting argues, both the storyteller and the critical historian want the listeners to interact with history. They remember and tell the tragic events of the past, making them significant for present generations. They interpret history rather than give information about it. They connect the past to the present in a shared communal encounter; the lived experiences of the dead are incorporated “into the on-going

experience of the community”: “this authoritative remembering is redemption” (online). According to Nutting, Morrison,

as storyteller [. . .] is able to create the dialectical images that bring those smashed voices into the present and re-members the dead, thus opening up the possibility of redemption for the oppressed [. . .] the creator of images, dialectical images, that can break the continuity of white history which threatens to bury slave history, leaving the survivors with a choice between forgetting and madness. (online)

As Janice B. Daniel has pointed out, the quilt is “an important part of the storyteller’s technique” (online). As a metaphor the quilt hints at the different perspectives that storytelling introduces in the story. This assemblage/collage based art puts together the past events of the characters’ memories, suggesting, through scraps of cloth, their various life experiences. All the patches form a whole: “Quilts—factual or fictitious—clearly have the capacity to encapsulate stories within the fabrics and designs of their squares” (Daniel: online). According to Catherine Rainwater, through the image of the quilt, all of the characters’ stories, all of their voices, become one intelligible story: “If one cannot tell a single diachronic story [. . .] then one must tell many stories that, held together synchronically in the readers’ mind, might consequently illuminate one another” (qtd. in Daniel: online).⁶² Hawthorne also resorts to a similar metaphor, patchwork, even though with a different meaning. It represents life as made out of different pieces from different epochs, symbolizing the presence of the past in our present. Uncle Venner would be its human personification.

Like Hawthorne, who creates a historical resemblance of the Salem of his time, Morrison, as Kimberly Davis claims, aims for authenticity in her historical account, even though she accepts that there is no single “totalizing Truth or History”: “Morrison’s career reveals both a desire for ‘authentic’ history-as-life-lived and the postmodernist realization that history is a fictional construct” (online). She creates “a parallel between the individual processes of psychological recovery and a historical or national process” (Krumholz 1999: 107). In fact, *American Gothic*, as we can also see in Hawthorne, is as much interested in personal identity as it is in national identity. While *Seven Gables* conveys the decadent and oppressive influence of the colonial and Puritan heritage; *Beloved*, as a demonic narrative, shows us the history of black individuals as a long

⁶² Original text quoted: Catherine Rainwater (1991). “Worthy Messengers: Narrative Voices in Toni Morrison’s Novels”. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, XXXIII 1 (Spring): 96-113. Showalter says that the quilt as a metaphor falls into the domain of the feminine gender rhetoric. Since it pertains to the craft of sewing, a task traditionally associated with women: “one of the most central images in this new feminist lexicon” (qtd. in Daniel: online). Original text quoted: Elaine Showalter (1986). “Piecing and Writing”. *The Poetics of Gender*. Ed. Nancy K. Miller. New York: Columbia University Press: 222-247. For Janice B. Daniel, on the other hand, the patchwork quilt can be understood as a narrative device which suggests the forward movement of the plot and its three stages: before *Beloved*’s arrival, the time when she is visible within 124, and after her expulsion (online).

nightmare from which it is difficult to wake up: “the traumatic hold of the past on the black community’s present consciousness” (Spargo: online). As Spargo states:

The trauma has come to function for many critics as a trope of access to more difficult histories, providing us with entry into a world inhabited by the victims of extraordinary social violence, those perspectives so often left out of rational, progressive narratives of history. Indeed, in this respect the trauma functions rather as a ghost of rationality, that which announces a history haunting the very possibility of history. (online)

As Kimberly Davis argues, Morrison tries to deconstruct the “official history,” while she constructs a counternarrative (online). There is a small number of recognizable historical events of the period: “the appearance of the newspaper clipping is one of the few” elements that points to the dominant cultural processes of “historical documentation” (online). Paul D’s doubts about its authenticity puts into question white culture’s representation. Morrison seems to suggest that a fictional account of a former slave’s interior life might be more accurate than actual documents, which were mostly written from the perspective of the dominant white society (online).⁶³ Davis claims that there are also a few historical references, such as the Fugitive Slave Bill that results in Sethe’s infanticide. Her account of the Civil War—one of the major events in American history—as inconsequential in these ex-slaves’ lives is striking. Paul D’s haunting memories of prison make this crucial event pale in comparison. On the other hand, his participation in the war is hardly mentioned in the last few pages of the book. In fact, as Davis points out, Morrison seems to tell us that these blacks’ daily struggle for survival outweighed any other important event in American history (online).

In this Gothic romance Morrison explores slavery not from a narrative or intellectual perspective but from the recollections and daily experiences of the ex-slaves, emphasizing the complex relationship between history and memory. As David Lawrence defines it, “memory is shown to be an active, constitutive force that has the power to construct and circumscribe identity, both individual and collective, in the image of its own contents” (87). In *Beloved* “lived experience” as history becomes memory as “remembered experience” through its characters (Moblely 1990: 190). Memory comes to be the means by which the characters recapture their personal and social history: “What Morrison is after and what thick description seeks to articulate, then, is the meaning of history on a human level for those who experienced these horrors one by one” (Denard 1997: 41). *Beloved* the revenant is a symbol of a historic

⁶³ Newspapers make another appearance in the novel when they are in a pile in the shed where Sethe had killed her child and where *Beloved* has sex with Paul D. For Kimberly Davis, they are metaphorically spectators to the “real” action of the fiction: “This metaphor allows Morrison simultaneously to point out the gap between representation and reality and to suggest that we can only know the past through discourse” (online).

time, and, her recollections belong to those who suffered the Gothic terrors of the Middle Passage, the underworld (her experiences on a slave ship).

Through the characters' memories, the historical past appears fragmented: "Morrison's text, like the African griot, is developed as a series of fragments of the past that unfold throughout the novel" (Fuston-White: online). Her historical patchwork is incomplete: we have pieces that come from the recollections of the different characters. They form an imperfect and fragmentary picture, in which some parts are absent: nothing is said about Howard and Bugler's fate or Halle's. Readers must imagine the missing fragments on their own: "the fictional present is hinged to the past, without the pieces of the present (and supposedly the future), the past remains an unfinished puzzle" (Osagie: online). *Beloved's* fragmented Gothic narrative stands as a metaphor for blacks' identity and history in America, during slavery and its aftermath.⁶⁴

1.1.3. The Influence of the Past on the Present

Tradition extends the wrongs of the past into the present—that much is clear; yet without tradition the present is a state of flux and the future largely a blank. Hawthorne is just as ambivalent about the present as he is about the past"
LEO B. LEVY, "Picturesque Style in *The House of the Seven Gables*".

The past is an issue of great interest in these gothic romances mainly because of its effects on the present. Both Morrison and Hawthorne show how the influence of the past on all the characters is so strong that past and present merge and their differences blur. The horrible past of the Pyncheon and Maules and the dramatic legacy of slavery are a terrible burden in the present of the story. In *Seven Gables* it is Colonel Pyncheon's reincarnation in his descendants and the ghosts which haunt the mansion that establish the enduring presence of the past. On the other hand, in *Beloved*, "it is always now" (*Beloved*: 210).⁶⁵ scenes of the past combine with the present life of Sethe's story. The presence of the revenant which haunts 124 metaphorically symbolizes the power of the past.

In *Seven Gables* Hawthorne contrasts "the organic relation between past experience and the living moment" (R. W. B. Lewis: 8) to the ideal of newborn innocence that the "hopeful" claimed. His individual is not free from history or the family's inheritance. Past misdeeds continue to affect the present through the model of usurpation, Colonel Pyncheon's illicit acquisition of Maule's plot of land: "Since Walpole, the model of usurpation in *Hamlet* had been central to Gothic structures, and

⁶⁴ Ana Mª Manzanás Calvo argues that "la aparente disposición caprichosa de los tiempos (pasado versus presente, pasado versus pasado anterior a pasado) es un reflejo formal de las vidas truncadas de los personajes y de la fragmentación de la memoria individual y colectiva que sufrían los africanos al llegar al Nuevo Mundo" (90).

⁶⁵ Toni Morrison (1987). *Beloved*. New York: Plume (all subsequent quotations from this edition will be identified by the name of the book and the page number included in parentheses in the text).

in response to revolutionary challenges had helped to make the Gothic suitable for inquiry into past wrongs” (Arac: 10). Consequently, the most pervasive link between previous times and the present is established through the feud between Pyncheons and Maules, the conflict between the two opposed social forces in both ages, “the deed is itself evidence of past evil persisting into the present” (Gollin: 153).⁶⁶

The mysterious and terrible past of the Pyncheons and Maules has a deep impact on their present. As Nina Baym says, “In *The House of the Seven Gables* the visible world exists in the romance’s present time and is controlled by the invisible world which is the past. As it becomes increasingly clear that the seen present is controlled by the unseen past, the mood of the book darkens. The sense of the present changes; its lack of freedom becomes clear” (1976: 154). According to Michael Bell, one of the main aspects of the presence of the past is its immateriality: “In Hawthorne’s subjective writings about the past—those writings in which he tries to evoke the past from significant scenes in the present—there is a characteristic contrast between the tenuous immateriality of the vision of the past and the hard materiality of the present” (200). Thus visitations of the past usually appear in the present as ghosts or ‘shadows’ which haunt the whole narrative. However, the past is also “endowed with a power paradoxically at odds with its immateriality” (Griffith: 390). Some of the characters, such as Hepzibah and Clifford, are definitely trapped by the old days. They are “time-stricken,” victims of the Pyncheons’ crimes. They finally seem to move forward when they flee the house and get out of the city. However, Judge Pyncheon “sinks into the past where he belongs [. . .] the Judge joins the Pyncheon shades. For him time stops” (Horne: 462).

Like Hawthorne, in her Gothic vision, Morrison also expresses how the present is brooded over by the wrongs of the past. In *Beloved*, it is slavery which haunts the characters. The characters’ terrible experiences during their enslavement intrude into the present through their memories. Thus Morrison explores the past through these traumatic recollections. Mischelle Booher points out: “[. . .] all these haunting memories and apparitions have one root—slavery. Just as all of Manfred’s crimes in *Otranto* trace back to an original usurpation, *Beloved*’s memories encompass not only her history with Sethe, but also experiences in a slave ship of the infamous middle passage between Europe and America” (128). In fact, “eternal memories are hell for the inhabitants of 124 just as they are in *Otranto*” (Booher: 123). It is the trauma of slavery which makes the characters’ lives a nightmare. According to Cathy Caruth:

⁶⁶ Marius Bewley thinks that Hawthorne’s *Seven Gables* carries on a debate between, “on one hand [. . .] the past, inherited wealth, and aristocratic status; on the other hand [. . .] the present, and [. . .] democratic equality, both financial and social” (442).

It is this literality and its insistent return which thus constitutes trauma and points toward its enigmatic core: the delay or incompleteness in knowing, or even in seeing, an overwhelming occurrence that then remains, in its return, absolutely *true* to the event. It is indeed this truth of traumatic experience that forms the center of its pathology or its symptoms; it is not a pathology, that is, of falsehood or displacement of meaning, but of history itself. (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 98)⁶⁷

All of the characters' earlier lives are unspeakable and, consequently, they are still traumatized many years after their escapes from slavery. Morrison especially explores the black female's traumatic experiences as a result of enslavement: "As the ghost of slavery, *Beloved* encompasses all the women's pasts, a horror multiplying with each individual affected" (Booher: 126).

In *Beloved* the influence of the past on the characters' lives is depicted as a Gothic haunting. Morrison's narrative moves quickly from the past to the present through the memories of the different black individuals, suggesting their uncontrollable capacity to remember. The past plagues the characters' daily lives, as we can see in the invasion of the present by their memories on the plantation. When Denver asks Sethe, 'How come everybody run off from Sweet Home can't stop talking about it?' (Beloved: 13), her mother answers that Sweet Home "comes back whether we want it to or not" (Beloved: 14). As *Seven Gables*' characters are trapped and haunted by the old aristocratic days, the horrifying legacy of slavery pursues and torments *Beloved*'s individuals. Thus Morrison, like Hawthorne, represents the power of the past to impair life in the present. Memories are such a terrible burden that the characters cannot go on with their lives. According to Helen Cixous, the process in which the witness brings the experience of slavery through the self in women's writing is some sort of 'possession.' The witness is possessed by his/her past (qtd. in Goldner: online).⁶⁸

When the novel starts, Sethe and Denver live in solitude, resigned to share the house with the baby ghost that dwells in it. The past has taken possession of Sethe's life. In her haunted condition, Sethe cannot think of a future or even the present because her life is full of "beating back the past: Rememories are stubborn, painful things to her and must be dealt with daily" (Booher: 127). Mae Henderson claims that "Rememory' [. . .] is something that possesses (or haunts) one rather than something that one possesses. It is, in fact, that which makes the past part of one's present [. . .].

⁶⁷ Caruth defines trauma as an "overwhelming experience of sudden catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrollable repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena [. . .]. This repetition is a response to the sudden and "unassimilated nature" of the event (qtd. in Plasa: 149). Original text quoted: Cathy Caruth (ed.) (1995). *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁶⁸ Original text quoted: Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement (1986). *The Newly Born Woman*. (*Theory and History of Literature*, 24). Trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis, MN.: University of Minnesota Press.

Sethe finds herself tyrannized by unconfigured and literally disfiguring images” (86).⁶⁹ Her capacity to feel is numbed by the pain the white master had inflicted her and the death of her crawling baby. Her intense and irreconcilable emotions are buried deep inside her. Her suffering is unbearable, since her act of murder is dramatically contradictory to her maternal identity. Sethe has not assimilated her daughter’s death. Consequently, as Nicholls points out, the deceased child becomes a phantasmal presence within her mother’s traumatic self, perpetuating her existence as something alive and foreign (140). Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok call this phenomenon the “crypt”:

Grief that cannot be expressed builds a *secret vault* within the subject. This crypt reposes—alive, reconstituted from the memories of words, images, and feelings—the objective counterpart of the loss, as a complete person within his own topography, as well as the traumatic incidents—real or imagined—that had made introjection impossible. (qtd. in Nicholls: 140)⁷⁰

According to Nicholls, this “crypt” is equivalent to a split in the Ego: a fragmented identity. The lost person is incorporated as something live and present, with a quality that can be spectral, magical, or sometimes even hallucinatory (141).

Denver, Sethe’s daughter, is the only free-born black of the story. Even though her mother tries to keep her away from the past, she is haunted by it as much as the rest of the characters. Not only has Denver lived all her life with the baby ghost’s presence, but she also drank her blood. Therefore, she has a double and contradictory relationship with the past, of which she is an intrinsic part while she is automatically shut out of it: Sweet Home is, for her, “a site of exclusion [. . .]. Denver is locked out, forced to see herself as an outsider” (Jesser: online). This situation makes her incapable of facing the past. When Nelson asks Denver about her mother’s crime, she cannot stand the idea of hearing any of it and, as a result, she is deaf for almost two years. Her childhood deafness shows the danger of the past for our present lives, despite her mother’s attempts to protect her from it. Afterwards, Denver recovers her hearing, apparently without any reason, when she feels the sound of the baby ghost crawling.

When Sethe and Paul D first meet eighteen years after Sweet Home, the power that compels them to make love cannot last. They are not yet ready for each other.

⁶⁹ For Carole B. Davies rememory involves “crossing the boundaries of space, time, history, place, language, corporeality and restricted consciousness in order to make reconstructions and mark or name gaps and absences” (qtd. in Teresa Washington: online). Original text quoted: Carole B. Davies (1994). *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*. London: Routledge.

⁷⁰ Introjection means the assimilation of the dead person to the self, as occurs in normal mourning. For more information, see: Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (1980). “Introjection-Incorporation: Mourning or Melancholia”. *Psychoanalysis in France*. Eds. S. Lebovici and D. Widlocher. New York: International University Press.

Even when they finally have sex, they are trapped in their own memories and it is a disappointing experience for both of them. Their terrible ordeals have numbed their capacity to feel and their shared recollections block their abilities to express their emotions. Nor can sex live up to their expectations after so many years. This scene emphasizes the power of the past to impair the characters' present life. Slaves and ex-slaves think that they have to fight their memories to survive and every day they try to beat them back.⁷¹ However, they cannot succeed in this war. Before Sethe, Denver or Paul D can have a present or a future, they must reconcile themselves with the past.

1.1.4. The Return of the Repressed

The Freudian principle of "the return of the repressed" has proved to be one of the most pervasive themes of the Gothic plot. Both *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* revolve around it. In Hawthorne's romance its main manifestation is the intermittent reincarnation of Colonel Pyncheon through generations of the aristocratic family. At the present moment, Judge Pyncheon is his embodiment. Through him, the unresolved issues of the past can be finally faced so the present members of the family, Clifford and Hepzibah, can get at least partial retribution from the family sins and can be somehow redeemed. Thus Jaffrey Pyncheon represents the need to confront the family's guilt for the usurpation of Maule's land. He symbolizes the effects of the past on the present. The characters' repressed feelings are materialized in their kin's reincarnation. The aristocratic Pyncheon family also represents the return of the repressed for America, since their history stands as a metaphor for national identity.

On the other hand, Morrison presents a Gothic vision of the American society in which life for blacks is built on fear and repression as a consequence of the legacy of enslavement. Paul Neubauer claims, "the murdered slaves remain part of the culture of African-Americans, ghosts of a past which can never be fully exorcised, which will keep returning just as we keep returning again and again to the dark tales of our personal and national heritage" (qtd. in Booher: 128).⁷² Quoting Michel de Certeau's work, Mae Henderson writes: "If the past [. . .] is *repressed* [. . .] 'it *returns* in the present from which it was excluded'. The figuration of this 'detour-return' and its consequences in the lives of individual characters, as well as the community as a whole, structures

⁷¹ Until that moment, as M^a del Mar Gallego argues, Sethe and Paul D's strategies to deal with life have been different, but equally unsuccessful: "[. . .] on the one hand, Sethe's refusal to leave and her need, almost despair, to cling to whatever she possesses or is left to her; and, on the other, Paul D's desire to continually move on". However "Both of them have one thing in common, though: their wish to escape from the memories related to their enslaved past" (1994: 12).

⁷² Original text quoted: Paul Neubauer (1998). "The Demon of Loss and Longing: The Function of the Ghost in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*". *Demons: Mediators Between This World and the Other*. Ed. Ruth Petzoldt and Paul Neubauer. New York: Pete Lang: 165-174.

Morrison's novel" (93).⁷³ However, the return of the repressed does not mean the return of something lost, but, as Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire say, "an interpretative elaboration or working through whose role is to weave around a rememorated element an entire network of meaningful relations that integrate it into the subject's explicit apprehension of himself" (qtd. in Nicholls: 135).⁷⁴ The Gothic story of *Beloved* is structured by "the return of the repressed" through Beloved's reincarnation, "the past and present collide in the embodied form of Beloved" (Carol Henderson: 88).

Beloved is the return of the unresolved past, which achieves dramatic Gothic overtones. As Nutting claims, "As flesh and blood woman, the ghost Beloved is wholly in the Now time of the story. Yet she embodies and brings with her the Then, the collective memory, and the collective rage, of the slaves forced from their ancestral homes, piled in ship holds for the Middle Passage, brutalized by the system of slavery" (online). Consequently, she represents the past's "desire to usurp the present and to deny Sethe and Denver and the entire community their right to live in the present" (Hinson: 157). The unresolved past comes back so as to be finally confronted: "It is surely a deliberate irony of *Beloved* that not only must history return against the grain of desire and through a figure of haunting, but, once it returns, it must be defeated" (Spargo: online). Sethe is vulnerable and helpless against the brutal and ruthless attack of the repressed.

In *Beloved*, as Cathy Caruth argues, there is an unsuccessful effort at the center of the characters' traumatic experiences, since the trauma is "the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits" (qtd. in Barnett: 75). As Freud observes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, "patients suffering from traumatic neurosis" are not "much occupied in their waking lives with memories [. . .]. Perhaps they are more concerned with *not* thinking of it [the traumatic event]" (qtd. in Barnett: 75). Characters spend too much energy fighting the past, trying not to think of their terrible memories.⁷⁵ "The difficulty lies in carrying on with life, in not giving up. So there is an urge in the characters to constantly attempt to widen the gulf that should exist between them and the dead, the ghosts from the past, to disassociate themselves from death completely" (Gallego 1994: 12).⁷⁶ The characters' efforts to beat the past back are useless.

⁷³ Barbara Christian also talks about the importance of the myth of the eternal return in African American culture, "Especially the return of that from which one was traumatically sundered—the community, the family, etc.—the return of that [. . .]" (211).

⁷⁴ Original text quoted: Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire (1972). "The Unconscious: a Psychoanalytic Study". *Yale French Studies*, 48: 118-178.

⁷⁵ Kimberly Davis talks about a kind of wavelike narrative effect in which the memories of the cruel past surface and are repressed (online).

⁷⁶ For Caruth, the core of trauma stories is the "oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (qtd. in Barnett: 76).

Beloved's presence forces Sethe and Paul to remember what they have tried so hard to forget. It is after the revenant's reincarnation that Sethe goes to the Clearing, where she seeks answers. She is trapped between the desire to continue in her death-like existence in the timeless present, and the desire to be part of a family and community. Finally, Sethe decides that she wants to try to make a new life with Paul D and the girls. She thinks that she can take care of them all as she did when she first came to Ohio.

Beloved also means the return of the repressed for the black community, since she symbolizes the horrors of slavery and the Middle Passage: "Beloved represents African American history or collective memory as much as she does Sethe's or Paul D's individual memory" (Barnett: 76). The women of the community, like Ella who refused to nurse a baby conceived through rape, confront their painful past stories: "The stories behind the wounds on the psyches of many of these characters are as important as the scars evident on the flesh itself. Freedom for these individuals rests on tracing the multiple figuration of the scar—from its fleshly denotation to its cerebral connotation" (Carol Henderson: 85). As Mobley argues, through *Beloved*, readers are also allured to face their repressed memories: "Morrison's purpose is [. . .] to address black readers by inviting us to return to the very part of our past that many have repressed, forgotten or ignored" (1990: 197).

On the other hand, in *Seven Gables* the repressed past returns in the person of Judge Pyncheon, whose presence deeply affects the rest of the characters' lives. As in *Beloved*, he stands for "the uncanny return of the dead to haunt the living, the return of the past to shadow the present" (Mae Henderson: 91).⁷⁷ Jaffrey Pyncheon stands for the ascendancy of the past over the present and the wrong inflicted upon the wizard. He comes back to make the aristocratic Pyncheons cope with their guilt and repressions.

1.1.5. Cyclic Nature of Time

Both Hawthorne's and Morrison's romances are narrated cyclically. Hawthorne tries to understand the nature of time, "[his] later fiction [after *The Scarlet Letter*] is dominated by a dialectical debate over the 'shape' of history—a debate over whether history is cyclical or linear" (Michael Bell: 194). Beebe argues that "Chapter xviii [. . .] presents the 'very essence' of Hawthorne's method, [it] fuses the past and the present" (14), as if "the present simply repeats or mirrors the past" (Gray: 101). As Kleiman states, society has become imprisoned by the mistakes of bygone times and "Each inheritor of the Pyncheon house, in failing to rectify the wrongs of the past, *is forced to*

⁷⁷ Mae Henderson uses these words to talk about Beloved's "rebirth".

repeat that past' (297; emphasis added). There are some elements and episodes of the history of the family that seem to duplicate themselves in the contemporary time. Matthiessen claims that Hawthorne "was always concerned with the enduring elements in human nature" (365).

In a sort of circular way, previous experiences are retrieved in the present: "the Colonel Pyncheon of two centuries ago steps forward as the Judge of the passing moment" (Gables: 120).⁷⁸ The full parallelism between these two characters is completed when the Judge sits in the same chair and dies in the same way his ancestor did before: "there is nothing new under the sun, past and present are essentially identical, as seen in the deaths of colonel and judge" (Waggoner 1967: 405). Jaffrey Pyncheon can only die in the old mansion, his true place: the aristocratic and static gothic world of the ruined house, where time seems to have stopped and repeat itself, is his grave. As the reincarnation of his ancestor, he is the ultimate example of the cyclic nature of Hawthorne's story and of time.

The story of Alice Pyncheon also makes clear both the similarity between Holgrave and the Maules of the past, as well as Phoebe's resemblance to her proud ancestor. Even the chickens of today are some sort of duplicate of the prior ones: the solitary chick looked like "the founder of the antiquated race. Instead of being the youngest of the family, it rather seemed to have aggregated into itself the ages, not only of these living specimens of the breed, but of all its forefathers and foremothers, whose united excellences and oddities were squeezed into its little body" (Gables: 151). Thus the repetitions of past events found in *Seven Gables* may suggest that man's nature is essentially unchangeable, implying a somewhat static idea of history. Reiteration makes us think of history as a circle. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that the story ends with the words of the title.

In *Seven Gables* time as a cycle receives its ultimate expression in the mirror in which, the day of the Judge's death, the departed Pyncheons can be seen in the process of committing once again the great wrongs of their ancestors: "Under Maule's curse history would seem to entail the endless repetition of past acts. Americans, like the Pyncheons in the haunted looking-glass, would seem doomed to 'doing over again some deed of sin' (21)" (Michael Bell: 216). Thus "history is a series of echoes and reflections" (Gray: 101).

In *Beloved* the characters' memories move in circles: "Beloved is a novel about the traumas and healing powers of memory, or 'rememory' [. . .] adding a connotation

⁷⁸ From a psychological point of view, it is also interesting to recall Rita Gollin's explanation of Hawthorne's complex idea of a self-extended in time and space through the continuum of history and the interdependence of person and place, an idea that coincides with the Gothic conception of identity (152).

of cyclical recurrence” (Kimberly Davis: online). Thus, as in *Seven Gables*, past and present become inextricably melted: “Within a recursive or circular plot, time present and time past lose their distinction as time past intrudes on time present. *Beloved*’s linear, forward movement is interrupted by repetitions and the return of the repressed” (Hinson: 152). In his theory of narrative dynamics, Peter Brooks suggests that,

Repetitions are [. . .] both return to and return of: for instance, returns to origins and returns of the repressed, moving us forward [. . .] toward elucidation, disillusion, and maturity by taking us back, as if in obsessive reminder that we cannot really move ahead until we have understood that still enigmatic past, yet ever pushing us forward, since revelation, tied to the past, belongs to the future. (qtd. in Hinson: 151)⁷⁹

Morrison’s plot is always in a circular motion, going backward into the past and forward into the present, through repetitions that get back to the origin of trauma. This movement is a reflection of the characters’ memories that make them hark back to their traumatic experiences and face them. According to Susan Bowers,

‘Rememorying’ is what Morrison’s characters call it, and it is the central activity in *Beloved*. Because of it the narrative moves constantly back and forth between past and present, mixing time inextricably, as memory escalates its battle against amnesia [. . .]. The characters’ rememorying in *Beloved* epitomizes the novel’s purpose of conjuring up the spirits and experiences of the past and thus ultimately empowering both characters and readers. (103)⁸⁰

As with the rest of the characters, the Gothic heroine Sethe deals with her terrible memories in a circular and erratic way as a result of her difficulties in approaching the unutterable painful history of slavery. They only have access to the past through short flashbacks. When Sethe tries to tell Paul D the terrible secret she has never spoken about before, her infanticide, her attempts are described as “spinning. Round and round the room” and “turning like a slow but steady wheel” around Paul D, “Circling him the way she was circling the subject” (*Beloved*: 159, 161).⁸¹ As Kimberly Davis writes, deconstructionist critics read this passage as a rejection of a linear and teleological reading in favor of a circular experience of time. Davis claims that “Rejecting a linear time-consciousness, Sethe expresses her belief that time is spatial and operates like a wheel, and that past events are waiting to recur” (online):

⁷⁹ Original text quoted: Peter Brooks (1985). *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. New York: Random House.

⁸⁰ In her conversation with Barbara Christian and Nellie Y. McKay, Deborah McDowell asserts that in the “re-memory” there is a revisitation of an actual event, but the result is always different to what was there before, since memory is a creative process (Christian: 210).

⁸¹ Grewal speaks about the circular movement of *Beloved*, which is connected to its orality and, as a consequence, it goes in spirals (1998: 104). Native American writer Paula Gunn Allen says about the cyclic time and narrative structure in *Beloved*: “There’s a meandering, there are circles, but the circles aren’t going in a nice perfect little spiral. Instead, they circle here, then they go over there and they circle, and they go someplace else and they circle, and the circles get bigger [. . .]. It’s an ever expanding, eccentric, erratic meandering spiral” (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 104). Thus Grewal associates the time in *Beloved* with the spiral, a symbol that Hawthorne had already used profusely in *Seven Gables*.

Morrison's theoretical conception of temporality is best expressed through the figure of the wheel - of a circle rolling forward (or occasionally backward) through time, while continually kicking up the dust of the past. Although wheels are circular, I do not believe that Morrison pursues a sense of wholeness that her circular narrative strategy might suggest, because the circles are never completed, the center never reached, and the "rememory" process always unfinished. The figure of the wheel can instead be translated into a progressive temporal strategy for a postmodern society - a strategy of learning from the past but not being paralyzed by its lessons, of forging a loose and flexible synthesis out of the fragments of history, of reaping the benefits of both a diachronic and a synchronic sense of time. (online)

According to Catherine Rainwater, Morrison's circular patterns are postmodern because they are never completed and thus deny traditional narrative closure (qtd. in Kimberly Davis: online).⁸² Barbara H. Rigney finds this circularity to be an example of Julia Kristeva's concept of "woman's time" as circular (nonphallic) and cyclical, reflecting the natural cycles of reproduction and the seasons (qtd. in Kimberly Davis: online).⁸³ On the other hand, Barbara Christian notes that, in African cosmology, time is nonlinear, and thus Morrison's and Sethe's circling finds root in an ancestral worldview (qtd. in Kimberly Davis: online).⁸⁴

1.1.6. Timelessness

The timelessness of the Gothic world affects both *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*. Morrison says that *Beloved* has "no time [. . .] because memory, pre-historic memory, has no time" (1990: 229). *Beloved* herself, as a ghost, insists that she is in a timeless present: "All of it is now it is now there will never be a time when I am not crouching and watching others who are crouching too I am always crouching" (*Beloved*: 210). Marilyn Mobley thinks that the lack of punctuation in the revenant's monologue suggests the "seamlessness of time, [and] the inextricability of the past and present, of ancestors and their progeny" (1990: 196). When *Beloved* starts, Sethe, ostracized from the black community, has lived in the timeless haunted house with her daughter Denver, for almost twenty years until Paul D's arrival: "Sethe's choice [her crime] has propelled them out of history into a 'timeless present'" (Jesser: online). Then, for a short period of time, they apparently get rid of their past, since the newcomer exorcises the baby ghost. It seems possible to escape the no-time world of the house. However, *Beloved*'s reincarnation forces 124's dwellers to face their troubling memories. Sethe's

⁸² For more information, see: Catherine Rainwater (1991). "Worthy Messengers: Narrative Voices in Toni Morrison's Novels". *Texas Studies in Literature* 33.1: 96-113.

⁸³ For more information, see: Barbara Hill Rigney (1991). *The Voices of Toni Morrison*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

⁸⁴ Kimberly Davis argues that even though feminist and poststructuralist readings celebrate the nonlinear narrative as a transgression of a linear reading of time and history, they tend to forget that circles are also laden with ominous symbolism, since they recall the circles of iron (and nooses) surrounding the necks of slaves, particularly the "jewelry" Paul D was forced to wear (online).

recognition of her crawling baby in the revenant and Paul D's departure finally seem to truncate their desires for a future outside the haunted world of the house.

Sethe stops thinking of having a family with Paul D. She confines herself in the "timeless present" of her home with her two daughters, in "a space that floats somewhere between an absent past and an absent future. Into this static fictional present a ghostly past perpetually attempts to insert itself" (Pérez-Torres 1998: 130). Sethe starts to believe that she does not need the outside world. Thus she gets to work late for the first time in sixteen years. She only wishes to be with her daughters. Kimberly Davis thinks that "although Sethe hopes that her timeless world has put a stop to the cycle in which the past can return to haunt, 124's no-time represents a different kind of vicious circle - with the past, present, and future collapsed into one" (online).

When Sethe, Denver and Beloved stay by themselves at 124, the haunted house becomes a sort of womb, "a place of 'no-time'" (Suero-Elliot: online), where they live in a pre-Oedipal state, escaping from "the psychic structures of the dominant socio-symbolic order that cause their pain" (Parker: online). Their voices blend, in their interior "dialogue": "[. . .] [they] summon the most agonized memories of each of the characters as they journey through their actual and ancestral pasts, as each attempts to claim Beloved as a part of themselves, as each names her 'mine'" (Koolish 2001: 175). Their "memories and minds" "combine in a mutual song of possession": "You are mine" (Beloved: 217) (Krumholz 1999: 120). They form a new kind of family outside the patriarchal Western society: "the women put together their histories in an erotics of relational identity outside of heterosexual structures and organizations of desire" (Carden: online).⁸⁵ In their no-time universe: "Sethe's, Beloved's, and Denver's relative positions in time are lost; their separate histories, their private thoughts, their terrible stories, and their bodies are fused, leaving Denver and Sethe possessed by all the dead and lost, all the Beloveds" (Jesser: online).⁸⁶ For Denver this is a healing test, she fully remembers Sethe's past and her own: her nightmares with her mother as a murderer and her imaginary reunions with her idealized father. According to Linda Krumholz, "The ritual of possession breaks through her isolation and grants Denver an experience of the past that can lead her into the future" (1999: 120).

⁸⁵ Teresa N. Washington thinks that "With the male aspect exorcised, Sethe and Denver harness all their power to remember Beloved, and with the latter's physical-spiritual reality, the three women become a trinity of Mother, Daughter, and Daughter-Divinity similar to the cosmic matriarchal trinity [. . .]" (online).

⁸⁶ Linda Koolish says that in this chapter "differentiated characters merge historically, spiritually, and psychologically" (2001: 184).

The ultimate metaphor for the timeless-present the three women live in after Beloved's recognition is the scene where they are skating, alien to the universe that surrounds them. Holland and Awkward see how in this episode the females' "worlds [are] arrested and stationary for the moment" (53). They emphasize the symbolism of the place where they meet: "[. . .] the suspension [. . .] stressed by the frozen creek, a space as liminal as that which Sethe, Beloved, and Denver occupy. As a tributary of the river, the creek serves as a symbolic extension of their complex relationships" (53).⁸⁷ However, Morrison shows us how the characters must escape from the "idyllic" no-time at 124 to have a chance for a future.

The timelessness at 124 coincides with Sethe's idea about time and place. She says:

I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. [. . .]. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened [. . .]. The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there—you who never was there—if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again [. . .]. Because even though it's all over—over and done with—it's going to always be there waiting for you. (Beloved: 35-36)

As Sharon P. Holland and Michael Awkward write, in Sethe's theory of spatial-temporal permanence, "They [places] leave a permanent record of their existence on the physical plane; they exist not only in imaginative activities such as memory and, on another discursive level, (re)memory's formulation as history but also as a tangible presence" (50). Sethe believes that "nothing ever dies" and that the past will always haunt you. We live in a recurring cycle from which we cannot escape. As Kimberly Davis says, her concept of a timeless present reminds us of Jameson's complaints about the postmodernist flattening of time. He believes that, in postmodern society, time has become a perpetual present, depriving us of history. However, Davis argues that Morrison's concept of history is not flat, but rather spreads out to contain the cultural memories of ancestors (online). Karla Holloway points out that

Because slavery effectively placed black women outside of a historical universe governed by a traditional (Western) consideration of time, the *aspect* of their being—the quality and nature of their "state" of being—becomes a more appropriate measure of their reality. In historian Joan Kelly's essays, the exclusion

⁸⁷ According to Sally Keenan, "this scene suggests the absolute identification of the three, not split into subject or object, gazer or gazed upon, an idealized moment of absolute unity, as fragile as the ice they skate upon" (130). Bonnet insists that the relationship between the three females at this point is insane: they have cut off from any contact with other human beings, as shown in the circularity of the ring they form on the ice, and the regression to the pre-Oedipal stage is signaled by the next scene in which Sethe heats milk for the girls. The skating scene is also associated with death, as we can see in the grey, death-like color of the women's skin, which has "turned pewter in the cold and dying light" (online).

of women throughout “historical time” is discussed in terms that clarify how the activities of civilization were determined by and exclusive to males. In defining a “feminist historiography” (a deconstruction of male-centered formulations of historical periods), Kelly focuses on the ways in which history is “rewritten and periodized” according to issues that affect women (6). In black women’s writings, this deperiodization is more fully articulated because of the propensity of this literature to strategically place a detemporalized universe into the centers of their texts. Not surprisingly, black women have experienced the universe that Kelly’s essays on women’s history theoretically discuss. (68)

Holloway adds that for Morrison, myth means “a metaphorical abandonment of time,” to be “freed from the dominance of history” (74).

As Justine Tally argues, Western thought understands time as classified into “past, present, and future”, as completely separated from one another. “Present” is not really relevant while both the “past” and the “future” seem to be much more significant. However, the suspension of disbelief that allows us to understand the figure of Beloved as Sethe’s murdered daughter helps us move beyond the limitations of a Western dichotomy of life and death and onto an African continuum:

The African world view [. . .] does not conceptualize reality as a strict dichotomy, but rather perceives life and experience on a continuum. The past is very much a part of us, of who we understand ourselves to be. In this view what we know as ‘life’ is only one stage or stage of human existence; we lie somewhere on the continuum together with our ancestors and our descendants, and communication from or with them is not only viable, it is an established ‘fact of life.’ (38)

Mae Henderson believes that “Sethe’s actions [. . .] show that the present is bound to the past and the past to the future, and it is precisely the (re)configuration of the past that enables her to refigure the future” (99).

The African view of time establishes a strong fluidity and interconnection between the past, present and the future. According to Holloway,

The structures within African and African-American novels consistently defy the collected eventualities of time “past, present, and future” and in consequence a consideration of aspect may be a more appropriate form through which to consider the chronicle of events in the story. Temporal time represents a narrow specific moment of occurrence. The relatively limited idea of time as being either in the past, the present, or the future is inadequate for a text like *Beloved*, where the pattern of events crisscrosses through these dimensions and enlarges the spaces that they suggest. This novel immediately makes it clear that a traditional (Western) valuation of time is not definitive of the experience it (re)members, instead it is an intrusion on a universe that has existed seemingly without its mediation. Weeks, months, and years become irrelevant to the spite of 124 [. . .]. Living itself is suspended in this story because of the simultaneous presence of the past. (73)⁸⁸

Kimberly Davis suggests that Morrison seems to reject a “modernist diachronic view of history” in order to explore the idea of a more synchronic, spatial experience of

⁸⁸ Morgan Dalphinis discusses how aspect is a better descriptor of those basic cultural concepts traditionally measured by a “(past/present/future) time-base yardstick” (qtd. in Holloway: 77). Aspect would describe action in terms of its duration without a consideration of its place in time. For more information, see: Morgan Dalphinis (1985). *Caribbean and African Languages: Social History, Language, Literature and Education*. London: Karia Press. (rpt. Paul & Co. Pub Consortium, 2006).

time. Morrison's spatial sense of time is not just what critics have called a postmodern form of temporality, but the way African Americans must confront time, since they are denied a future and they are haunted by their past. They are "boxed in" by time: "she [Sethe] cannot construct an ordered timeline of her life, so she attempts her experiment of living only in the present" (online). *Beloved's* reincarnation corroborates the fact that the boundaries between past and present are not clearly differentiated.

After the initial joy of recognizing her dead daughter, the revenant's recriminations begin and Sethe cannot stop apologizing. Nothing can mend the irreparable damage done to *Beloved* or the deep guilt that her mother feels. Sethe gives up. She quits her job, while she seems to be on the verge of insanity: "broken down, finally, from trying to take care of and make up for" (*Beloved*: 243). The females at 124 are locked in a love that exhausts them and leads them to the edge of madness and violence. Their roles change and Sethe is the child punished by the insatiable reincarnation of the past, *Beloved*, who devours her: "Beloved becomes for Sethe a manifestation of history—a living and usurping power, one that controls and subsumes her, one for which she does not have a contesting language" (Pérez-Torres 1999: 190). Sethe is impotent and completely enslaved to her daughter's despotic rule. However, "to cling to the past even to the annihilation of the present and the suspension of the future can only lead to the obliteration of the self. Sethe must come to terms with a past she tries hard to 'disremember,' a process instigated by the arrival of Paul D and *Beloved*, respectively, but she must learn to accept the past without being consumed by it" (Tally: 39).

In *Seven Gables*, Clifford and Hepzibah are confined in the no-time Gothic world of the Pyncheon house, which symbolizes the inner life of the psyche: they have withdrawn from the world and, consequently, from life. Clifford's body and mind are practically destroyed by thirty years of imprisonment and he can only be another ghost in the static universe of his forebears' abode. His sister Hepzibah is also a ghostly prisoner of time who does not want to confront the dynamic society outside her dwelling. She is unable to earn a livelihood with the cent-shop, since she cannot renew her bonds with humankind. Eventually she must retreat to the dismal house. Neither Clifford nor Hepzibah can escape from their timeless existence inside the old house. In their failed attempt to attend church or in their flight they realize that they do not belong to the contemporary world, but to the Gothic abode of their ancestors. The Judge, as the true symbol of the past and the Pyncheons' guilt, is also doomed to be forever a part of the timeless world of the Pyncheons' haunted house and become a new member of his dead forefathers' parade.

1.1.7. Individual and National Trauma in *Beloved*

The Gothic quest of *Beloved's* characters seeks to transform their traumatic experiences into awareness of their own selves and of the blacks' history, without which there cannot build a future. Only by confronting their memories can ex-slaves achieve authentic freedom. They have to face the effects of the brutality they have suffered to recover human dignity. Morrison reveals that ex-slaves have to deal with the psychological trauma created by the cruelty of slavery. As Sethe says, "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another" (*Beloved*: 95). Bowers argues that "The physical escapes of both Sethe and Paul D create the patterns for their psychological escapes: archetypal journeys of courage, descents into almost certain death, and rebirths into beauty and freedom" (104). As Satya P. Mohanty states, "the colonial condition continues unless it is faced as a fundamental ethical challenge" (online). In *Beloved* memory is the ex-slaves' healing mechanism in order to recover their self-appreciation, but it is also "figured as a menacing force in Sethe's life—it seems to stalk her—and she works hard to avoid it. She sees her future as 'a matter of keeping the past at bay' and begins each day with the 'serious work of beating back the past'" (Barnett: 75).⁸⁹

Living in the present was the only chance for some ex-slaves to survive. Before coming to 124, Paul D had been wandering for almost twenty years, trying to forget everything about his past life. However, he learns that living only in the present moment is not life at all; life means "caring and looking forward, remembering and looking back" (*Beloved*: 109). He has suffered so much that his heart is described as a tobacco tin shut tight with a rusty lid, which "by the time he got to 124 nothing in this world could pry [. . .] open" (*Beloved*: 113).⁹⁰ It is when Paul D meets Sethe after eighteen years of separation that the past and present wake to life. Each one of them recalls in the other buried memories which trigger tumultuous emotions connected to their slave days together. The past was too painful for either Paul D or Sethe to remember alone and now they can recover it together: "her story was bearable

⁸⁹ Henry L. Gates believes that the slave and, later the ex-slave, became, in some respects, "a slave to [her]self, a prisoner of [her] own power to recall" (qtd. in Mae Henderson: 91). Original text quoted: Henry L. Gates (1981). "Frederick Douglass and the Language of Self". *Yale Review* 70, 4 (July): 592-611.

⁹⁰ Michele Bonnet argues that Paul D's tobacco tin exemplifies the mental or emotional death inflicted by slavery, one of the most terrible strategies ex-slaves assumed to go on living: "Both as metaphor (it holds the traumatic experiences of the past) and metonymy (it is buried in his chest) the tin box materializes the death of his heart, the death of what the novel shows to be the highest expression of life, love" (online). Krumholz comments that, like Paul D's tobacco tin, Sethe's repressed past is compared to "a rusted box closed inside of her". "This treasure chest combines images of great discovery and wealth with images of death". When she recognizes *Beloved* as her dead baby daughter, Sethe exhumes the past she has hidden inside her. "She feels as if she's found buried treasure" (*Beloved*: 176) (1999: 117).

because it was his as well” (Beloved: 99). Consequently, the wandering man brings hopes for a better present and a different future. For the first time, Sethe thinks that she has a chance “to launch her newer, stronger life with a tender man” (Beloved: 99). Paul D attempts, from the outset of his arrival, to start anew:

Paul D tries to move Sethe away from the destructive past towards a new beginning. Suggesting a movement beyond the structures of patriarchy and the violence of slavery, Paul D realizes the need to rename and re-identify what their past was and, as a result, what their future may be. He wants to put his story next to hers, to rewrite and so reroute the course of their narrative. (Pérez-Torres 1998: 135)

When Paul D gets to the Gothic world of 124, he brings with him new information about the past, which he resurrects and changes at the same time: “his arrival initiates the painful plunge into the past through the sharing of their individual stories, memories and experiences” (Mobley 1990: 193). He tells Sethe what happened to Halle the day of her escape: “he [Paul D] had beaten the spirit away the very day he entered her house and no sign of it since. A blessing, but in its place he brought another kind of haunting: Halle’s face smeared with butter and the clabber too” (Beloved: 96). This disturbing remembrance is added to the painful recollections of Sethe’s past as a slave, “new pictures and old rememories that broke her heart” (Beloved: 95). She fills an empty space in her mind that was “sometimes colored with righteous resentment at what could have been his [Halle’s] cowardice, or stupidity or bad luck—that empty place of no definite news was filled now with a brand-new sorrow and who could tell how many more on the way” (Beloved: 95). Paul D’s revelations and his love for Sethe threaten to put an end to the stillness and out-of-timeness of her life for all those years. The black woman finds difficulty in managing the new past, but also the new future: “In fact, even in freedom she lives in a kind of psychic bondage to the task of ‘keeping the past at bay’ [. . .]. While she had murdered Beloved to save her from the future, she raises Denver by ‘keeping her from the past’” (Mobley 1990: 194).

Paul D’s exorcism does not accomplish its purpose. Even though he “strives generously to bring the reign of the ghost to an end, he brings the past to bear more fiercely on the present. For all his good intentions, Paul D reflects the biases of the predominant culture in his eagerness to participate in a forgetfulness conforming all experience to progress” (Spargo: online). His unsuccessful exorcism activates or lets loose the past. Despite the fact that he gets rid of the ghost which dwells 124, the revenant he fights returns as a woman he will contend with and finally be defeated by. Neither Paul D nor Sethe is still ready to let go of their terrible memories.

Before the Gothic phantom’s appearance, Sethe’s life has been only a matter of fighting the past back. Baby Suggs and she had agreed not to talk about the

unspeakable events of their past lives and Sethe has always given short replies to Denver's questions. Even with Paul D, with whom she had shared some of it, talking is painful. Sethe's refusal to re-live her past makes her life a kind of limbo, where redemption is not possible. Mae Henderson points out that now she "must liberate her present from the burden of the past [. . .]. She must learn to remap the past so that it becomes a blueprint for the future" (90). Even though every mention of her past life hurts, Sethe finds an intense pleasure in telling things to her new guest, since Beloved gets profound satisfaction from her stories. Sethe discovers the healing powers of storytelling: "The extreme and unspeakable nature of the slave woman's oppression enables it, when spoken, to convulse the symbolic order of patriarchy. In doing so, *Beloved* lets us recognize the need for a historically specific differentiation of women's bodies, psyches, and oppressions" (Grewal 1998: 113).

It is through storytelling that Sethe and Denver can finally confront the past: "Like Morrison, Sethe uses the memory of personal experience and what Collingwood calls the 'constructive imagination' as a means of re-membering a dis-membered past, dis-membered family, and community" (Mae Henderson: 90). Both Denver and Beloved are anxious for information and ask Sethe to tell them stories. Their mother only stops when they make the past too vivid for her. Mae Henderson argues that, through storytelling Sethe "construct[s] an alternate text of black womanhood. This power to fashion a counternarrative, thereby rejecting the definitions imposed by the dominant other(s), finally provides Sethe with a self—a past, present, and future" (95). The history of the blacks can only survive by means of the ex-slaves' stories, since the official culture has ignored it.⁹¹ Keenan argues that "An analogy between feeding and story telling is drawn repeatedly throughout the narrative, suggesting that the culture's history and the myths created out of it are its sustenance, its means of survival, especially since that history is constantly under threat of erasure" (122). For Denver, storytelling is also a healing process. She experiences the past through the stories her mother tells Beloved. When Sethe relates her birth story to the revenant, "Denver was seeing it now and feeling it—through Beloved. Feeling how it must have felt to her mother. Seeing how it must have looked" (*Beloved*: 78).

In the last scene Sethe is finally able to face her past when she attacks Mr. Bodwin and thus causes Beloved to flee. According to Gurleen Grewal, the revenant goes away because the past that she represents has finally been confronted (1998: 116). She has accomplished her mission as a "rememory" agent. Once Sethe has dealt

⁹¹ Storytelling is one of Morrison's racial approaches to literature. She "abandons the master's way of writing history in favor of the African style of storytelling called griot, which moves in a non-linear motion through the story" (Fuston-White: online). Original text quoted: Cornel West (1996). "Black Strivings in a Twilight Civilization". *The Future of the Race*. New York: Random: 53-113.

face to face with the past, she can hope to have a life in the present and even a possible future with Paul D. Scot Hinson argues that the original violence within a community can be compared to the trauma that some people suffer: the event at its root is repressed and forgotten, however, the person repeats it without knowing it (150). To get rid of the past, the traumatized person must re-experience the upsetting event so as to reenact the feelings of that moment. According to Freud, "the process has no curative effect if, by some peculiar chance, there is no development of emotion. It is apparently these emotional processes upon which the illness of the patient and the restoration of health are dependent" (qtd. in Hinson: 150).⁹² In the post-traumatic stress syndrome, the most crucial part of the healing is the "confrontation with the original trauma and feeling the pain again" (Bowers: 104).

Beloved's function of rememory is not finished until Sethe has finally coped with the traumatic experience that initiates the haunting. Thus John Forrester argues, "the Freudian experience of 'memory' has less to do with the recollection of an 'event' than with the repetition of a structure" (qtd. in Nicholls: 135).⁹³ Memory leads a double life, since, as Krell points out, it is both "the source of the malady with which it is concerned and the *therapy* it proffers" (qtd. in Nicholls: 135).⁹⁴ According to Peter Nicholls, remembering is related to a "deferred action", which is a product of the excessive character of the first event, and requires a second event to release its traumatic force (135). Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis say: "only the occurrence of the second scene can endow the first one with pathogenic force" (qtd. in Nicholls: 136).⁹⁵ Andrew Benjamin points out, it is not simply a matter of recovering a lost memory, but rather of the restructuring, which forms the past in retrospect as "the original site [. . .] comes to be reworked". He adds, "The original event is thus no longer the same as itself. The effect of the present on the past is to cause a repetition of the 'event' within which something new is taking place" (qtd in Nicholls: 136, 137).⁹⁶

Both the individual and the community need to face their ghosts to start anew. However, to get rid of psychological scars is not an easy task. It requires the whole

⁹² Original text quoted: John Rickman (ed.) (1989). *The Origin of Psychoanalysis*. A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud. New York: Doubleday.

⁹³ Original text quoted: John Forrester (1990). *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan, and Derrida*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁹⁴ Original text quoted: David F. Krell (1990). *Of Memory, Reminiscence and Writing: On the Verge*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

⁹⁵ Jean Laplanche claims that "nothing can be inscribed in the human unconscious except in relation to at least two events which are separated from one another in time by a moment of maturation that allows the subject to react in two ways to an initial experience or to the memory of that experience" (qtd. in Plasa: 155). Original text quoted: Jean Laplanche (1989). *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*. Trans. David Macey. Oxford: Blackwell. John Forrester defines this movement as "the articulation of two moments with a time delay" (qtd. in Nicholls: 136).

⁹⁶ Original text quoted: Andrew Benjamin (1991). *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde*. London and New York: Routledge.

community to succeed in this heroic Gothic deed: “*Beloved* combines the personal quest theme with the collective memory of racial brutality, for although apocalyptic literature features the destiny of the individual and persona salvation, its ‘overall perspective is still that of the community’ [. . .]” (Bowers: 102-103). *Beloved* as a Gothic “narrative becomes a collective, interactive enterprise. The effect of several individuals dealing with their pasts is a collective remembrance and purging” (Grewal 1998: 103). The characters’ memories become communal and can only be healed collectively: “memory exists as a communal property of friends, of family, of a people. The magic of memory is that it is interpersonal, that it is the basis for constructing relationships with the other who also remembers” (Rushdy 1990: 321-322).⁹⁷ In their collective exorcism the black female community finally defeats, at least partially, the past which has haunted them.

In *Beloved* Morrison highlights the Gothic quest of retrieving the traumatic past as a national need. National trauma cannot be overcome unless it is coped with. In his discussion of W. E. B. Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk*, Arnold Rampersad talks about Black Americans’ recovery of history as both a personal and a national necessity:

[Du Bois’s] point of view is clear. Admitting and exploring the reality of slavery is necessarily painful for a black American, but only by doing so can he or she begin to understand himself or herself and American and Afro-American culture in general. The normal price of the evasion of the fact of slavery is intellectual and spiritual death. Only by grappling with the meaning and legacy of slavery can the imagination, recognizing finally the temporality of the institution, begin to transcend it. (qtd. in Krumholz 1999: 108)⁹⁸

As Krumholz says, “The repression of the historical past is as psychologically damaging as the repression of personal trauma” (1999: 108).

However, even though blacks need to confront their past as a race, forgetting is also necessary to keep living: “This tension between needing to bury the past as well as needing to revive it, between a necessary remembering and an equally necessary forgetting, exists in both the author and her narrative” (Rushdy 1998: 142). Morrison suggests that both processes, remembering and forgetting, are necessary to move into the future: “although Morrison promotes a delving into the historical past, she realizes that the past must be processed and sometimes forgotten in order for one to function in the present and to ‘pass on’ to the future” (Kimberly Davis: online). When Paul D comes back once *Beloved* has left the house, he tells Sethe: “Sethe [. . .] me and you,

⁹⁷ David Lawrence expresses similar views (87).

⁹⁸ Original text quoted: Arnold Rampersad (1989). “Slavery and the Literary Imagination: Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk*”. *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*. Eds. Deborah E. Mc Dowell and Rampersad. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow [. . .]. You your best thing, Sethe. You are” (Beloved: 273).⁹⁹ According to Grewal,

If the task of the novel has been to lift the “veil behind the veil” that has been “disremembered and unaccounted for” and “deliberately forgot,” it must also eventually draw the veil [. . .]. Morrison covers the exposed wound of the past with the repeated statement, “it was not a story to pass on” [. . .]. The writer is careful to note at the end that in history or narrative, all cannot be accounted for; there remains that which remains unspoken, locked. The gaps and silences become quietly recriminating, refuting the possibility of any posthumous recompense that claims to be adequate to the past. We are left with an image of a lock, “a latch latched” and covered with the “apple-green bloom” of lichen. At a certain point, authorial control gives way to unaccountability and, metaphorically, to the agency of natural elements: the night, the rain, the wind: “The rest is weather” [. . .]. The image of the weathered lock signals a closure, reminding us that for survival, forgetting is as important as remembering. But his forgetting is not an act of the unconscious. It is the forgetting enabled by a therapeutic working through of the repressed material of historical trauma. (1998: 116-117)

1.1.8. History as an Ascending Spiral Curve

In what might be seen as a similar light, Michael D. Bell claims that, in *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne faces the contradictions between the cyclical and linear views of history (213). Even though Hawthorne emphasizes the approach to history as a cycle, he also seems to accept that historical change is possible. He contrasts the concept of existential guilt to the hope for a new beginning. At the core of his romance is the conflict between history and determinism. As Holgrave says, “it will startle you to see what slaves we are slaves to by-gone times—to Death, if we give the matter the right word!” (Gables: 183). The question is whether man can escape the guilt his ancestors have incurred. Thus the novel oscillates between the power of a static determination and the possibility of dynamic progress. Klaus P. Hansen sees in the figure on the top of the barrel-organ the most suggestive depiction of an inexorable fate. This microcosm is a reflection of the macrocosm, revealing that the ultimate consequence of determinism is utter senselessness (97).

Despite the static nature of many parts of *Seven Gables*, we cannot say that there is no progress: “If we conceive of the circles of history in terms of the ancient figure of the wheel of fate, then the death of the judge and much else in the history of the family would make it appear that the wheel is merely going around. But the union of Pyncheon and Maule suggests that the wheel is moving somewhere as it revolves” (Waggoner 1967: 406). Holgrave’s and Phoebe’s marriage seems to break at least partially the circular movement of the story and makes us believe that history is moving

⁹⁹ Morrison points out that “Beloved has no place there now. Sethe is now going to concentrate on taking care of herself, the beloved that is inside her which is her. ‘She’ is the beloved, not the child” (Carabí 1993: 110).

ahead. However, we cannot be completely certain whether history provides reasons for hope or whether, as Hawthorne suggests, great mistakes can never be corrected or erased. In fact, we know that for some characters, such as Clifford and Hepzibah, who have suffered much, “the past can never be entirely obliterated” (Cunliffe 1964: 99).

There are elements in this romance that support the idea of determinism and some others which emphasize progress and hope: “there are tokens of change as well as tokens of repetition in *Seven Gables* (Michael Bell: 216). Among the aspects of the tale which highlight hopefulness and advancement, I will mention the moment when Holgrave hypnotizes Phoebe, as his ancestor did before with the haughty Alice Pyncheon, and does not take advantage of his power. Besides, his marriage with Phoebe is also contrasted with the abortive relationship between their ancestors one hundred years before. In addition, Hyatt Waggoner claims that “the common impression that the work [*Seven Gables*] simply wavers between belief in progress and despair of any escape from the past may be corrected by a closer look at the implications of the emphatic Eden imagery [. . .]” (1967: 407). Many critics have supported the idea that Hawthorne’s romance evinces significant hopeful signs, “The plot of *The House of the Seven Gables* is dominated by conventional devices and figures associated with historical progress” (Michael Bell: 217).¹⁰⁰

There is a clear recognition of the fact that economic-historical progress is achieved through democratic advances and the decline of aristocracy. John Gatta believes that social advancement is gradual and brought about by Providence. Human efforts are powerless in themselves, they can just assist provisionally in the subtler larger design of Providence: “man’s best-directed effort accomplishes a kind of dream, while God is the sole worker of realities” (Gables: 180). He argues that the belief in the benevolent and mysterious designs of a hidden God, “was one of the few points of Christian theology to which Hawthorne himself gave fairly explicit creedal assent” (39).¹⁰¹ Thus personal development is wholly dependent on God’s enigmatic schemes and Hawthorne’s story illustrates His inscrutable ways (39). The opening of the cent-shop, which has beneficial effects for Hepzibah, or Judge Pyncheon’s death, which

¹⁰⁰ Frank Battaglia believes that Hawthorne fully agrees that human history is brightening (590): “As to the main point—may we never live to doubt it!—as to the better centuries that are coming, the artist was surely right” (Gables: 180).

¹⁰¹ For more information, see: Hubert Hoeltje (1962). *Inward Sky: The Mind and the Heart of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press: 460-461; supplemented by Leonard J. Fick (1955). *The Light Beyond*. Westminster, Md.: Newman Press; and Hyatt Waggoner (1963: esp. 13-18- 28-29, and 248). Many critics, including Hoeltje, Randall Stewart, W. Stacy Johnson—and, more recently, Joseph Schwartz and Raymond Benoit—have tended to place Hawthorne in or near “the central catholic tradition of Christian humanism” (Waggoner’s phrase). Dissenters from this view find in Hawthorne’s fiction a skeptic and secularist perspective more than a Christian approach: Nina Baym (1976: esp. 9, 68-69, and 117-118).

establishes Clifford's innocence and prepares the path for redemption, seem to be providentially fortunate (40-41).¹⁰²

In the nineteenth century, there were different attempts to create an ideal society, such as the experiment of Brook Farm, and the communitarian reformers of Hawthorne's days—including his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Peabody—were “proclaiming the imminent realization of the kingdom of God on earth.”¹⁰³ According to Gatta, the final apocalyptic imagery that overwhelms the end of the story has been seen as the underground of sacred history advancing toward a final metaphysical fulfillment (46). Hawthorne, Gatta points out, resorts to the acquisition of riches as a means to express the transhistorical spiritual progress of the human community,

Not even the author of the Book of Revelation, perhaps the most bizarre and influential of all progressive chronicles, could describe the spiritual glories of the New Heaven and New Earth without resorting to pictures of material wealth—appeals far more glittering and opulent than Hawthorne's ingenuous report of the wealth regained by his New England saints at the close of *The House of the Seven Gables*. (48)

In *Seven Gables* Hawthorne represents the apparent advancement of society and history through the symbolic figure of “the ascending spiral curve” proposed by Clifford on the train when he is talking to a surprised passenger:

You are aware, my dear Sir [. . .] that all human progress is in a circle; or, to use a more accurate and beautiful figure, in an ascending spiral curve. While we fancy ourselves going straight forward, and attaining, at every step, an entirely new position of affairs, we do actually return to something long ago tried and abandoned, but which we now find etherealized, refined, and perfected to its ideal. The past is but a coarse and sensual prophecy of the present and future. (Gables: 259-260)

The spiral curve, as Gatta writes, is the figure for human progress commonly used by the romantic historians (43).¹⁰⁴ Beebe, among other critics, claims that “the figure which describes the novel is not a line, but a circle spinning out from a central core, its conclusion contained in its starting point. Or, better, the geometric figure which more accurately describes *The House of the Seven Gables* is, as Clifford Pyncheon says of life in general, an ‘ascending spiral curve’” (3).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² According to Gatta, Hawthorne affirms the individual pilgrim's advance, but he is more ambiguous about the apparent progress of society and of secular history (43).

¹⁰³ For more information, see: Elizabeth P. Peabody (1966). “Christ's Idea of Society” and the “Plan of the West Roxbury Community.” Both appeared in the *Dial*, in 1841 and 1842, and are reprinted in *Selected Writings of the American Transcendentalists*. Ed. George Hochfield. New York: New American Library: 336-339 and 385-391.

¹⁰⁴ For more information, see: David Levin (1959). *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

¹⁰⁵ Kleiman compares this “ascending spiral curve” with the metaphor of the “spiral profusion of red blossoms” of the Pyncheon garden. He views progress as a process which involves growth, change and decay (301).

On the whole we can say that this story is not a static portrait, but a dynamic narrative, “Throughout most of the book, the narrative seems to revolve within a circle, but eventually the frame is pierced—the House of the Seven Gables is abandoned—and a new cycle is begun. Since the new cycle begins in the old and overlaps it, the end of the novel is organically related to the beginning” (Beebe: 15). Michael Bell also thinks that “in *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne turns uncritically to the great conventional symbol of progress—the triumph of light over darkness” (219), since, at the conclusion of the romance, Phoebe becomes the ultimate representative of the forces of progress as well as of the forces of sunshine. In Hawthorne’s ending, Richard Gray sees that “the past can apparently be denied; the destructive consequences of earlier crimes may, as a matter of moral choice, be evaded; in sum, progress would seem to be possible” (102).

Both Clifford—on his railway trip—and Holgrave—before he falls in love—plead the case for change. The old bachelor, in his exhilarating speech after the Judge’s death, not only introduces the symbolic figure for progress, “the ascending spiral curve,” but also advocates radical changes in society, such as his defense of historical nomadism:

It is my firm belief and hope, that these terms of roof and hearth-stone, which have so long been held to embody something sacred, are soon to pass out of men’s daily use, and be forgotten. Just imagine, for a moment, how much of human evil will crumble away, with this one change! What we call real estate—the solid ground to build a house on—is the broad foundation on which nearly all the guilt of this world rests. A man will commit almost any wrong—he will heap up an immense pile of wickedness, a hard as granite, and which will weigh as heavily upon his soul, to eternal ages—only to build a great, gloomy, dark-chambered mansion, for himself to die in, and for his posterity to be miserable in. (Gables: 263)

However, it seems that Hawthorne opposes radical change that will endanger the whole society and defends a moderate and gradual change.¹⁰⁶

Hawthorne contrasts Holgrave’s democratic spirit to the weight of the past. The daguerreotypist is the Emersonian type of man who does not believe in the values of the past and considers it as a burden. Lawrence Hall believes that “Hawthorne felt about his own generation as Holgrave feels about his. They must slough off the second-hand arrangements of the defunct past and work out their own relation to the world. This was their responsibility according to the best theories of democratic individualism” (382). Holgrave condemns the past passionately in his conversation with Phoebe in chapter 12. The young reformer attacks tradition and conservatism while defending a radical renewal of everything: “the artist inveighed against the Past and thought incineration the best cure for the ills of the House of Seven Gables” (Francis

¹⁰⁶ For more information, see: Richard A. Yoder (1974). “Transcendental Conservatism and *The House of the Seven Gables*.” *The Georgia Review* 28: 33-51.

Battaglia: 582).¹⁰⁷ The daguerreotypist realizes that they drag the burden of bygone times and rebels against the influence of the past on the present:

We read in Dead Men's books! We laugh at Dead men's jokes, and cry at Dead Men's pathos! We are sick of Dead Men's diseases, physical and moral, and die of the same remedies with which dead doctors killed their patients! We worship the living Deity, according to Dead men's forms and creeds! Whatever we seek to do, of our own free motion, a Dead Man's icy hand obstructs us! Turn our eyes to what point we may, a Dead Man's white, immitigable face encounters them, and freezes our very heart! And we must be dead ourselves, before we can begin to have our proper influence on our own world, which will then be no longer our world, but the world of another generation, with which we shall have no shadow of a right to interfere. I ought to have said, too, that we live in Dead men's houses; as, for instance, in this of the seven gables! (Gables: 183)

Joel R. Kehler claims that “Holgrave’s is the Adamic stance of which R. W. B. Lewis speaks in showing how the ‘case against the past’ became the core of American notions of progress in the nineteenth century” (148).¹⁰⁸

Gatta says that the young reformer seems to be right about his perception of the evils man inherits from the past, but Hawthorne does not find his radical conception of social progress acceptable: the daguerreotypist is “misguided in his expectation that society can be wholly transformed within the immediate future” (44). Holgrave suffers from a naive idea of social reform. His error lies in expecting a radical change, a revolution. However, he “has to learn a moderation that sets a speed limit for history and only after having done so, is he worthy of a happy ending” (Hansen: 98). Thus the author’s criticism of Holgrave does not seem to point to the artist’s belief in advancement, but his credence in immediate progress (Michael Bell: 217). The reformer has to accept the past before he constructs a new future: “progress must be built carefully on the pyramid of the past” (Alfred Levy: 464).

Holgrave stands for the values of youth: spirituality, inexperience, impatience, hate of the past, passion. In his behavior we can see the eternal rebellion of the young against the authority of their ancestors. According to Leo B. Levy, Hawthorne’s hopes for progress are partially invested in the young reformer and it is through his opinions that he transmits his “own rather vague belief in the improvement of society through periodic repudiations of the past” (160). For Hawthorne, young people, Holgrave and Phoebe, can be a promise of a better future. Their youth and passion seem to make it possible to hope for wonderful things.

In *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne seems to favor slow change in contrast to Holgrave’s early radical ideas. Referring to Uncle Venner’s suit, he says of the

¹⁰⁷ Clark Griffith agrees with Battaglia. He believes that Holgrave “a forerunner of the materialistic purifiers of Blithedale” (388). According to Buitenhuis, “Holgrave goes beyond attacking the reign of the dead and the class system: he also attacks the root ideas of a conservative, capitalist society—tradition, succession, and property” (1991: 99).

¹⁰⁸ See: *The American Adam* where Lewis discusses Clifford’s Adamism rather than Holgrave’s (115).

reformer's initial radical attitude: "His error lay, in supposing that this age, more than any past or future one, is destined to see the tattered garments of Antiquity exchanged for a new suit, instead of gradually renewing themselves by patchwork" (Gables: 180). According to Wayne Caldwell, "Uncle Venner, through his dress and his relationship with the other characters, is the emblematic representation of this slow change, of mellowing with age into wisdom" (41). This is the position that Hawthorne adopts at the end of this romance when the daguerreotypist is "transformed from a wild-eyed reformer, despiser of the past, and hater of property to a landowner and conservative who laments that the Judge's country house is built not of stone but of wood!" (Buitenhuis 1991: 115).

As Waggoner points out, the tension Hawthorne experienced between the conservative and liberal views of history is established in *Seven Gables* (1967: 409). Phoebe, the woman, is the conservative. Holgrave, the reformer, rebels against the past. Both conservative and radical get married. Their union has a great effect on Holgrave, who changes his attitude and comes closer to Phoebe's conservative point of view. The daguerreotypist begins to accept the importance of the past in our lives. He increases his domestic values. Like Hawthorne himself who had also moved from his earlier days of communitarian idealism, the young reformer seems to realize the modest role that man has in transforming society:

And when, with the years settling more weightily upon him, his early faith should be modified by inevitable experience, it would be with no harsh and sudden revolution of his sentiments. He would still have faith in man's brightening destiny, and perhaps love him all the better, as he should recognize his helplessness in his own behalf, and haughty faith with which he began life, would be well bartered for a humbler one at its close, *in discerning that man's best directed effort accomplishes a kind of dream, while God is the sole worker of realities.* (Gables: 180; emphasis added)

Although the end of the novel is ambiguous, "the dead hand of the past, for which Hawthorne had both a healthy respect and distrust, is in part lifted" (Buitenhuis 1991: 10). Hugo McPherson argues that Hawthorne's ultimate statement about the relation of past and present is that "The individual must, moreover, discover, as Holgrave the artist does, the meaning of the past—of his own posterity of seven generations—and make this meaning relevant to the problems of the present" (144). The past has to be overcome to be fully understood. He also claims that this involves an understanding of the relationship of America to England, "it meant the abandonment of all European pretensions and the marriage of the forces of wealth and power to the now educated native imagination. The marriage of Holgrave and Phoebe, then, is America's attainment of mature independence" (145). It seems clear that Hawthorne intends to advocate for the present at the conclusion, despite the fact that we most feel the

weight of the past throughout the romance. However, at the end of the book, the decaying structure of the Pyncheon mansion is still rather strong, “Hawthorne leaves the old house still standing as a powerful symbol of the past” (Buitenhuis 1991: 118).

1.2. Colonialism

The mystery of the Eastern land is thus seen to be the conflict of European ‘colonialism’—which wished to hold the so-called ‘East Indian’ territory in vassalage—with the native creativity of humble colonists who wished to make it a ‘garden-ground’. The Puritans and their eighteenth-century commercial heirs failed to appreciate the indigenous value of the place: the natives, over all opposition and tyranny, finally made it their own. In these terms, the ‘secret’ of the Eastern land disappears in the achieved dream of democracy; it is a free land over which the now united Pyncheons and Maules will not struggle.

HUGO MCPHERSON, *Hawthorne as a Myth-Maker: A Study in Imagination*.

Both *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* deal with colonialism. Hawthorne explores the colonial past and its relationship with the democratic present: “*Seven Gables* is a novel about history, a meditation on the effects of New England’s colonial and Puritan past on the nineteenth-century present” (Buitenhuis 1991: 46). *Seven Gables* provides an understanding of the Puritan population of New England in the mid-nineteenth century, a society in decline, whose social conflicts reflected its colonial heritage. European Puritan colonists arrived in the New World, massacred Native Americans and took possession of the Indian territories. This theft is at the root of the colonial society of New England. In nineteenth-century New England, privileged—“aristocratic”—classes, who usually owned the land, still kept the power and wealth. However, the working classes—“plebeians”—were struggling for their rights. Hawthorne depicts how colonialism had left its marks on the nineteenth-century society of Salem: privileged classes still used their wealth and influence and class distinctions were still applied. Even though he focuses on the nineteenth-century class struggle, he hints at the Indian dispossession through the Pyncheon claim to the Eastern territory and he also deals with slavery as another pillar of the European colonial system. Hawthorne depicts a society in transition toward democracy.

On the other hand, Morrison copes with the brutal exploitation of non-European cultures by Western societies, the feudal and colonial institution of slavery. As Suero-Elliot says, her historical revisioning

defines the U.S. as an oppressive colonialist nation, thus challenging official historical narratives of democratic benevolence. It also places the U.S. as a nation in a parallel position to Sethe and slavery; Sethe and her relationship to slavery as a colonialist institution embodies in microcosm a specifically postcolonial facet of Morrison’s historical rememory. In this equation, Sethe represents national identity as defined by colonial constructs. (online)

However, Morrison focuses on the postcolonial society, the aftermath of slavery. According to Eva Cherniavsky, she depicts a colonial domination which “systematically displaces both indigenous peoples and nonwhite labor from the social and symbolic territory of the consensual Euro-American state” (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 7).¹⁰⁹ As Gurleen Grewal argues, to analyze *Beloved* we can use the term *domestic* (or internal) *colonialism* “developed by black historians in the 1960s and early 1970s to refer to the experience of black people in America” (1998: 7). Robert Allen writes, “the most profound conclusion to be drawn from a survey of the black experience in America [is] to consider Black America as a semi-colony” (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 7).¹¹⁰ Social critic Harold Cruse explains it in the following terms: “The only factor which differentiates the Negro’s status from that of a pure colonial status is that his position is maintained in the ‘home’ country in close proximity to the dominant racial group” (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 7).¹¹¹ Thus *Beloved*, in its concern with postcolonial issues, can be defined as postcolonial gothic literature. Mohanty claims that “[*Beloved*] is one of the most challenging of postcolonial texts because it indicates the extent to which the search for a genuinely noncolonial moral and cultural identity depends on a revisionary historiography. We cannot really claim ourselves morally or politically until we have reconstructed our collective identity, reexamined our dead and our disremembered” (online).

1.2.1. Class Struggle in *Seven Gables*

In *Seven Gables* there is a struggle between the aristocratic and colonial inheritance of the old genteel class and the democratic aspirations of the low classes.¹¹² Punter points out that this romance is the “one which follows through most closely the arguments about class relations” which characterize British Gothic (173). It is true that the Pyncheons are not real aristocrats. They belong to an upper middle class. However, they play the part of the privileged class as opposed to the democratic low class, as in British gothic romances which depicted the social conflict between aristocrats and plebeians.

¹⁰⁹ Original text quoted: Eva Cherniavsky (1996). “Subaltern Studies in a U.S. Frame”. *Boundary 2*, XXIII: 85-110.

¹¹⁰ Original text quoted: Robert Allen (1970). *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday.

¹¹¹ Original text quoted: Harold Cruse (1968). *Rebellion or Revolution?* New York: William Morrow and Co..

¹¹² James R. Lowell, an eminent New England poet and historian, wrote to Hawthorne to tell him that *The House of the Seven Gables* was “the most valuable contribution to New England history that has been made”, since it makes a connection between ancestry and descent, “which historians so carefully overlook. Yesterday is commonly looked upon and written about as of no kin to To-day, though the one is legitimate child of the other, and has its veins filled with the same blood” (qtd. in Julian Hawthorne: 391).

Early Gothic romances dealt with a feudal society in which courtly classes had the power. The Puritan society of New England was aristocratic and feudalistic as the society of Europe was. In Lawrence S. Hall's words, "The theme of this romance has to do with inherited sin, the sin of aristocratic pretensions against a moral order which in the judgement of an equalitarian like Hawthorne, calls for a truer and higher evaluation of man. For the inheritance of the Pyncheon family proves to be no more than the antagonism of the old Colonel and his world toward things democratic" (376). Nineteenth-century New England society was hierarchical and feudalistic, supported by an elaborate set of hereditary legitimacies and distinctions: "Within this system, then, each man was born to an assigned place to which he must tie himself and submit, for a certain place in the social hierarchy was a God-given right" (Dryden 1971: 300). Maule's shack suggests the hut of the medieval serf while "Colonel Pyncheon, with his aristocratic pretensions and dreams of a great fiefdom, assumes the role of the usurping feudal lord, confiscating property and thwarting incipient democracy in the New World" (Kehler: 143).

In *Seven Gables* Hawthorne develops his thoughts about democracy, which were profoundly influenced by his experience at the Brook Farm community at West Roxbury.¹¹³ *Seven Gables* is "a romance about the emancipation of a family from a hereditary curse, and, correspondingly, of a nation from the legacy of colonialism" (Buitenhuis 1991: 29). Hawthorne shows us the triumph of democracy, while depicting the strong hold of the aristocratic past: "the descendants of the old aristocracy continue to have influence long after their energy and moral influence have withered. Resistance to the democratic impulse, as represented by the daguerreotypist Holgrave, is correspondingly strong" (Buitenhuis 1991: 47).

In the legend of "Alice Pyncheon", class distinctions are clearly revealed when Gervase Pyncheon addresses Matthew Maule's son by the title "Goodman", which emphasizes the carpenter's low social status. On the other hand, the craftsman does not accept the formal manners of the hierarchical society of the nineteenth century. Even though he is expected to go to the back door, "where servants and work-people were usually admitted" (Gables: 191), he uses the front door. The black slave, Scipio, says of him, "Lord-a-mercy, what a great man he be, this carpenter fellow! [. . .]. Anybody think he beat on the door with his biggest hammer!" (Gables: 192). Even in a period when colonialism was deeply rooted in the society, Matthew Maule does not

¹¹³ Hawthorne participated in the Brook Farm project, an idealistic experiment based on the ideas of the French Utopian and socialist thinker, Charles Fourier. Hawthorne had also read another radical French writer, Pierre Proudhon, who believed that property was theft; a concept which is the starting point of *Seven Gables*. Hawthorne was deeply influenced by this episode and reflected it in his romances, mostly in *The Blithedale Romance*.

assent to the ranks established in his community. This type of distinction was natural in the days of the Colonel, who belonged to a world in which differences between social classes were accepted as habitual, but since then it had become almost unethical. In this chapter Hawthorne is denouncing “the stratification of society according to birth and wealth, and proscribes these aristocratic anachronisms as the danger threatening the vitality of democracy and of brotherhood—inequalities especially flagrant in the New England of his day” (William Stein: 153).¹¹⁴

As Baym has shown, besides the struggle between aristocracy and democracy, in *Seven Gables* there is a romantic conflict—very typical of the Gothic tradition—between nature and civilization, represented respectively by the Maules and the Pyncheons. Nature stands for passion, spontaneity and creativity, whereas civilization symbolizes regulation and control. Colonel Pyncheon, the Gothic villain, is a man of law who does not have a true bond with the spot he wants to own. He builds the house of the seven gables, the House of Man, on the same place where Matthew Maule had his hut, the House of Nature.¹¹⁵ Thus the Pyncheons are linked to the arrival of civilization that replaces nature. They represent the forces of regulation when they resort to the law to achieve their aims: to seize Maule’s plot and to imprison Clifford in order to appropriate his inheritance (156). In Baym’s words:

[Colonel] Pyncheon represents the advent of civilization, and civilization replaces a creative and expressive relation to nature with one wholly materialistic. Land is now desired as a material possession rather than an expressive medium. Apparently, the whole apparatus of law exists to further and protect the aims of materialistic greed; it is created by men like Pyncheon and serves their interests. Pyncheon’s criminal acquisition of Maule’s land, by having him dispossessed and executed as a witch, is legal [. . .]. In brief, Hawthorne’s myth of the origins of civilization founds it on a crime. The fact and nature of that crime irrevocably determine the character of the civilization. Maule and the qualities he represents are officially driven out of civilization. The remaining civilized beings are oppressed, distorted, and incomplete. Moreover, the structure itself begins immediately to decay, because, by refusing to permit the open existence of energy and creativity, the civilization cuts its own lifelines. Because societies composed of people and not things, the Pyncheon civilization, based on hard materialism and formalism that are destructive to people, must eventually destroy itself. As *The House of the Seven Gables* opens, that destruction is at hand. (1976: 156-157)

1.2.2. Racial Oppression and Class Struggle in *Beloved*

Beloved focuses on racial exploitation rather than class struggle. “Whitepeople”, especially men, are the oppressors in Morrison’s story. African American Gothic expresses anxieties towards the dominant white society, which subjugates slaves and ex-slaves. The torture the whites exert on black slaves reaches Gothic extremes of

¹¹⁴ Lawrence Hall expresses similar views (376).

¹¹⁵ In this dissertation I use Joel Kehler’s terms: the House of Man and the House of Nature.

cruelty and violence. When Baby Suggs breaks down, she accuses the whites of being the source of all the blacks' suffering. However, Morrison reminds us that the nineteenth century was not hard exclusively for African Americans. *Beloved* not only reflects racial oppression, but also class struggle. At the time of the story, white indentured servants were treated almost like slaves. The only difference was that their servitude was for a limited term. Amy, the white girl, is an indentured servant who helps Sethe escape and becomes Denver's midwife. Amy's mother had worked for her owner to pay for her passage and, after dying, her daughter had to liquidate her mother's debt with her labor. Even if the white girl is sometimes rough with Sethe, she does not abandon the slave or turn her in. The story of the pregnant black woman's rescue by the white servant points to female companionship and cooperation, a typical theme of Female Gothic fiction, as well as interracial solidarity.

Amy tells Sethe that she is going to Boston to get some velvet. Her desire for the colored cloth resembles Baby Suggs's and Sethe's. They have endured a life of hardship and denial and, as Ann-Janine Morey has pointed out, their yearning for color is their yearning for life (online).¹¹⁶ Linda Krumholz points out how the situations of Amy and Sethe are somehow alike: "The similarity between the two women's situations supercedes their mutual, racially based mistrust, indicating that class relations (as well as differences in inherited cultural values) are central in shaping racial differences" (1999: 113-114). These three women suffer the dynamics of domination and subordination that are characteristic of the patriarchal white society, even though the black female is also racially marginalized.

Morrison depicts the transition between the slavery system and the ex-slave's incorporation into the paid labor force. In contrast to the black slave who serves his master without any compensation but the right to go on living, the free black receives some money. When a private called Keane, who has been with the Massachusetts 54th, tells him that blacks were paid to fight, Paul D can only look at him with wonder and envy. Then the miracle happens when he arrives at Trenton. He is standing in a street when he hears a white man who calls him to help unload two trunks. Afterwards the white man gives him a coin. For a while Paul D does not even know what to do with

¹¹⁶ Ann-Janine Morey says that color is something typically associated with women, who give them innumerable names and use them as a metaphoric shorthand in assigning value: colorlessness is boring and full of color is to be rich (online). *Beloved's* love for life is clearly seen in her fascination for the two orange patches in the quilt. Sethe also claims color in her last days with *Beloved*. She plans a garden of vegetables and flowers and buys ribbons and cloth to make garments for her two daughters: "To reclaim color [. . .] is part of reclaiming the inseparability of body and spirit and the historic witness of the enduring community [. . .] for Morrison, color, once part of the language of oppression, is being transformed into the language of life itself" (Morey: online). Pérez-Torres argues that "The punning on Baby Suggs's fixation with 'color' is an appropriate verbal device for a narrative concerning and arising from a black culture" (1999: 184).

the money or whether anybody would sell him anything. Finally, he buys some withered turnips; "his first earned purchase made him glow" (*Beloved*: 269).

Despite Paul D's joy at being paid for his work, social oppression does not end for slaves after liberation. Even as free individuals, African Americans are second or even third class citizens. Baby Suggs tells Stamp Paid that blacks are in this world to look for the back door. They cannot do the things whites do. They are not in control of their lives, as free human beings should be. The old black woman is still the whites' servant, for whom she makes shoes, the symbol of her bondage after her "freedom". Shoes are associated with dirtiness, inferring blacks' condition as the lowest servants. Sethe cannot accept this situation. That is why, she prefers to steal supplies from the restaurant where she works rather than wait at the back door of Phelps store, as all of the other blacks do, until all the whites are served. Even though Sethe feels guilty because of her petty thefts, her pride does not let her stand at the back door, as a second-class human being.

Freed life for blacks is not the paradise it was believed to be. Like slave life, it is an everyday test. Whites have the power and blacks have to work for them to receive very low salaries, with little hope of improving their living conditions. Ex-slaves' occupations are the worst and least paid: servants, such as Janey; prostitutes; cooks, like Sethe; workers at the slaughterhouse, like Stamp Paid and Paul D. Even the educated blacks, as Stamp Paid thinks, have a very difficult life: they have "the weight of the whole race sitting there" (*Beloved*: 198). They have to survive in a hostile world and prove that whites' ideas about them are wrong. This is a hard mission to accomplish in a society that discriminates against blacks.

As a contrast to the cruel situation of black slaves and ex-slaves, as Morrison argues, Africa appears to be a lost paradise: a place where free black women gather flowers and play in the long grass (Carabí 1993: 109). When Denver is telling *Beloved* the story of how she was born, they are on a quilt (on the bed), which brings them an image of Africa: "It was smelling like grass and feeling like hands—the hands of unrested hands of busy women: dry, warm, prickly" (*Beloved*: 78). In *Beloved*'s imagination, Sethe is the one who picked yellow flowers from the place before the crouching (in the slave ships). Now she sees these flowers on the orange patches of the quilt. In the characters' memories the pleasant pictures of the black community in their homeland, before they were captured, contrast with the harshness of their black bondage in the New World. As Morrison claims, Africa becomes the symbol of Eden before the fall of man, 'slavery': "It may be a little too romantic to think about Africa as a kind of Eden, a place before the fall, before, corruption, the cradle of humanity" (Carabí

1993: 109). Slaves' longing for their native land makes that their feelings of unbelonging persist. Du Bois says:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (qtd. in Ogunyemi: online)¹¹⁷

Together with the paradisaical image of Africa, blacks also have the myth of the "Magical North", symbol of liberty for the slaves. However, "the harsh lesson of freedom in the 'Magical North' is that it offers little to combat the racist institutions, whether in the form of chattel slavery or the brutal enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law" (Jesser: online). Even though it seems to be a "better" place, it does not live up to the slaves' expectations: it is not benevolent and welcoming (Jesser: online).

1.2.3. Racial Oppression: Different Kinds of Slavery

In *Beloved* Morrison depicts different situations of racial oppression: the mild enslavement of Mr. Garner, the cruelest and most terrible of Schoolteacher and the alleged non-slavery of the Bodwins. Mr. Garner is the benevolent patriarch of Sweet Home, who runs a special kind of "enlightened" enslavement: "the Garners represent a milder—and in some ways more subtle and insidious—form of white-supremacist, capitalist domination of African Americans" (Keizer: online). He is a good and generous owner by the standards of slavery, an example of "good 'ownership'", but blacks' lives are not their own: "Garner's model farm places his slaves in a false position of community" (Jesser: online). Despite Mr. Garner's benevolence, he embodies the Law of the Father in the patriarchal world of the farm. Sweet Home becomes every slave's dream of how the intolerable conditions of enslavement could be made bearable. The Garners treat their blacks as if they were paid labor, allowing them to hire their time and purchase their families and themselves. They handle their slaves with a certain amount of respect: they listen to them, take into consideration their thoughts and feelings, do not stud their male slaves or rent their sex and do not beat or torture them.

The Garners allow their slaves some selfhood and manhood; however, "this allowed manhood does not change the basic relationship of owned and owner" (Jesser: online). Mr. Garner brags about his black slaves being men, while other farmers consider them boys. However, Sweet Home's black slaves do not have real freedom: they are forbidden to leave the farm, except in the white owner's company. The

¹¹⁷ Original text quoted: W. E. B. Du Bois (1990). *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Vintage Books.

slaveholder is scared to let male slaves loose.¹¹⁸ Mr. Garner is very much like a god in his paradise of Sweet Home: he is the patriarch who set the rules in his domain.¹¹⁹ To Baby Suggs, “Mr. Garner acted like the world was a toy he was supposed to have fun with” (*Beloved*: 139). In fact, this “utopian” slave community makes the farm more profitable and valuable than the usual ones, since blacks worked harder.

Even though Mr. Garner treats his slaves well, their dignity has its origin in an outside source: “this kind of personhood lay in the hands of the ‘definers’” (Jesser: online). Paul D has always felt anxious about his masculinity. He does not know if he is just a result of the white owner’s “enlightened slavery” or his own achievement. Mr. Garner is unable to see the shortcomings of the enslavement he runs at his farm. When he takes Baby Suggs to the Bodwins’ house, he tries to demonstrate that his kind of slavery is good. He asks the old black woman about her stay at Sweet Home, expecting that she would show gratefulness. However, her perspective is very different. She thinks about her son who will remain in captivity and will be rented out for a long time to pay for her freedom. Even under a mild slavery like this, blacks are still merchandise that can be traded whenever the white master decides to do it. Their liberty has limits they cannot trespass, since they are ultimately property. Besides, it does not matter if they have been raised as men or ‘pseudo’ free human beings, because their circumstances are subjected to the owner they have at the moment. The welfare of the slaves at Sweet Home depends so much on Mr. Garner that after his death their situation becomes precarious.

Mrs. Garner is also a benign owner, but her good intentions are ineffectual in a patriarchal world. When her husband dies, she does not want to be the only white woman on the farm, alone with all her black men. So, she calls her brother-in-law, Schoolteacher, who comes with his two nephews to run Sweet Home. The white woman is weak and gets weaker with her illness. Even though Mrs. Garner feels sad when she hears how Schoolteacher’s boys have treated Sethe, she exercises very little authority. By telling the white woman, Sethe only gets further brutalized. The jewels Mrs. Garner gives to her are the only token of her affection for the young black slave and, even though they are bright and glittering, they have trifling value. On the other hand, Sethe, who receives so little from her white owner, attends to her as if she were the mother she had lost. Mr. Garner’s death and Schoolteacher’s arrival reveal the fragility of the exemplary plantation.

¹¹⁸ Mr. Garner’s definition of his slaves has a strong sexual component: he would not have any black man round his wife or on the loose, hinting at their potential sexual aggressiveness.

¹¹⁹ Like Eva Peace in *Sula*, Mr. Garner appropriates the power of naming his slaves men in the world he has created. He is also like Valerian Street in *Tar Baby*. Mr. Street invites Son to have dinner, showing how he can shape and play with everyone’s life.

Schoolteacher, the scientific gothic villain, practices the most atrocious form of slavery. Under his rule the farm acquires its most horrifying gothic tones. Despite his “pretty manners”, his apparent gentleness and “soft” talking, he is a cruel racist. Schoolteacher comes to the farm to put things in order. He considers all slaves as animals and treats them so. He thinks that blacks must not have liberty, since, as free individuals, they will go back to their cannibalistic way of life, as *Beloved*’s murder proves: “All testimony to the results of a little so-called freedom imposed on people who needed every care and guidance in the world to keep them from the cannibal life they preferred” (*Beloved*: 151).¹²⁰ According to Schoolteacher, blacks need to be guided and taken care of, because God has given the whites the responsibility for these creatures.¹²¹

Some of the blacks at Sweet Home consider the Garners as different from other slave owners because of the way they behave towards their slaves. However, some others realize that Mr. Garner and Schoolteacher are patriarchs who exert their power on the plantation. Both Halle and Sixo understand that even though Mr. Garner treats them mildly, he speaks the same language as Schoolteacher. Halle says: “What they say is the same. Loud or Soft” (*Beloved*: 195). To this statement, Sethe tells her husband that Mr. Garner let him buy his mother. However, Halle answers her that it was in his own interest, since his mother would not last another ten years and he was paying for those. Besides, Mr. Garner also got Sethe and their offspring. Both Sixo and Halle represent two possible revolutionary responses to racial bondage. Sixo, the wild Indian, radically rejects the white man’s definitions: he is “engaged in resistance of the dismembering logic of the white-capitalist, patriarchal system of domination” (Keizer: online).¹²² He stops speaking English and refuses to learn the master’s numbers because “it would change his mind” (*Beloved*: 127). Halle’s response to the slaveholders’ oppression is different. He learns to write and count, but he uses the white owner’s knowledge for his own purposes, to buy his mother’s freedom.

On the other hand, the Bodwins are former abolitionists. They have been helping the black community for a long time. Mr. Bodwin aids Baby Suggs when she comes to Ohio once she has been freed. He gives her some work and rents her 124, his house

¹²⁰ Stamp Paid realizes that white people think of blacks as cannibals. However, he suggests that if there is any savagery in them it is the result of the whites’ cruelty, or these fantasies of cannibalism are the product of the whites’ fears projected onto the blacks.

¹²¹ When Schoolteacher, one nephew, one slave catcher and a sheriff come for Sethe, they cannot understand the blacks’ behavior or feelings. They stand there amazed and think that their actions are the result of the freedom that leads blacks to their natural state of savagery.

¹²² Indians are hardly mentioned in *Beloved*. Sixo is the only Indian character who is depicted. He maintains cultural and spiritual bonds to his own people and nature. The other Indians mentioned are the Cherokees who help Paul D when he runs away from prison. Both blacks and Indians show some solidarity to one another, since they share the same fate, to be oppressed by the dominant white society.

before he moved into town. Then the Society he led was at its height in opposing slavery. Morrison says that those old days were stimulating, imbued with high aspirations, “Good years [. . .] full of spit and conviction” (*Beloved*: 260). However, Morrison also criticizes in Mr. Bodwin, the abolitionists who, after the crime, only finds in Sethe a cause and not a human being: “The Society managed to turn infanticide and the cry of savagery around, and build a further case of abolishing slavery” (*Beloved*: 190) (Pérez-Torres 1999: 190). As Arlene R. Keizer argues, “Their abolitionist friends, Mr. and Miss Bodwin, share negative views of African Americans with slaveholders, despite their belief that ‘human life is holy, all of it’” (online).

Later on in the story, when the Bodwins offer Denver a night job, the piggy bank they have in their house shows the limits of their anti-slavery. It has the shape of a servile black boy with distorted features, suggesting his ridiculous happiness at being a servant and on its base the words “At Yo’ Service”.¹²³ This inscription indicates that blacks are not considered equal to whites, that, as Trudier Harris says, “by their nature” they existed for the service of their white masters whether that meant to be a mammy or a slut, sometimes sexual partners, or cooks, or nursemaids (2004: 65). Even if the Bodwins help free slaves, “they have trouble seeing the people as full-fledged people, though to show them as totally free of their xenophobia and sense of superiority might well have been anachronistic” (Atwood: 145). According to Harris, this scene makes clear how pervasive the Sambo stereotype was:

Sambo is the image of black people controlled by white people, usually signalled by its distorted facial features, especially eyes and mouth, and its exuding of a palpable willingness to please. In history as in literature, Sambo is ever self-effacing, ever obsequious and subservient, ever willing “to grin and bear it”, ever willing to be trampled on by whites because its irrepressible spirit will rise up and beg to be degraded again. This popular stereotype of black people saturated the white American mind for centuries; not only was it complimentary to whites, whose money could evoke such distorted grins, but it was comforting to them, for it was infinitely more pleasant to imagine grinning darkies than knife-wielding ones. (2004: 64)

The Sambo stereotype expresses the servile behavior that white society expected from blacks. It symbolizes African Americans’ complete compliance, docility and submission to their masters. Those blacks who did not accept these attitudes were accused of instigating insurrection and considered violent and savage. Trudier Harris sees in this image a warning to Denver that even “good” whites may not necessarily uphold social equal rights for blacks and whites (2004: 65-66).

¹²³ Rafael Pérez-Torres points out the various meanings that the shape of the black boy suggests: it hints at commercial exchange (the coins held are used for delivery or small services); the figure is kneeling expressing servitude; the grotesquely twisted neck is associated with a lynching victim. Pérez-Torres sees in this image Morrison’s “comprehensive critique of the commercial, racist, and potentially violent nature of the dominant social order” (1999: 185). Keizer also comments on the racist symbolism of the statue (online).

1.2.4. The Pyncheons' Greed: the Usurpation of Maule's Plot and the Missing Deed

Both Hawthorne and Morrison deal with the grasping spirit that defines colonialism. They show different facets of the whites' desire for ownership and possession. In nineteenth-century society the arbitrary and despotic power of the genteel white class was based on the ownership of land; consequently, inheritance was very important. The possession of land is at the core of the class struggle and becomes the dead hand of the past on the present. In the first Gothic romance, *The Castle of Otranto*, inheritance and proprietorship are central to the story. The principality of Otranto was unlawfully usurped from its rightful owners by means of dubious and villainous ways. After a few generations, it will be restored, with the help of supernatural forces, to its true heirs.

In *Seven Gables* the Pyncheons have brought the curse upon themselves because of their obsessive desire to build up real estate, characteristic of their genteel position (Buitenhuis 1991: 17). As in *The Castle of Otranto* this obsession makes them commit the primal sin, the usurpation of the land, whose original occupant was Matthew Maule, its true settler and cultivator. He had "brought it from a state of nature into the Edenic garden state with the labor of his own hands" (Baym 1976: 155). The wizard's shack, located far from the center of the village, stands for wilderness, the House of Nature. The social conflict between the Pyncheons and Maules begins because of a natural spring of fresh water, the emblem of the sources and energies of life, which makes the place especially valuable.

In *Seven Gables* the Pyncheons, who imitate their ancestors' aristocratic pretensions, keep colonialism alive. They want to increase their wealth and power at the expense of the common people. Colonel Pyncheon does not hesitate to use his political influence and his privileged position to make his claim to Maule's spot. Thus Hawthorne recognizes how economic motives can be behind the charge of witchcraft for the benefit of the powerful classes' interests.¹²⁴ The dispute comes to an end with the wizard's death, making him a sort of martyr to the influential gentry. The Maules are the Pyncheons' victims, but as they are poor and belong to a low class, they cannot present any threat to them: "The plebeian Maules represent an independent, democratic nation, suppressed and dispossessed by colonial power" (Buitenhuis 1991: 51). As a consequence of the Pyncheons' wrongdoing, Maule's Well is cursed at the moment their mansion is built: its water turns "hard and brackish". The symbolism is

¹²⁴ As Buitenhuis writes, Hawthorne was deeply concerned with the corruption of arbitrary colonial power and it became a repeated theme in his work, as we can see in an early tale, "The Gray Champion" (1835) (1991: 48).

clear: “the Edenic purity of the early garden has been destroyed by Pyncheon’s crimes; the polluted spring is the emblem both of a fallen world and of the creation of an unjust colonial power structure” (Buitenhuis 1991: 50). Colonel Pyncheon’s descendants know that their ancestor violated Maule’s rights; however, they accept the stolen estate and consider themselves its owners. So, each Pyncheon who inherits the piece of land shares the Colonel’s aristocratic guilt and fate.

The greed of the Pyncheons becomes even more explicit in the Colonel’s and his offspring’s attempts to appropriate the Eastern territory: “The social sinfulness of aristocracy became specific, took on symbolic expression [. . .] in the crime which the arrogant old Colonel committed in usurping the home of the commoner Maule. It became more explicit still in the Colonel’s effort to appropriate for himself and his heirs a tract of land somewhere in Maine” (Lawrence Hall: 377). Only the missing deed would legitimize the family’s claim to “vast Eastern lands” and thus restore them to their feudal status, “The mysterious document would be found and the divine right of the family authenticated” (Dryden 1971: 300). As revenge, Thomas Maule, son of the reputed wizard and architect of the House of the Seven Gables, “secreted the title to the Maine estate behind the Colonel’s portrait, denying the Pyncheons’ posterity their hope of aristocratic preferment” (Hoffman 1967: 477). Gervayse Pyncheon tries to get the missing deed and does not hesitate to put his daughter’s life at risk to achieve it. At the time of the story, Judge Pyncheon is aiming to get the lost parchment and he thinks that Clifford knows its whereabouts. Unscrupulous as his ancestors, he tries to force the secret out of his cousin. The only difference is that Jaffrey Pyncheon, in line with the new times, disguises his cruelty and blackness behind his benign appearance.

Thus the missing deed becomes a Gothic symbol of the Pyncheons’ aristocratic pride and European ‘colonialism.’ “Though the land itself is only as far east as Waldo County in Maine, it is associated with the ‘princely territory’ of Europe and symbolizes the aristocratic tradition of the Pyncheon clan, with its ‘antique portraits, pedigrees, coats of arms’” (Male 1967: 433). The Pyncheons’ absurd aspirations of high social rank have a fallacious foundation: “these traditional titles are ‘impalpable,’ signify an ‘absurd delusion’ and a ‘shadowy hope,’ still many a later Pyncheon has dwelt upon them because he finds ‘nothing more solid [. . .] to cherish’” (Griffith: 384). When they finally find the deed, it is no longer valid: “By rendering the Pyncheon claim to such territory a snare and a delusion, Hawthorne signified the baselessness of the pretensions of gentility and its gradual absorption in the morally inevitable progress of society toward democracy” (Lawrence Hall: 378).¹²⁵

¹²⁵ McPherson expresses similar views (144).

Hawthorne shows another pervasive Gothic concern, the waning of aristocracy and colonialism. The aristocratic inhabitants of Seven Gables are undergoing decline like the house itself. Some typically Gothic elements, such as ruins, and other certain deteriorated elements of the romance reflect the effects of the passage of time and dramatize a decaying colonial society. Successive generations of Pyncheons, with a few exceptions, have become increasingly impoverished while their aristocratic pretensions of superiority ostracize them and lead them to annihilation: “An aristocracy emphasizes the excellence and privileges of a few and leads to a dangerous and unwise withdrawal from the world’s ‘united struggle’” (Dillingham: 452).

1.2.5. Slavery, the Ultimate Consequence of the Whites’ Greed

In *Beloved*, Morrison deals with the ultimate consequence of the colonialism of nineteenth-century Western societies, slavery. For the white man both blacks and the land are property. In contrast to the indigenous cultures’ respect for nature, European societies regard the land as a source of power and profit instead of a source of life, making the harmony between humans and the wilderness impossible. In its materialistic orientation the white race de-spiritualizes the world.¹²⁶ The violation of nature is paralleled by the violation of another race. The ownership of human beings is the basis of the tyrannical feudal institution of slavery. The white man is the gothic villain who, protected by the law, exerts his despotic rule upon the black body and self. Even though the ethics and morality of nineteenth-century society allow the possession of human beings, enslavement, from a black perspective, can only seem censurable and cruel. The concept of ownership of the white European “civilization” in the New World leads to the eventual exhaustion of natural resources, the spoilage of the land, the Indians’ genocide and the ownership of other human beings, the blacks.

Slave owners reign over their slaves’ bodies and minds. Trudier Harris distinguishes between ownership and possession as characteristic of slavery. Both of them “reflect the monetary exchange involved in that system of dehumanization as well as the psychological control usually attendant upon the physical imprisonment” (2004: 59). “Ownership” refers to the masters’ rule over their slaves and over their labor. However, “possession” applies to the psychological dimension: white owners made their slaves believe in the institution of slavery and accept that their condition was hopeless (2004: 59). The whites’ strategies to subjugate African-Americans psychologically were various, such as the annihilation and rupture of the black family

¹²⁶ As Paul Scott Derrick says: “That act of taking control over the land—of converting the land into ‘property,’ into something to be appropriated, manipulated, controlled and exhausted by man—is the primordial act, the inception of the American identity. It is also, for us, the Original Sin” (1996: 371).

and community, since “The family [. . .] becomes a historically constituted social site where individual subjectivity is constructed” (Mae Henderson: 93). The annihilation of their bonds to their own kin taught slaves that they were alone in the world, dependant on the slaveholder. As Trudier Harris writes, white owners used many barbaric punishments to “break” blacks’ spirits, such as whipping, branding a letter on their face or back, cropping an ear or a finger, confining them in bits, or selling them: “All of these tactics were everyday reminders to slaves that the masters possessed their very minds and memories—had indeed erased if not destroyed their histories—even as they owned their bodies” (2004: 60).

As property, blacks are given a price. After Paul D is captured, he hears his for the first time, \$900. Then he learns his worth as merchandise, “the dollar value of his weight, his strength, his heart, his brain, his penis, and his future” (Beloved: 226). Knowing his own price, Paul D begins to wonder how much each of the other slaves on the farm would cost. Once Schoolteacher has frustrated the blacks’ escape, he kills Sixo, who has become unsuitable and can be of no use any more.¹²⁷ There is no human tragedy because a man has died, this is only an economic loss. Just after the Indian’s death, Schoolteacher starts thinking in terms of increasing the value of Sweet Home. He has already lost at least two slaves, Sixo and Paul A. So he decides what to do to improve the monetary worth of the farm: he will sell Paul D and get two young blacks, twelve or fifteen years old, instead. Schoolteacher plans on securing Sethe, “the breeding one”, and her children. He knows that she has a great value because she can reproduce. The slaveholder calculates that with these slaves, he can have seven docile blacks at Sweet Home.

As Trudier Harris points out, Morrison expresses the internalization of slavery’s dynamics of oppression by introducing images of monetary units to describe physical features and convey psychological states, such as frustration and remorse. Morrison seems to be suggesting that the characters have assimilated the slave master’s concepts about themselves “which suggest that *some* black people may have modeled their behavior too closely on that of their masters” (2004: 60). Morrison uses a monetary image when, at the restaurant, Paul D wants to forge a future with Sethe and tries to tell her of his affair with Beloved: “Still, he’d gotten a little more time, bought it, in fact, and hoped the price wouldn’t wreck him. Like paying for an afternoon in the coin of life to come” (Beloved: 129). Trudier Harris claims that “Since so much misery for these two in the past has depended upon the monetary value placed on them or their

¹²⁷ Peter J. Capuano argues that the white men find it impossible to shoot the Indian as he sings because his singing expresses his “personhood”. It is not until one white man hits Sixo in the head to make him stop singing that they proceed to burn him alive. Even Schoolteacher thinks “that he was too human ever to become a docile slave” (online).

relatives, it is ironic that the same images, reinforced by repetition ('bought,' 'price,' 'paying,' 'coin'), would be used to describe their potential for post-slavery happiness" (2004: 62).¹²⁸

As property black slaves are marked as animals: "The brand is the language of slavery denoting the ownership of 'property that reproduced itself without cost,' the sign of inclusion in an economics of bondage. The slave owner and white society have the power first to inscribe and then to interpret the mark, the prerogative to disrupt the systems—language and culture—that construct subjectivity" (Sonser: 24). Sethe recalls that one day her mother took her behind the smoke house, opened up her dress front and pointed under her breast. She did not have a name or identity other than a brand. She told Sethe, "This is your ma'am [. . .]. I am the only one got this mark now. The rest dead. If something happens to me and you can't tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark" (Beloved: 61). Sethe's mother realizes that she is going to die and her last wish is to be recognized by her little girl. Her ignominious brand becomes the only connection between them. However, she feels ashamed of it and she cannot stand the idea of her daughter being marked, as she is. That is why she slaps Sethe's face when the girl tells her innocently that she also wants to be branded. As a child Sethe cannot understand its meaning, which she will later discover when she has a mark of her own.

The idea of ownership runs through the whole narrative. First, slaves were the whites' property. However, in the aftermath of slavery, blacks have to feel that something belongs to them, whether the place they live in or those people close to them. Sethe stays at 124, despite the ghost. She has made it her home, even though it is not officially hers. But, even more important, ex-slaves have a desperate need to "lay claim" to their loved ones. During slavery they could not do it, they could not say "my mother" or "my son", since not even their own lives belonged to them. The natural "ownership" that comes with family bonds is destroyed by slavery. That is why blacks' love might be so possessive and devouring, as it is in *Beloved*. When Stamp Paid is outside 124, the only word he can make out is "mine", which is repeated again and again. The love of the three women, Sethe, Denver and Beloved, is such a consuming and sickly feeling that makes them lose their identities and exhausts them: "a love that wore everybody out" (Beloved: 243).

¹²⁸ As Trudier Harris has shown, there are numerous monetary images in *Beloved*. Later in the same scene mentioned previously, Sethe and Paul D walk through a snowstorm where the flakes are "fat enough and heavy enough to crash lie *nickels* on stone" (Beloved: 129; emphasis added). Stamp Paid feels that the memory of Baby Suggs is "scorching his soul like a silver dollar in a fool's pocket" (Beloved: 170). Morrison uses them also to describe her characters' physical features. Lady Jones perceives Denver's "nickel-round" eyes (this image suggests the stereotyped eyes of the black slave as it was conceived throughout their history in America) (Beloved: 246) (2004: 61-62).

As Trudier Harris argues, in *Beloved*, “all of the females emphasize possession-ownership over love” (2004: 69). Sethe asserts her claim to her children when Schoolteacher comes for them; Denver, hers to Beloved and Beloved, to her mother, Sethe. Mary J. Suero-Elliot comments that Sethe’s

internalization of the lessons of commodification encourages Sethe to act, in a highly problematic attempt to save her children from commodification, as if they are not only extensions of herself, but also her possessions [. . .]. Despite its protective motivation, however, Sethe’s act effectively denies her daughter the chance to live. It signifies her appropriation of the potential of her daughter’s yet unrealized subjectivity. (online)

Ownership based on love can be even as destructive as slavery. It can be devastating: “In carving out a definition of motherhood in a world where she had no models for that status, in shaping a concept of love from a void, Sethe has erred on the side of excess, a destructive excess that inadvertently gives primacy to the past and death rather than to life and the future” (Trudier Harris 2004: 69-70).

1.2.6. Hepzibah as the “Immemorial Lady”: Symbol of the Waning Aristocracy

Hawthorne deliberately establishes a contrast between the aristocratic and colonial values of the Pyncheon family represented by Clifford, Hepzibah and Judge Pyncheon and the rising democracy represented by the young couple, Holgrave and Phoebe, whose father married a plebeian woman. Hawthorne especially develops his concept of aristocracy in the character of Hepzibah, who symbolizes the “immemorial lady”, whose genteel pretensions are so persistent that they even haunt her daydreams: “Hepzibah [. . .] even more given than he [Clifford] to feeding upon the ‘shadowy food’ and ‘airily magnificent’ hopes of aristocratic pretensions” (Griffith: 385). In her aristocratic fantasies, as Lawrence Hall claims, she imagines that the great claim to the heritage of Waldo County would finally belong to the Pyncheons, to the detriment of the common people.¹²⁹ Hawthorne uses her turban, very common among Jewish and oriental females, to depict her genteel aspirations.¹³⁰ In fact, the old lady’s name is Hebrew and her dreams to become rich resemble those of an oriental upper class woman: “For example, an uncle [. . .] might yet return [. . .] and adorn her with pearls, diamonds, and oriental shawls and turbans and make her the ultimate heiress of his unreckonable riches” (Gables: 64).

¹²⁹ Lawrence Hall argues that Hepzibah dreams that “some sort of deed may yet appear to establish arbitrarily the claim of one family” (378) and he thinks that Hawthorne may have been influenced here by Rousseau’s *The Social Contract*, whose works he had read extensively.

¹³⁰ Buitenhuis says that Hepzibah’s head-covering is a parody of the headgear used by a powerful sultan (1991: 112).

When Hepzibah is forced to begin business, she is compelled to “unbolt the locks on her heart” and interact with the world. She “must at last step down from her proud and isolated pedestal of aristocracy” (Dillingham: 451). Hepzibah becomes a “huckstress” and “a decayed gentlewoman”. Hawthorne describes her fall from gentility:

A lady—who had fed herself from childhood with the shadowy food of aristocratic reminiscences, and whose religion it was, that a lady’s hand soils itself irremediably by doing aught for bread—this born, lady, after sixty years of narrowing means, is fain to step down from her pedestal of imaginary rank. Poverty, treading closely at her heels for a lifetime, has come up with her at last. She must earn her own food, or starve! And we have stolen upon Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon, too irreverently, at the instant of time when the patrician lady is to be transformed into the plebeian woman. (Gables: 37-38)

Hepzibah’s incorporation into trade changes her genteel fantasies: “The opening of the cent-shop to let the outside world into the stifling interior of the secluded house is a symbol of the salutary virtues of the Maule forces, or the forces of democracy, in contrast to the moribund condition of the Pyncheons” (Lawrence Hall: 380). It is the end for the old lady’s castles in the air.

As Patrick K. Dooley has pointed out, Hawthorne uses two symbols, the bell and money, to mark Hepzibah’s descent from gentility (34). At the beginning of chapter III, “The First Customer”, the bell seems to have enslaved the old woman’s spirit; “the talisman to which she owed obedience”.¹³¹ The second token of her downfall is money. That is why Hepzibah finds it so difficult to take it: she wants to hold onto her aristocratic position (34). She will not receive any from Holgrave and tells him: “let me be a lady a moment longer”. The old lady also has difficulties charging her first real customer, a little urchin. Hepzibah finally accepts the money when the boy returns for another gingerbread and “The sordid stain of that copper-coin could never be washed away from her palm [. . .]. No lady, now, but simply Hepzibah Pyncheon, a forlorn old maid, and keeper of a cent-shop!” (Gables: 51). In fact, once the schoolboy has engulfed the second Jim Crow, “The structure of ancient aristocracy had been demolished by him” (Gables: 51). Now Hepzibah can “turn the old Pyncheon portraits with their faces to the wall, and take the map of her eastern-territory to kindle the kitchen-fire, and blow up the flame with the empty breath of her ancestral traditions” (Gables: 51). From now on, she is not a lady any more, but simply Hepzibah Pyncheon.

¹³¹ This episode is ironically linked to the ghost of Hamlet’s father. The legend of a ghost’s suddenly getting very pale when a cock crowed goes back to the Middle Ages. In the first appearance of the ghost in *Hamlet* (I, i, 147-149): “It was about to speak when the cock crew./ And then it started like a guilty thing/ Upon a fearful summons”. This information is taken from a footnote in Hawthorne’s *Seven Gables* (42).

The old lady must now work in order to escape from her genteel poverty. In dealing with Hepzibah's plight, Hawthorne examines her concepts of gentility. Her reluctance to open a business, even in the face of penury, gives us an idea of how the upper class related to the lower classes in the nineteenth-century New England society. As Dooley comments, one key difference between the old order and the new is the approach to work. At the time, labor was considered as a mark of inferiority: "to work is to admit that one has to work—to admit poverty. More important, to work is to admit that one is a member of the lower classes, that he is thereby an inferior human being" (33). Thorstein Veblen observes that labor is not only socially undesirable, but also "*morally impossible* to the noble, free-born man, and incompatible with a worthy life" (qtd. in Dooley: 33; emphasis added).¹³² In addition, Melissa M. Pennell argues that "women especially were charged with the responsibility of enacting them [aspirations toward a life of leisure], especially as women's roles evolved within the 'cult of domesticity'" (1999: 193). Hepzibah herself admits that her values were shaped in another time and that she will never understand "new notions" (Gables: 45), nor does she wish to. Her life follows the principles of her genteel class.

That is why the old gentlewoman is not merely frightened or uneasy, she feels guilty: "opening the shop amounts to a shameful deed, a violation of the ethical norms of her class" (Dooley: 33). Veblen explains that "In persons of delicate sensibilities, who have long been habituated to genteel manners, the shamefulness of manual labor may become so strong that, at a critical juncture, it will even set aside the instinct of self-preservation" (qtd. in Dooley: 33). Hepzibah would not mind continuing to live in poverty, except that this old forlorn maid has to support her brother Clifford. Her love for him forces her to open the long abandoned business. This is so hard for her that once she removes the bar from the outer door, "she fled into the inner parlor, threw herself into the ancestral elbow-chair, and wept" (Gables: 40).

On her first day of trade, Hepzibah begins to think differently about the class system. On one hand, she comes "to very disagreeable conclusions as to the temper and manners of what she termed the lower classes" (Gables: 54-55), which she has despised until then because of her "unquestionable superiority". But, on the other hand, she resents "the idle aristocracy", of which she has been part. She can no longer unquestioningly accept the unfair class distinctions of the colonial age: "Now in trade as well as desperately poor, she has a new, sour, view of the oppressive and discriminatory social system that keeps some idle while many toil and suffer" (Buitenhuis 1991: 93).

¹³² Original text quoted: Thorstein Veblen (1934). *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. (1899; rpt. New York: Modern Library).

In Hepzibah's descent from aristocracy, she seems to become inferior to her customers: "they evidently considered themselves not merely her equals, but her patrons and superiors" (Gables: 54). She feels that she has fallen to the lowest position. However, Holgrave does not see the old maid's fate as tragic: "she ought not fret about not being a lady, for such renewal calls for a break with the past" (Dooley: 34). The young man assures Hepzibah that to be a "lady" is no longer an advantage, but a disadvantage: "the title is meaningless and even detrimental in their society" (Alfred Marks 1967b: 341).¹³³ At first, she does not believe him, but throughout the narrative, she slowly renounces her pride and undergoes an evolution that takes her closer to Holgrave's idea that it is better to be a true woman than a lady. Almost immediately after the shop is opened, the old maid begins to feel the beneficial effects of her new life. Then she starts to understand Holgrave's remark that in working for a living "you will at least have the sense of healthy and natural effort for a purpose, and of lending your strength—be it great or small—to the united struggle of mankind" (Gables: 45). Her new occupation invigorates Hepzibah because she renews her contact with humankind after her long seclusion in the old mansion. However, this experience cannot completely change her ideas or feelings.¹³⁴

As Julian Smith has shown, the source for Hepzibah is the story of "Old Esther Dudley", the last "Legend of the Province House" (19). This tale is about an aristocratic old maid who stays alone in a mansion, haunting it like a ghost, after the British have been defeated in the Revolutionary War. Rumors say that she summons from a mirror the ghosts of the past governors, which are waiting for the day when a representative of the king returns, to keep her company. The similarities between Esther Dudley and Hepzibah, as Smith argues, are clear: they both hang onto an aristocratic and dead past; they represent the dangers of ancestral pride; the two of them look forward to the restoration of aristocratic principles (Esther awaits the return of the King's representative and Hepzibah, the recovery of the Eastern claim); they both are daughters of ancient and once eminent families, who have become poor and decayed; they are trapped in the past and follow an outmoded genteel code. Despite the two old ladies' pride, they gain the reader's sympathy (19).¹³⁵

¹³³ William Dillingham expresses similar views (451).

¹³⁴ Lawrence Hall emphasizes that Hepzibah's feelings are only transitory (380).

¹³⁵ According to Smith, both *The House of the Seven Gables* and "Legends of the Province House" deal with "the decline of old and aristocratic orders. British rule in New England, as represented by the Province House, ends with the death of Old Esther Dudley, its last loyalist occupant; the haughty sway of the Pyncheon family ends when Jaffrey dies and Clifford, Hepzibah, and Phoebe, the last of the Pyncheons, desert the family mansion to reside elsewhere" (19).

1.2.7. Phoebe and Holgrave: the Rising of Democracy

In contrast to Hepzibah's old aristocratic delusions, both Holgrave and Phoebe represent a new generation with democratic values. Hawthorne opposes "new Plebeianism" to "old Gentility", emphasizing, as Dooley claims, their clashing attitudes toward work and self-help: in "an American democracy [. . .] work will first blur and then eventually eradicate all class distinctions" (34). Hawthorne shows us the strong differences between Phoebe, the daughter of a commoner and Hepzibah, the lady. The young girl devotes herself to shop keeping and housework successfully, possibly because "her father [. . .] married beneath his rank [. . .] [she] possessed such plebeian capabilities as being able to manage a kitchen or conduct a school" (Matthiessen: 367). However, Hepzibah is unable to deal with any kind of chores. The old woman's genteel helplessness is pathetic compared with Phoebe's self-reliance. The young girl is the "symbol of that democratic renewal and energy of the common people that he [Hawthorne] saw as the transforming agent of the ancestral, aristocratic, and decaying past" (Buitenhuis 1991: 95-96).

Phoebe, the Gothic maiden, is not only characterized as a representative of democracy, but also as the true New England woman. She is the master of her own destiny: a determined and independent woman like other gothic heroines such as Clara in *Wieland*. Phoebe is unlike other fair maidens of Hawthorne's stories, such as Priscilla of *Blithedale*, who lacks a free will of her own and thus becomes "a promising victim of the Black Man, of mesmerists, or such empirical zealots as Hollingsworth" (McPherson: 238). Phoebe's functional plebeian abilities must have come to her with her mother's blood because the Pyncheons are useless for practical purposes.¹³⁶ The author repeats this idea on different occasions: "It betokened the cheeriness of an active temperament, finding joy in its activity, and therefore rendering it beautiful; it was a New England trait—the stern old stuff of Puritanism, with a gold thread in the web" (Gables: 76).

On the other hand, Holgrave, the Gothic scientist figure, stands for the forces of democracy. The young reformer works as a writer and daguerreotypist. He is a member of a socialist community, a practiser of mesmerism, Jack-of-all-trades, anarchist. Daniel G. Hoffman says that "Holgrave is a representative man of the nineteenth century" (1967: 474).¹³⁷ Hawthorne comments that he is the archetype of

¹³⁶ For William Stein, Phoebe is a sort of mediator between "the ancestral pretensions of the aristocratic Pyncheons and the arrogant pride of the humble Maules, neutralizing generations of hostility. In the process the icy evil of clannishness melts into the common stream of love that invigorates the life of the community" (153).

¹³⁷ Hoffman thinks that Holgrave is "significantly rooted in the folk traditions of Yankee metamorphosis and optimism" (1967: 476).

many compeers in his native land because of his magnanimous zeal for man's welfare. Holgrave is, as Hoffman points out, a detailed portrait of one of Emerson's promising Young Americans, an example of Emersonian optimism and self-reliance: "His image of himself is [. . .] the popular conception of the unfallen, self-created man whose own will determines his destiny" (1967: 481). In Henry James' words,

Holgrave, the modern young man, who has been a Jack-of-all-trades, and is at the period of the story a daguerreotypist, is an attempt to render a kind of national type—that of the young citizen of the United States whose fortune is simply in his lively intelligence, and who stands naked, as it were, unbiased and unencumbered alike, in the centre of the far-stretching level of American life. Holgrave is intended as a contrast; his lack of traditions, his democratic stamp, his condensed experience, are opposed to the desiccated prejudices and exhausted vitality of the race of which poor feebly scowling, rusty-jointed Hepzibah is the most heroic representative. (363)

Holgrave also symbolizes the young American rebel. In his role as an outcast, he attacks the authority and institutions of colonialism. He has very strange companions: reformers, lecturers and all manner of philanthropists; community-men, who do not comply with the law. He shows a lack of reverence for conventions and Hepzibah says that he has a law of his own. Holgrave has carried his family tradition of defiance into the present, holding subversive views of the established authority while he generally remains aloof from the society of others (Gilmore: 180). Baym believes that "Holgrave's radicalism is defined as a sense of human possibility, 'which a young man had better die at once, than utterly to relinquish' [. . .]. Perhaps he is naïve, but his errors are noble" (1976: 158). In his radical attitude he does not just attack the dead colonial past, but also the class system.

The final absorption of the family by democracy can be achieved through the marriage of Holgrave and Phoebe. It is as a result of this matrimony that both classes can be reunited and the equalitarian ideal is possible. Finally, "Maule's Well and the house of the Pyncheon have merged together in the democratic unity of the descendants of the two lines, and the dream of eastern lands has become the reality of the new republic" (Buitenhuis 1991: 22).¹³⁸ Eventually the Pyncheons redeem their sin against the plebeian Maules and the aristocratic pride of the privileged class is defeated. At the end of *The House of the Seven Gables*:

Hawthorne is showing that with this marriage, the democratic strain—for both Phoebe and Holgrave belong to the common people, not to the aristocratic minority—has triumphed over the decayed hierarchy that represents the dead hand of the colonial past. America has at last transcended its subservient role with respect to Europe (Judge Pyncheon's son symbolically dies there) and can emerge psychologically as well as politically as an independent power. (Buitenhuis 1991: 117)

¹³⁸ Lawrence Hall argues that "Thus she [Phoebe] will expiate the old social guilt by dissipating the false distinctions that underlay it" (379).

Hawthorne had shown, previously to *Seven Gables*, his concern with the Gothic struggle between colonialism and the forces of democracy. As Julian Smith has pointed out, there are many similarities between the “Legends of the Province House” (“Howe’s Masquerade”, “Edward Randolph’s Portrait”, “Lady Eleanore’s Mantle” and “Old Esther Dudley”) (1839) and *Seven Gables*. These stories contrast a colonial aristocratic past with the democratic present (19). The houses once had magnificence and splendor that have been transformed into current decay and, in that process, they illustrate the opposition between a glorious past and the shabby present (19).¹³⁹ Buitenhuis argues that, in all “The Province House” stories, Hawthorne expresses his conflicting feelings about colonial times. He shows that they are outmoded and superseded; however, they retain a dignity and a sense of ceremony, honor and tradition that are lacking in the democratic present. Hawthorne, the romancer, Buitenhuis says, takes pleasure in recording the splendid clothing, armor, heraldry and in using the stately language of that past. All this ambivalence, he took into the writing of *The House of the Seven Gables* (1991: 34).

1.3. Gothic Blackness

1.3.1. *Seven Gables* and “The Black Question”

Hawthorne’s Gothic romance [. . .] represents a ‘racial Gothic’ in which the ghosts inhabiting the House of the Seven Gables are the uncanny figures of race [. . .].
DAVID ANTHONY, “Class, Culture, and the Trouble with White Skin in Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables*”.

While African American Gothic focuses on blackness, Anglo Gothic works, even if not overtly, have long been bound up with race and racial otherness. Jerrold E. Hogle argues that the “persistence of racial blackness in the Gothic is especially pronounced in American writing, well before the works of Nailor, Morrison, and their contemporaries” in “Anglo-American writers from Brockden Brown to Poe to Hawthorne” (217). Through the Gothic, Hogle writes, whites express the guilt and terror associated with blacks, their dependence and attraction to their vaguely known culture, their repugnance toward racial mixture or black proliferation that might endanger white purity, priority, or supremacy: “Few literary forms are as obsessed as the white Gothic

¹³⁹ Julian Smith says that one of the stories in “Legends of the Province House”, “Howe’s Masquerade”, provides the model for the great feast with which Colonel Pyncheon opens his house for all his friends, and, probably even more, for the ghost stories about how all the dead Pyncheons were bound to assemble in the parlor (19). Both ghostly parades could probably symbolize the end of aristocracy. Another story in “Legends of the Province House”, Smith writes, “Edward Randolph’s Portrait”, provides the model for the portrait of the Pyncheon’s mansion. Smith also seems to find some similarities between Lady Eleanore, the heroine of the third legend, and the proud Alice Pyncheon (19).

[. . .] with the Anglo vacillation across a wide continuum between extreme abolitionist and racist attitudes toward black people of African descent” (216).¹⁴⁰

Even though Hawthorne concentrates on class struggle he also explores the theme that Leslie Fiedler considers the essential sociological theme of the American gothic romance, the Negro (414). To understand Hawthorne's dealings with racial issues in his fiction,¹⁴¹ I would like to introduce a few ideas that might be interesting for this discussion. In *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison argues about the validity of some assumptions regarding blacks which literary historians and critics have agreed on for a long time: the fact that canonical American literature had not been affected by the Africans', or later, by the African-Americans' presence in the United States. However, she believes that, in different ways, a real or fabricated Africanist presence was crucial to its sense of Americanness. In fact, Morrison states that American literature was shaped by its encounter with the Negro. Monika Müller thinks that the “nineteenth-century American society found it very difficult to accommodate the racially other which it had created out of its own fantasy life” (202).

In *Playing in the Dark*, Morrison calls this phenomenon Africanism,¹⁴² referring to “the ways in which a nonwhite, Africanlike (or Africanist) presence or persona was constructed in the United States, and the imaginative uses this fabricated presence served” (1992: 6). She claims that for the white writer the creation of an Africanist Other was reflexive, a meditation on the self. It was used to explore the fears and desires of the mind: “Americans choose to talk about themselves through and within a sometimes allegorical, sometimes metaphorical, but always choked representation of an Africanist presence” (1992: 17). Caroline M. Woidat believes that “Morrison does more than reveal the Africanist presence in the canon: she reminds us that ‘the act of enforcing racelessness in literary discourse is itself a racial act’” (542).

In fact, many critics have argued about the absence of racial issues in Hawthorne's narrative. According to Jennifer Fleishchner, Hawthorne avoided race and slavery in his fiction because of his political interests and his artistic intentions: “the black question' was not part of the domestic or psychological landscape from which he

¹⁴⁰ Eugenia DeLamotte argues that “the rise and proliferation of this predominantly European-American genre [the Gothic], focused on anxieties” about race (2004: 18), might give us a better sense of the construction of whiteness and its terrors (2004: 19).

¹⁴¹ For more information about the role of blackness and racial difference in Hawthorne, see: Jay L. S. Grossman (1993). “A is for Abolition? Race, Authorship, *The Scarlet Letter*”. *Textual Practice* 7: 1 (Spring): 13-30; Anna Campbell Brickhouse (1998). “Hawthorne in the Americas: Frances Calderon de la Barca, Octavio Paz, and the Mexican Genealogy of ‘Rappaccini’s Daughter’”. *PMLA* 113:2: 227-242.

¹⁴² Morrison explains that her use of the term “Africanism” differs from the philosopher Valentine Mudimbe's (the larger body of knowledge on Africa), since she uses it as a term for “the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people” (1992: 6-7).

[Hawthorne] drew to write his tales and novels, but rather a social issue involving political abstractions more or less distant from his personal experience both at home and during the antebellum years he spent in England” (qtd. in Britton: 9).¹⁴³ Like Fleishchner, Sacvan Bercovitch thinks that Hawthorne seemed unconcerned about Southern slavery or Indian genocide (1993: 236) and Monika Müller argues that Hawthorne “virtually ignores slavery and also does not address the subject of race in a ‘realistic’ or even ‘topical’ manner” (195).

In the same way, Wesley Britton claims that Hawthorne’s use of the color black is merely symbolic and does not have racial associations. It is only an indicator of spiritual darkness: the absence of light stands for a state that indicates the unhealthy condition of the human soul: “Instead of drawing themes along racial lines, Hawthorne traces them in accord with his understanding of universal human conditions” (10). Britton exemplifies Morrison’s ideas about literary criticism. He considers that the black presence in the white gothic suggests a remarkable difference between the black and white worlds of Hawthorne’ time: “For one world, blackness symbolically indicates a spiritual state without identifying racial associations; for the other, blackness signifies identity, history, and destiny” (11). On the other hand, DeLamotte believes that “behind the fears of dark, rationalized others on which the Gothic constructions of whiteness hinges is the unspeakable Other of that construction: the fear that there is no such thing as whiteness, or even race” (2004: 17).

Before I carry on, I will present a few facts about Hawthorne’s personal approach to the theme of race. In *Salem Is My Dwelling Place*, Edwin Haviland Miller’s 1991 biography of Hawthorne, we can find some important statements about black freedom that summarize his personal attitude: “[Slavery is] one of those evils which divine Providence does not leave to be remedied by human contrivances, but which, in its own good time, by some means impossible to be anticipated, but of the simplest and easiest operation, when all its uses have been fulfilled, it causes to vanish like a dream” (qtd. in Müller: 194).¹⁴⁴ Hawthorne condemned the institution of slavery, but also opposed abolition because it threatened to fragment the nation. As Sacvan Bercovitch has noted, Hawthorne’s rhetoric called for “manifest inaction justified by national destiny” (1978: 89).¹⁴⁵ Or, as Woidat says, “Rather than being abolished,

¹⁴³ Original text quoted: Jennifer Fleishchner (1991). “Hawthorne and the Politics of Slavery”. *Studies in the Novel* 40: 96-106.

¹⁴⁴ Monika Müller takes these words from a quotation in (Grossman: 18). See: Jay Grossman (1993). “‘A’ is for Abolition?: Race, Authorship, *The Scarlet Letter*”. *Textual Practice* 7: 13-30.

¹⁴⁵ Original text quoted: Sacvan Bercovitch (1991). *The Office of The Scarlet Letter*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.

slavery would be allowed to play its part in the sweeping course of America's progress" (536).

As Edwin Haviland Miller points out, Hawthorne stated that southern blacks were "more agreeable" than northern ones because they were "so picturesquely natural in manners and wearing such a coat of crust of primeval simplicity (which is quite polished away from the northern black man)" (qtd. in Britton: 9-10).¹⁴⁶ He also, provocatively, wrote that the blacks of his generation would not benefit from emancipation because, as free human beings, they would have to "fight a hard battle with the world, on very unequal terms" (qtd. in Britton: 10). In 1852 Hawthorne said in defense of Franklin Pierce's opposition in Congress to the antislavery movement,

That the evil [of abolition] would be certain, while the good was, at best, a contingency, and [. . .] scarcely so much as that, attended as the movement was and must be during its progress with the aggravated injury of those whose condition it aimed to ameliorate, and terminating, in its possible triumph,—if such possibility there were with *the ruin of two races which now dwelt together in greater peace and affection, it is not too much to say, than had ever elsewhere existed between the taskmaster and the serf.* (Hawthorne 1883: 415; emphasis added)

Some critics have tried to defend Hawthorne's approach to black issues. Deborah Madsen claims that his essay "Chiefly about War-Matters" conveys a rather different idea: "the historical status of American slavery is a phenomenon of very long standing [that] connects the children of the Puritans with the Africans of Virginia, in a very singular way" (qtd. in Britton: 10). Hawthorne calls for the redemption of the "blood and ruin" of slavery, a redemption that Madsen locates in the Civil War (qtd. in Britton: 10). Madsen believes that, in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne is concerned with "the psychological enslavement of white Americans by the ideology of slavery" (qtd. in Britton: 10).¹⁴⁷

We can conclude that Hawthorne had 'conflicting' opinions about blacks and abolition, which he might have easily transferred (maybe even unconsciously) into some aspects of his narrative. As Morrison says in *Playing in the Dark*, "writers transform aspects of their social grounding into aspects of language" (1992: 4). Müller states that Hawthorne's "writing reveals both a fascination with and repugnance for those who are 'other' than himself as, for example, women and members of other ethnic and racial groups—takes a much more pessimistic stance towards the subject of racial mixing and racial progress" (194). There is no doubt that, in *Seven Gables*,

¹⁴⁶ Richard Clark Sterne believes that Hawthorne did not see Negroes as fully human. He considers the writer's symbolic representation of Northern Negro figures as quite different from his racist views about Southern slavery as he expressed in his 1852 campaign biography of the anti-Abolitionist Franklin Pierce and in his *Atlantic Monthly* article of 1862, "Chiefly About War Matters" (80).

¹⁴⁷ Original text quoted: Deborah L. Madsen (1991). "'A for Abolition': Hawthorne's Bond-servant and the Shadow of Slavery". *Journal of American Studies* 25: 255-259.

Hawthorne gives expression to the anxieties of a white class over racial issues. Through gothic elements, he conveys the troubling conflicts of class, race and gender, which are so important in nineteenth-century America. David Anthony argues that “In *The House of the Seven Gables* [. . .] the ‘Africanist presence’ [. . .] is crucial both for understanding the novel and for understanding how race acted as a crucial third term in negotiations of class and culture during the antebellum period” (251).

1.3.2. *Seven Gables*’ Racial Reflections

No wonder the southern white American Gothic [. . .] concentrates so much on racial oppression and mixture as the primary ghosts or monstrosities recalling the past and presents these as intimately bound up with such classically Gothic obsessions as fears about illegitimate ownership, forbidden sexual attractions, and the conversion of bodies and labor into reified objects of exchange (in a sense, ghosts of their former selves).

JERROLD HOGLE, “Teaching the African American Gothic: From its Multiple Sources to *Linden Hills* and *Beloved*”.

Racial elements are intermingled subtly in the fabric of Hawthorne’s romance. They are connected with some of its most important themes. At the beginning of *Seven Gables*, as Robert Martin writes, the Pyncheons’ claim to the mythic land in Maine, on the basis of a missing Indian deed, emphasizes the national theft and genocide of native Americans: in their colonial endeavors the new Americans had tried to impose European property rights on native people (132). On the other hand, Hawthorne’s anxiety about race is closely related to class struggle. When Hepzibah opens the shop and makes her inaugural sale, her first customer, Ned Higgins, is a new Irish lower middle-class boy who purchases a gingerbread Jim Crow.¹⁴⁸ The little “cannibal” devours the body of the black figure, “probably a comic but telling image of an oppressive caste and class society” (Buitenhuis 1991: 92-93). According to Robert Martin, Hepzibah’s sale repeats the economics of America and reveals the hidden sources of northern wealth: “Slavery [. . .] was the mainstay of the Salem economy and the bartering of human bodies the origin of most New England wealth” (134).

Hawthorne gives a special emblematic emphasis to Hepzibah’s first sale of a piece of Jim Crow gingerbread, “a symbol of aristocracy;” since the Pyncheon family, as we can see in ‘Alice Pyncheon,’ had once owned slaves. The way Hawthorne describes it suggests its dramatic consequences: “The little schoolboy, aided by the impish figure of the negro dancer, *had wrought an irreparable ruin*” (*Gables*: 51; emphasis added). Ned’s “cannibalizing” of the Jim Crow figure represents the end of a way of life that is already waning, aristocracy, and, as Stern argues, the expression of

¹⁴⁸ DeLamotte thinks that the appearance of Jim Crow in the *House of the Seven Gables* confirms the fact that “the presence of racial otherness was an ideological requirement of the genre [the Gothic]” (2004: 25).

resentment of the white working-class towards both blacks and upper-class white masters (75). David Anthony points out that Hawthorne uses a strategy of “displacement” when dealing with his anxieties over class struggle (251).¹⁴⁹ Thus, in the long feud between the Pyncheons and the Maules, the Maules as representative of the low classes “are displaced onto the triangulated third term of racial difference, as a means of obscuring or effacing the realities of class division in the years following the social upheaval in Europe in 1848” (250).

Hawthorne creates tension by choosing Jim Crow as the mediator between classes, since, as Anthony claims, “figures of blackness often mediate class relations in this novel” (252). The black figure introduces race as a factor in the relationship between the decaying aristocracy and the working class. Its name, “Jim Crow”, suggests the slave condition as part human and part animal (Sterne: 82). The gingerbread cookie is presented comically, as in the minstrel show tradition from which it comes:¹⁵⁰ an “impish figure” that can be seen “executing [their] world-renowned dance” in the cent-shop window (Anthony: 252). As Robert Martin claims, it is a commodity devoured by a white boy, while, in the minstrel show, a white audience also consumes it. Jim Crow is reduced to the playful, thus concealing its main role as labor force (134-135). Richard Sterne believes that, depicting both Ned and Jim Crow as comic figures, Hawthorne’s treatment of class and race in “The First Customer” is undermined or loses some tension (76).

In *Seven Gables* apparently metaphorical associations between blackness and whiteness seem to relate to issues of class (Anthony: 253).¹⁵¹ Before Hepzibah makes her first sale, she wonders, ““Must the whole world toil, that the palms of her hands may be kept *white* and delicate?” (Gables: 55; emphasis added). The symbolic ‘white’ hands, linked to an aristocratic racial purity, will be stained by Ned’s money (Anthony: 252). Anthony claims that class struggle is seen through racial symbolism: “Class [. . .] is being made by Hawthorne into a racial issue, a fact which makes blackness a crucial third term in the effort to imagine a distinct difference between working-class whiteness

¹⁴⁹ For more information about the strategy of “displacement”, see: Amy Schrager Lang (1992). “Class and the Strategies of Sympathy”. *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*. Ed. Shirley Samuels. New York: Oxford University Press: 130.

¹⁵⁰ In the Minstrel Show, which emerged from preindustrial European traditions of carnival, working-class white men dressed up as plantation slaves imitated black musical and dance forms. This form of entertainment combined a strong parody of blacks with deep appreciation for African American culture. Among the main characters that reappeared in nineteenth-century minstrel shows were “Jim Crow”, the stereotypical carefree slave. For more information about the Jim Crow tradition and minstrel shows, see: Eric Lott (1993). *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. New York: Oxford University Press. On line at: <http://www.chnm.gmu.edu/courses/jackson/minstrel/minstrel.html> (consulted 2.02.2006).

¹⁵¹ In note 13. In his letters and journal entries from the 1840s and 1850s, Hawthorne metaphorically associates manual labor and blackness with reference to the white working-class men along Salem’s waterfront (1932: 296).

and whiteness of the kind inhabited by the ‘idle aristocracy’” (252-253). Even though this connection might be possible, there is no doubt that Hepzibah’s dealings with the working class reflect the tensions between people from different social ranks. Not long after Ned Higgins leaves, an adult representative of the working class—a “man in a blue cotton frock”, who smells of alcohol—goes into the shop. Hepzibah imagines him as the husband of a “care-wrinkled woman” “worn to death by a brute” (Gables: 53). The old lady is clearly afraid of him because of his “brutal” aspect that she associates with the low class he belongs to.

The scene of the street musician parallels the Jim Crow episode, reflecting the racial, cultural and social anxiety of nineteenth-century society: the immigrant musician, representative of the working class, and the monkey, which connects to the dancing black, Jim Crow. As Robert Martin has shown, Hawthorne highlights the ape’s representation as a black person, an association conventional at the time as a result of Darwin’s theory of evolution,¹⁵² by depicting it with a “strangely manlike expression”; while, at the same time, emphasizing its disturbing and immoral masculinity (135). Hawthorne insists again and again on the monkey’s tail, calling the animal a “long-tailed imp”: as “preposterous prolixity from beneath his tartans [. . .] too enormous to be decently concealed under his gabardine” (Gables: 163-164). This is the usual kind of caricature of the black male’s sexuality in the minstrel shows of the time. In this scene, Hawthorne evokes the whites’ “fear of cultural and physical impotence as well as a possible homoerotic attraction to the black phallic alongside a panic over his possible revolt” (Robert Martin: 135).¹⁵³

Blacks males appear to white men as a sexual menace: they may rape white women. Because of this, when black slaves were lynched, whites used to remove their genitals. According to Amiri Baraka, in “American Sexual Reference: Black Male”, white men are afraid of black men’s sexuality, since they have lost their masculinity and become feminine, powerless, as if they had been castrated by white females, who play a “sort of vampiric role”: “white women become men-things, a weird combination, sucking the male juices to build a navel orange, which is themselves” (qtd. in Piggford: 152).¹⁵⁴ Thus the figure of a “hyper-sexed black male” contrasts to the delicate and

¹⁵² Even though Darwin had not published *On the Origin of Species* yet, his ideas were already circulating.

¹⁵³ Lee Edelman highlights how “the essentializing white fantasy of the black male’s intensified biological potency and virility [. . .] makes possible the racist reduction of black man to the status of genital part” (qtd. in Robert Martin: 136). Original text quoted: Lee Edelman (1994). *Homographesis*. New York: Routledge.

¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, Amiri Baraka also argues that white females are sexually attracted as well as repulsed by black males. For the black male that “signified some special power [. . .] [he] had managed to obtain in white society” (qtd. in Piggford:152). Original text quoted: Amiri Baraka (1966). *Home: Social Essays*. New York. William Morrow.

feminine Clifford. As a representative of the white male, he continually shows his lack of vigor and his androgynous character.¹⁵⁵ He is an impractical artist, whose refined sensibility is incompatible with the world shown outside the old mansion. Robert Martin claims that one of Hawthorne's foundational myths is that of "the decline of an artistic male personality linked to the aristocracy in the face of opposition from a more aggressive male figure, allegedly over the possession of a woman" (138).

As Anthony has shown, in the scene of the street musician, as in the chapter "The First Customer", Hawthorne conveys anxiety over class and race. He joins a symbol of blacks, the monkey, and a representative of the low classes, the Italian organ grinder. He stands for the masses of immigrants, especially Italian and Irish (represented by Ned Higgins), who were coming to the United States during that time. The immigrant population was not always well accepted. The Italian organ-grinder was a typical figure on the streets of many major cities and his performances frequently elicited social unease due to people's conflicting feelings towards immigrants. Urban reformer Charles L. Brace shows this ambivalence when he describes them: "They [immigrants] were, without exception, the dirtiest population I had met with [. . .]. So degraded was their type, and probably so mingled in North Italy with ancient Celtic blood, that their faces could hardly be distinguished from those of Irish poor children" (qtd. in Anthony: 255).¹⁵⁶

In Holgrave's gothic narrative of Alice Pyncheon, Hawthorne also conveys some elements of American racism and sexualized power. In the exchange between Scipio, the black servant, and Matthew Maule, the carpenter, some important facts about the racist and classist society of the moment are revealed: first, the blacks as servants become the voice of the privileged whites, as we can see when Scipio recriminates Matthew Maule about his comments on Alice Pyncheon, "The *low* carpenter-man! He no business so much as to look at her a great way off!" (Gables: 188; emphasis added). It seems ironic that a black servant uses a classist remark when referring to a member of the working class. As Sterne asserts, there is a certain hostility in Maule's and Scipio's verbal exchange, which points to the bad relationship between white laborers and black slaves, despite the fact that they are equally oppressed. When the black servant answers Maule, he mumbles down in his throat, which faintly reminds the reader of the curse on the House of Pyncheon. Scipio is part of the family and, to

¹⁵⁵ Robert K. Martin argues that, in Hawthorne's fiction, this scene of fascination and fear of the black phallus is repeated through the figure of a delicate man (Dimmesdale, Coverdale, Owen Warland), who watches a display of masculinity with desire and horror (136).

¹⁵⁶ Probably like many people at the time, it seems that Brace is trying to make of the immigrant population one single racial group by signaling the difficulty to differentiate them. Original text quoted: Charles L. Brace (1872). *The Dangerous Classes of New York, and Twenty Years Among Them*. New York: 194.

certain degree, shares with them the curse (77). Thus Hawthorne's dealings with blackness are mediated by two stereotyped figures of racial difference (Jim, Scipio): two-dimensional cartoon images, which do not have a deep self (Anthony: 250). In fact, Anthony believes that "literary high culture was tapping into the malleable and frequently unsettling energies and fantasies of race, both 'black' and 'white,' developing during this period within mass culture, in particular as a means of managing anxieties over class conflict and cultural production" (251-252).

On the other hand, Anthony observes that, Scipio, as servant, highlights the distinctions between upper and lower class white people, which are explicit in the class struggle between the two families (260). Maule sees himself as oppressed not by race, but by class. When the black servant says to the carpenter "What for do you look so black at me?", Maule replies, "No matter, darkey! Do you think nobody is to look black but yourself?" (Gables: 188). "To look black" implies that the wizard's descendant bears "the burden of class inferiority and of service in a way that is racially marked" (Anthony: 260). That reminds us that not all whites had privileges, only those who belonged to upper-middle classes, such as the Pyncheons. Likewise, in *Beloved*, Amy Denver, the indentured white servant, is almost like a slave. Maule is racially marked, "a fact that seems intended to redirect the very real threat which both he and his descendant Holgrave pose into a more easily categorized and thus containable form of Otherness" (Anthony: 260).

The troubling conflicts over gender and race are also seen in the Pyncheons' "traffic" of women, which can be easily extrapolated to the slave trade.¹⁵⁷ Gervayse Pyncheon is willing to sell his daughter as he would do with a slave to obtain the secret of the house, the missing deed. Young Matthew Maule uses his power as a wizard to control his victims, who, as slaves, are stripped of their own selves. Thus the gothic novel expresses the traumatic destruction of female autonomy and personality through the hypnotic powers of the Maules, which replicate the dynamics of the capitalist economy and slavery, "by turning people into slaves, magnetism reveals that everything and everyone is subject to commodification" (Goddu: 107).¹⁵⁸ As Robert Martin says: "To be mesmerized is to lose one's self, that is, to be appropriated or dispossessed by a form of possession, much as the slave lost his fundamental

¹⁵⁷ An excellent account of these issues can be found in Walter Benn Michaels (1987). "Romance and Real Estate". *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature at the Turn of the Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 85-113.

¹⁵⁸ When Phoebe begins to show clear signs of her hypnotized state, she is depicted as a veiled lady (Gables: 211). Her veil points, in a metaphorical way, to her imprisoned spirit. According to Teresa Goddu, in mid-nineteenth century America, the veiled lady functioned as a dominant image of womanhood (97). The true Victorian woman in America was seen as a disembodied self, which took his proper position in a sort of spiritual sphere, the role of domestic angel away from the market's demons.

property—himself—by being enslaved” (137). Maule’s visible phallic potency, his “long pocket for his rule, the end of which protruded” (Gables: 201), embodies the forceful masculinity under which the woman will become a servant. Under the tyrannical carpenter’s dominion, Alice dies dramatically one snowy and rainy night, the day of Maule’s wedding, when she is summoned by her evil despot to wait upon his wife: she is wearing her “gossamer white dress” which becomes wet while she treads the “muddy sidewalks” (Gables: 209). The violent class struggle brings about the gothic maiden’s tragic death.

As Anthony has argued, in “The Flower of Eden”, we can also find a symbolic act of appropriation (263). When Holgrave shows Phoebe a picture that he has taken of the dead Judge Pyncheon, she looks at it and exclaims anxiously: “This is death!” (Gables: 302). Some critics, such as Oliver W. Holmes, even point out the vampire-like quality of the daguerreotype, characterizing it as a soul-stealing method: the photographer is like a “great white hunter” who gathers the images of his prey as if they were their heads or skins (qtd. in Anthony: 11).¹⁵⁹ Thus Anthony considers Holgrave’s photographic ‘vamping’ of the Judge might be read as a rather radical act of appropriation, a racial usurpation: “For, while seizing the Judge’s ‘soul,’ Holgrave should also be thought of as appropriating that which is most dear to those of the Judge’s class—the conception of white racial purity which the protective walls of high culture have been erected to protect [. . .]. Holgrave’s daguerreotype plate is the image of the Pyncheons’ lost whiteness ‘itself’” (264). On the other hand, I would suggest that, in photographing the dead Judge, Holgrave the wizard finally exerts his complete and ultimate supremacy over his adversary’s soul. The forces of democracy have obtained an absolute triumph over aristocracy.

Finally, in the “Governor Pyncheon” chapter, Hawthorne resorts to black and white symbolism when he describes Judge Pyncheon’s death. First, he insists on the whiteness of the deceased and then the blackness,

The gloom has not entered from without [. . .]. The judge’s face, indeed, rigid, and *singularly white*, refuses to melt into this universal solvent [. . .]. Has it yet vanished? No!—yes!—not quite! And there is still the *swarthy whiteness*—we shall venture to marry these ill-agreeing words—the *swarthy whiteness* of the Judge’s face. The features are all gone. There is only the paleness of them left. And how looks it now? There is no window! There is no face! An infinite, inscrutable blackness has annihilated sight! Where is our universe? All crumbled away from us. (Gables: 276; emphasis added)

Anthony analyses the scene as Hawthorne’s expression of racial anxieties: “Moving from ‘singularly white’ to an ‘ill-agreeing’ state of ‘swarthy whiteness’ to a featureless

¹⁵⁹ For more information, see: Oliver Wendell Holmes (1859). “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph”. *Atlantic Monthly*: 162. <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/1859jun/holmes.htm>

'paleness,' Judge Pyncheon's face seems here to be the face of elitist American culture 'itself'. Increasingly diluted by differences of class and race, that face appears here to reflect a failed last moment in the maintenance of upper-class whiteness" (263-264). I would emphasize how, in these words, the writer is depicting the waning of aristocracy. The Judge is the last true representative of a class system that is dying out. Hawthorne's words "Where is our universe?" convey his ambiguous approach to the end of a social order for which he showed certain admiration.

To conclude, I agree with Richard C. Sterne that in *Seven Gables* Hawthorne conveys through the gothic mode the complex interrelationships between three social groups: black slaves, working-class whites and waning aristocrats. None of them are presented in a favorable light, "he [Hawthorne] is politically stalemated" (81). As some critics have shown, Hawthorne subtly connects class difference with racial difference. We cannot doubt that the Pyncheon mansion is not just haunted by social and gender differences, but also by racial ones. Thus *Seven Gables* is another example of Morrison's words,

Explicit or implicit, the Africanist presence informs in compelling and inescapable ways the texture of American literature. It is a dark and abiding presence, there for the literary imagination as both a visible and an invisible mediating force. Even, and especially, when American texts are not 'about' Africanist presences or characters or narrative or idiom, the shadow hovers in implication, in sign, in line of demarcation. (1992: 46-47)

1.3.3. Slavery in *Beloved*

African-American authors' appropriation and revision of gothic conventions shows that the gothic is not a transhistorical, static category but a dynamic mode that undergoes historical change when specific agents adopt and transform its conventions. In the works of African-American writers from Frederick Douglas and Harriet Jacobs to [. . .] Toni Morrison, and others, the gothic has served as a useful mode in which to resurrect and resist America's racial history.
TERESA GODDU, *Gothic America*.

Just as the earliest European Gothic reacts to the Enlightenment by darkly illuminating those places in the human heart that rationalism tries to ignore, American Gothic appropriately finds its truest subject in slavery, the "peculiar institution" that exposes the gulf between the ideals upon which the nation was founded and the realities of its history.
DAVID DUDLEY, "Toni Morrison".

Unlike Hawthorne's Anglo Gothic approach to racial issues, Morrison reworks essential Gothic motifs to manifest cultural fears distinctive of the African American. In *Seven Gables*, the conflict between the privileged and the low classes takes the central stage. Hawthorne mostly deals with the white man and the transition from aristocracy to democracy. It shows us how the democratic forces are replacing nobility and becoming the successful future of America. Morrison's romance is also about the liberation of a whole generation from a legacy; however, this is not aristocracy, but

slavery. In *Beloved* the characters struggle to break free from the bonds of enslavement, to become complete human beings. As in *Seven Gables*, the impulse of the new generation represents the forces of regeneration and renewal.

The horror that is inside the Gothic genre is embodied in the haunting legacy of slavery. Consequently, as I said before, there is a powerful affinity between the African-American experience and the Gothic: “[Gothic works] are revealed to be unusually apt for symbolizing African American history—and to be connected to it today with extraordinary force” (Hogle: 215). In the eighteenth century the Gothic had already been unveiled as a complex historical mode: “history invents the gothic, and in turn the gothic reinvents history” (Goddu: 131-132). Morrison revises the horrifying history of slavery by transforming it into a gothic tale: her “*Beloved* is one of the fullest articulations of the gothic’s role in rematerializing African-American history” (Goddu: 154).

Beloved shows, with terrible Gothic tones, the horrors of slavery and its aftermath. We can see its terrible faces, such as rape, murder and miscegenation. Morrison depicts the deep marks enslavement can make on human beings and how difficult it is to get rid of them: “black men and women [tried] to carry out meaningful human lives after slavery, which bruised and bloodied their humanity but did not destroy it” (Denard 1997: 41). *Beloved* describes the physical, but mostly psychic, wounds of Southern slavery, among them the paradoxes and perversion of Schoolteacher’s practice on Sweet Home plantation in Kentucky: “the vision of this novel is innervision, the cognitive reclamation of our spiritual histories” (Holloway: 76).¹⁶⁰ *Beloved* not only focuses on the individual characters and their “intensely personal trauma”, but it also emphasizes “slavery as a national trauma” (Krumholz 1999: 108). As a Gothic text Morrison’s romance makes America face the holocaust of slavery by “resurrect[ing] those suppressed elements of human and national experience that we would like to forget” (Dudley: 296).

Despite the difficulties inherent in recovering a gothic history, Morrison insists on speaking the unspeakable. Silence can be an understandable response to the horror of history, but it is ultimately disempowering and isolating: Halle goes insane when he watches his wife’s torture and cannot say a word. As Mischelle Booher argues “Morrison has penned a most terrifying, unspeakable Gothic plot—a monument to slavery. *Beloved* is every American reader’s ghost as well as Sethe’s, whose crime is overshadowed by the greater injustice she lived beneath every day” (129). In *Beloved*

¹⁶⁰ Some other critics, such as Adrienne Rich (1972: 19), Iyunolu Osagie (online), Ashraf H. A. Rushdy (1998: 141) and Carl Plasa (43), have emphasized the fact that Morrison deals mostly with the psychological consequences of slavery. Morrison herself says “I’m looking to find and expose a truth about the interior life of people who didn’t write it [. . .]” (qtd. in Plasa: 47).

Morrison removes the guilt of enslavement from the blacks and places it on the whites, where the blame belongs. According to Mark Edmundson: "It's the white community, authors of the Holocaust, that's now to be haunted. This book, a work of genius, seeks to effect a transference; from black to white, the guilt of slavery must go" (qtd. in Dudley: 300).

Morrison rewrites the distorted view of history as stated by the dominant social group, the whites, who must also confront their past. Morrison privileges the victims' vision of enslavement, giving African Americans back their voices and denies that death could mean any kind of closure for the tragedy that slavery meant for millions of blacks. In fact, as Valerie Smith claims, "The project of the novel, much like Baby Suggs's project, seems to be to reclaim these bodies, to find a way to tell the story of the slave body in pain" (1993: 348). Sethe's story is a counternarrative, a revisioning of the history of blacks' enslavement: "For Morrison [. . .] the gothic serves as a mode of resistance. By writing their own gothic tales, these authors [Morrison and Harriet Jacobs] combat the master's version of their history; by breaking the silence, they reclaim their history instead of being controlled by it" (Goddu: 155).

Morrison focuses on the characters' blackness in contrast to the white society that surrounds them and both violates and denies their existence. She is concerned with reflecting their individual and unique voices, the gothic quest for the black self. Bernard W. Bell believes that Morrison expresses the African-American characters' "double consciousness of their terribly paradoxical circumstances as people and non-people in a social arena of white male hegemony" (54). Morrison does not reduce her narrative to what Henry L. Gates Jr. has called "a master plot of victim and victimizer" (qtd. in Rushdy 1990: 38);¹⁶¹ she deals with "the values held by the blacks themselves as agents of their own humanity rather than as resigned victims of the values of their white enslavers" (Denard 1997: 42).¹⁶² *Beloved* gives testimony of the endurance of blacks slaves and those who suffered the consequences of enslavement in its aftermath, the survivors of the horrors of slavery.

1.3.4. *Beloved* as a Slave Narrative

Morrison's reinterpretation of the slave narrative does more than fill the lacunae in early African-American texts: it offers a reinterpretation of white nineteenth-century

¹⁶¹ Original text quoted: Henry L. Gates (1990). "Introduction". *Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Henry L., Jr. Gates. New York: Penguin Meridian: 1-17. Laurie Vickroy thinks that Morrison wants the reader to "share the victim's experience from the victim's point of view [. . .] we all must explore our own role in this victimization, whether our guilt take the form of direct responsibility or complicity" (107).

¹⁶² Jennifer Fitzgerald (111) and Elizabeth Abel (qtd. in Holden-Kirwan: online) express similar views. Original text quoted: Elizabeth Abel (1990). "Race, Class, and Psychoanalysis? Opening Questions". *Conflicts in Feminism*. Ed. Marianne Hirsh. New York: Routledge, 184-204.

texts as well. Like all slave narratives, *Beloved* responds to a white literary tradition. Whereas her predecessors often emulated the white text, however, Morrison works to deconstruct it.

CAROLINE M. WOJDAT, "Talking Back to Schoolteacher: Morrison's Confrontation with Hawthorne in *Beloved*".

If Hawthorne deals subtly, almost surreptitiously, with racial issues, Morrison fully confronts the subject of race through the slave narrative genre. Thus her romance deals with the most traditional conventions of the Gothic mode, since the slave narrative inherits the typical motifs used in Radcliffean Gothic. Morrison, as Marilyn S. Mobley points out, "uses the trope of memory to revise the genre of the slave narratives" and "make the slave experience [. . .] more accessible to contemporary readers", for whom slavery was just "a remote historical fact" (1990: 191). *Beloved* shares many of the characteristics of the classic slave narrative; however, they have some significant differences.

The classic slave narrative tells the story of an individual—usually autobiographical in form and theme—who comes to selfhood through freedom. It uses memory to narrate facts and incidents in a chronological and linear way. On the other hand, in *Beloved*, through their disturbing recollections, a group of individuals rebuild and, at the same time, confront their past interactively from different points of view. Morrison unfolds her novel using a modernist technique, changing constantly between present and past in a disordered narrative which follows the logical disruptions of memory. Morrison reverses the classical slave account since, by means of their recollections, these characters go back from their "free" everyday life to their days of enslavement.¹⁶³ Another important difference between conventional slaves narratives and *Beloved* is that Morrison does not intend to convince white readers of the slave's humanity—even though she may also get this effect—, since her novel is principally directed toward black readers so as to make them face those traumatic aspects of their past (Plasa: 48).

Teresa Goddu says that even though the slave narrative might not incorporate the gothic's typical supernatural elements, it contains many of its characteristics: "With descriptions of slavery as a feudal institution, horrifying scenes of torture and entrapment, lascivious masters and innocent slave girls, and curses on many generations, the slave narrative reads like a gothic romance with a single, crucial difference: the scenery is not staged but real" (136). The slave narrative can be read as the conventional female gothic plot of the Radcliffean romance when it portrays an

¹⁶³ Classic slave narratives, as autobiographies, are told using only a first person perspective, while *Beloved* is framed by a third person narrative, which enables multiple perspectives from the different characters. Bernard W. Bell highlights the different voices in *Beloved*, "a haunting story of a mother's love that frames a series of interrelated love stories (maternal, parental, filial, sororal, conjugal, heterosexual, familial, and communal) by multiple narrators" (55).

innocent maiden pursued by a wicked villain. However, as Goddu writes, it transposes the Gothic's usual associations: the villain, the slave master, is white and the maiden is a black slave (137). *Beloved* shares with other slave narratives its use of Gothic conventions, but it also includes numerous paranormal phenomena, including Beloved, the ghost in the flesh. Nevertheless, its strongest gothic element is, as in the rest of slave narratives, probably thematic: its historical referents embody horror. The African-American experience under slavery is coded in gothic terms: "Morrison's novel uses and refashions Gothic materials to uncover truths of the African American experience" (Dudley: 299).

Nineteenth-century writers of slave narratives confronted important limitations. To appear as objective as possible and to make the experience palatable for readers, they were silent about many things and they hardly mentioned the slaves' interior lives. They sometimes masked or coded certain aspects. Authors of slave narratives did not usually reveal the true horror of slavery, especially the white master's sexual violence upon female slaves, for fear of offending the white middle-class Northern readership or because they did not want to dwell on painful memories. These narratives have the purpose of changing things by showing the white readership that blacks were also human beings. In addition, they were frequently used as political texts contrived to promote the objectives of the abolitionist movement, which helped to set many slaves free, but also forced certain restrictions upon the blacks' possibilities to fully communicate their experiences: "Even as they are the written signs of freedom, the slave narratives are thus produced and disseminated in a historical context marked by the operation of certain kinds of constraint that set the limits of representation and divide what can be said from what cannot" (Plasa: 43).¹⁶⁴

The nature of the slave narrative changed once slavery no longer existed. *Beloved*, as one of its complex and contemporary examples, shows this shift. It is a rewriting which "challenges the hegemonic status of the (primarily male) slave narratives as well as the 'canonical' history embodied in the master('s) narratives" (Mae Henderson: 82). Morrison attempts to fill in the blanks traditional slave narratives had left. As Plasa says, in her depiction of how the blacks had survived psychological trauma, Morrison goes beyond its constraints, making a radically innovative contribution to the genre: Morrison never offers a sugar-coated vision of free African Americans' lives. Not only does she overtly represent the most horrifying aspects of slaves' physical oppression—especially sexual violence, rape—, she also dramatically

¹⁶⁴ Blacks ran the risk of being considered liars when telling their recollections from slavery. That is why, as Liliane Weissberg states, their accounts were usually "recorded by white men for readers who came from a white tradition" (114). Weissberg adds that while classic slave narratives gave preference to the written word, Morrison emphasizes orality as the form that could be claimed as Black.

depicts their psychological wounds (43). Morrison exposes manifestly those aspects which had been hidden or encrypted within the classic slave narrative: "If *Beloved* is a story about a ghost, it is a story which itself has a ghostly status or existence, haunting, as it does, the gaps and silences of the tradition on which it draws, seeking release" (Plasa: 43).

1.4. The Threat of Science in Nineteenth-Century America

Slavery broke the world in half, it broke it in every way. It broke Europe. It made them into something else, it made them slave masters, it made them crazy. You can't do that for hundreds of years and it not take a toll. They had to dehumanize, not just the slavers but themselves. They have had to reconstruct everything in order to make that system appear true. It made everything in World War II possible. It made World War I necessary. Racism is the word that we use to encompass all this. The idea of scientific racism suggests some serious pathology.
TONI MORRISON, qtd. in Carl Plasa (ed.). *Toni Morrison: Beloved*.

Both Hawthorne and Morrison show their great concern about science, which has always been a very important subject for Gothic fiction. Both give a gothicized vision of the threat of the scientific project and share anxieties about Western rationality in colonial societies. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne deals with the reality of science and technology in the nineteenth century as a counterweight of the Gothic burden of the past. He shows a decayed colonial society in transition, a rural America which is experiencing the changes of progress and technology. Technology and science, for Hawthorne and for many other people in the industrial age, appear as a challenge to institutions and tradition. Industrialization is depicted by images of machine technology, which appear as a counterforce of the American pastoral myth. However, it also seems to be capable of dissipating the oppressive force of the past, which characterizes the Gothic narrative. Everything seems unfixed, nothing is immune to the advance of progress and science: "We are made to feel that the rural myth is threatened by an incursion of history" (Marx 1964: 21), which is represented by breakthroughs of science.

On the other hand, *Beloved*, like many of Morrison's novels, centers on elements of rural, pre-industrial American life, since "the industrial has not yet infused the lives of the characters [. . .]. By presenting monetary exchange only through the buying or selling of slaves, the narrative suggests a nostalgia for the premodern that implicitly focuses criticism on contemporary social organization" (Pérez-Torres 1998: 132). In *Seven Gables*, at the end of Clifford and Hepzibah's train trip, Hawthorne also offers a vision of the American rural society which contrasts to the old man's speech about progress and technology. At the lonely train station, the two owls gaze gloomily at two symbols of the past: a wooden church, "black with age, and in a dismal state of ruin

and decay” and a farmhouse “in the old style, as venerably black as the church” (Gables: 266). As Buitenhuis argues, these ruins can be considered as symbols of a rural America which is entering the industrialized age. The decaying church might mean the loss of religious spirit and the decline of religion and its institutions in a society in which science and technology are more important. The old farmhouse might suggest the anachronism of the rural society and the increasing urbanization that began with Mathew Maule’s small hut (1991: 56).

Unlike Morrison, Hawthorne focuses on contrasting industrialization with a pastoral view of American life. In *Seven Gables*, he analyzes the transformation of the rural idyllic America. Hawthorne wondered if Jefferson’s pastoral ideals could ever be realized in the materialism of the present. Thus his Gothic narrative presents the land as a locus of anxiety, where monstrous transformations and dark visions of swift changes take place. As Leo Marx has shown in *The Machine in the Garden*, in Hawthorne’s Gothicized world, the railroad and the industrial life style it symbolizes appear as threatening to the old values of the rural aristocratic America. However, in the conclusion of *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne was able to hope that a better age was possible: America had got rid of the ghosts of the past and was advancing towards a better future.

On the other hand, in *Beloved*, Morrison attacks the racist use of science. She resorts to a Gothic approach to disclose the collaboration between slavery and science, delegitimizing Western rationality, as it endorsed the slave trade. Through the slaves’ lives and their hauntings, Morrison defies the rationale of Western culture. As Ellen J. Goldner writes, in Morrison’s narrative, the haunting is used in the service of witnessing: “Witnessing, derived from religion and exemplified by the Gospels, values not the distanced and ‘objective’ view of science but rather the personal, morally-committed, and even passionate testimony that derives from situated, lived experience. Witnessing thus attests to the reality of historical atrocity, to the moral judgement of it, and to the suffering of those who endure it” (online).¹⁶⁵ Both in *Beloved* and *Seven Gables* the gothic haunting transmits, at least in some aspects, a different sense of time and space. The haunt is associated with immeasurable time as it is bonded to the timelessness of death for which science has no explanation.

¹⁶⁵ Goldner argues that “As hauntings preserve the dead amid the living and the past amid the present, they defy the concept of linear time, the bedrock of cause and effect that enables prediction. They thus defy the Western dream of control. In these texts, haunts also defy the Euclidean conception of the world as a uniform space, infusing the space of the abstract grid with signs of the specific history and suffering of slaves, charging the atmosphere with the emotional, moral, and political forces which the project of science claims to disregard, and the project of slavery seeks to disregard” (online).

As Ellen Goldner has pointed out, Western science and the domination of other cultures are connected and one of their most important results is the slave trade. Paul Gilroy thinks that slavery was not a deviation of the modern Western society that seeks human freedom and prosperity through reason. On the contrary, he argues that the slave trade is central to the modern European vision and is justified by its rationalism (qtd. in Goldner: online). European science makes man envisage nature as something to be controlled and dominated. David Harvey argues: "the conquest of space [the earth] requires that it first be conceived as something useable, malleable and capable of domination through human action" (qtd. in Goldner: online).¹⁶⁶ There is a small step between the control of nature and the control of other human beings, since Europeans associate non-Western peoples with savagery and the wild (online).

Whites exert their domination over other races using the law and justifying their actions on the rational scientific discourse. In *Seven Gables* Judge Pyncheon is the representative of the Law of the Father, but it is Holgrave who personifies the man of science. However, in *Beloved*, Schoolteacher is both the "voice of law" and the "perverse rationality" of European culture. Therefore, "it is this white/male construction of the law according to the authority of the master discourse that Sethe must first dismantle in order to construct her own story" (Mae Henderson: 90). *Beloved* shows a much harder view of science than *Seven Gables*, since Holgrave never reaches the extremes of Morrison's villainous slaveholder. Just as in *Beloved*, *Seven Gables* separates the scientific discourse from an ethical approach to life, as we can see in Holgrave's detached observation of the old couple's vicissitudes.

1.4.1. Science and Magic: the Daguerreotype as a Truth Detector

Etching his text with strokes of ambiguity and dubiety, Hawthorne draws widely on figural terms from the popular discourse of the daguerreotype circulating in the print culture of the 1840s and early 1850s [. . .]. He draws on that gothicized discourse not for the sake of local allusions alone but as a vehicle of his deepest intentions in the romance, which are to probe the implications of the new order of things of which photography serves as the auspicious type.

ALAN TRACHTENBERG, "Seeing and Believing: Hawthorne's Reflections on the Daguerreotype in *The House of the Seven Gables*".

In Morrison science and magic become two different approaches to real life, which she associates, respectively, with whites' rational Western view and blacks' African perception of reality. Magic is an intrinsic part of the way blacks confront reality, towards which, on the whole, as Morrison says, whites show scorn: "My own use of

¹⁶⁶ Claude Alvares emphasizes that, in the scientific method, abstraction is connected to the homogenizing of its subject matter, thus eliminating diversity and creating "an artificial reality which can be completely controlled" (qtd. in Goldner: online). Original text quoted: Claude Alvares (1988). "Science, Colonialism and Violence: a Luddite View." *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity*. Ed. Ashis Nandy. Delhi: Oxford University Press: 68-112.

enchantment simply comes because that's the way the world was for me and for the black people I knew [. . .] there was this other knowledge or perception, always discredited but nevertheless there, which informed their sensibilities and clarified their activities. It was a kind of cosmology that was perceptive as well as enchanting" (Christina Davis: 226). However, in *Seven Gables*, as in traditional Gothic fiction, science and magic are closely associated, for instance in Dr Frankenstein's experiments. As Fiedler points out, the sciences first favored by romancers are those of the gothic past, astrology and alchemy. Nevertheless, later, these are replaced by the bourgeois pseudo-sciences of mesmerism, phrenology, ventriloquism that we can find in Brockden Brown's and Hawthorne's works (139). Hawthorne relates science and magic to the daguerreotype, the truth detector. Holgrave, the daguerreotypist and a wizard with occult powers, can find the truth under deceptive appearance by conjuring images through the use of light.

Hawthorne resorts to the popular conception of this invention for his gothicized scientific discourse. In the early days of photography in America, daguerreotypes evoked uneasiness and, as David Anthony argues, were, for different reasons, regarded with certain suspicion (263). On one hand, this new form of technology was considered "a scientific breakthrough by many and as an artistic revolution by others" but, on the other hand, it was seen as a work of witchcraft and "in some corners as a dangerous and even blasphemous transgression of individual autonomy" (Ronald Thomas: 107).¹⁶⁷ The 'stealing' quality of the daguerreotype, which I mentioned previously, clearly relates this photographic procedure to Holgrave's mesmeric powers. According to Joel Kehler, the photograph of the Judge's corpse parallels the young reformer's magnetism on Phoebe: "Thomas Maule and Holgrave are mesmerists of some accomplishments, and the latter practices another, scientific type of natural magic, daguerreotype" (143).¹⁶⁸ The daguerreotype embodies the ambiguous character that science takes in Gothic fiction. Its relationship to magic, its role as a truth detector,

¹⁶⁷ In fact, in the *American Journal of the Franklin Institute*, the writer Antoine Claudet commented that the daguerreotype art, "two centuries ago [. . .] would have been looked upon as the work of witchcraft" (qtd. in Alfred Marks 1967b: 331). For more information, see: Antoine Claudet (1845). "The Progress and Present State of the Daguerreotype Art" *Journal of the Franklin Institute* XL (July). Cathy Davidson believes that "some metaphysicians of the time feared that taking someone's likeness in photographic form desecralized personhood, ventured into the region of spiritualism, and generally contested the boundaries between the material and the occult world" (qtd. in Ronald Thomas: 107). Original text quoted: Cathy Davidson (1990). "Photographs of the Dead: Sherman, Daguerre, Hawthorne". *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 89.4: 667-701. Alfred H. Marks, quoting Beaumont Newhall, expresses similar views (1967b: 331); M. A. Gaudin (1844). *Traité Pratique de Photographie*. Paris: 6. For more information, see: Beaumont Newhall (1938). *Photography, A Short Critical History*. New York.

¹⁶⁸ Rudolph Von Abele also connects Holgrave's gift of mesmeric power and the daguerreotype (1967: 398).

its vampiric quality makes it a perfect medium to express anxieties about the perception of reality and about life itself.

Alan Trachtenberg argues that the daguerreotype plays a strategic role as an emblem of the ambiguity that distinguishes the gothic romance, due at least in part to its “magic” character. Through this invention, Hawthorne deals with the ‘complicated purposes’ of romance: the unreliability of appearances, of representations altogether [. . .]. Is there a trustworthy way of seeing through surfaces, interpreting them as signs of something not seen, a ‘secret character,’ an invisible writing?” (37-38).¹⁶⁹ In fact, as Trachtenberg claims, in its combination of science with magic, the daguerreotype shares qualities of both novel and gothic romance: “While ‘minute fidelity’ seems incontrovertibly to associate photography with ‘Novel,’ with its recurring imagery of light and mist and shadow, the preface subtly recruits the daguerreotype for a key role in the definition of ‘Romance’ that the narrative will unfold” (32). According to Ronald Thomas, the replacement of painted portraits with photographically-reproduced prints reflects “how the history of a new technology of representation might articulate with the history of a new literary form in distinct ways under different cultural circumstances” (92).

As a consequence of its ambiguity, the daguerreotype embodies a multiplicity of meanings in *Seven Gables*, “Holgrave’s daguerreotypes combine elements of past and present, of tradition and change, of magical and rational systems of knowledge. The narrator situates the products of Holgrave’s equivocal craft within a radiating web of implication” (Trachtenberg: 35). This web seems to spread in numerous directions: it becomes associated with unsettling elements of modernity, it has the invasive ways of some technologies and it represents the black or Maule vision of Holgrave (Trachtenberg: 45).¹⁷⁰

Hawthorne [. . .] places many interpretations on the nature and possibilities of the daguerreotype process in *The House of the Seven Gables* [. . .] he uses it as an instrument that can detect that which his villain has successfully hidden from society. From this point he expands it into an instrument of truth, a tool of Romantic epistemology, and a scientific act-form which does unfailingly what only genius has been able to do earlier; and finally he makes it an intermediary in the cause of light; it not only uses light; it brings light. (Alfred Marks 1967b: 340)

The daguerreotype fascinated Americans, who had a great passion for new technology.¹⁷¹ Even though new systems were introduced, this photographic method

¹⁶⁹ On one hand, Richard Fogle states that Judge Pyncheon’s daguerreotype reveals all that the Judge conceals (1952: 156). On the other hand, Maureen O’Connor argues that this photographic invention is another means of self-duplicating representation in this romance; among others, Judge Jaffrey is an iteration of the Colonel (228).

¹⁷⁰ Trachtenberg claims that Holgrave “plays a kind of avenging angel, not with a sword but a camera or, better, a certain kind of eye that adapts itself with alacrity (less careless than he admits) to the daguerrean mode of vision” (37).

¹⁷¹ Beaumont Newhall describes Americans’ passion for it (qtd. in Alfred Marks 1967b: 332).

persisted in America, since, as Ronald Thomas suggests, it was somehow associated with specifically American values and principles: the fact that the daguerreotype produced only a single image was not perceived as a disadvantage, rather it stood for uniqueness and authenticity (92).¹⁷² In *Seven Gables* Hawthorne also seems to express that this photographic method could depict the "characteristic" and essential aspects of nature and human beings. This device would be immune to hypocrisy, since, as Buitenhuis highlights, unlike painting, scientific and direct imitation of nature cannot conceal the truth (1991:52).¹⁷³ Besides, "The daguerreotype portrait could be said to reveal truth because the length of the exposure made it imperative for the subject's head to be held still in a clamp for many minutes; and it is difficult to maintain a posed and artificial expression for that length of time" (Buitenhuis 1991: 101). Thus it could penetrate beneath the surface of the world into the essential core of life (Alfred Marks 1967b: 336).

The daguerreotype, as Alfred Marks claims, is strongly associated with sunlight, sometimes interchangeable with it (1967b: 336). Abele argues that this photographic process "operates with the assistance of the sun, that is, of nature [. . .]" (1967: 398). Holgrave says to Phoebe, "I make pictures out of sunshine". Marks asserts that "the daguerreotype [. . .] becom[es] an important agent of the light and dark imagery in the novel. It seems to derive some of the occult powers Hawthorne gives it from its ministries in the service of light" (1967b: 336). As a truth detector, the daguerreotype brings light to reality and shows, for instance, Judge Pyncheon's "secret character": "the fact that his historical being arises from a crime" (Trachtenberg: 38).¹⁷⁴ Judge Pyncheon may deceive the world with his "exceedingly pleasant countenance, indicative of benevolence", yet in his portrait, the sun reveals the real man.¹⁷⁵

Clifford's beautiful Malbone miniature, which Hepzibah has treasured for a long time, also catches his "*innately characteristic* [look] [. . .] that all the dusky years, and the burthen of unfit calamity, which had fallen upon him, did not suffice utterly to destroy" (Gables: 106; emphasis added). It reproduces faithfully the old man's inner truth, only slightly idealized. However, his true character has not been hidden, since he

¹⁷² Ronald R. Thomas claims that these "virtues [are] entirely consistent with emerging canons of American realism and valuations of the individual self" (92).

¹⁷³ In fact, the photographic images of *Seven Gables* are contrasted with "a set of painted portraits which do *not* tell the truth, the most important of which is the portrait of the ancestral patriarch Colonel Pyncheon" (Ronald Thomas: 103).

¹⁷⁴ Ronald Thomas argues that Holgrave exposes in his daguerreotypes "an oppressive legal and political establishment" and "a judge and a political candidate who has taken to conducting himself like an Old World aristocrat" (103).

¹⁷⁵ Joseph Flibbert, in contrast with the idea of the daguerreotype as a truth detector, claims that the camera only records what is visible to a mechanical eye. If Judge Pyncheon's daguerreotype reveals his true aspect, it is not because of the mechanical eye, but because of the sunshine, the warm "eye" of nature (125).

is not a powerful public man. Robert Whelan believes that the strong contrast between these two pictures suggests a fundamental theme of the story: “the struggle between the old Man and the New” (72). In opposition to Judge Pyncheon’s photograph, the great portrait of Colonel Pyncheon, which presides “over the house as a household deity and a symbol of privileged authority rather than as a representation of truth” (Ronald Thomas: 103), also shows the reality because of the almost ‘magic’ phenomenon which characterizes it.

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Holgrave is the Faustian figure who, in his role as a daguerreotypist, is in search of truth and “tries to go beyond external appearances” (Gollin: 163). The young reformer, as a scientist-artist with occult powers, finds in the daguerreotype the perfect instrument for his purposes. He is aware that this photographic method can bring out the disagreeable traits of a perfectly amiable face: his “daguerreotypes consistently function in the text in these ways: as evidence, memorial, historical document. They tell the truth” (Ronald Thomas: 103). Holgrave captures Judge Pyncheon’s “innately characteristic” frown, since his hypocritical smile is probably too ephemeral. It is his disguised stern gesture that really prevails and finally gets immortalized. Through the daguerreotype, “Holgrave deals in representations of personal identity—the portraits of persons. And this links him with his author’s prepossessive concern with identity and its vicissitudes in an egalitarian culture” (Hoffman 1967: 482).

Among its many symbolic meanings, Holgrave’s occupation stands for his rational approach to life, “his inward-looking tendency”. Donald Ringe states that his interest in daguerreotypes objectifies his intellectual pursuits and the fact that he belongs to the present and progress (1950: 121). In addition, as Ronald Thomas argues, the daguerreotype seems to relate to the reformer’s approach to life and his political ideas. Holgrave’s camera is especially well suited to his political convictions, since it “seems to carry an especially potent and subversive ideological power consistent with a radical rather than a bourgeois political agenda” (102). However, his status as an observer contradicts his political commitments and his respect for other people: “his profession engages him in the conversion of persons into property—an action very much at odds with his radical view and reverence for the individual” (107-108).

1.4.2. The Railway, the Satanic Industrial Fire. The Flight of Two Owls

It is the embodiment of the age, an instrument of power, speed, noise, fire, iron, smoke—at once a testament to the will of man rising over natural obstacles and, yet, confined by its iron rails to a predetermined path, it suggested a new sort of fate.

LEO MARX, *The Machine in the Garden*.

Hawthorne expresses his Gothic anxieties about science and technology with the railway, which together with the daguerreotype, was one of the major developments of the mid-nineteenth century. Buitenhuis thinks that he was captivated by this new means of transportation (1991: 53). His first tale dealing with the subject was "The Celestial Railroad" (1843) in which he seems to use this invention to satirize science's ability to "annihilate the toil and dust" of spiritual and moral struggle.¹⁷⁶

Leo Marx has delved into the phenomenon of industrialization and its impact on American literature in his *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964). In the nineteenth century, Marx says, there was great faith in the incessant progress of mankind and, consequently, in the power of machines, which was consistent with the American dream of abundance. In fiction the recurrent image of the irruption of the machine into the landscape is connected to the rapid industrialization and the special conditions of the new life in America. According to Marx, the powerful and efficient locomotive in the paradisiacal American garden stands for the superiority of the present to the past: the ability of man to rise above the obstacles with which nature has surrounded him. Marx asserts that the new man can impose his will upon the world. Besides, both the machine and the new Republic, democracy, made people think that industrialization was necessary to be happy. In *Seven Gables* the machine, the railroad, becomes a transcendent symbol, which acquires a political and metaphysical meaning with contradictory connotations (Marx: 209), thus becoming a strongly ambiguous image. Even though this technological invention seems to pervert the American pastoral life, Hawthorne seems to favor its positive meanings: it symbolizes progress and becomes a counterforce of the burden of the past, thus standing for democracy.

Leo Marx points out some of the meanings of this transportation. On one hand, it is related to a "black monster", communicating a sense of anxiety and dread. In a gothicized discourse, the railroad and industrialization are, as Marx asserts, associated with a satanic industrial fire in contrast to the pastoral life-giving sun: a device used by Dante, Spenser, Milton and Bunyan (Industrialization is frequently linked to a cluster of images: "iron", "fire", "smoke", "furnace", and "forge").¹⁷⁷ In Milton's mythology, Marx

¹⁷⁶ This is extracted from a footnote in Hawthorne's *Seven Gables* (260). As Buitenhuis writes, this story is a parody of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which tells how the communication between the City of Destruction and the Celestial City has been greatly improved by a railroad. However, it is finally discovered that the driver of the train is Apollyon (Satan) and the locomotive turns out to be "much more like a sort of mechanical demon that would hurry us to the infernal region than a laudable contrivance for smoothing our way to the Celestial City" (Works, 2: 216) (1991: 53). See: John Bunyan (1965). *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

¹⁷⁷ William Blake begins to exploit the new industrial associations of satanic fire in his poem "Milton" (1804-1808), and later John Martin brought them into the pictures of hell he did for an illustrated edition of *Paradise Lost* (1827).

continues, it seems that, before the Fall, man didn't need technology; but, afterwards, Adam and Eve were grateful for the gift of fire. Fire becomes an equivalent of technology, a surrogate for the "machine", as we can see in legends such as Prometheus, Vulcan and, partially, in the Christian myth (270).¹⁷⁸ Prometheus defies the universe and commits his daring theft: he steals God's fire and gives it to man. On the other hand, Marx points out, the introduction of industrial power in the American setting will also be paralleled by the dialectic of art versus nature.

As Marx has shown, nineteenth-century American literature depicts the railroad as an intruder, a shocking invader of the idyllic nature: "By placing the machine in opposition to the tranquility and order located in the landscape, he [Hawthorne] makes it an emblem of the artificial, of the unfeeling utilitarian spirit, and of the fragmented, industrial style of life that allegedly follows the premises of the empirical philosophy" (1964: 18). Although this invention is useful for commerce, at the same time, it is destroying pastoral life (Buitenhuis 1991: 54):

The train stands for a more sophisticated, complex style of life [. . .] the passengers are busy men, citizens, from the hot street [. . .]. The harsh noise evokes an image of intense, overheated, restless striving—a life of 'all unquietness' like that associated with great cities [. . .]. The central device [. . .] is to expose the pastoral ideal to the pressure of change—to an encroaching world of power and complexity or, in a word, to history. It is a variant of Virgil's poem. (Marx 1964: 24)

Railways are "associated with crude, masculine aggressiveness [. . .] in contrast with the tender, feminine, and submissive attitudes traditionally attached to the landscape" (Marx 1964: 29).

In the early times of the railroad, not only Hawthorne, but many Americans had a dubious attitude towards this new invention. As Marx has pointed out, there was a strong conflict between the popularity of Jefferson's ideal of rural peace and simplicity, and the passion for industrialization and machine power. Many Americans recognized that the railway was a breakthrough and believed it might mean progress for mankind. But some regretted the evils of this technological novelty. In addition, anxiety over this mode of travel increased, since, at the time, it was more dangerous than today and it also produced a considerable noise and annoying smoke. In fact, in his gothic approach, Hawthorne's machine-in-the-garden motif, Marx says, presents a dark outlook. He sees a contradiction between the facts of industrialization and the ideals of American life. As Marx argues, progress and science cannot be separated in his fiction from his concept of the Unpardonable Sin: knowledge can become an end in itself and be the cause of alienation from humankind and nature. Man's Faustian curiosity seems to be in contradiction with the rural ideal of America: "the dream of pastoral harmony

¹⁷⁸ In "Ethan Brand" Hawthorne uses the fire-sun antithesis to create the symbolic frame for the story (Marx 1964: 270).

will be easy to realize as soon as the Faustian drive of humankind [. . .] has been extirpated" (1964: 277).

As Marx has shown, despite its negative attributes compared to the pastoral America, the locomotive is presented as the leading symbol of the new industrial power, of progress, in contrast to the ruined—and burden with a heavy past—gothic Pyncheon mansion. At the time of the story railways had already started to change nineteenth-century life. Hawthorne depicts a society in the turmoil of transition and how the Pyncheon family's fate is to change with it: the society is symbolized by the new railroad and the family by the ancestral house (Arac: 3). After Clifford's thirty years of imprisonment, the railroad appears as an expression of modernity that amazes the old bachelor. Its "terrible energy" fascinates him when he observes it from the arched window. Therefore, when Hepzibah and Clifford escape from the House of the Seven Gables, it seems natural that they travel by railway. On their train trip we can see the "Adamic ambition", the desire to begin anew (R. W. B. Lewis: 115). The old man is trying to leave the past behind. However, his flight is not permanent; in the end, he returns. The Adamic impulse is not strong enough at this stage. In addition, as Griffith claims, the railway is also a symbol to express the wish to escape from sin and human responsibilities (391). However, an easy getaway is not possible, redemption must be achieved in the community.

In *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne provides the readers with the vivid sensations of what this new mode of transportation meant for the nineteenth-century mind: "To those used to the immemorial movement of the horse-drawn vehicle, railway travel was a distinct dislocation of sensibilities" (Buitenhuis 1991: 55). On their trip, Clifford and Hepzibah see the world moving too fast: "The spires of meeting houses seemed set adrift from their foundations; the broad-based hills glide away. Everything was unfixed from its age—long rest, and moving at whirlwind speed in a direction opposite to their own" (Gables: 256). Modern life seems vertiginous to the timeless life of the colonial gothic world. According to Cunliffe, through the railway, Hawthorne is expressing the impermanence of American life: "What strikes him, and us, is the past-denying briskness of American life. Old wrongs fade into oblivion. Old pretensions turn into absurdity. The travelers on the train symbolize a social order in which nothing stays put" (1964: 99).¹⁷⁹

Clifford and Hepzibah's railroad trip "is an extreme revulsion from the past-haunted torpor of the House of the Seven Gables" (Cunliffe 1964: 91). It depicts the confrontation or contrast between present and past: "The wild train ride of Clifford and

¹⁷⁹ Horne also believes that, with the train trip, Hawthorne is trying to give the impression of civilizations rising and falling (463).

Hepzibah in their flight from the house dramatizes the impasse of old and new" (Leo Levy: 159). Horne argues that the old couple must move forward in time and "the train ride—described as a kind of time travel—becomes a symbolic equivalent for this movement" (463). In his euphoric enthusiasm after the escape, Clifford condemns homes and houses and advocates man's nomadic state. Life in households is polluted by morbid influences and does not allow one to be happy: real estate is "the broad foundation on which nearly all the guilt of this world rests" (Gables: 263). It stands for the misery of the people who live in these homes. The old bachelor exalts trains as an emblem of a future state of happiness, an escape from "these heaps of bricks and stones" (Gables: 261) that men call houses. The old man expresses his excitement about this new mode of transportation: "These railroads—could but the whistle be made musical, and the rumble and the jar got rid of—are positively the greatest blessing that the ages have wrought out for us. They give us wings; they annihilate the toil and dust of pilgrimage; they spiritualize travel" (Gables: 260).¹⁸⁰

The railroad, Jonathan Arac writes, appears as a microcosm of society. The old couple meets varied passengers, who are representative of life itself. It is a society in transition, "a world racing past them", offering a glimpse of history (15): "At one moment they were rattling through a solitude;—the next, a village had grown up around them;—a few breaths more, and it had vanished, as if swallowed by an earthquake" (Gables: 256). The railroad, as Buitenhuis comments, provides chances for people of very different social status to mingle and interact; in this sense it sets them free of the aristocratic past and leads them to democracy: "a means by which the various conditions and classes of humanity can mix and communicate, shake loose the stranglehold of the past and serve democratic ends" (1991: 55). The conception of human relationships is transformed, "New people continually entered. Old acquaintances—for such they soon grew to be, in this rapid current of affairs—continually departed. Here and there, amid the rumble and the tumult, sat one asleep. Sleep; sport; business; graver or lighter study;—and the common and inevitable movement onward! It was life itself!" (Gables: 257). Hawthorne compares the isolation of the house with the railway as an expression of life and thus he expounds the idea that only through human relationships can man be reborn: "the self-enclosed egoism of the Gothic house, the prison of self from which sympathetic human intercourse provides the only escape, discordantly echoed in the railroad's bustle and movement" (Arac: 19). This democratic medium is life; whereas the interior of the gothic aristocratic house is death.

¹⁸⁰ These words are a clear reference to "The Celestial Railroad". This induces us to think that they are, at least in part, ironical.

On his journey, Clifford unravels the metaphor of the railroad as an ever-ascending spiral of progress. He develops the transcendental doctrine that evil is disappearing because of human advancement. For the old bachelor the world is growing more spiritual and, in this sense, he poetically praises the wonders of modern science: mesmerism and electricity. Kehler summarizes Clifford's conclusions as follows: "The agency by which the neo-pastoral is to be effected is science, specifically, the technology which has made possible a new, unprecedented mobility. The railroads, in particular, will 'spiritualize travel' and will help to create a race of aesthetic shepherds, piping their way about the world in search of beauty" (148). The old man's praises of the railway and science as symbols of man's betterment are caused by his relief at the death of his tormentor, Judge Pyncheon. However, on the other hand, Hawthorne also shows a certain ambiguity towards science in Clifford's speech on the train trip. The old bachelor's flattering comments about science are contradicted, as Buitenhuis suggests, when a traveler reminds him that the electric telegraph is also useful to detect bank robbers and murderers. Then the old bachelor expresses his desire that this "almost spiritual medium [the electric telegraph] should be consecrated to high, deep, joyful and holy missions" (Gables: 264-265), like sending messages of love and friendship (1991: 55).

The sudden access of self-confidence and power provoked by Clifford's liberation from Judge Pyncheon's menace does not last for long; his essentially submissive and weak nature will, in the end, reassert itself (Buitenhuis 1991: 56). Suddenly, the old man realizes that they "have flown far enough for once" (Gables: 265-266). Once Clifford's temporary frenzy is gone, he begins to collapse. The old couple cannot go on with their short enterprise, they get off the train and descend to a solitary way station. As Horne says, at this moment, the only thing that the distressed Hepzibah can think of is kneeling down to pray, as if the only salvation possible was a merciful God: "he [Clifford] relapses at the end of the train ride, but what he gains is not lost. Nor is it for Hepzibah. Both find they can pray at last, there on the country station platform, something they did not do *together* while cloistered in the rusty time-locked house" (464).¹⁸¹

1.4.3. Racist Scientific Discourse

By removing the center, it breaks down marginality. By subverting reason and the master's language, it gives a strong, authoritative voice to black culture. Through its fragmented narrative, it legitimizes the decentered self. And, ultimately, it challenges the construction of Otherness which has traditionally objectified African Americans, as well as other marginalized groups in society.

¹⁸¹ Leo B. Levy seems to state some sort of circularity for Clifford and Hepzibah's train trip: "Their journey ends nowhere—or rather, ends where it began, at the site of a picturesque ruin" (159).

JEANNA FUSTON-WHITE, "From the Seen to the Told": The Construction of Subjectivity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

Hawthorne and Morrison question in different ways the western scientific project of the nineteenth-century society of the United States. In *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne expresses his anxieties regarding the true nature of progress that technological inventions such as the railway and the daguerreotype represented. However, in *Beloved* Morrison deals with racist scientific discourse. She criticizes western rationality, which justified slavery. Hawthorne suggests some hope in progress and industrialization, while Morrison presents with dramatic tones the collaboration of science with the exploitation of ethnic people.

In their gothic narratives both Morrison and Hawthorne deal with ethical concerns about science. However, while Hawthorne centers on man's Faustian drive of curiosity as in traditional Gothic, Morrison focuses on discrediting the racist misconceptions of Western thought about blacks in the nineteenth century. In *Beloved* Morrison dramatically uncovers the complicity between science and the slave trade in nineteenth-century American society. She shows how whites used scientific discourse to legitimize their dealings with the Negro. Jane Flax argues that at the time Enlightenment thought saw science and the scientific method as the objective/neutral use of reason that could unlock the secrets of nature for the benefit of social progress (qtd. in Fuston-White: online);¹⁸² however, modern science used a rationalistic discourse to justify slavery, which served as the basis for the economical and political expansionist policies of the European countries. In America, as Jeanna Fuston-White writes, whites employed this pseudo-scientific evidence because the economy and social structure of the South needed the slave trade to survive. Thus "'objective' science fell into the service of a tainted social interest outside of rational discourse" (online). Bell hooks argues that, even though abolitionists intensified their struggle against slavery, "Southern intellectuals propounded the positive social benefits of slavery for 'uncivilized' Africans" (qtd. in Fuston-White: online).¹⁸³ According to Jatinder K. Bajaj, the Western domination of other cultures followed the precepts of modern science, knowledge became associated with power and utility, and separated from morality (qtd. in Goldner: online).¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² For more information, see: Jane Flax (1990). "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory". *Feminism/ Postmodernism*. Ed. Linda Nicholson. New York: Routledge: 39-62.

¹⁸³ For more information, see: bell hooks (1990). "Marginality as Site of Resistance". *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*. Ed. Russell Ferguson, et al. New York: Museum of Contemporary Art & MIT P: 341-343.

¹⁸⁴ For more information, see: Jatinder K. Bajaj (1988). "Francis Bacon, the First Philosopher of Modern Science: A Non-Western View". *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity*. Ed. Ashis Nandy. Delhi: Oxford University Press: 24-67. Linda Krumholz states the connection between science and the American educational system, in their association with the economical and political power:

Nineteenth-century biosocial investigation of racial difference set the basis that justified the domination of whites over other races. Nancy Stepan describes how the “scientific’ study of race served to ‘elevate hitherto unconsciously held analogies’—such as the long-standing comparison of blacks to apes—into ‘self-conscious theory’” (qtd. in Bouson: 96).¹⁸⁵ Rational discourse, Stepan asserts, gave so-called scientific confirmation to “the superiority of the higher and civilized white race” and the inferiority of “the lower and degenerate black race” (qtd. in Bouson: 96).¹⁸⁶ Western racist scientific discourse denies the humanity of slaves, along with their history and culture, in order to transform them into property to do business with. Thus the Western world extended its control and increased its political and economical power at the expense of the freedom of other non-Western people. The direct consequence of the racist Western discourse is the process Edward Said terms as “Orientalism”: for centuries powerful Western nations have defined their interaction with their African and Asian colonies, and some other non-Western nations, “as a Manichean struggle between light and dark, good and bad, enlightened self and irreconcilable ‘other’”. These dynamics can also be applied to the relationships in the United States between the dominant white culture that defined itself as the American ideal in contrast to other ethnic groups (qtd. in Ochoa: online).¹⁸⁷

In *Beloved* Morrison illustrates the social concept of the Negro ‘animal,’ in contraposition to the whites’ humanity and civilized ways used by rational scientific discourse to justify blacks’ enslavement. Hayden White believes that this notion is a “culturally self-authenticating device’ intended to ‘confirm the value of [the] dialectical antithesis between ‘civilization’ [. . .] and ‘humanity’” (qtd. in Mae Henderson: 88).¹⁸⁸ Sethe’s murder appears as the “evidence of the depraved African brain that required the ‘humanizing’ and ‘civilizing’ influence of whites lest it sink into the madness and cannibalistic brutality that was its nature [. . .] a testimony of the results of a little so-called freedom imposed on people who ‘needed every care and guidance in the world

“Morrison depicts schoolteacher’s pedagogical and interpretative methods as morally bereft, and through him she condemns not only slavery but also the United States’ educational system” (1999: 113).

¹⁸⁵ Original text quoted: Nancy Stepan (1983). *The Idea of Race in Science*. London: MacMillan.

¹⁸⁶ William Greenslade says that by the mid-nineteenth century racial biology in which certain races were cast as degenerate types, the Negro race was regarded as the most degraded and its form connected to that of the beast. Consequently, the necessity of keeping the races apart to avoid degeneration and the extinction of civilization (qtd. in Bouson: 100). Original text quoted: William Greenslade (1994). *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel 1880-1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. On the other hand, Nancy Stepan discusses that the movement of races out of their “proper” places caused a ‘degeneration,’ referring to the movement of freed blacks into the spaces occupied by whites (qtd. in Bouson: 100). Nancy Stepan (1985). “Biological Degeneration: Races and Proper Places”. *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress*. New York: Columbia University Press: 99.

¹⁸⁷ For more information, see: Edward Said (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.

¹⁸⁸ Original text quoted: Hayden White (1979). *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

to keep them from the cannibal life they preferred' [. . .]" (Fuston-White: online). Rational discourse justifies black slaves' torture and abuse by slaveholders, since they need education, the kind of education that an animal should receive: punishment. And the blacks at Sweet Home have to be re-educated, since their former owner had wrongly instructed them. Schoolteacher uses his "corrections" to discipline them.

Sethe is haunted by her painful and denigrating memories of how Schoolteacher, using his pseudo-scientific empirical observations, defined her animal characteristics, but also by how his nephews implemented their uncle's "corrections", as if she were an animal:

Objectified as the racial and sexual Other, Sethe is treated like a sexually aggressive wet nurse and mammy when schoolteacher's nephews sexually assault her in the barn, nursing from her breasts and stealing her milk. She also is treated like an animal, milked as if she were 'the cow, no, the goat, back behind the stable because it was too nasty to stay in with the horses' [. . .]. Afterward, she is beaten like an animal by schoolteacher's nephews for telling Mrs. Garner what has happened to her. Following schoolteacher's orders, the two boys dig a hole in the ground to protect the developing fetus—which is considered to be the property of the white slave owner—and then they brutally beat Sethe on her back with cowhide. (Bouson: 97)

Thus, "as often happens, the treatment she receives as an object of discourse transforms her into an object of violence [. . .]. Just like the page of schoolteacher's notebook, Sethe is divided and marked, inscribed with the discourse of slavery and violation" (Pérez-Torres 1999: 186). Psychological torture was probably even more horrendous for blacks than the brutal physical torments they underwent.

However, as Peggy Ochoa argues, contrary to the intrinsic purpose of slavery, the very nature of "otherness" gives some hidden powers to those defined as others in the form of "other-speech". The marginalized individual and community when recognizing themselves as "other" begin to create a minority discourse historically dismissed as irrelevant by the dominant white culture (online). According to Ochoa, "that very dismissal may allow an unpoliced space in which 'other-speech' can develop relatively unchecked into what becomes—in effect—subversive language" (online). The wildness and animality attributed to the blacks, but which in fact have been created by the whites through torture and abuse, are used as a means of resisting and fighting the patriarchal system of slavery.

Morrison refutes the animalistic and savage image which science assigned to blacks by exposing the humanity that the scientific discourse denied them. She shows why, as Fuston-White explains, science could not empirically isolate the biological cause of the lack of humanity that whites attributed to the blacks, because their wildness is "a social construction, placed in them by the inhumane and inhuman treatment they suffered at the hands of the uncivil and uncivilized white man in his

service to knowledge and social progress” (online). On the contrary, Morrison reveals the white people’s animalistic and cruel treatment of the black individual, which constitutes them as inhuman. When Stamp Paid finds on the bank of the river a red ribbon “knotted around a curl of wet wooly hair, clinging still to its bit of scalp”, he wonders, “What are these people? You tell me, Jesus. What are they?” (Beloved: 180). The physical and psychological tortures inflicted on the blacks and their ensuing broken lives challenge the humanity of the white man (Fuston-White: online).

CHAPTER 2

Fantasy, Ghosts and Gothic Spaces

2.1. The Supernatural in *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*

But his reality was always the filmy twilight, or lunar world, of the fantastic imagination.

JORGE LUIS BORGES, "Nathaniel Hawthorne".

As Fiedler says, the authors of gothic novels "were plagued by a hunger for the inexplicable, a need of the marvelous" (138). Both Hawthorne and Morrison seem to share that hunger. In their fiction, Gothicism and ghosts represent ties to past tragedies and conflicts: "In the ghost of *Beloved*, readers view spiritual representation of a past so horrific to so many people that it appears almost unbelievable to the twentieth-century reader" (Booher: 117). According to Rebecca Ferguson, in *Beloved* Morrison's version of the traditional gothic is presented by means of an imagined historical novel "in which the supernatural functions as history" (qtd. in Sonser: 18).¹⁸⁹ *Seven Gables* explores the past by means of its ghosts, which stand both for the psyche and history. Through their specters, Hawthorne and Morrison symbolize the past and how the character seeing them is trapped between the world of the living and the dead, the present and the past. Kathleen Brogan says:

Cultural ghost stories, which feature the haunting of a people by the ghosts of its own past, represent one way a group actively revises its relationship to the past. Not surprisingly, these stories tend to emerge in the aftermath of times of swift and

¹⁸⁹ For more information, see: Rebecca Ferguson (1991). "History, Memory, and Language in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*". *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice*. Eds. Susan Sellers, Linda Hutcheon and Paul Perron. Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 109-127. Osagie (online) and Justine Tally (39) express similar views.

often traumatic change, when old social bonds have been unhinged and new group identities must be formulated. (HDTG: online)¹⁹⁰

Beloved also represents, through the use of the supernatural, the grip of the terrible past on the present lives of free blacks, who cannot get rid of their troubling memories as slaves. Thus Morrison depicts the characters' psychological process of making meaning out of a painful past while they develop their identities as emancipated individuals. Hawthorne also uses the spectral in his attempt to express the conflict of subjectivity formation in a patriarchal society. Ghosts help the living to mend past conflicts and thus to move free of guilt into the modern world. Unlike *Seven Gables*, in *Beloved*, the supernatural allows to question racial subject formation. Beloved's haunting is dictatorial, since she is the manifestation of the past, the return of the repressed through the characters' recollections. As Lori Askeland argues, "Beloved seems to embody the insecurities of each of the residents of 124: the pervasive, tyrannical memory of the 'patriarchal institution' that continues to sap their ability to claim freedom. Because of this memory, her 'tyranny' has strong overtones of slavery's patriarchal force" (173). The family past threatens the present inhabitants of 124 and the Pyncheon house with annihilation. The tragedies that hover over Morrison's and Hawthorne's characters are expressions of their societies' class and racial conflicts. As Anna Sonser says "'hauntings' [. . .] propel Hawthorne's and Morrison's texts into controversial territory, intensifying the painful histories which mark the illusory boundaries between self and society" (19).¹⁹¹

Seven Gables and *Beloved* take place on the mysterious borderline between the world of the living and the dead, the ambiguous region where life and death interpenetrate. They convey in their fiction the continuous involvement of the dead in living beings' matters. Morrison shares with Hawthorne an interest in exploring the human condition through social and historical contexts while using the connections between the natural and supernatural. Britton claims that Morrison works "within the traditional canon of Hawthorne, Melville and Poe by exploring light-and-dark dichotomies and the supernatural and symbolic links between spirit and flesh" (7). Ralph Ellison suggests that Morrison could be associated with these authors, "the haunted and nocturnal writers [. . .] who dealt with images that were symbols of an inner world" (qtd. in Britton: 7).

The Gothic mode provides Hawthorne with imaginative devices and symbolism to depict his vision of human and national identities: "[he] dressed [*Seven Gables*] up as a

¹⁹⁰ Original text quoted: Kathleen Brogan (1996). "Haunted by History: Louise Erdich's Tracks". *Prospects* 21: 174.

¹⁹¹ In fact, Sonser uses these words referring to *The Scarlet Letter* and *Beloved*, but I think they are also applicable to *Seven Gables*.

fairy tale: an enchanted garden, a wicked ogre, puppets dancing to an organ-grinder's music, magical red blossoms, and a Merlin figure at work within his tower—no doubt his Puritan ancestors turned over in their graves when they saw the company that Nathaniel Hawthorne was keeping" (Kleiman: 304). Even though Hawthorne brings his "fancy pictures" "into positive contact with the realities of the moment", he builds "a house, of materials long in use for constructing castles in the air" (preface Gables: 3). Consequently, *Seven Gables* has a "great deal more to do with the clouds overhead than with any portion of the actual soil of the county of Essex" (preface Gables: 3). Evan Kleiman argues that Hawthorne "[opens] the gates to a whole wondrous world of fable" (295) with a fanciful imagery that "belongs to the world of fairy tale and fable" (290). Hawthorne's frequent magical elements are wisely interwoven with somber realistic scenes from New England's Puritan past.

The fantastic factor is also an essential part of Morrison's romance. Her imaginative perception of experience transcends the empirical conception of the world. According to Tzvetan Todorov's definition, *Beloved* is a Fantastic Novel, since he considers that when a reader cannot decide between marvelous and realistic causes for unusual events, s/he is in the realm of the fantastic (qtd. in Cutter: online).¹⁹² Morrison's works are characterized by the combination of realism and fantasy and the extreme importance of the supernatural, magical or inexplicable. Iyunolu Osagie comments,

The reader's experience of the uncanny in *Beloved* rests mainly in the realistic (historical) setting which characterizes Morrison's novels. The landscape of normalcy upon which the extraterrestrial is accounted for encourages the reader to read with a certain trepidation and expectation of terrifying havoc common to all such ghostly manifestations. (online)

As Isabel Allende argues, the supernatural in Morrison's fiction can be regarded as "a literary device or a way of seeing in which there is space for the invisible forces that move the world: dreams, legends, myths, emotion, passion, history [. . .]. It is the capacity to see and to write about all the dimensions of reality" (qtd. in Faris: 107).¹⁹³ In *Beloved* there is "an 'irreducible element' that is unexplainable according to the laws of the universe as they have been formulated by modern, post-enlightenment empiricism [. . .]" (Faris: 102).

Like Hawthorne, Morrison introduces magical or ghostly components that entice us to believe the unbelievable. The deconstruction and dismemberment of the real is

¹⁹² Todorov believes that the fantastic begins with the integration of the reader's and the character's perspective. Thus *Beloved* is an almost perfect fantastic narrative, since this is what Morrison does (qtd. in Cutter: online). For more information, see: Tzvetan Todorov (1973). *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Trans. Richard Howard. Cleveland: P. of Case Western Reserve U: 25.

¹⁹³ Original text quoted: Marilyn B. Snell (1991). "The Shaman and the Infidel" (interview with Isabel Allende). *New Perspectives Quarterly* 8.1: 54-58.

frequently used to represent the repressed impulses of the mind, as well as the return of the repressed past. Through magic Morrison tries to express blacks' way of dealing with the world in contrast to the western rationalist approach to human experience. However, in doing so, she is able to portray a Gothic vision, in which all kinds of boundaries are blurred and in which the supernatural or magical stands for the importance of what one cannot see, for the illogical or irrational in our lives.

2.1.1. Formula of Alternative Possibilities or The Marvelous as Another Reality

In a society suspicious of imagination, Hawthorne is cautious about the employment of the Marvelous. There is ambiguity in his use of fancy elements, which Yvor Winters calls the "formula of alternative possibilities" (qtd. in Cunliffe 1964: 86).¹⁹⁴ As Buitenhuis argues, this method consists of providing two main sets of explanations: a natural and a supernatural. The first explanation belongs to the world of reason and realism; the second belongs to the world of imagination and romance. Hawthorne supplies enough evidence to support both possibilities. His narratives are full of "perhapses" and "possiblys" that leave it open for the reader to interpret either way (1991: 74). Hawthorne keeps "open the prospects for interpretation on the grounds that reality never means either one thing or another, but rather is meaning fragmented by plural points of view" (Bercovitch 1993: 210). Entertaining various possibilities enriches the meaning of the romance. Another author, Mikhail Bakhtin, explains this device with the concept of "dialogic imagination"¹⁹⁵ that he applies to different American novels, especially to *The Scarlet Letter* (qtd. in Bercovitch 1993: 212-213). For him dialogics is the process by which "a singular authorial vision" is expressed through a "'polphony' of distinct voices", thus creating "a sustained open-ended tension between fundamentally conflicting outlooks" which interact in the dynamics of their diversity (qtd. in Bercovitch 1993: 212-213). Hawthorne was a master at using ambiguity as a way to expand the meaning of his romances.

Hawthorne uses alternate possibilities successfully in *Seven Gables*. There are frequently two interpretations for many of the "marvelous" elements of the novel. Buitenhuis writes that the "supernatural" explanation for Maule's curse would account

¹⁹⁴ Fiedler gives this technique of fiction the name of "alternative explanations". He thinks that Hawthorne's method allows readers to adopt the interpretation that best suits our temperament or can also decide not to make any choice. The reader will finish the story "not with some assured insight into the causes of human depravity but only with a confirmed sense of the ambiguity of life" (140). Matthiessen calls this a "device of multiple-choice" (qtd. in Bercovitch 1993: 207). For more information, see: F. O. Matthiessen (1941). *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*. New York: Oxford UP, 276.

¹⁹⁵ For more information, see: Mikhail Bakhtin (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

for the death of some Pyncheons as well as the tainting of Maule's well. On the other hand, the "natural" alternative would be that the Pyncheons have a hereditary tendency to die of apoplexy due to their guilty conscience. Similarly, the decline of the Pyncheon family can be due to natural causes such as genetic failure because of incestuous mating or to supernatural causes, the curse (1991: 74).

Thus, neither Hawthorne nor Morrison follows in the footsteps of the feminine gothic tradition, which rationally explained ghosts. Morrison's approach to the supernatural is close to the traditional Male Gothic formula or the nineteenth-century ghost tale written by women that establish the "marvelous" as another "reality"; thus rejecting Western rationalism and materialism. According to Lynette Carpenter, Morrison mixes the "ghost story with a cultural and narrative tradition in which the natural and supernatural are not dichotomized" (qtd. in Booher: 119-120).¹⁹⁶ Sonser argues that postmodernism would also explain Morrison's radical way of conveying the supernatural: "in the original gothic novel, the dominant cultural order is ultimately reconfirmed, that is, the supernatural is explained away whereas the postmodern gothic does not allow for such rational resolution. Instead of being reduced to the dominant culture's version of 'reality,' the postmodern gothic creates alternate realities that challenge the dominant cultural order" (8).

In *Beloved* all the characters accept the existence of ghosts as something natural. As Margaret Atwood says: "The supernatural element is treated, not in an "Amityville Horror", but with magnificent practicality, like the ghost of Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights*" (144). Morrison notes, "everybody believes in them [ghosts], even those of us who don't believe in them" (online). All of 124's inhabitants deal with paranormal events as part of their daily lives. The larger black community, as well, believes in the specter of *Beloved* from the very first moment they are told of Sethe's ordeal. This spiritual conception does not accept death as the absolute end of human experience, but as a sort of transformation, a transit to a new situation. On the contrary, a group of innocuous ghosts people Hawthorne's novel. Even though they are part of the dwellers' daily life, their presence is not so meaningful and they do not stand as a menace, as in *Beloved*.

Despite the apparent different presentation of the supernatural in *Beloved* and *Seven Gables*, both novels rest on ambiguity. The difference between them might be that in Morrison's romance the haunting and the paranormal are even more important. In fact, in *Beloved*, if the reader explains "away the excesses of the Gothic as a symptom of the character's irrationality, the reader chooses an option presented within

¹⁹⁶ Original text quoted: Lynette Carpenter (Ed. and Introduction) (1998). *Ghost Stories By British and American Women: A Selected, Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Garland, i-xxxv.

the Gothic plot—but an option that, if chosen too soon or too absolutely, would ruin much of a story that has come to depend narratively on its fantastic mechanism” (Spargo: online). In my opinion, it is in the spiritual or supernatural dimension of these novels, in their symbolic language and magic, that both Hawthorne and Morrison find the best expression to convey the complexity of real life.

2.1.2. Magical Elements in *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*

In responding to an interviewer’s observation about her novels, Toni Morrison once claimed, “I am very happy to hear that my books haunt”.¹⁹⁷ If her works are in fact haunting for most readers, in their disturbing and unforgettable characters and events, they also include haunting of a more ghostly sort. Ghosts, such as the horsemen of *Tar Baby* or the title character of *Beloved*, not only exist in her fictional world; they are also often as real, memorable, and central to the stories as “living” characters. They continue to feel pain and desire, for instance, and allow Morrison a means of “giving the dead voice, in remembering the forgotten”. The effect of these ghosts and of Morrison’s ghostly themes is the effect of gothic literature—it is disquieting, unsettling, even subversive.

KATHERINE P. BEUTEL, “Gothic Repetitions: Toni Morrison’s Changing Use of Echo”.

In *Seven Gables* Hawthorne uses artifices characteristic of the most traditional Gothic romances, which establish a bond between the dead and the living. They are associated with the haunted mansion as the white patriarch’s domain and, as such, they do not have any parallels in Morrison’s fiction. They are symbols of the past, of an “aristocratic” era, connected to the villain’s evil influence. First, the ancestral portrait of Colonel Pyncheon, “[whose] stern, immitigable features *seemed to symbolise an evil influence*” (*Gables*: 21; emphasis added), has a special significance in this romance. Rita Gollin says that “the old portrait is the demon of guilt within the haunted mind” (153); as if the Colonel’s painting allowed the ghost of the dead progenitor to haunt the interior of the house “to make certain that his shadow is permanently present” (Brook Thomas: 202). Jonathan Arac, on the other hand, points out that Hawthorne’s imagery approximates that of a later nineteenth-century writer of psychological Gothic, Freud. He believes that this picture could stand for “the positive side of our ambivalence toward the dead father, enshrined in the superego” (10). The portrait of the stern ancestor conceals the rottenness behind the history of the Pyncheon family, source of its “evil influence”. Hawthorne comments on the magical phenomenon “occasionally observed in pictures of antique date” (*Gables*: 58), whose decay brings out the “unlovely truth of a human soul”:

while the physical outline and substance were darkening away from the beholder’s eye, the bold, hard, and, at the same time, indirect character of the man seemed to be brought out in a kind of spiritual relief [. . .]. They acquire a look [. . .] we at once recognize as reflecting the unlovely truth of a human soul [. . .] the painter’s deep

¹⁹⁷ In Nellie Mckay (1994: 146).

conception of his subject's inward traits has wrought itself into the essence of the picture, and is seen after the superficial coloring has been rubbed off by time. (Gables: 58-59)

The malignant force of the Colonel's painting fills the house and its inhabitants until it crashes and the Pyncheons leave.

The mirror was a favorite figure, not only for Hawthorne, but also for the time. As in many works of fiction, it is the door that connects the world of the dead and the living, the real and the imaginary.¹⁹⁸ William Bysshe Stein argues that "Hawthorne utilizes the device of the enchanted mirror to enhance the supernatural significance of the Maule influence" (125). The mirror is "a kind of window or door-way into the spiritual world":

A large, dim looking-glass used to hang in one of the rooms, and was fabled to contain within its depths all the shapes that had ever been reflected there; the old Colonel himself, and his many descendants [. . .]. But there was a story, for which it is difficult to conceive any foundation, that the posterity of Matthew Maule had some connection with the mystery of the looking-glass, and that—by what appears to have been a sort of mesmeric process—they could make its inner region all alive with the departed Pyncheons; not as they had shown themselves to the world, nor in their better and happier hours, but as doing over again some deed of sin, or in the crisis of life's bitterest sorrow. (Gables: 20-21)

Maule's well, which is associated with mirror symbols, prophesies the future. At the end of *Seven Gables*, it seems to produce "a succession of kaleidoscopic pictures, in which a gifted eye might have seen foreshadowed the coming fortunes of Hepzibah and Clifford, and the descendant of the legendary wizard and the village maiden, over whom he had thrown Love's web of sorcery" (Gables: 377). Gollin considers it, symbolically, the soul of the house; even if it is separated from it (155).¹⁹⁹

There are other magical elements that both Hawthorne and Morrison share, such as bad omens, which foreshadow death and adversity. The omen indicates that the time present is connected in unknown ways to the past and future. The scarlet letter, one of Hawthorne's major gothic symbols which stands for evil passion and guilt, is also an omen and a sign of stigmatization. In *Seven Gables* Hawthorne resorts to gloomy presages to explain the cycle of misfortune and death that plagues the Pyncheons. One remarkable augury is the tainted water of Maule's well as a result of the construction of the Pyncheon house, which becomes a symbol of the ancestor's wrongdoing. Another foreboding showing the curse on a Pyncheon occurs when the daguerreotypist finds some beans inside an old chest of drawers in a garret over one of

¹⁹⁸ According to Marjorie Elder, "the mirror frames the mimic representation of the ideal and kindles the imagination more than the reality (that is, actuality) would" (79).

¹⁹⁹ Gollin also believes that Maule's well is "a reservoir of knowledge, a form of the dreaming mind" (156). On the other hand, Maureen O'Connor associates mirror images and the process of writing. She considers that "The deadly fascination of the well reflects Hawthorne's own conflicted relationship to the project of fiction, especially [. . .] the issue of iteration—the self-duplicating independence of representations. The loss of the writer's (or 'sender's') control over language [. . .]" (224).

the seven gables. Some Pyncheon of the past had put them there “to sow them the next summer, but was himself first sown in Death’s garden ground” (Gables: 148).

Along with bad omens, visions of death and the devil appear in *Seven Gables*. Soon after Hepzibah and Clifford abandon the mansion where the lifeless Judge Pyncheon remains, a vision of death occurs in the parlor: a grimalkin,²⁰⁰ outside the window, stares at a little mouse. The narrator wonders, “Is it a cat watching for a mouse, or the Devil for a human soul?” (Gables: 281). The cat is compared to the devil, which has come in search of Jaffrey Pyncheon’s soul. In contrast to these, there are also good omens: the Pyncheon-elm whispers “unintelligible prophecies;” the golden branch; Chanticleer and the hens’ indefatigable egg laying; Alice’s farewell harpsichord music; Alice’s posies in bloom (symbolically “the flower of Eden”).

Morrison also makes extensive use of presages in her fiction. Like Hawthorne’s scarlet letter, Sula’s birthmark is a complex and powerful symbol whose configuration changes with her actions and people’s perceptions of her. Nel, her dear friend, thinks it is shaped like a stemmed rose. For Jude it is a copperhead, the presage of her future betrayal of Nel. Sula’s blemish associates her with evil:²⁰¹ the community sees how it marks “her [as evil] from the very beginning” (Sula: 114). In *Sula*, there are other omens, such as the birds which announce Sula’s arrival or the strange things which foretell Hannah’s death, such as Eva’s dream of the wedding in the red dress.²⁰² There are also remarkable presages and prophecies in *Song of Solomon*. Milkman’s birth is announced by the suicidal leap of an insurance salesman, Mr. Smith, who jumps with his blue silk wings from the Mercy Hospital. In *Beloved*, when Denver comes back home from the woods, she looks through the window and sees her mother kneeling and next to her an empty white dress is kneeling too and its empty sleeve is around her mother’s waist. Later, she tells her mother that “the baby got plans” (Beloved: 37). The shape that the spirit takes, a dress, might be an augury of Beloved’s resurrection as a human being and the form the returned baby would take, a full-grown woman. Another omen is when Sethe recognizes Schoolteacher’s hat and hummingbirds thrust their

²⁰⁰ Originally an old gray she-cat or an evil-looking female cat. Hawthorne’s use of capitalization (in the manuscript it was originally in lower case) is unusual and probably symbolic. The cat has historically been associated with evil creatures, witches, witches’ companions (who carried messages to the Devil and aided with spell-casting), etc. (part of this information is taken from a footnote in Hawthorne’s *Seven Gables* (247)). For more information, see: www.endicott-studio.com.

²⁰¹ It is quite frequent in traditional gothic fiction to mark the wicked character, the villain, so as to recognize him/her as a servant of the Devil. Hawthorne’s Judge Pyncheon does not have a physical mark, but he is identified as evil by different aspects of his appearance or behavior, such as his black dress, the red fire that kindled in his eyes when he was angry, etc. However, I would say that Morrison’s literary world, as in the Female Gothic or the ghost tales by women, cannot be separated clearly into good and evil.

²⁰² Trudier Harris states that these signs have their counterparts in *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*. Ed. Wayland D. Hand, vols. 6 and 7. Durham: Duke University Press, 1961, 1964, sections on “portents”, as related to future disastrous events (1991: 70).

beaks into Sethe's hair. They seem to forestall the crime which will be happening in the shed. After her two-year silence, the first sound Denver hears is her dead sister climbing the stairs, which "signaled another shift in the fortunes of the people of 124" (*Beloved*: 104). When Paul D arrives at 124, the ghost manifests itself as a pool of pulsing red light, which warns him of the evil presence haunting the house and foretells his next misfortunes.

Seven Gables and *Beloved* share the highly symbolic nature of the Gothic. Both Hawthorne and Morrison use figurative language to express the deepest experiences of man that literal speech cannot capture. According to Wayne T. Caldwell, Hawthorne "constantly aspired to achieve a symbolic mode which would integrate theme and emblematic detail, whereby the detail becomes symbolic" (34). William Stein argues that Hawthorne was more perceptive than other Gothic practitioners were:

Hawthorne realized that the devices of Gothic machinery were nothing more than immemorial mythic images whose function had been obscured by rational thought. Because of their inevitable supernatural character, they aroused a positive response in the ordinary imagination. They gave concrete embodiment to the most mysterious adventures of the human spirit. This feature of the Gothic symbol appealed to Hawthorne. Hence, when he invented his own symbols, he imbued them with a preternatural quality. (50)

Using symbols, Hawthorne and Morrison try to convey the profound meaning of man's encounter with the world. The difference between these two authors is that Morrison chooses those which have a connection with black culture.

In both novels "natural imagery links the spiritual and physical worlds, as well as the past and the present" (Britton: 17). Britton claims that, like the ancient Pyncheon elm standing before the old mansion, the "chokeberry tree" on Sethe's back embodies her past as a slave (17). Blood, as Britton points out, is another image that is used in a similar way. A bloodstain on Judge Pyncheon's white neck cloth, a representation of the wizard's prophecy, symbolizes Matthew Maule's curse on Colonel Pyncheon: "God will give him blood to drink". This image is repeated in *Beloved* where the baby ghost, who was killed by having her head sawed off, bleeds at the neck when she claws her throat screaming "Rain! Rain!" (17). However, in *Beloved*, the symbolic value of blood can be inverted and this vital body fluid is transformed in a source of life as in the ritual of the Christian Eucharist, and, consequently, becoming a positive element: Denver is protected from the revenant's evil powers because she drank her sister's blood along with her mother's milk. Water imagery is also very important in both romances, as we can see in the pollution of the water of Maule's well, which is connected to the beginning of the curse or in all the symbolism that it takes in *Beloved*, which I develop extensively in following sections.

2.1.3. Witches and Wizards

Both Hawthorne and Morrison resort to conjurers and magicians in their works of fiction. In Morrison's novels, there are some important witches. In *Sula* the black people of Bottom think that Sula is a sorcerer, as her blemish seems to disclose: "Sula's personality, along with the snake-like birthmark that so intrigues those who encounter her, makes her the closest thing to a witch that the Bottom will ever have" (Trudier Harris 1991: 57). They tell many stories of her supernatural powers, such as that she had pushed little Teapot and, as a result, he had got a fracture and that Mr. Finley had choked on a bone and died when he saw Sula. Like Hawthorne's wizards and sorcerers, most of Morrison's witches, such as Pilate, Circe or Thérèse, have a special bond with the world of the spirits and with nature; consequently, they have a distinctive wisdom. In both authors the witch or wizard is an independent and transgressive figure who does not comply with the norms of the society that surrounds her/him. Transgression and difference are at the core of their ostracism.

Some of Morrison's witches, such as Pilate or Circe, are somehow freakish: Pilate does not have a navel and the two-hundred-year old Circe appears, in some aspects, to be a twenty-year-old girl. On the other hand, some of Hawthorne's wizards want vengeance: Matthew Maule casts a spell on the Pyncheon family; and his son, Matthew Maule the carpenter, takes his revenge on pure and delicate Alice Pyncheon. Conversely, Morrison's conjurers show their love for humankind. In fact, Pilate, Circe and Thérèse act as spiritual guides: Pilate is "Milkman's pilot, the guiding force, the pedagogue who introduces him to the mysteries of life and death, and of blackness" (Fabre: 110); Circe, the immortal midwife, helps Milkman complete his genealogy: she "plays gothic cicerone to this ancestry" (Brenner: 118); Thérèse, descendant of the mythic blind horsemen who ride the island, guides Son to discover her destiny.

Hawthorne's use of witches and wizards is connected to the Puritan tradition. Even though Europeans had already resorted to sorcerers in their gothic romances, some American writers, such as Hawthorne, started to deal with Puritan beliefs in witchcraft in a very characteristic gothic way. Wizards and Witchcraft become an intrinsic part of American Gothic. Puritan New England was the perfect setting for the gothic genre and this mode the perfect means to represent the colonists' supernatural credence. Hawthorne resorts to wizards and witches in his stories in order to explore the connection between life and death, good and evil. One of Hawthorne's most famous witches is Mistress Hibbins of *The Scarlet Letter*, the sister of the Governor, who meets other conjurers of the town in the forest: "Ha, ha, ha, cackled the old witch-lady, still nodding her high head-dress at the minister. 'Well, well, we must needs talk

thus in the day-time! You carry it off like an old hand! But at midnight, and in the forest, we shall have other talk together!" (S. L.: 150).²⁰³

The whole story of *Seven Gables* is embedded in a realm of magic and wizardry related to the Puritan tradition. The iron-hearted Colonel Pyncheon of the witch-hunting times gains the curse through his unlawful influence in the wizard's hanging. From that time on, the Pyncheon family and their dwelling suffer from the evil spell cast upon them. The ruined mansion is haunted and the garden "enchanted": the waters of Maule's Well have been bewitched ever since the old mansion was built. According to Kleiman, "Hawthorne's imagination may itself have served as the metaphysical battleground, the timeless arena in which persecuted witches and wizards were at last able to confront the fury of the Puritan mob with enough vision to recognize the true nature of the forces—the 'spells' or 'ghosts'—that had possessed the Puritan community, planted so stubbornly in the New World" (289).

In *Seven Gables*, the members of the Maule family are reputedly wizards. Their work of witchcraft can be seen everywhere in the narrative. It was the rumor that Matthew Maule could not stay in his grave and he rises to haunt the mansion of the Pyncheons: "Their graves, in the crevices of rocks, were supposed to be incapable of retaining the occupants, who had been so hastily thrust into them. Old Matthew Maule, especially, was known to have as little hesitation or difficulty in rising out of his grave as an ordinary man in getting out of bed, and was often seen at midnight as living people at noonday" (Gables: 189).²⁰⁴ The townsfolk also said that the Maules had inherited "mysterious attributes; the family eye was said to possess strange power" (Gables: 26):

There was a great deal of talk among the neighbors, particularly the petticoated ones, about what they called the witchcraft of Maule's eye. Some said, that he could look into people's minds; others, that, by marvellous power of this eye, he could draw people into his own mind, or send them, if he pleased, to do errands to his grandfather, in the spiritual world; others again, that it was what is termed an Evil Eye, and possessed the valuable faculty of blighting corn, and drying children into mummies with the heart-burn. (Gables: 189-190)

Matthew Maule's alleged wizardry and witchcraft is associated with his close connection to nature and the unconscious mind, "mastery of the spirits of nature being

²⁰³ Nathaniel Hawthorne (1988). *The Scarlet Letter*. Ed. Seymour L. Gross. New York & London: Norton (all subsequent quotations from this edition will be identified by the abbreviated title of the book "S. L." and the page number included in parentheses in the text).

²⁰⁴ Hiroko Washizu distinguishes two groups of characters in Hawthorne's Gothic romance: the Pyncheons and the Maules. The Pyncheons are associated with daytime whereas the Maules are associated with nighttime, the time of witches, when the sleeping Pyncheons become bondservants to the plebeian Maules. Washizu's distinction reminds us of Hugo McPherson's (136). As he does with the characters, Washizu differentiates the romance, mostly the gothic, which deals with dreamy "nighttime" visions and the novel, which deals with "daytime" realism (301).

the traditional basis of the necromantic arts” (Kehler: 143).²⁰⁵ In *Seven Gables* Hawthorne symbolically reverses the story of the Garden of Eden, which is invaded by the powers of darkness. Holgrave, Matthew Maule’s descendant, is the white wizard who restores this New England garden from its fallen state. Thus, through his association with this Biblical metaphor, he becomes part of Hawthorne’s meditation on the American experience and national identity. Holgrave has inherited his magic powers from his ancestors, the Maules. However, his magic is different from his family predecessors’ Black Art:

Unlike his forebear, Holgrave uses his eyes not to enslave another to his will and thus become enslaved himself by the hypnotic influence of the past, but to look at life anew, to see and understand. With the aid of the “wonderful insight [granted him by] heaven’s broad and simple sunshine” [. . .] Holgrave is able to exercise a wizardry of his own, combat one kind of magic with another, master the malign influence of the past by capturing its author within the borders of a daguerreotype plate. (Kleiman: 298)

According to Wayne Caldwell, Holgrave is characterized symbolically through his white clothing, which stands for his restorative and beneficial magic. His clothing is a disguise designed for the role he is playing. In fact, his distinctive outfit is not white linen, but the “ragged cloak” that connects him to the wizard’s curse (40). Hawthorne himself comments that: “The mantle, or rather, the ragged cloak of old Matthew Maule, had fallen upon his children” (Gables: 26). Consequently, as Wayne Caldwell points out, “Holgrave, then, metaphorically wears his ancestor’s mantle” (40). The Maules’ witch-like powers are perpetuated somehow in Holgrave’s mesmeric powers and his profession, a daguerreotypist. It is probably his Maule personality and his wizard’s blood that make him choose this strange job. Holgrave’s artistry is a perfect metaphor for his identity: “Now the arts of this young man, daguerreotype and literature, are connected by Hawthorne with his gift of mesmeric power, a naturalist version of the occult powers said to have been owned by his forebears, and for the possession of which Matthew Maule the elder was hanged” (Abele 1967: 398). His sorcery is of a modern kind in comparison with his past kin’s: “the ‘wizardry’ of the Maules becomes more sophisticated” (Kehler: 143).

²⁰⁵ According to Hoffman, Hawthorne might have found the material for Maule’s powers of witchcraft in Sir Walter Scott’s *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1967: 478). Maule’s specter is both a revenant and a shape shifter, which is very common in colonial mythology. For more information about shape shifting and its presence in the folk tradition, see: Maria Leach (ed.) (1950). *Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, 2 vol. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 2: 1004-1005. Also see: the chapter “Cases of Conscience Concerning Witchcraft”, in Increase Mather. *A Further Account of the Tryals of the New England Witches* (1693; reprinted, London: J. R. Smith, 1862), a chapter especially about the shape shifting of Satan and his legions in colonial New England. Cotton Mather’s chapter “Enchantments Encountered” in *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693; reprinted London: J. R. Smith, 1862), also deals with the power of specters and devils to take any shape they choose.

On the other hand, as a daguerreotypist, the young reformer is linked to the sunshine he uses: "I misuse Heaven's blessed sunshine by tracing out human features through its agency" (Gables: 46). Consequently, Holgrave becomes an important sunny agent in the novel; a minister of the light, a white wizard, who uses his power for good ends: "To steal light from Heaven in order to plunge it into the darkness is the kind of act we associate with the 'light-bearer' Lucifer. But instead Holgrave chooses to become a 'light-bearer' of a quite different order, and to usher forth a new genesis" (Kleiman: 299). His artistic power enables him to "see through" appearances and thus discover the essence of the human soul, especially of those who have tried to conceal it. Alfred Marks states that daguerreotypists have "to bring sunlight into the shadows which have been thrown over the present 'passing generation'; and with his camera, he is to bring out that which is eternal and exclude that which is, to the romantic, 'passing'" (1967b: 339). It is the wizard's descendant who reveals the dark side of Judge's character, arduously hidden, to Phoebe.

At the end of the book, when Phoebe comes back after her short absence from the mansion, Holgrave leads her into an uninhabited room: "The sunshine came freely into all the uncurtained windows of this room, and fell upon the dusty floor" (Gables: 300). Then the young woman asks the reformer, "And why have you brought me into this room, instead of the parlor?" (Gables: 301). It is clear, as Alfred Marks suggests, why he has taken her into the only sunlit room in the house: Holgrave is guiding not only Phoebe, but the whole story, from the darkness into the sunshine (1967b: 336). His Gothic mission as a white wizard is to dispel the evil shadows that hover over the gloomy mansion.

2.1.4. Ghosts in *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*

Beloved is Morrison's most explicitly Gothic novel, dominated by a haunted house, a haunted family and community even, and the flesh-and-blood ghost of Beloved herself. Some of this haunting is manifested again in echo—in the disembodied voices that float around the house at 124 Bluestone Road. This "conflagration" of voices that Stamp Paid can hear from the road in the novel's second part consists of echoes of voices once suppressed, voices without body, floating around the gothic, cavelike house.

KATHERINE P. BEUTEL, "Gothic Repetitions: Toni Morrison's Changing Use of Echo".

Both Hawthorne's and Morrison's works of fiction are haunted by ghostly visitations. As Jane Lundblad writes, "Hawthorne's own disposition and the environment in which he grew up made him receptive, from the beginning, towards tales concerning the supernatural world" (25). In *The American Notebooks*, he records ghostly tales, the strange sounds that both he and his wife had heard in the Old Manse in 1842 (8: 325) and the apparition that both saw entering their front yard in 1847.

Hawthorne seems to accept the existence of ghosts.²⁰⁶ In fact, in his fiction, he shows a predilection for mystery and the supernatural. His remark about Whittier's collection, *The Supernaturalism of New England* (1847), was well-known at the moment, "If he cannot believe his ghost-story while he is telling it, he had better leave the task to somebody else".²⁰⁷

Hawthorne's discreet use of the marvelous includes ghosts of very different kinds. In "The Gray Champion" (1835), the old regicide is perceived by some as a ghost and in "The Man of Adamant" (1837) Mary Goffe can be taken as a revenant or a dreamlike spirit. Hawthorne's ghosts' "represent the effects of a past that seems dead but which, in their ghostly forms, is nonetheless still living" (Ringe 1982: 159). The House of the Seven Gables is haunted by spirits which cannot rest until the wrong done to the Maules is righted. All of these are harmless ghosts that wander about the house. They exist as a background to the story. They can be perceived by the living in subtle ways: the music of Alice's harpsichord can be heard on occasions. They do not usually interact with or even seem to be aware of the living. However, sometimes the connection between the world of the dead and the living seems to be more powerful. In Holgrave's legend of Alice Pyncheon, while Mr. Pyncheon and Mathew Maule, the carpenter, are talking, the old Puritan of the portrait shows gestures of disapproval, frowning and clenching his fist. It is when the carpenter suggests a transfer of the seven-gabled structure that the ghostly figure seems to lose his patience and "to have shown itself on the point of descending bodily from its frame" (Gables: 198). On the whole, the appearance and actions of Hawthorne's ghosts are always the same, mere recordings that are attached to the environment in which they once existed. They are like residual energies that reappear again and again: traumatic moments in time which leave an indelible impression on the place they occurred.

From the very beginning of the story, Hawthorne introduces spectral apparitions, thus following a Gothic tradition that goes back to the beginning of the genre, in Walpole's *Otranto* and Radcliffe's stories.²⁰⁸ In *Seven Gables* the first mention of

²⁰⁶ In the preface to the *Old Manse* Hawthorne wrote about the two resident ghosts that he got acquainted with while he was living in that old mansion, the specter of the old minister and the kitchen maid (50). Hawthorne also seems to have been acquainted with the ghost of Dr. Harris, whom he used to encounter in the Boston Athenaeum (Michelson: 166).

²⁰⁷ Hawthorne's comment appears in a review in *Literary World*, 17 April 1847, 248. Jane Lundblad mentions that Samuel T. Pickard talks about a letter written by one of the young Nathaniel's friends, W. Symmes, in which he suggests that Hawthorne's mother was somewhat superstitious and that may account for Hawthorne's interest in the supernatural" (25). Original text quoted: Samuel T. Pickard (1897). *Hawthorne's First Diary*. London: Houghton, Mifflin & Co..

²⁰⁸ Ronald Curran also discusses the phenomenon of ghosts in *The House of the Seven Gables*. He argues that Hawthorne intends to democratize the traditional gothic romance and to treat gothic conventions ironically (qtd. in Michelson: 168). For more information, see: Ronald Curran (1976). "'Yankee Gothic': Hawthorne's 'Castle of Pyncheon'". *Studies in the Novel* 7 (Spring): 69-80.

ghosts takes place when Phoebe asks Hepzibah about Clifford's death and the old maid answers her: "in old houses like this, you know, dead people are very apt to come back again!" (Gables: 75-76). An eighteenth-century member of the family who first opened a shop in the basement is said to haunt the place: "It used to be affirmed, that the dead shop-keeper in a white wig, a faded velvet coat, an apron at his waist, and his ruffles carefully turned back from his wrists, might be seen through the chinks of the shutters [. . .]. From the look of unutterable woe upon his face, it appeared to be his doom to spend eternity in a vain effort to make his accounts balance" (Gables: 29).

On the other hand, according to the villagers, Colonel Pyncheon built his new home over the unquiet grave of the wizard, whose specter will have, consequently, the privilege of dwelling in it. Holgrave, the last embodiment of the Maules, becomes a sort of shape shifter. Then there is the beautiful spectral Alice, who haunts the house and strikes with her harpsichord, from time to time, "ghostly harmonies, prelusive of death in the family" (Gables: 225). Hepzibah hears a note of music just before Judge Pyncheon's death. Mrs. Radcliffe also uses eerie music in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. In the woods around the French châteaux, mysterious and unearthly harmonies, like those of Alice Pyncheon's harpsichord, can be heard.

There is also the parade of all the dead Pyncheons that assemble in the parlor of the old mansion. In the chapter "Governor Pyncheon", Jaffrey sits dead in front of the portrait of Colonel Pyncheon while the specters of his ancestors step up to touch the painting. In a corner the ghost of Matthew Maule, the builder of the house, mocks them. As Julian Smith has pointed out, the Pyncheons' parade resembles the procession of dead governors in "Howe's Masquerade", in the *Legends of the Province House*. In the same way that Matthew Maule derides his enemies, the old Whig ridicules Howe's masquerade (19):

[. . .] ghost-stories should be susceptible of, can be traced in the ridiculous legend, that, at midnight, all the dead Pyncheons are bound to assemble in this parlor! [. . .]. All try the picture-frame. What do these ghostly people seek? [. . .]. There is evidently a mystery about the picture, that perplexes these poor Pyncheons when they ought to be at rest. In a corner, meanwhile, stands the figure of an elderly man [. . .] with a carpenter's rule sticking out of his side-pocket; he points his finger at the bearded Colonel and his descendants, nodding, jeering, mocking, and finally bursting into obstreperous, though inaudible laughter. (Gables: 279-280)

According to Ringe, Hawthorne suggests in this episode that

another kind of reality has superseded that of the material world, which, in the sudden death of Judge Pyncheon, has been shown to be as insubstantial as the ghosts that seem to materialize in the transient moonbeams. These uneasy spirits are in many ways more real than the corpse of the dead Judge, for they represent the ongoing pride, guilt, and frustration that has beset the Pyncheon family ever since the Colonel cheated Matthew Maule out of his land. (1982: 158)

As Bruce Michelson claims, in *Seven Gables* we can also see true ghostliness, the death-in-life condition. Clifford and Hepzibah are the true haunters of the Pyncheon mansion (full-time revenants in the mansion) (168). Hepzibah and Clifford illustrate minds that are—at least at the beginning of the story—almost completely unembodied (Dryden 1971: 309). This is much more disturbing and represents a clearer menace than true specters. We all may become ghosts. According to Michelson, *Seven Gables* as a ghost story—a tale of a haunted house—is “about the loss of the self” (164). He believes that, for Hawthorne, a ghost is a “lost soul” in two specific ways. First, it has lost its identity, deteriorating “from a personality into a repeated gesture”. Second, “it has escaped from temporality into a vertiginous world” beyond time and change (166). Thus, Michelson argues, the popular tradition of the haunted house is linked to “the revenant and to the moral issue of the self-loss through stasis and perseveration” (169). In chapter 7, the ghostly footsteps and spectral presence turn out to be Clifford, who is not a ghost, but, in fact, is more of a ghost than those which truly are spiritual appearances.

As Michelson has shown, in *Seven Gables*, Jaffrey Pyncheon is considered a shape-shifter, a far more dangerous sort of “specter”. The disintegration of his self is produced by too much public life and too much attention to temporal ideas and matters. Michelson thinks that “Like the traditional shapeshifter in the American folk tradition, the repulsive true form can be only glimpsed by mortals, and only when the dissembling spirit is caught off its guard” (171). Jaffrey is always showing a disguised image, not just to his family, but to everyone in town. When he is dead, Michelson argues, Hawthorne shows us “the essential misery of the shapeshifting ghost” (172). His constitutive hollowness and invisibility are made clear by his death, the dead Judge is not much different from the live one. As a meditation on the nature of ghosts and ghost stories, Hawthorne’s romance deals with the problem of how to escape “from a haunted condition, from the loss of the self” (Michelson: 180).

On the other hand, even though ghost tales by African-American writers have their deepest roots in West African culture, their immediate development can be traced back to the era of slavery in the southern United States. According to Gladys Marie Fry, to prevent blacks from having secret night meetings, white owners used ghost stories to exert psychological control over the slaves (qtd. in Smith-Wright: 143).²⁰⁹ They created stories of haunted places where witches and ghosts met and supernatural

²⁰⁹ For more information, see: Gladys M. Fry (1975). *Night Riders in Black Folk History*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press: 45-80.

animals attacked slaves or the dead came back to life searching for them.²¹⁰ Besides, Sterling Stuckey argues, blacks maintained their deeply-rooted African traditions, with a high presence of the supernatural, in the alien American land: “The final gift of African ‘tribalism’ in the nineteenth century was its life as a lingering memory in the minds of American slaves” (qtd. in Smith-Wright: 144).²¹¹ Their sense of continuity between the natural and supernatural

is often nurtured by cultural traditions other than a white Eurocentric one. So, American women writers with roots in minority cultures seem even more likely to accept the supernatural. In African-American and Native American cultures, family ghosts, like living family members, are simply part of experience. They can be healing and supportive, and can bring information crucial to survival, as they do in Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* (1977) [. . .]. Like the living family, they can also be angry and resentful, as in [. . .] Morrison’s *Beloved* (1988). (Carpenter and Kolmar: 13)

Consequently, blacks worshipped their ancestors: it was essential to be on good terms with them (qtd. in Smith-Wright: 144). John S. Pobee claims that as part of the family, the forebears’ spirits, “good and evil”, supervise and “monitor the activities of the living”: “To start with the family, it consists of the living, the dead and the still unborn. It is not only the living. Consequently, these ancestors, though dead, are still believed to be concerned with and involved in the affairs of the living [. . .]. In short on the ancestors depends the well-being of the living” (qtd. in Smith-Wright: 145).²¹² Black folklorists and writers used and altered their rich African oral tradition so as to harmonize their African beliefs about the supernatural with the experiences of slaves in the new continent.²¹³ As Gladys M. Fry says, these ghost tales thus emphasize the heroic exploits of suppressed people (qtd. in Smith-Wright: 145). They often describe, metaphorically, creative ways of dealing with white oppression and strengthening the bonds among the members of the black community (Smith-Wright: 145). Lawrence Levine highlights the teaching aspect of slave folk tales: “If slave tales only infrequently dealt with the sacred world, they nevertheless were often infused with a direct moral message. In Africa, tales [. . .] were widely used for didactic purposes” (qtd. in Smith-

²¹⁰ Smith-Wright claims that white owners frequently disguised themselves as ghosts and used tin cans as noisemakers near the slave quarters (143), tactics that were later appropriated by the Ku Klux Klan. In fact, Gladys M. Fry believes that even though slaves were aware of the white owners’ deception, they still believed that supernatural beings existed (qtd. in Smith-Wright: 144).

²¹¹ Original text quoted: Sterling Stuckey (1987). *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America*. New York: Oxford University Press: 3.

²¹² Original text quoted: John S. Pobee (1976). “Aspects of African Traditional Religion”. *Sociological Analysis* 37: 1-18.

²¹³ Molefi Kete Asante emphasizes the different interactions and retentions of African traditions during and after slavery (qtd. in Wilentz: 129). Original text quoted: Molefi K. Asante (1990). “African Elements in African American English”. *Africanism in American Culture*. Ed. Joseph E. Holloway. Bloomington: Indiana UP: 19-33.

Wright: 145).²¹⁴ Morrison incorporates African-American folklore in her fiction, transmitting the values of the blacks as some writers such as Chesnutt, Hurston and Ellison had done before. When Morrison talks about the writing of *Song of Solomon*, she says: “I could blend the acceptance of the supernatural and a profound rootedness in the real world at the same time with neither taking precedence over the other. It is indicative of the cosmology, the way in which Black people looked at the world” (qtd. in Wilentz: 129).²¹⁵

Like Morrison, “Women writers of the supernatural”, states Rosemary Jackson, “have overturned many of these assumptions and definitions [concerning rigid boundaries between life and death]—not, as with some of their male counterparts, to investigate ‘horror’ for its own sake, but in order to extend our sense of the human, the real, beyond the blinkered limits of male science, language, and rationalism” (qtd. in Carpenter and Kolmar: 12).²¹⁶ Supernatural literature traditionally describes the world as dualistic (rational/irrational; human/ghostly; known world/unknown; natural/supernatural) (Kolmar: 236), since, as Adrienne Rich argues, dichotomies are the basis of patriarchal thinking (qtd. in Fleenor 1983a: 15). Wendy K. Kolmar points out that male writers usually cling to the rational side of those dichotomies; however, women do not try to confirm any of their sides by denying the other. They seem to challenge the dualistic view of the universe, since their insider/outsider status forces them to have a double or multiple vision (237). Rachel Duplessis says:

Insider/outsider social status will also help dissolve an either-or dualism. For the woman finds she is irreconcilable things: an outsider by her gender position, by her relation to power; maybe an insider by her social position, her class. She can be both. Her ontological, her psychic, her class position all cause doubleness. Doubled consciousness. Doubled understandings. How then could she neglect to invent a form which produces this incessant, critical, splitting motion (qtd. in Kolmar: 237).

In Morrison’s fiction supernatural and spectral apparitions are ever present. As in *Seven Gables*, there are ghostly sounds, such as Solomon’s dead wife, Ryna, crying, or when Pilate opens the sack she had been carrying all her life with the bones of her father, a “deep sigh escaped from the sack and the wind turned chill” (*Song of Solomon*: 360). Unlike Hawthorne, Morrison depicts a world in which the dead and the living interact with familiarity. As in *Female Gothic*, mainly in American ghost tales by

²¹⁴ Original text quoted: Lawrence W. Levine (1977). *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press: 90.

²¹⁵ The supernatural had a great importance in Morrison’s life. Her mother decoded dream symbols. Visitations were accepted in a natural way. Storytelling of ghost stories was quite frequent by both men and women of her family.

²¹⁶ Original text quoted: Rosemary Jackson (1989). “Introduction”. *What Did Miss Darrington See?*. Ed. Jessica Amanda Salmonson. New York: Feminist P.. See: Adrienne Rich (1977). *Of Woman Born*. Bantam Edition. N.Y.: W.W. Norton. Original text quoted: Rachel Duplessis (1985). “For the Etruscans”. *The New Feminist Criticism*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. London: Pantheon.

female writers, but also in African American Gothic, ghosts are not alien to the daily lives of the characters.²¹⁷ A spirit might often appear among the living to help them, to indicate that all is well. Natural and supernatural experiences do not collide. Unearthly apparitions are accepted and may even have a quality of intimacy.²¹⁸ They can be horrifying, but usually they are not. In fact, female characters seem to understand these ghostly visitations and learn from their messages, which sometimes warn them of the dangers of domesticity through connections between the spirit's and the living woman's histories. Females' victimization becomes the reason for many of the hauntings of ghost stories.²¹⁹

Morrison's ancestral figures have spiritual powers which allow them to contact the dead. Pilate keeps in touch with her deceased father, Jake, a magical ability she inherited from him. He comforts and haunts her and her brother when they escape to the woods after his brutal murder by the whites. Pilate explains how her "Papa came back one day [. . .]. Now, we lost and there was this wind and in front of us was the back of our daddy" (Song of Solomon: 49). His ghost guides her: "I see him still. He's helpful to me, real helpful. Tell me things I need to know" (Song of Solomon: 156). As Trudier Harris asserts, the coexistence of the living and the departed anticipates *Beloved*, "where the living not only talk to the dead, but the dead dwell with the living" (1991: 92).

In Hawthorne's fiction ghosts may be interpreted as the result of the capitalist patriarchal system which dehumanizes people. In Morrison's fiction ghosts or encounters with them are sometimes due to the fact that, as Carpenter and Kolmar point out, blacks are alienated from their culture and communities (146). Their inability to acknowledge the black inheritance in their lives prevents them from developing into coherent selves: "ghosts in these novels [. . .] develop mythic explorations of ways for culturally disenfranchised Black characters both to acknowledge their heritage and to forge a more satisfying connection with their communities" (Carpenter and Kolmar: 146). In *Tar Baby* the 'night-women,' ghosts of African females, appear to Jadine in order to reprove her renunciation of the responsibilities and privileges of being a black woman. On the other hand, Son, a merchant sailor tired of his rootlessness, leads a ghostly existence that is symbolic of his false life, his displacement in a world outside

²¹⁷ In ghost stories by women, such as Annie Trumbull Slosson's "A Dissatisfied Soul" (1904) and Mary Austin's "The Readjustment" (1908), females return from the dead and their apparitions do not shock anyone.

²¹⁸ In Morrison's *Song of Solomon* people accept the existence of unexplained elements in the most natural way. When Milkman is in the middle of his journey into self-awareness, he realizes that if his aunt did not have a navel, why couldn't ghosts be true as well? (318).

²¹⁹ For example: Rebecca H. Davis's "A Story of a Shadow" (1872); Gertrude Atherton's "The Dead and the Countess" (1905); Harriet P. Spofford's *Sir Rohan's Ghost* (1860) and Wharton's "The Lady's Maid's Bell".

his value system. According to Geraldine Smith-Wright, “To show that the history and politics of American race relations translate finally into the personal, Morrison creates ghosts that assume identities familiar to displaced characters” (155).

In *Beloved*, ghostly apparitions become the center of the novel. Carol Schumde recognizes that “at the most basic level of plot and setting, *Beloved* is a ghost story” (qtd. in Booher: 117). As Goldner claims, the gothic haunting becomes a vehicle through which the suppressed feelings of the slaves return. It carries the voices of the African Americans who suffered the cruelties of slavery. However, the denied feelings of the oppressed only appear as ghostly traces because the despotic culture keeps them invisible and disempowered (online). According to Geoffrey Harpham, the haunting breaks through the white Western cultural paradigms and identities (qtd. in Goldner: online),²²⁰ and is the evidence of a crisis. The voices that join the women of the haunted house in their ritual of possession are the echoes of the dead, “illustrating the power of the voice, especially feminine voice, to transcend body and time” (Beutel: 84). They become the expression of the collective memory of the blacks’ experience during the Middle Passage and slavery. When Stamp Paid hears their inarticulate sounds from the road, he identifies them as the “mumbling of the black and angry dead” (*Beloved*: 198).

Besides, ghosts in recent African-American literature, while sharing the literary functions of white Gothic romances, also serve another purpose: to recover a poorly documented and partially erased cultural history. Morrison’s fiction is concerned with the importance of the ancestors, who, Morrison writes, are not “just parents [. . .] [but] timeless people whose relationships to the characters are benevolent, instructive, and protective [. . .] [and who] provide a certain kind of wisdom” to them (qtd. in Robinson: online). Jesser says that “The lost ancestors and the lost children must all be born(e) into the future, not as iron links in a chain, but as sutures that hold the body together in the aftermath of violence” (online). To recover their cultural heritage—which had suffered a serious drawback in an alien land where slaves were subjected to an alien culture—was a necessary step in the blacks’ quest for identity. In fact, for West African people the dead had a remarkable role in their lives, faced with destruction under the terrible conditions of slavery. As Arlene R. Keizer argues, “One of the major psychological imperatives for the free former slaves is to fill in the absences created by

²²⁰ See: Geoffrey G. Harpham (1982). *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature*. Princeton: Princeton UP.

slavery—to reconnect with their ancestral pasts, their dead and living relatives and friends, and their own ‘conscious community of memory’ [. . .]” (online).²²¹

In *Beloved* the ancestors are represented by the spirit of Baby Suggs and by Beloved, who stands for all the blacks who died during the Middle Passage and slavery. Baby Suggs’s revenant resembles those specters which have been the central motif of the nineteenth-century ghost story tradition by women writers in the United States. She helps the living to deal with their past and find reconciliation. Her ghost urges Denver to “go out the yard” (*Beloved*: 244). According to Elizabeth L. Nutting, Baby Suggs tries to “convince her [Denver] that neither fearing the past, nor ignoring it, is the answer [. . .]. Saving her mother is not a matter of leaving the past behind [. . .]. Remembering history so that it can be communicated as lived experience is the source of courage and redemption” (online). Her dead grandmother’s words help Denver leave her crippling closed universe to enter the community. Besides, at the end of the romance, when the black women of the community are outside 124, they have a vision of the day of the feast when, as young women, they were sitting on the lawn with Baby Suggs, “laugh[ing] and skip[ing] among them, urging more’ [. . .]. They see themselves happy in their bountiful last supper, ‘not feeling the envy that surface the next day’ [. . .]” (*Beloved*: 258). As a soothing and comforting visitation, “Baby Suggs’s ghost once again teaches the wideness of love, and they are now ready to carry her love on” (*Askeland*: 174). Ancestors are also very important in *Seven Gables*, even though they are never a healing or counseling presence, but a reminder of the past family sins.

2.1.5. Gothic Stories about a “Reincarnated” Ghost

Even the most typically Gothic manifestations of the supernatural, such as ghosts (whether these turn out to be “real” or imagined), bleeding portraits, and animated statues and skeletons manifest this pattern of anxiety about the Symbolic: whatever their other functions in terms of plot or theme, such phenomena suggest the fragility of our usual systems of making sense of the world. Spirits that should be dead (or departed for another world) return; the non-material, or the “disembodied” suddenly materializes. Or, conversely, the material but inanimate object suddenly takes on the characteristics of the living—it moves, bleeds, or even speaks.

ANNE WILLIAMS, *Art of Darkness: a Poetics of Gothic*.

Beloved is a Gothic story about a ghost: “una historia de fantasmas que vienen a cobrarse una deuda con los vivos” (Giménez-Rico: 32). Unlike Hawthorne, Morrison concentrates the supernatural phenomena in her multiform ghost, Beloved, in two different stages: when she is only the baby spirit who inhabits the house and after her reincarnation. Even when the revenant is only a baby, its haunting is not an innocuous

²²¹ Arlene R. Keizer points out that the African belief systems were violently disrupted by the slave trade and the acts of feeding the dead, critical to a West African’s sense of self and “of the beingness of the group”, faced complete annihilation (online).

background to the story, as in *Seven Gables*; it greatly affects the physical world of 124. Morrison creates a poltergeist in which Sethe's dead child manifests itself in different ways, sometimes malicious. Even at this point the baby ghost interacts with the living and answers to their actions. Once the baby ghost is reincarnated, the nature of the haunting changes.

After Sethe's crime, the Gothic erupts violently with the "baby ghost"; a ghostly disturbance incorporated in the daily lives of 124's inhabitants: the strange voices, lights and powerful shaking; even though accepted, its haunting means a serious disruption of the normality of the life of Sethe's family. Ghosts and spooky happenings are the legacy of slavery and the materialization of the guilt of those who perpetrated the crimes. As Susan Corey claims,

These opening scenes alert the reader that this story involves that border region between the mundane world and the realm of mystery or the uncanny. For Sethe the ghostly signs are concrete reminders of her guilt for the murder of her baby some eighteen years ago. The physical shaking urges her to break out of her normal routine and to confront directly this ghost of guilt from her past. (108)

Beloved is presented from the outset of the story as a spirit, like Hawthorne's ghosts, which does not acquire a body until Paul D exorcises it. 124 Bluestone Road is filled with ghostly signs of the murdered daughter. Sethe thinks that her house is "full of touches from the other side" (Beloved: 98). There are numerous examples of the terrible haunting in Sethe's dwelling. The mirror might shatter when they look in it. That makes Buglar, Sethe's son, run away when he is thirteen years old. Howard, the other son, also has enough when two tiny handprints appear in a cake. Soda crackers crumble and get strewn in a line next to the doorsill. Morrison describes the haunting as a "plaything of spirits and the home of the chafed" (Beloved: 86). In fact, the habitation is so filled with the ghost that "there was no room for any other thing or body" (Beloved: 39). One of Denver's early recollections is that of an empty white dress kneeling next to her mother, the only ghostly shape the spirit takes at that point. This is one of the few times that the phantom is tender and good to the inhabitants of the house. Denver thinks that "The dress and her mother together looked like two friendly grown-up women—one (the dress) helping out the other" (Beloved: 29). In contrast to this white dress, Beloved's dress is black, signaling her evil nature.

For eighteen years the baby ghost is frequently malicious. It cripples the family dog, Here Boy. It slams it into the wall and breaks its two legs and dislocates its eye. After this, the dog never wants to enter the house again, at least when it feels the

ghost.²²² However, the inhabitants of 124 feel lucky that the revenant is only a baby. There is a shift in the ghost's manifestations after the return of Denver's hearing, when she perceives her dead sister trying to climb the stairs. From that time on, the haunting "was full of spite. Instead of sighs and accidents there was pointed and deliberate abuse" (Beloved: 104). Then Sethe decides to face those ghostly forces she has had to keep at bay until then. In *Seven Gables*, ghosts also become somehow a familiar and intrinsic part of the house; however, they are never felt as a threatening presence. Unlike many other Gothic romances, as a spirit Beloved is, in some ways, wanted. Denver needs it because she is lonely and Sethe also accepts its presence, which fills the emptiness that the murdered baby had left. In fact, as Margaret Atwood says, "Sethe would rather have the ghost there than not there. It is, after all, her adored child, and any sign of it is better, for her, than nothing" (144).

Even at the very beginning, the baby ghost behaves like a human being, expressing feelings and answering to the characters' actions. When Paul D comes into 124 for the first time, the ghost manifests itself as a pool of pulsing red light "that locked him where he stood" (Beloved: 8); the color of the light symbolizing the murdered baby's blood. The spirit is already preventing the stranger's entrance into the house. Even though Paul D thinks that an evil presence haunts the house, Sethe tells him that it is just sad.²²³ The last of the Sweet Home men trusts her and feels a deep sadness: "a wave of grief soaked him so thoroughly he wanted to cry" (Beloved: 9). Then, when Sethe and Paul D begin to make love, the house starts "pitching" out of possible anger or jealousy at their intimacy (Beloved: 18). 124 manages to distract them. Afterwards, the phantom's presence is also manifested in the shaking of the house when Paul D touches Sethe's breasts. Then his exorcism begins. Paul D wants to liberate Sethe from the ghost and fights against the house. A table rushes toward him and he grabs it by its leg and bashes it about, wrecking everything. He screams "back at the screaming house: You want to fight, come on! God damn it! She got enough without you. She got enough!" (Beloved: 18). That was the end of Beloved as a baby ghost haunting the house on Blue Road.

There are two events that make the spirit take flesh. First, just after Baby Suggs's death, Sethe and her daughter Denver decide to end the persecution of the ghost by

²²² Among the animals traditionally believed to sense ghosts and evil spirits, dogs are perhaps first on the list. See: (1964) *The Frank Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, vol. 7. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press: 144, 145, 147.

²²³ Before the spirit comes to life, the two inhabitants of the house, Sethe and Denver, have very different perceptions of the ghost's quality. However, both of them seem to agree that it is not an evil haunting. First, Sethe defines it to Paul D as sad. Later, Denver says that it is lonely and rebuked. Paul D's response to the ghost mirrors his terrible memories. In fact, as Koolish asserts, all the characters seem to project their own feelings in their perception of the spirit (2001: 177).

calling it forth. The only result at that point is the movement of a sideboard which takes a step forward, but nothing else. According to Teresa N. Washington, the two women summon their spiritual third. They “use the power of the word [. . .] to impart unification of spiritual, physical, and geographic planes of existence at 124 [. . .] they invite [her] to share their material space. Beloved, having received a ritual invitation, begins crossing all boundaries to enter the sacred realm prepared by her mother” (online). Then Sethe foreshadows what is going to happen, “But if she’d only come, I could make it clear to her” (Beloved: 4). She even thinks of the possibility of leaving the house, but Baby Suggs tells her, “Not a house in the country ain’t packed to its rafters with some dead Negro’s grief. We lucky this ghost is a baby” (Beloved: 5). The second event that definitely precipitates the ghost’s reincarnation is Paul D’s arrival and his exorcism: the revenant cannot exist if he is there by Sethe’s side, so it has to expel him from 124.

Beloved the revenant is the ultimate gothic expression. As David Dudley states, “The dominant Gothic element in *Beloved* is the ghost-girl of its title” (299). We can see Beloved as a strayed young woman, but also as a ghost, the continuation of the spooky manifestation of the haunted house. Either as a real character or as a ghost, Beloved becomes a complex symbol which operates simultaneously on a personal (or psychological) and on a collective level. However, it is only as a revenant that Beloved achieves her highest significance. On a personal/psychological level, she assumes a number of symbolic identities: “the condensation of Sethe’s daughter and her African mother” to a “preoedipal child who desires a merger with her mother” (Rimmon-Kenan: 116).²²⁴ On a collective level, Beloved may be interpreted as the symbol of “a whole lineage of people obliterated by slavery, beginning with the African who dies on the Middle Passage” (Rimmon-Kenan: 116);²²⁵ or as Deborah Horvitz specifies, “all the women dragged onto slave ships in Africa and also all black women in America trying to trace their ancestry back to the mother on the ship attached to them” (qtd. in Plasa: 157). Beloved becomes the manifestation of the ghosts of America’s racial history.²²⁶

As Mischelle Booher says,

Instead of representing the departed spirit of one person, Beloved embodies the unspeakable memories of many of the ex-slaves in Morrison’s text. Beloved as ghost is not only one particular person who once was. Beloved’s ghost is the memory of slavery. Thus Beloved haunts more than just her murderer, Sethe. All of the town’s residents are affected in some way. (125)

²²⁴ For a view of Beloved as Sethe’s African mother, see: Deborah Horvitz (59) and Jennifer L. Holden-Kirwan (online).

²²⁵ Rimmon-Kenan is quoting Jean Wyatt (1993). “Giving Body to the Word: The Maternal Symbolic in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*”. *PMLA* 108.3 (May): 474-88. See: Carol Henderson (89) for similar views.

²²⁶ Among others, Teresa Heffernan (561) describes Beloved as the figure who represents the ghosts of slavery.

Thus *Beloved* is a restless ancestor spirit, which Marsha Darling describes as: “spirits which have been largely unacknowledged and unaccounted for, as the dislocation of African peoples and individuals—the diaspora—has swallowed the memory of their existence” (246). Hawthorne’s ghosts, though not as complex as Morrison’s revenant, must also be interpreted on individual and collective levels: mostly they represent forefathers’ crimes (somehow they are restless ancestors specters), but they also stand for the white colonial legacy.

Consequently, *Beloved* is a strongly diversiform symbol. The different perspectives from which *Beloved* can be analyzed, as a real being or as a ghost, are equally valuable for the complex light they cast on the novel. There is no need to accept one as right and reject the other as wrong: “Who *Beloved* is, fittingly, is not merely ambiguous but multiply inscribed. Simultaneously, she represents many things, many people, each of which is true” (Koolish 2001: 172).²²⁷ Instead, it is more interesting to recognize how both readings simultaneously enrich the texture of the novel, as it “oscillates between [the] two alternatives in an insoluble ambiguity” (Rimmon-Kenan: 119).²²⁸ Koolish emphasizes how the ghost encounter enhances the imaginative potential and thus makes it possible for the reader to produce and accept multiple meanings while *Beloved*, as a real woman, gives her a voice that the disembodied presence of a ghost cannot quite muster (1995: 438). Morrison herself recognizes *Beloved*’s ambiguous nature,

She is a spirit on one hand, literally she is what Sethe thinks she is, her child returned to her from the dead [. . .]. [S]he is also another kind of dead which is not spiritual but flesh, which is, a survivor from a true, actual slave ship. She speaks the language, a traumatized language, of her own experience [. . .]. Both things are possible, and there’s evidence in the text so that both things could be approached, because the language of both experiences—death and Middle Passage—is the same. (Darling: 247)²²⁹

In this dissertation, I will focus on *Beloved* as the reincarnated ghost of Sethe’s third child who was murdered by her mother when she was one year old—as that, she also symbolizes the ghost of slavery—a specter which has haunted 124 for twenty years and then becomes flesh.²³⁰

Morrison’s narration, like many other gothic works of fiction, goes far beyond what Western rationalism can accept as “real” and asks the reader to overcome

²²⁷ See: Holden-Kirwan (online) and Tally (37) for similar views.

²²⁸ Osagie has similar views (online).

²²⁹ Teresa Washington characterizes *Beloved* as a multifaceted entity (online).

²³⁰ Ashraf H. A. Rushdy thinks that Toni Morrison had been concerned with giving life to the dead as early as 1973. In the Foreword to *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, Morrison had commented how living were Van der Zee’s portraits of the dead: his photographs had given them renewed life. With *Beloved*, Morrison finally gives voice to the dead (1998: 144). For more information, see: Camille Billops (1978). *The Harlem Book of the Dead*. New York: Morgan and Morgan.

cultural preconceptions so as to give ghosts complete meaning. Unlike Hawthorne's, in her radical approach to the supernatural, she creates new life out of death: Beloved's spirit takes on physical form. In literature, including Gothic fiction, ghosts do not usually become human beings and start dwelling among the living. As in *Seven Gables*, they just appear as spiritual entities, occasionally and frequently in special circumstances. Morrison accomplishes what no other Gothic novelist had done: "she lets the reader into the mind of the ghost" (Booher: 125). In *Beloved*, the gothic is as real as real life. First, the haunting leaves strong traces: it shatters a mirror, it attacks Here Boy, it fights Paul D. Then, when the baby ghost resurrects, the gothic achieves extreme proportions and the ghostly visitation acquires distinct physical human features: Beloved behaves like a human being.

Ghosts in *Seven Gables* never have such strong or violent effects on the present, nor can we find anything like a ghost taking physical form in Hawthorne's other fiction. However, Hawthorne resorts to the intermittent reincarnation of the primal ancestor, Colonel Pyncheon, somehow in similar ways to Beloved's, since it points to the legacy of colonialism and the family crimes. At the present moment of the story, Judge Pyncheon is the reincarnation of his greedy Puritan ancestor, whose ambition brought about Maule's condemnation. Thus he becomes the last of a series of tyrannical villains and, consequently, the embodiment of the continuity of evil, which was so characteristic of the gothic romance.

Judge Pyncheon has inherited the essential characteristics of his progenitor and his resemblance to him is so extraordinary that people mistake him for his ancestor. Phoebe thinks he is Colonel Pyncheon when Holgrave shows her his portrait. In fact, when the jurist comes into the shop, it is as if her old ancestor had arrived from the other world. Likewise, Morrison describes Beloved with the distinctive physical traits only she could have: her bending neck, three thin vertical scratches on her forehead (the result of Sethe's fingernails), the age and "the markings on Beloved's neck from the handsaw Sethe used to kill her" (Booher: 125).²³¹ However, Morrison goes further and depicts Beloved's "unusual" identity as a baby in a woman's body, since she died when she was just an infant.²³² Despite her physical shape of a grown young female, she acts like a one year-old child: she can hardly breath or walk; she needs lots of

²³¹ See: Osagie (online) and House (1998: 69) for information about Beloved's markings.

²³² Barbara Christian points out that in many West African religions the dead come back as babies (204). According to West African beliefs, the character Beloved is what the Yoruba would call "Abiku", a "wandered child", "the same child who dies and returns again and again to plague the mother" (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 106). For more information, see: Toni Morrison (1987). "The Site of Memory". *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*. Ed. and Intro. William Zinsser. Boston: Houghton: 103-124.

liquid; she longs for sweets; she does not remember her last name.²³³ In fact, she could “be characterized psychoanalytically as pre-Oedipal”; she shows a pathological devotion and dependence on her mother (Fitzgerald: 114).

On the other hand, the likeness between Jaffrey Pyncheon and the family founder is related to the curse which plagues the family: “give them blood to drink”. Ancient superstitions about the Pyncheons say that “this miraculous blood might now and then be heard gurgling in their throats” (Gables: 124). Phoebe gets startled when she hears a noise in her cousin’s throat, “rather habitual with him, not altogether voluntary, yet indicative of nothing, unless it were a slight bronchial complaint, or, as some people hinted, an apoplectic symptom” (Gables: 124). One of the doctors who examines Colonel Pyncheon’s body thinks he has died of apoplexy, a disorder to which the Pyncheons have certain propensity. It seems that the crime blamed on Clifford might be the result of this hereditary illness, which makes the Pyncheons choke with blood.

In addition, Jaffrey Pyncheon is associated with the founder of the old mansion through their similar outfits. Among the main elements that characterize Colonel Pyncheon, in his portrait, are the sword, the ruff and the Bible, which represent power, respectability, social position and his greedy desire for wealth. Their direct equivalent garments would be Judge Pyncheon’s gold-headed cane and silken neckwear, which are linked to his appearance as a gentleman, but also connect him with Maule’s curse. Jaffrey Pyncheon also shares his progenitor’s demonic animal qualities, whose roots are in their greed and materialism: “His gross, animal qualities so enchain him that there is no room for the spiritual” (Beebe: 9). He is described as having “a somewhat *massive accumulation of animal substance* about the lower region of his face, the look was perhaps unctuous, rather than spiritual” (Gables: 116; emphasis added).²³⁴ Because of their strong animal instincts, both Colonel Pyncheon and the Judge had “fallen into certain transgressions” when they were young. Judge Pyncheon had been a dissipated youth before he reformed himself and became an “exceedingly respectable member of society”. He recklessly spent and was addicted to low pleasures.

In Morrison’s novel, once the spirit stops haunting 124, a mysterious young woman, Beloved, appears on a stump near the house, the revenant reincarnated.²³⁵ Beloved shows up the very same day its inhabitants have started a real life and 124 is

²³³ Nobody calls the baby by her name in the story. She would just be called unspecifically the ‘crawling girl’. Koolish believes that Beloved has no name because she is everyone’s Beloved (2001: 177) and Emma Parker because she represents “an African American Everywoman or the ‘Sixty Million and more’” to whom the book is dedicated (online).

²³⁴ Dryden (1971: 308) and Alfred Marks (1967a: 419) emphasize Judge Pyncheon’s materiality.

²³⁵ The stump contrasts to Brother, the tree under which the slaves of Sweet Home find comfort and happiness.

free of spirits. Paul D could beat up a ghost, but it was different to fight a 'helpless' colored girl. The revenant comes out of the water as if it were a symbolic birth: coming out of the womb.²³⁶ As Morrison says in her interview with Angels Carabí, she wanted Sethe to re-experience birth. When Sethe sees Beloved, she has some sort of child delivery (1993: 107): she feels "her bladder filled to capacity" and "the water she voided was endless" (Beloved: 51), as with Denver's birth, "flooding the boat" (Beloved: 51). The revenant's birth seems to be related to her memories from inside the womb, curled-up and moaning as a fetus (Beloved: 124).

Like Judge Pyncheon, Beloved is demonic. It can only be a wicked revenant, since Beloved represents the suffering and anger of millions of black slaves during the Middle Passage, slavery and its aftermath.²³⁷ However, "In her embodied state, Beloved is much more deadly, a material source to be reckoned with as she seeks solace from the woman who cut her throat" (Carol Henderson: 89). Beloved's devilish nature is definitely revealed when Sethe, Denver and Beloved go to the Clearing. There she starts caressing Sethe's neck, but she ends up choking her. Trudier Harris highlights her demonic tendencies: "We can describe the title character as a witch, a ghost, a devil, or a succubus; in her manipulation of those around her, she exerts a power not of this world [. . .] she is inhumanly vengeful in setting out to repay the one upon whom she places the blame for her too-early demise. [. . .] this is not the first time that Morrison has called woman Demon" (1991: 153).²³⁸

In her complex personality Beloved reunites characteristics of two classical gothic figures, the villain and its counterpart, the maiden in distress: she has Judge Pyncheon's wicked nature, but she is also a fugitive and innocent young woman, who flees from perverse white men. According to Grewal, Beloved is reminiscent of Jung's archetype of the maiden, who is "often described as not altogether human in the usual sense; she is either of unknown or peculiar origin, or she looks strange or undergoes strange experiences, from which one is forced to infer the maiden's extraordinary, myth-like character" (1998: 109). However and unlike Jaffrey Pyncheon, Beloved proves to have curative and regenerative properties: she is a healing agent, since, as Morrison argues, she exposes "everybody's vulnerability" (qtd. in Carabí 1993: 106). The revenant forces the other characters to remember the horror of slavery by bringing

²³⁶ Beloved is associated with the liminal zone between land and water: the bridge. Beloved is a black Aphrodite rising from the waters of the unconscious (Grewal 1998: 109).

²³⁷ Peter Paris writes that "in African cosmology those who die an unnatural death [. . .] [are] capricious and 'not easily pacified' since it has lost its family and community moorings" (qtd. in Corey: 112).

²³⁸ Trudier Harris sees in Beloved the engulfing and never-satisfied woman of oral traditions which document destructive images of women. She compares this image of the woman with Kali, the Indian goddess, epitome of the bloodthirsty female on the rampage against human, especially *man*-kind (1991: 152).

forth their memories and emotions. This way they can surface their painful feelings to consciousness.

Like Judge Pyncheon, *Beloved* is the embodiment of guilt and the symbol of the legacy of the colonial past. With her reincarnation, the outbreak of the concealed unconscious is terrible: "She [*Beloved*] represents the eruption of the uncanny, the anti-rational, or the mythic into the realm of normal existence, an event that may unlock previously locked emotions and open the mind to a wider experience of life" (Corey: 112). *Beloved* is the embodiment of Sethe's guilt, her daughter who returns to demand vengeance and the materialization of those unaccounted ghosts of slavery who died on slave ship voyages: "Death and the Middle Passage evoke the same language. They are the same existence; both were experienced by the multiple-identified *Beloved*" (Horvitz: 63). Thus, *Beloved* is the reincarnation of the "unspeakable": "She is the boundless, transgressive, illegitimate, disruptive other who breaks up the peaceful ordering [. . .] who disregards the laws of gender and race; who puts in crisis identity and history" (Heffernan: 569).

Morrison exploits *Beloved* as a ghost in the flesh and enhances, as critics such as Ann Sonser has pointed out, her most gothic aspects through the traditional trope of "the female vampire or succubus" (97). Judge Pyncheon is also known for his vampiric and predatory sexual tendencies. He exhausts his wife in three or four years, just as Colonel Pyncheon wore out his three wives by "the hardness of his character in the conjugal relation".²³⁹ In her double quality of ghost and vampire-succubus, *Beloved* is the apotheosis of the Gothic. As Louis S. Gross argues "Women as active demons figure significantly in the lore of the vampire [. . .]. Vampire women in Gothic fiction function in two major ways: first as seductress and second as murdering demon" (49). *Beloved*'s resurrection, as Sonser says, recalls Poe's female creations, those vampiric and erotic women who come back to life. However, unlike the etherealizing nature of her gothic foremothers, Morrison's revenant "refuses even to play at being dead" (97). According to Sonser, Morrison reenergizes "the seductive vampire/ succubus trope by linking it with the economic and social violence through which women are constituted as subjects or, conversely, denied subjectivity" (98).

Traditionally this gothic figure, the vampire, has been depicted, as Rosemary Guiley argues, as a sexualized demon who sucks or drains the vital life fluid, blood or semen, from her victims (qtd. in Sonser: 97). *Beloved*, as a vampire, becomes the radical transgressive dark lady, a seductress and a temptress: "She seduces in order to drain her oppressors, to rob them of their subjectivity and to contest the patterns of

²³⁹ Roy R. Male signals the sexual element in the genetic history of the Pyncheon and points out that the sexual aggressiveness of the Pyncheons' dominant strain has limited its offspring (432).

dominance and submission that shape material and ideological practices such as slavery, racism, and sexism” (Sonser: 97). Beloved has vampiric relationships with Sethe and Paul D. As Pamela Barnett points out, she shows homosexual desire and erotic longings when, in the Clearing, she kisses and massages her mother’s neck (79). She drains Sethe of her vitality, suggesting the ambiguity of the mother-child relationship, about which Female Gothic had expressed a certain anxiety. The all-consuming Beloved feeds on her mother, metaphorically sucks Sethe’s vitality, becoming plump while Sethe gets increasingly weak:²⁴⁰ “her appetite is an insatiable ‘life-hunger’ [. . .] a ‘downright craving to know’ [. . .] the life and love that was denied her” (David Lawrence: 94). This feeling of hunger is suffered by all the characters in the novel, since as blacks, they have endured physical, sexual, and even psychological starvation.

Sally Keenan comments: “the story that began with the mother’s impassioned loving gift of her body to her daughter turns into a story of the daughter voraciously devouring that body, the mother and daughter’s desire for the other has grown monstrous, like an incubus feeding on itself” (131). Patton states that Beloved has already suffered separation from her mother and now desires reunion which, since she cannot go back to the womb, she seeks in death (128). Both mother and daughter relate to one another through a discourse of dominion. Beloved’s haunting is expressed through her control over Sethe’s will: “Sethe [who] has seemingly been broken down into a ‘safe’ madwoman [. . .] has become so only after having her claim to herself taken away by this ghost [Beloved] that demands to be her only ‘best thing’. Such a theft of claim represents the epitome of patriarchal possession” (Askeland: 173-174). Sethe and Beloved’s relationship clearly repeats the binary paradigm of the colonial discourse; a system of violent possession, in which Beloved becomes, like Judge Pyncheon, a dominant and demanding tyrant and Sethe, her slave: “There is even a connection between this ruling Beloved and the slave-driver. Because any attempt to possess another human being is reminiscent of the slave-master relationship” (Horvitz: 62). Like Beloved’s, Jaffrey Pyncheon’s tyrannical colonial rule over his weak relatives destroys their subjectivities, making of them shadow selves.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Ernest Jones writes that “the vampire superstition is evidently closely allied to that of the Incubus and Succubus [. . .]. Just as Incubi suck out vital fluids and thus exhaust the victim [. . .] so do Vampires often lie on the breast and induce suffocation” (qtd. in Barnett: 78). For more information, see: Ernest Jones (1951). *On the Nightmare*. New York: Liveright.

²⁴¹ David Lawrence (95) and Mary J. Suero-Elliott (online) express similar views. According to Jesser, Beloved starts her wicked dominion over Sethe when she tries to strangle her in the Clearing: “At the foot of Baby Suggs’s rock, in a scene strangely reminiscent of the sacrifice of Isaac, the sacrificed daughter exacts her demands” (online).

With Paul D, Beloved becomes a temptress who seduces him into sexual intercourse. As the traditional succubus, Barnett writes, Beloved is “a female demon and nightmare figure that sexually assaults male sleepers and drains them of semen” (74).²⁴² She entices Paul D into having sex, “draining him of his masculine life force and reducing him to a powerless, drunken drifter” (Dudley: 299). The demonic woman rebels against male authority, questioning the social and economic conditions that help to reproduce the relations of race and gender and her ultimate act is the subversion of patriarchy, which is at the core of the Gothic romance. Sonser claims that Beloved as a “female vampire/succubus figure actively resists this depletion [to be robbed of subjectivity] by depleting the power of the patriarchal order” (99). In addition, through the revenant, Morrison seems to revise the Oedipus story. Beloved, the daughter, is seeking the mother and not the father. She says: “I don’t love nobody but her [Sethe]” (Beloved: 116). Beloved drives Paul D, her surrogate father, out of 124 to the cold house.

In the last scene of the novel, as Sonser argues, “Sethe reenacts the image of the vampire’s victim, a fading figure whose gradual enervation parallels her vampire’s increasing force” (101). Her power is symbolized by her pregnant shape, which coincides with the height of her vengeance and physical power (101).²⁴³ Unlike Judge Pyncheon, who dies, Beloved just vanishes. Hers is a perpetual haunting. There can only be an incomplete redemption from the past. The revenant becomes a sort of vestigial haunting just as Hawthorne’s ghosts: a mere trace and a remaining energy knitted to the environment forever. She becomes the symbol that slavery cannot be forgotten and will always haunt those who suffered it and their descendants.

2.2. The Haunted House

Unlike Hades, or those caves and natural fissures into which so many heroes plunge, a castle is a *man-made* thing, a cultural artifact linked with the name of a particular family. This structure has a private and a public aspect; its walls, towers, ramparts suggest external identity, the “corridors of power,” consciousness; whereas its dungeons, attics, secret rooms, and dark hidden passages connote the culturally female, the sexual, the maternal, the unconscious. It is a public identity enfolding (and organizing) the private, the law enclosing, controlling, dark “female” otherness. The walls of the house both defend it from the outside world (“A man’s home is his castle”) and hide the secrets it thereby creates. The structure embodies the principles of cultural order.

ANNE WILLIAMS, *Art of Darkness*.

²⁴² One type of demon included in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christian classifications is the “night terror, female demons that attack sleeping men, children and women in childbed to suck them of their vitality and blood” (qtd. in Plasa: 149). For more information, see: Rosemary Guiley (1992). *The Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits*. New York: Facts on File: 92.

²⁴³ Grewal believes that the pregnant figure of Beloved is alive in the figure of Wild in *Jazz*. She is also an evocative figure of Mnemosyne and of the muse of the black woman artist (1998: 116).

One of the most pervasive supernatural aspects of the Gothic is the haunted house, which dominates the narrative both as a physical as well as a psychological presence. Many critics have seen it as another character, if not the main one of the Gothic romance. Dean R. Koontz says: “the ancient mansion permeated with evil should be as much a character in your story as any people in it” (qtd. in Anne Williams: 39).²⁴⁴ According to Clery (introduction to *The Castle of Otranto*), the Gothic story is an “extension of the mood evoked by the setting” (xv). Likewise, Anne Williams believes that “the ‘Gothic myth’ also demonstrates that particular kinds of settings (settings that [. . .] reify family structure) generate particular kinds of actions *and* feelings [. . .]. Only certain kinds of stories can take place in haunted castles, and those stories conventionally evoke the pleasures of melancholy, the delights of terror” (23). The gothic setting seeks to create a mysterious and gloomy atmosphere that emphasizes the powerlessness and vulnerability of the characters: the fact that they are in the hands of dark and inexplicable forces.

The prominence of the dwelling in Gothic tradition comes from early English Gothic fiction when the haunted castle was among the principal conventions of this genre. However, as Arac comments, “the century wore on [. . .] the Gothic was democratized. Middle-class families like the Dombey and Pyncheons could have *their* ghosts as had the aristocrats of an earlier age” (5-6).²⁴⁵ About the democratization of the Gothic, Punter points out that “For the first time the working class is intruding significantly into the system of class relations characteristic of the Gothic [. . .]. The upper classes are seen as posing threats not so much to the morality and power of the middle classes as to the actual lives of the people” (163). In fact, many writers found ordinary homes more interesting, since “the scene of events [were] more full of human interest [. . .] than those of a gray, feudal castle” (Gables: 10). In the Gothic the haunted castle or house is the major metaphor of the gothic mode, which functions simultaneously as setting and organizing principle of the narrative. According to Savoy, the house is “the vehicle for representing the return of the repressed Other and the prosopoeial mode of its signification. The haunted house will denote both ‘the text that is inhabited by the specters of referentiality and the subject who is haunted by the repudiated Other’” (14). The house seems to be “the most persisting site, object, structural analogue, and trope of American gothic’s allegorical turn” (Savoy: 9).

²⁴⁴ For more information, see: Dean. R. Koontz (1973). *Writing Popular Fiction*. Cincinnati: Writer’s Digest.

²⁴⁵ David Punter argues that the process of democratization of the Gothic had already begun in the 1830s and the 1840s with writers such as Bullwer Lytton, G. P. R. James, William Harrison Ainsworth and G. W. M. Reynolds. They developed a new sub-genre which Punter calls ‘proletarian Gothic’ (145).

American Gothic fiction is full of haunted houses: Poe's House of Usher, Hawthorne's Houses, Stephen King's Castle Rock, Capote's Kansan farmhouse. In fact, the haunted house signifies different things at once. First, there is the identification between the house and the psyche, familiar in psychoanalytic literature. There is also the connection between the house and the patriarchal family, another of the basic organizing principles of the Gothic narrative; since it is linked to the name of a particular family, the house embodies its history. Thus the gothic dwelling represents culture and power relations, the dynamics of domination-subversion between man and woman. It becomes a place of secrets. From all these connections the haunted house multiplies its symbolic implications: from the American self to a national metaphor.

The cult of domesticity characterized the home as a safe place with benign maternal figures and controlled by the paternal law. However, the home of the gothic family romance proves to be unsafe for women: a place of imprisonment, torture, threatened rape or death for the female heroine (Chapman: 190).²⁴⁶ Fiedler argues that the haunted house is a sort of womb in which the ego first existed and to which it must return and "beneath [. . .] [it] lies the dungeon keep [. . .] the maternal blackness", a prison or torture chamber "from which the cries of the kidnapped *anima* cannot even be heard" (132). In gothic fiction the absence of protective mothers is related to the powerlessness of women to control the domestic sphere, which is under the male rule (Chapman: 190-191). Anne Williams says,

The Tale of "Bluebeard" thus suggests how a "central term" of Gothic, the "haunted castle", may be read as a complex metaphor for the structures of cultural power (whether private or public, sexual, political, or religious) and for the gender arrangements such institutions both found and mirror [. . .] affirming both the premises of sexual difference and the inferiority or "otherness" of "the female". (47)

Even though it may seem a paradox, as Williams claims, the haunted house is both "central" and unnecessary to the Gothic, since "The latent' Gothic myth' may be expressed in any number of alternate symbols" which may convey the same meanings (isolation, gloominess, mystery) and evoke certain feelings in the characters (claustrophobia, loneliness) (39).

In Female Gothic the heroine's feelings are illustrated by the image of the enclosed space which suggests either the repressive society in which the female heroine lives or her inner self, or both: "the image of interior space, with its prisonlike atmosphere is used to indicate disorder of the world for its female inhabitants" (Fleenor 1983a: 13). Elaine Showalter has noted that the enclosed and secret room "had been a

²⁴⁶ In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries female gothicists describe the danger of open spaces and the unsafe domestic sphere. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* the heroine rides from castle to castle along highways facing the hazard of the banditti. However, the early Male Gothic usually recreates the horrors of imprisonment or confinement, as in *The Monk*, *Melmoth the Wanderer* and other Gothic narratives.

potent image in women's novels since *Jane Eyre*, but by the end of the century it came to be identified with the womb and with female conflict" (qtd. in Fleenor 1983a: 13).²⁴⁷ Locked doors in Radcliffe's fiction deny the heroine entrance to her own self, and mainly to her sexuality: "Sexuality, female physiology, and female processes are frequently suggested with the image of interior space, not because of any innate comparison to female wombs but because of the fact that women's sexuality has been frequently denied, even to women themselves" (Fleenor 1983a: 13). Ann Barr Snitow suggests that the popular Gothic represents an attempt of women to control sex on their own terms (qtd. in Fleenor 1983a: 13).²⁴⁸ Besides, the gothic building is also associated with disorder and chaos, elements which have been usually linked to the feminine nature.²⁴⁹

In Hawthorne's and Morrison's fiction, house tropes are very important. Dryden states that "For Nathaniel Hawthorne [. . .] a study of the imagination properly begins with the problem of the poetics of the house, as the prominence of the house image in the body of his work makes clear" (1971: 294). As Buitenhuis points out, his fascination with houses may have its source in the days when his family could afford mansions (1991: 32). On the other hand, Dryden argues that Hawthorne's "experience of homelessness [. . .] determines his sense of his relation to the world. His own son, Julian Hawthorne says that his father, who constantly moved from one place to another in America and in Europe, 'never found any permanent rest anywhere' [. . .]. This sense of homelessness, then, becomes the original impulse or basic theme of Hawthornian Romance, and gives the familiar metaphor of the house of fiction a special ontological dimension" (1971: 294-295).²⁵⁰

Hawthorne constantly lamented his rootlessness and said once that "it is folly for mortal man to do anything more than pitch a tent".²⁵¹ He makes continuous allusions to

²⁴⁷ Original text quoted: Elaine Showalter (1977). *Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelist From Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

²⁴⁸ For more information, see: Ann B. Snitow (1979). "Mass-Market Romance: Porn for Women is Different". *Radical History Review* 20 (Spring/Summer): 141-161.

²⁴⁹ Michael Sadleir associates Gothic ruins with rebellion, since the Gothic movement was, originally at least, toward freedom and away from the control of discipline (qtd. in Fleenor 1983a: 13). For more information, see: Michael Sadleir (1927). *The Northanger Novels: A Footnote to Jane Austen*. The English Association Pamphlet No. 68, November. Juliann Fleenor agrees with Sadleir and believes that the ruin metaphor, as an ambivalent image, symbolizes chaos or disorder, and the female herself (1983a: 13).

²⁵⁰ Dryden claims, emphasizing Hawthorne's quality as a wanderer, that "the relationship between the realm of Romance and the ancestral home is a central theme in his unfinished romances" and he associates his sense of homelessness with his inability to complete his stories (1971: 295-296). In *Hawthorne and His Wife* (vol. I), Hawthorne's son himself, Julian Hawthorne, insists on his father's rootlessness (qtd. in Dryden 1971: 294-295).

²⁵¹ Kehler expresses similar views about Hawthorne's homelessness (142). For more information about Hawthorne's rootlessness, see: *Letters of Hawthorne to William D. Ticknor*, 1851-1864. Newark, 1910, Letters dated Liverpool, Sept. 26th, '56; Liverpool, Jan 31st, '57; Concord, May 16th (1661: 26, 39, 115).

houses and homelessness in most of the prefaces to his novels and stories. In the “Custom House”, Hawthorne recognizes his rootlessness and the fact that his native town would not give him the inspiration he needed as an artist.²⁵² Undoubtedly, houses are a source of inspiration for Hawthorne: his second book of stories is called *Mosses from an Old Manse* after the house where he lived in Concord and *Tanglewood Tales* is named after his dwelling in the Berkshires.

In Morrison’s romances houses are also usually a central element, inspiring all kinds of feelings. In *The Bluest Eye*, Mrs. Breedlove continuously expresses the disgust she feels towards her own dingy and ugly habitation (in fact, it is not even a house, but a storefront) while she invests all her efforts and pride in keeping the house where she is employed as a servant clean and beautiful. There are those propertied black people who spend all their energies and love on their homes, “Like frenzied, desperate birds, they overdecorated everything” (12). In addition, Morrison starts the novel with the idealized and simplistic story for children about the pretty green and white house with a red door where Father, Mother, Dick, Jane and their dog live happily, to which the real life of blacks is compared.²⁵³ In *Sula* Eva Peace lives in a chaotic house of many rooms, which has been designed without any previous plan; a house where no one is scolded or given directions and all sorts of people drop in, in contrast to the oppressive neatness of Nel’s house. *Beloved* deals with the blacks’ dream of possessing their own habitation, since under slavery they could not own anything, not even their bodies. Baby Suggs makes 124 her home and, along with the Clearing, the center of her life. Out of her desire to have her own house, Sethe tenaciously decides to stay in the haunted dwelling, despite the ghost which plagues her.

2.2.1. The Pyncheon Mansion and 124: True Gothic Dwellings

[. . .] una casa simbólica del pasado [. . .] casi desierta de vivos, alberga únicamente los fantasmas de los que la habitaron, mientras sus muros [. . .] cobijan e irradian únicamente sombras. *Una casa que ha dejado de ser “real” y se ha convertido en espacio “gótico” para el “romance”*. (emphasis added)
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, *Prefacios*. (Catalina Montes’s description of the Pyncheon house).

Kehler also speaks of a notebook entry of 1842 in which Hawthorne expresses similar views: Hawthorne (1972). *The American Notebook*. Ed. Claude M. Simpson. Columbus: Ohio State University Press: 322 (Centenary Edition of *The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Ed. William Charvat et al.).

²⁵² See: Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*: 34. Hawthorne makes other mentions of the concepts of home and homelessness in the Preface to *Mosses from an Old Manse* in *Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Cambridge, 1883: 11, 45.

²⁵³ Dick and Jane were the main characters in popular basal reads written by Dr. William S. Gray and published by Scott Foresman, that were used to teach children to read from the 1930s through to the 1970s in the United States. On line at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dick_and_Jane (consulted 4.09.2008).

Both Hawthorne and Morrison's habitations stand as haunted Gothic houses. In *Seven Gables* the Gothic dwelling is the perfect setting for the exploration of the white patriarchal family. Besides, the Pyncheon mansion "is not just a resemblance of family and historic houses in Salem, but it also stands for the symbolic and real consequences of house ownership and hereditary transmission" (Buitenhuis 1991: 68). On the other hand, in *Beloved*, Morrison analyzes through the haunted dwelling the deep conflict of the black self and the black family as a consequence of the dominant white patriarchal society. Hawthorne and Morrison use the house to show the inversion or distortion of the ideal home. The cult of domesticity is criticized, since the haunted house reveals the powerlessness of women, both blacks and whites, since the feminine domestic sphere is under the despotic male's control. The home of the gothic family romance is unsafe and treacherous for the female. Both Hawthorne and Morrison's stories are "an examination of personal and national identity contained by the Gothic archetypes of the haunted dwelling and the ghostly haunting" (Louis Gross: 17).

The Pyncheon mansion shares many of the characteristics of the haunted house of the early Gothic tradition. It is a once-aristocratic, run-down mansion filled with gloom and mystery. According to the description given in the opening chapter of the book, its whole visible exterior recalls that of gothic buildings: "ornamented with quaint figures, conceived in the grotesqueness of a Gothic fancy, and drawn or stamped in the glittering plaster, composed of lime, pebbles, and bits of glass, with which the woodwork of the walls is overspread" (Gables: 11). The seven pointed gables and the main entrance, which is compared to a church door, enhance this impression. As a gothic mansion, *Seven Gables's* mysterious passages provoke fear and suspense. When Hepzibah goes to her brother's room, she feels afraid of what may lurk down the next passage: "[she] opened one crazy door after another, and ascended the creaking staircase, she gazed wistfully and fearfully around" (Gables: 240). There is a hidden secret compartment, which holds the deed to the land in Maine (the object of the Pyncheons' greed for generations). Holgrave will finally discover its whereabouts, a recess of the wall behind the portrait of Colonel Pyncheon. The setting seeks to create a mysterious and dismal atmosphere, which Clifford describes in his train speech:

the greatest possible stumbling-block in the path of human happiness and improvement are these heaps of bricks and stones [. . .] which men painfully contrive for their own torment, and call them house and home [. . .]. *Morbid influences*, in a thousand-fold variety, gather about hearths, and pollute the life of households. There is no such *unwholesome atmosphere* as that of an old home, rendered poisonous by one's defunct forefathers and relatives [. . .] a rusty, crazy, creaky, dry-rotted, damp-rotted, dingy, dark and *miserable old dungeon*. (Gables: 261; emphasis added)

The whole picture gives a gothic impression, which is clearly reinforced by using typical gothic terms such as dungeon.

Besides the shadows of the mansion, its inner as well as outer decay is a well-known characteristic of Gothic fiction. The ruined abode of the Pyncheons is described as a “weather-beaten edifice”: it has an old structure with crumbling plaster and a decaying roof. There is also a strong deterioration in its inside: “the dingy-framed toilet-glass”, the carpet is worn and faded, the tea table depicted as ancient, etc. Surrounding the dwelling, everything shows the same decadence: the old elm tree, the ruinous wooden fence, the abundant weeds. In a truly Gothic-like way, the images of graves, rust, decay, and dust connect the ancient house with death, which leads us back to the Pyncheons’ usurpation and primal crime. They highlight the moral and emotional degeneration of the present family members (Griffith: 385). Richard Fogle even suggests that the old mansion is almost deadly: “It is intimately acquainted with dust and decay, ‘unwholesome for the lungs,’ and with sordid grime. The genial temperament of Phoebe combats its ‘grime and sordidness,’ its dry rot, its ‘heavy, breathless scent’ of death” (1952: 163).

Unlike the Pyncheon mansion, 124 is not an aristocratic house; it does not have the Gothic ornaments or hidden passages and compartments of the traditional gothic dwelling. However, they both share the main characteristic, they are haunted by specters as a consequence of the “past crimes of the family identified with the structure. The psychic as well as the physical space of the castle [the haunted house] bears its marks” (Anne Williams: 45). *Seven Gables* is inhabited by the ghosts of the departed Pyncheons. *Beloved*, on the other hand, deals with the possession of 124 and its inmates by a baby ghost, whose eventual exorcism by Paul D brings temporary peace to the women’s habitation. Unlike Hawthorne’s mansion, in which there are spiritual apparitions of different members of the Pyncheon family, 124 has the mood of Sethe’s dead daughter, the “crawling already” baby, whom Sethe kills so the slave catcher will not take her away. It is the spirit of the baby-ghost that personifies the dwelling: “Morrison is able to give the house a life of its own [. . .]. By being haunted by a child, and by acting like a child, 124 is both familiar and defamiliarised—an uncanny actor that rules over its inhabitants” (Weissberg: 110). 124 becomes the repository and the physical representation of the spirit of the unnamed baby who lived in it when alive and still inhabits it after death: “its spiteful signs [. . .] are attributed not to the ghost but to the house, which represents and is conflated with the ghost that haunts it” (Hayes: online).

Both Hawthorne and Morrison give their houses a remarkable role in their novels. According to Marilyn Chandler, they are “the stage on which the dramas of sexual

politics and class warfare are played out” (qtd. in Hayes: online).²⁵⁴ Racial politics is also played out in and through their houses (Hayes: online). In fact, the dwelling, as the most persisting trope of the gothic mode, functions as the axis around which the story revolves. That is why the Pyncheons’ habitation is involved in all the action in the book: “Very rarely does the action move away from the mansion and its immediate environment, and when it does the movement is invariably abortive” (Gray: 99), as when Hepzibah and Clifford try to go to church or in their escape on the train. There is no doubt of the importance of the mansion in *Seven Gables*. Hawthorne gives its detailed description at the very beginning of the first chapter, “The Old Pyncheon Family”. Its prominence is also reflected in the headings of several of the chapters: “The Little Shopwindow”, “Maule’s Well”, “The Pyncheon Garden”, “The Arched Window”, “Clifford’s Chamber” and “Alice’s Posies”. The mansion, as Richard Gray claims, can even be considered as the organizing principle of *Seven Gables* (95). It has probably the main role in the whole story.

As Evert Duyckinck says, in *Seven Gables*, “The chief, perhaps, of the *dramatis personae* is the house itself [. . .]. From its turrets to its kitchen, in every nook and recess without and within, it is alive and vital” (352).²⁵⁵ The old mansion is so important that our interpretation of the novel seems to be mediated, in great measure, by this symbol: “The House of the Seven Gables, dwelling and narrative, is [. . .] Holgrave’s ‘piece of domestic architecture’, structuring our perceptions, leading us along specific lines of imaginative inquiry, but allowing us at the same time a good deal of freedom of interpretation according to our ‘taste and convenience’” (Gray: 104). Some different literary houses can be traced as sources for the mansion of the Seven Gables: Spenser’s House of Pride in *The Faerie Queen*, the crumbling family house of “Peter Goldthwaite’s Treasure”, the dwelling of the “Legend of the Province House” and Poe’s House of Usher.²⁵⁶

Like the Pyncheon mansion, 124 is one of the most important “*dramatis personae*” of Morrison’s novel and its structural principle; the story starts and ends in the house. The action hardly ever gets away from 124 and it always comes back. There are only a few moments when the action goes outside to the street. Clifford and Hepzibah’s attempts to leave the mansion are comparable to Sethe’s, Denver’s and Paul D’s day at the carnival. In these situations the inhabitants of the two haunted

²⁵⁴ Original text quoted: Marilyn R. Chandler (1991). *Dwelling in the Text: Houses in American Fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

²⁵⁵ Many other critics believe that the house is the main character in *Seven Gables*: Hiroko Washizu (297), Buitenhuis (1991: 103) and Gray (98).

²⁵⁶ See: Hazel Thornburg Emry (121), Julian Smith’s “A Hawthorne source of *The House of the Seven Gables*” (18), Fogle (1952: 162) and Beebe (13).

houses are trying to reestablish bonds with the community, but fail. According to Holloway, it is through the changing of the haunted dwelling that *Beloved* is organized: “Morrison has written novels marked by seasons (*The Bluest Eye*) and years (*Sula*) but this story is marked by the shifting presence of the house, number 124 on Bluestone Road, that was introduced in Book One as ‘spite[ful],’ in Book Two as ‘loud,’ and in Book Three, as finally ‘quiet’” (75). On the other hand, as Holloway remarks, these changes allow the reader to ignore time frames: the white house on Bluestone Road stays in a timeless situation (75). The house is the right Gothic scenario for Sethe’s struggle against the past,

a struggle centered on the house and whose progress is marked by the references to 124 which open each section. The progression is also illustrated by the passing of the seasons and its effect on the house. Thus, the narrative starts in the summer, but by the end of the first section snow has started piling around house [. . .]. In the second section, the house has been completely cut off by the snow, and the conflict will be solved in the final section with the return of spring and the heat dissolving the snow. (Cuder: 42)

As in *Seven Gables*, in *Beloved* the gothic house is so important that the novel starts with its description, or we could say with the description of its haunting:

124 was spiteful. Full of a baby’s venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children. For years each put up with the site in his own way, but by 1873 Sethe and her daughter Denver were its only victims. The grandmother, Baby Suggs, was dead, and the sons, Howard and Buglar, had run away by the time they were thirteen years old—as soon as merely looking in a mirror shattered it (that was the signal for Buglar); as soon as two tiny and prints appeared in the cake (that was it for Howard). (*Beloved*: 3)

2.2.2. Maule’s Hut and 124. Female Domain and Community Shelter

Both Hawthorne and Morrison contrast the Gothic house to a previous habitation or the same in an earlier stage, which were not yet haunted by ghosts. To the old, ruined Pyncheon mansion, the House of Man, permeated by spooky happenings, Hawthorne opposes the House of Nature, Maule’s hut, which has many symbolic dimensions. Historically, Horne points out, it symbolizes the dream of the New England early ancestors, “its raising is a part of that effort made by Puritan and Pilgrim fathers to establish a new England, another Eden, in the new world” (461).²⁵⁷ Thus this hut is “an expression of the pioneering spirit, of man’s belief in his ability to master the fact of his aloneness in an alien world. The solitary hut was an image of man’s confrontation with nature [. . .]. It was a place of refuge and solitude, a small human outpost in the midst of the forest” (Dryden 1971: 299).

²⁵⁷ Kehler expresses similar views (143).

Socially, as Kehler claims, the shack stands for the harmonious pre-social pastoral existence previous to a more complex and modern society based on legal documents and social hierarchies (143). According to Leo Levy, “Maule’s Lane represents the marginal pastoral life upon which Puritan society has encroached, yielding its rustic simplicity to the complex motives that produced the civilization responsible for the tragedy of the Pyncheon family” (153). Maule’s dwelling is the first habitation erected by man, the “presocial hut of the solitary pioneer” (Dryden 1971: 299). Besides, the wizard only claims as property the hut in which he lives and he does not seem to feel the desire of Western whites to ‘possess’ nature. Horne associates Hawthorne’s houses with the ages of myth. For him, Matthew Maule’s hut is representative of the Golden Age, while Seven Gables, which replaces the previous one, stands for the Iron Age (461). Consequently, the construction of the house of the seven gables means the removal of this symbol of pastoralism from the world: “The formerly unspoiled landscape becomes involved in the concealment and deception [. . .]. The Pyncheon mansion is alienated from the natural world of Maule’s idyllic dwelling” (Leo Levy: 153).²⁵⁸ The new relationship between man and nature is different from the harmonious relation that existed in Matthew Maule’s pastoral habitation: “The pastoral view of nature as a source of moral integrity is played off against our knowledge of the counterfeit integrity of the society that stands indicted by the wronged and ruined house” (Leo Levy: 153). Nature becomes property, a thing to be owned and to be passed on from heir to heir.

Seven Gables stands for the social ambition and greed of a family, but also for “an entirely new kind of consciousness in the community” (Kehler: 145). The whole society shares the responsibility for the wrong done to Matthew Maule. It seems that it was “almost a religious act to drive the plough over the little area of his habitation, and obliterate his place and memory from among men” (Gables: 145). As Kehler points out, the old wizard was unwanted in the evolving social complex and it was the moment to remove him from the community:

The community is not interested in deed and documents, as Colonel Pyncheon is; it is seizing the opportunity to rid itself of an “undesirable” whom it fears and whose primitive ways are out of place in the evolving social complex. There is no place for huts or for solitaries in the House of Man [. . .] the New England town of Hawthorne’s novel has been captured at the mythic moment of the birth of a new consciousness. The new era is ushered in at the expense of the ritual scapegoat, Matthew Maule [. . .] and the community, like each generation of Pyncheons, reimplicates itself in the sacrificial ceremony [. . .]. (145)

²⁵⁸ Buitenhuis shares Leo Levy’s ideas (1991: 112). Dryden reminds us that the thatched hut is destroyed by a powerful individual, so it is the society “itself is what truly threatens the pioneering spirit” (1971: 299).

According to Joel R. Kehler, *The House of the Seven Gables* is Hawthorne's most profound disquisition on the role of habitation in the shaping of human identity and psyche, since for Hawthorne "the identities not only of individuals but of entire nations are a function of the interaction between the Houses of Nature and Man and that to find a 'home' is to achieve a stable identity" (143). For Hawthorne,

'Home,' [. . .] was the seam of consciousness, a metaphor for the reconciliation, however transitory, of contrary impulses within the living mind. One impulse demands that a free rein be given to the vagrant, outward-tending, cosmic self, that this self be allowed to make itself 'at home' in the House of Nature; the other impulse demands that the self make a 'home' with its kind and huddle round the fireplace in the House of Man. (Kehler: 142)

Psychologically, Kehler has shown, Maule's habitation represents a highly simplified image of the self: "a self composed (in the schematic Freudian terminology) of id and ego, of ego responding to id without the contrary demands of superego. A man apparently without dreams or thirsts of any sort, Matthew Maule lives an Adamic existence in which identity is solely a matter of the interaction of self and nature, of house and non-house; he has no past, no future, only a perpetual, satisfying present" (143). The hut's psychological dimension, Kehler says, provides a clue to the symbolic significance of the Maules. Their alleged witchcraft connects to nature and to the unconscious mind. Thus they stand for the primitive and anti-civilized urges in the individual and collective psyche, repressed and consigned to the realm of dreams, fantasies and guilt; while Seven Gables and the Pyncheons symbolize "the 'civilizing,' stasis-craving impulse within the human psyche" (142).²⁵⁹

As Kehler has pointed out, Hawthorne establishes the psychological continuity of the Maule strain through the image of the "inner sanctum" (143-144).²⁶⁰ Holgrave, as a descendant of the wizard, is now a dweller in a remote gable. It is as if the hut had moved inside the house where its original site was. This is a reminder of Maule's guilt in the Pyncheon mind and a reminder of the anarchic and primitive Maule strain in the House of Man, the natural and primitive impulses of the mind (Kehler: 144). As Gaston Bachelard asserts, the retreat within a house is a displacement of the "hut dream", with its symbolism of primitiveness (qtd. in Kehler: 144).²⁶¹ However, Kehler writes, Holgrave's inner sanctum is somehow a betrayal of his ancestor's pastoral dwelling, since it also symbolizes the Maules' desire for revenge (144). Kehler argues that the

²⁵⁹ McPherson makes a similar distinction (138). This aspect is connected to the romantic conflict between nature and civilization I talk about in section 1.2.1 "Class Struggle in Seven Gables".

²⁶⁰ Other writers have used this literary device. Poe's fiction is full of terrifying inner sanctums, from the after-hold in which Arthur Gordon Pym is trapped to the small place in the school house where William Wilson boards. Melville's *Pierre* also contains a series of such spaces.

²⁶¹ For more information about the concepts of house, home and dream house, see: Gaston Bachelard (1964). *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. New York: Orion Press.

metaphorical description of Judge Pyncheon as a “tall and stately edifice” with a “hidden nook” or “bolted closet” that conceals the “secret abomination” of his soul (Gables: 229-230) stands as a sort of antithesis of the image of the inner sanctum (144).

In *Beloved*, Morrison also develops two different facets of the space called “home”. Unlike Hawthorne’s contrast between the colonial house and the hut of the pioneer, Morrison approaches it from a racial and feminine perspective. Her concept of “home” relates to the same habitation in two different stages: until Sethe’s arrival and then for eighteen days, when 124 is a female domain and a community shelter. Morrison shows how Baby Suggs successfully transforms the patriarchal house into the feminine sphere and thus proves, as Jesser claims, that homes can “serve as places to gather strength, formulate strategy, and rest, even as they are insufficient to the task of ‘solving’ institutional and social ills [. . .]. Spaces where boundaries between selves are softened, making possible the gatherings necessary for emancipatory struggles and providing emotional and physical sustenance (online). However, after Sethe’s crime, everything changes: 124 becomes a haunted gothic dwelling.

In the past the house on Bluestone Road belonged to the Bodwins’ grandparents.²⁶² Mr. Bodwin was born there, but, later, he moved to the town with his father, grandfather and baby sister. He hardly remembers anything of the house of his childhood. Among his scanty memories is the fact that “the cooking was done behind the house”, which identifies 124 as the traditional patriarchal habitation of the time. Mr. Bodwin also recalls that, as a child, he used to bury around the house precious things he wanted to protect. Pilar Cuder Domínguez suggests that these objects were presumably those from his father’s authority and power (35). Besides, as Mr. Bodwin approaches his old home at the end of the novel, his childhood recollections about the house dwell on death, and particularly, women’s deaths (Cuder: 35). All the Bodwin females had died there: “his mother, grandmother, an aunt and an older sister before he was born” (*Beloved*: 259). 124’s association with women’s death possibly foretells Sethe’s infanticide long before Baby Suggs and Sethe’s family inhabit it. Lori Askeland wonders why this house has always used up women (166).

The abolitionist Bodwins rent 124 out to Baby Suggs in return for some laundry, some seamstress work and some shoes. Unlike the “aristocratic” Pyncheons, blacks are only renters, they cannot truly own the house they live in. The old black woman, exercising her recently acquired freedom, remodels the patriarchal house that Mr.

²⁶² Grant-Boyd says that Morrison may have named Bluestone Road because the bluestone heals when applied to a cut. It “burns like hell”, but cures instantly (qtd. in Teresa Washington: online). For more information, see: Grant-Boyd, J. H. Personal communication. 9 Nov. 2000.

Bodwin “gives” her. She makes 124 her own house—while as a slave she could not own anything, not even her life—by transforming it into the female’s domain. At the same time, through the changes she introduces, the old black woman expresses rejection of her previous mode of life as a slave. Nancy Jesser points out the difficulties Baby Suggs may encounter in her appropriation of the patriarchal house, “The land itself is a palimpsest, American history a ghost story. Any attempt to re-structure a rented space is going to be bound by limitations and troubled by layers and layers of lost cultures and lives” (online).

Baby Suggs remodels the house to avoid the traditional patriarchal design. The Bodwins’ servants’ quarters are transformed into a bedroom for the family. Everyone coming into 124 has to come by Baby Suggs: she is the true ruler of her house. The old black woman changes the structure of the white-owned dwelling by making the kitchen indoors. Hence the female’s main area, the kitchen, becomes the real heart of the house. Through these adjustments, Morrison questions racial and gender dynamics in the patriarchal white household.²⁶³ As Elizabeth T. Hayes states, “domestic space and patriarchal notions of domesticity are radically interrogated by the creation of a radical, magic-realist female discourse space” (online).

On the other hand, unlike the pre-social Maule’s hut or even the Pyncheon’s mansion, which becomes part of a more complex society, but stands separated by social prejudices, Baby Suggs ensures that 124 will be an open space for the black community of Cincinnati, where blacks can get together and share food and information: a place that provides blacks with protection. 124 becomes a way station where messages are delivered. It evolves into a center for the community, a womb and a crypt (Speary: 180). Susan Spearey thinks that “124, as the number suggests, is, like Beloved’s, a body that is exponentially proliferating, and that contains within it multiple histories and multiple possibilities” (180). In the domestic female space, specifically the kitchen, the old woman receives those blacks she preaches to in the Clearing: “Baby Suggs does not want to create a separate domain for community and spirituality; it is located in her kitchen where there is no pretense of servants, lavish displays, or of life lived without the real work of living. Even kitchen life is holy” (Askeland: 169). Morrison shows an alternative vision to the patriarchal house:

She suggests a space where a warm, communal center could be made out of the working place of the home: a space where women and men can share themselves in the form of their stories without fear of their stories being claimed by someone else’s labels of them as being wrong—animalistic, bad, unwomanly, or unchristian; where painful stories can be made bearable because they are shared by more than

²⁶³ For more information about Baby Suggs’ changes and the domestic norm for the patriarchal house and how its design asserted the power of the man’s realm over the “female” spiritual domain, see: Askeland (168).

one person and accepted by the community; where that community can learn to love anything they choose and claim themselves in the domain of that love. If they indeed accomplish this loving claim, as we are given to hope at the end of *Beloved*, then the ghosts of the patriarchy may finally cease to have power over if not to cease haunting, the house of women's fiction. (Askeland: 176)²⁶⁴

All this time 124 becomes the expression of Baby Suggs's generosity and openness, the external symbol of her newly-discovered identity: "During this period then, the house is the embodiment of Baby Suggs's self, the inner self she did not even know she had while still a slave at Sweet Home" (Cuder: 36). This communal center gives Baby Suggs the kind of power that allows her to set the rules; she becomes the spiritual leader of her community.

2.2.3. Seven Gables as a Symbol of the Past

Both the Pyncheon house and 124 are symbols of the past. 124 stands for the legacy of slavery, since it is haunted by the baby ghost, which represents the black martyrs of enslavement. Besides, Sethe's home, at the time of the story, symbolizes the matrilineal history of Baby Suggs' family for the period they have inhabited it. On the other hand, like the houses of the early gothic tradition, the Pyncheon mansion is associated with the family line, since generations of its members have dwelled there for more than 200 years.²⁶⁵ However, in *Beloved*, there is not the symbiosis between the family and the habitation that we can see in the traditional gothic house. Nor is the Gothic plot, in Morrison's romance, structured in close relationship with the family tree and its history. We cannot say that 124 symbolizes family history, at least in the same way that the traditional gothic romance does. Whereas the Pyncheon mansion has kept family secrets for a long time, such as the whereabouts of the mysterious deed, the short stay of Baby Suggs's family in the house does not seem enough to conceal that kind of secrets.

Seven Gables symbolizes the whole life of the Pyncheon family, from the Colonel, who built it, to the present inhabitants. The adjective "rusty" binds the house and its inhabitants together with the passage of time. As Leo Levy says, this word play establishes a paradox between two opposite features, strength and decay: "Iron, of course, is the metal that commonly serves Hawthorne as an image of the unyielding character of Puritan society; rusting iron as an image of the attrition of a proud family and a great house conveys the idea of strength turned to stiff grotesqueness" (151).²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Teresa N. Washington emphasizes how 124 is the spiritual refuge Baby Suggs creates for the black community, runaways and the officially free (online). Nancy Jesser expresses similar views (online).

²⁶⁵ Several critics, among them Anne Williams, have pointed out the fact that the Gothic house embodies family history.

²⁶⁶ Leo Levy comments that the phrase "a rusty wooden house" transfers a quality of iron—the inorganic world—to wood—the organic world. Not only the ruined mansion, but also the characters and even the

Horne analyzes *Seven Gables* historically through these two characteristics: "From the Golden Age of early Puritan hope to the Iron Age of moral (Pyncheon) imperfection to the rusty Iron Age of the present" (461). He calls the Pyncheons' age "the Age of Iron", which is best characterized by the colonel himself.²⁶⁷ This new era is a fallen age and the new hope lies in a future time "embodied in Judge Pyncheon's country home" (461).

As an emblem of the past, the old mansion represents the colonial past of the Pyncheons, the attachment to the king and to hereditary principles. Unlike 124, the decor of the traditional gothic space of the house is a reflection of the family history. Genteel emblems of the past, which do not have any parallels in Morrison's romance, characterize the ruined Pyncheon dwelling and its family; for instance: the oaken chair, Colonel Pyncheon's portrait, the map of the Pyncheon territory, Alice's harpsichord, the looking glass. Hawthorne exploits their strong symbolic implications. The aristocratic ancestral chair stands for the family's susceptibility to apoplexy and is a reminder of the old Colonel's mysterious death: "Many a former Pyncheon had found repose in its capacious arms [. . .] they had mused, and slumbered, and *departed, to a yet profounder sleep*" (Gables: 238; emphasis added). It is symbolically linked to the beginning of the curse and its continuity. Old Colonel Pyncheon's portrait is another colonial adornment with a magical and evil character. Besides, "This picture [. . .] was supposed to be so intimately connected with the fate of the house, and so magically built into its walls, that, if once it should be removed, that very instant, the whole edifice would come thundering down, in a heap of dusty ruin" (Gables: 197-198).

The missing deed is a visible token of the greedy colonial family tradition. It has been coveted by the Pyncheons for a long time and it is in their dreams of genteel excellence. The link between this claim and the Old World is especially clear in Gervayse Pyncheon, "foreign-bred", who tries to recover the hidden map because he wants to return to England. The harpsichord recalls Alice Pyncheon's fatal aristocratic pride, but also the family's. She learned to play it in Europe. This musical instrument transports us again to the nobility of the Old World, connecting the aristocratic traditions in America and Europe, where it came from. Nobody has touched it since Alice's death and, at the present time, it "looks more like a coffin than anything else [. . .] stifled for want of air" (Gables: 73). Thus the harpsichord stands for death and the waning of the gentry. The large and dim-looking glass also has a very relevant

chickens are depicted using this peculiar quality: Hepzibah, "rusty-jointed maiden" (Gables: 41); chickens, "queer, rusty, withered aspect" (Gables: 88) (151).

²⁶⁷ Horne recalls Hesiod's and also Donne's lament "that our age was Iron, and rustie too" (461). As in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Horne describes the descent of man from the Golden Age to the Age of Iron as characterized by injustice and strife.

historical role, since it links the world of the living Pyncheons with the world of their dead ancestors.

All these pieces of the aristocratic furniture of the old mansion have a definite and essential role in Hawthorne's gothic romance: "One and all, these are the worthless heirlooms of the Pyncheon dynasty, relics rooted like the moldy parchments and illegible autographs in the very origins of the family" (Griffith: 386).

2.2.4. The Anthropomorphism of the Haunted House

The anthropomorphism of the haunted house is a very frequent trait of the Gothic. Both the Pyncheon house and 124 are somehow self-contained and detached from their neighbors, microcosms within larger worlds. These two buildings merge the objective and subjective because, as Maurice Beebe says of the House of Seven Gables and the House of Usher, in both cases the correspondence *and* conflict between the physical and the psychological, the house-human metaphor, appear to have supplied the initial 'idea-germ' which the stories work out dramatically and symbolically" (13). In fact, the symbolism of both the Pyncheon mansion and 124 derives, at least partly, from their descriptions as human beings. These dwellings adopt human qualities.²⁶⁸

The Pyncheon family is identified with their place of abode, through its human qualities. Leo B. Levy says that,

the effect Hawthorne seeks in personifying the house [. . .] is not only to impart dignity to it by remodeling it on the human scale, but to endow it with the palpable, anguished feelings that its inhabitants have suffered for generations. Through this process, and because the feelings that Hawthorne invests in the house seem stronger than those attributed to any of the characters, it becomes the protagonist of the romance. (152)

The anthropomorphism of the ruined mansion starts in its very first description: "The aspect of the venerable mansion has always affected me 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" (Gables: 5). From the very beginning, the house is established as a living presence pervaded with thought and feelings: "so that every room and gable has a sort of human interest communicated to it" (Whipple: 360).²⁶⁹ This organic metaphor is developed during the entire narrative. The hearth is apparently the house's heart: "Its 'great chimney in the centre' is made to represent a heart, which warms and unifies the entire structure, making 'a great whole' of the smaller units of the seven gables" (Fogle 1952: 162). Its timbers are as "oozy" as any human skin, the windows

²⁶⁸ Original text quoted: Koontz (1973). *Writing Popular Fiction*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest: 126.

²⁶⁹ For similar views see Gray (96).

are the eyes looking out on the “mighty river of life”. The deep projection of the second story gives the house a meditative look.

The Pyncheon house stands for the mind of the human being haunted by the guilt of the past. Donald Junkins states that the old Pyncheon mansion is a metaphor for the psyche itself and the characters are symbols of its basic psychological functions, while their exit from the dwelling stands for the process of individuation that occurs in the regenerative psyche of man. Thus this romance “symbolizes the multiple functions of the human mind as they interrelate in the mind’s struggle against fragmentation and toward wholeness” (193). Therefore, this novel becomes emblematic of the nature and processes of man’s psyche and its struggles to grow and be free (Junkins: 209). Gray suggests that “all the major characters are simply reflections of Hawthorne himself or, more generally, that they represent conflicting aspects of the same single mind” (95).²⁷⁰

Thus, as in many traditional Gothic novels, the Pyncheon house stands metaphorically for the inner life of the haunted psyche. This symbolic association is relevant, since the ruined dwelling is anthropomorphically depicted as a human head with its consequent inner activity. Gray thinks that the old family house is “a peculiarly centripetal figure, almost forcing us to draw comparisons between outer and inner, the structures of architecture and the structures of the mind or self” (93). As Gollin argues, the mansion also stands for the collective consciousness of the Pyncheon family, keeping the terrible secrets of generations of its members.²⁷¹ In the ruined abode of the Pyncheons, symbolically the haunted mind, the malignant spirit of guilt is represented by the old portrait, which covers a hidden recess behind it: “the novel presents the dream of the house, haunted by the guilt of its founder and the ghost of his victim” (152).

Hawthorne develops the reversibility between the physical and the moral, the human and the house in his use of the “heart” image. Not only the hearth, but the whole mansion is just like a great human heart: “it is the visible heart of the cursed Pyncheon family—whispering of tormented and doomed spirits, the center of the family’s timeless and haunted afterlife” (Horne: 460).²⁷² As Arac claims, “Both physically and psychologically the heart is a privileged center, a crucially representative part, which may determine the condition of the whole, or from which the condition of the whole may be inferred” (8). Consequently, the house reflects the plight of the family

²⁷⁰ See: Rudolph Von Abele (1955: 61) and Nina Baym (1976: 155) for similar views.

²⁷¹ For another view about the Gothic Pyncheon house as a repository of the family secrets, see: Gollin (152).

²⁷² Hawthorne uses a heart figure, at least twice, to describe the inner house (Gables: 294, 295). Shroeder agrees with Horne’s views (111).

and appears much “like hell itself”: “a place in which [. . .] ‘monsters of divers kinds’ [. . .] [can] be found on the journey through the heart. The old house, then, is a symbol of the darker realities within the Pyncheon family’s heart, and the family’s journey is yet to be completed” (Horne: 460).

In the metaphor of Judge Pyncheon as a splendid palace with a corpse lying dead beneath the marble pavement, Hawthorne merges many of the symbolic meanings of the house: heart, mind, dungeon, death. According to Jonathan Arac, this imagery is similar to the symbolism used by Freud, for whom the deceased ancestor beneath the floor would represent the repressed oedipal wish to kill one’s father: “Gothic language of underground foundations for the psyche was as congenial to Freud as it was to Hawthorne” (11).²⁷³ Hawthorne creates a historical narrative that is representative of the individual’s psychic structure: the repressed is preserved in the unconscious. The sense of something underground, repressed, is developed in historical, sociological as well as psychological terms through the house.

Morrison also emphasizes 124’s anthropomorphic features. She depicts the gothic dwelling as a living being, before she even says that it is Sethe’s habitation. As Morrison says, “A few words have to be read before it is clear that 124 refers to a house [. . .]. House was not mentioned for seventeen lines, and a few more have to be read to discover why it is spiteful, or rather the source of the spite” (1990: 228). Morrison depicts the haunted dwelling as a psychic entity: “From the opening of the work, it is apparent that 124 [. . .] can be considered a character” (Teresa Washington: online). When Denver thinks of 124 Bluestone Road, she refers to it as “a person rather than a structure. A person that wept, sighed, trembled, and fell into fits” (*Beloved*: 29). Kawash claims the “convergence of person and [the] architectural structure” of 124 in *Beloved*, which she connects to the fact that “in the American context the determination of ‘person’ is inseparable from the exclusionary definitions of racialized slavery” and, consequently, “so too do the determinations of property become intractably twined with the peculiar ‘person as property’ which is the slave” (74). 124 is full of life, which is expressed through its ghostly manifestations. Morrison’s haunted house is not only a symbol of the human psyche, it virtually becomes human, expressing feelings and moods: it is full of “venom”, “rage”, “fury”, and “grief”, acting by turns “spiteful”, “outrageous”, or “sad”, sounding by turns “loud” or “quiet” (Hayes: online). Cuder argues that “since the building is the site of ESP phenomena, it exhibits human traits and modes of behaviour it could not possibly have otherwise: it commits insults against its owners, it shakes, it looks back at them, etc” (35).

²⁷³ Millington also associates Judge Pyncheon’s metaphor with the condition of the self and connects it to the comparison between the Pyncheon mansion and the human heart (1992: 128-129).

Morrison “names” her house, 124, and tries to personalize and humanize it: “The house number, representing the building metonymically, acquires a life of its own” (Weissberg: 108). Morrison herself explains its significance:

Beginning *Beloved* with numerals rather than spelled out numbers, it was my intention to give the house an identity separate from the street or even the city; to name it the way “Sweet Home” was named; the way plantations were named, but not with nouns or “proper” names—with numbers instead because numbers have no adjectives, no posture of coziness or grandeur or the haughty yearning of arrivistes and estate builders for the parallel beautifications of the nation they left behind, laying claim to instant history and legend. Numbers here constitute an address, a thrilling enough prospect for slaves who had owned nothing, least of all an address. And although the numbers, unlike words, can have no modifiers, I give these an adjective—spiteful (There are three others). The address is therefore personalized, but personalized by its own activity, not the pasted on desire for personality. (1990: 228)

As the house is the embodiment of the spirit of Sethe’s murdered daughter, its number may stand for the infant. The missing “3” might symbolize the absence of the dead baby, who has become a ghost.²⁷⁴

2.2.5. The Pyncheon House and 124 after the Crime

A crime transforms both the Pyncheon mansion and 124 into Gothic dwellings. In *Seven Gables* the primal crime is Colonel Pyncheon’s false accusation of witchcraft in order to acquire Maule’s property. The new mansion he builds on the plebeian’s plot is haunted from the very beginning as a result of the wizard’s malediction. Thus it becomes the emblem of Colonel Pyncheon’s contempt for the commoner’s rights and the unethical use of the law at the service of the privileged classes. Both Colonel Pyncheon, who abuses his political influence, and the whole society, which did not accept the marginal figure of Maule, share the responsibility for the wrong done to the wizard. Colonel Pyncheon’s offspring inherit their ancestor’s guilt since they fail to rectify the inequity inflicted on the Maules. The curse, whose polluting influence affects the old mansion from its foundation, is on the roots of the ensuing family crimes.

On the other hand, as Jesser points out, the transformation of 124 from a community center into a haunted house is the result of two events: the whites’ encroachment of the women’s sphere and the disruption of the black community’s solidarity (online). The community fails to warn Sethe of Schoolteacher’s arrival and then her yard is assaulted by slavery’s institutional forces. The fence is “pulled down” by the whites who “yanked up the posts and smashed the gate leaving 124 desolate

²⁷⁴ There are other possible meanings for the house number: Sonser argues that it “suggests a missing link [. . .] Sethe’s family must create, find, and restore” (127); Parker points out that 124 is the exact number of years between the abolition of slavery (1863) and the date of the novel’s publication (1987) (online); Teresa Washington writes that the number three often indicates spiritual unity and that “The number 124 is the numerological equivalent of seven”, which has a symbolical meaning in African cultures (online).

and exposed at the very hour when everybody stopped dropping by” (*Beloved*: 163). Baby Suggs learns that the yard is no protection against the slave owner’s rule. For the old black woman the fact that the whites could “come into the yard at will is a devastating one [. . .]” since, even if she had restructured the space rented to her, “As long as white people set the limits, African American attempts to transform their houses, their communities, and their minds into safe, open spaces remain subject to a reassertion of the narrative of slavery” (Jesser: online). Schoolteacher’s violent incursion has terrible consequences. Sethe commits her unspeakable act and the house becomes a haunted and ostracized place.

After Schoolteacher invades Baby Suggs’s house to take back his slaves, “124 is transformed from the vibrant, ‘buzzing’ nexus of the community into a house isolated from the outside and constricted from the inside [. . .]. 124 is hurled out of time to become a fixed, timeless world trapped on the border of death” (Jesser: online). 124 changes into a tormented and isolated place, the repository of its inhabitants’ terrible memories of slavery. The lack of restrictions and the welcoming nature that made 124 a communal center, are reversed by this apocalyptic moment (Jesser: online). Sethe’s habitation comes to be the haunted gothic building which conceals a terrible family secret, infanticide: “The imposing house with a terrible secret is one—possibly *the*—‘central’ characteristic of the category ‘Gothic’” (Anne Williams: 39). Like the Pyncheon mansion which hides the primal crime and the subsequent violent deaths in the family, 124 conceals the crawling baby’s murder and with it all those crimes blacks committed as a consequence of slavery. Until that moment, for both Sethe and Baby Suggs, their household has stood for freedom, as the opposite of Sweet Home. However, neither of the two women can accomplish her dreams of a new life for her family.

The white patriarchal society imposes its rule on the female domain. It is after the crime that the old black woman and her family realize that 124 has always been haunted by the ownership of the white patriarchy: “both by Edward Bodwin’s literal ownership and the broader political ownership that allowed the men to invade her home in the name of the law” (Askeland: 172). Baby Suggs’s house is still controlled by the patriarchal law, since the Fugitive Slave Act gives Schoolteacher the legal right to enter 124 at will to seize, repossess, and remove “his property” (Hayes: online).²⁷⁵ On the other hand, the ruined Pyncheon mansion has, from the very beginning, been ruled by the tyrannical male figures of the family, who are reincarnated intermittently throughout its history. At the present moment of the story, Judge Pyncheon, who does

²⁷⁵ Jesser says that “places in *Beloved* are made hard discursively and architecturally, marked off by the law, by walls, or by armed guards. They can also be open or be made open: fluid, dynamic, and partially or temporarily invisible to the law” (online).

not live in the house, becomes an external threatening force for his weak relatives, Hepzibah and Clifford, who inhabit the house.

When *Beloved* starts, 124 is already a gothic dwelling which has been haunted by the ghost of the murdered baby for eighteen years. Morrison comments that the beginning of the gothic romance is very abrupt so as to suggest that “something is beyond control” in 124. Thus the reader feels

Snatched just as the slaves were from one place to another, from any place to another, without preparation and without defense. No lobby, no door, no entrance—a gangplank, perhaps (but a very short one). And the house into which this snatching—this kidnapping—propels one, changes from spiteful to loud to quiet, as the sounds in the body of the ship itself may have changed. (1990: 228-229)

124 is occupied territory, the embodiment of pain and unexpressed guilt: “124 was spiteful. Full of a baby’s venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children” (*Beloved*: 3). Baby Suggs comments that its possession is not unusual, since many of the houses inhabited by blacks were peopled by ghosts. According to the old black woman, Sethe’s dwelling is “Suspended between the nastiness of life and the meanness of the dead” (*Beloved*: 3-4). 124 is on the borderline of life and death.

On the other hand, as the narrator tells us, since the Gothic house of the Pyncheons is symbolically built over the wizard’s restless grave, Mathew Maule’s ghost becomes its rightful haunter. Despite this ghostly menace, Colonel Pyncheon decides to follow his original design and lays the foundations of his mansion on the accursed site. The first consequence of the malediction seems to be the pollution of the spring of water, which made Maule’s spot so desirable. Then the very day Colonel Pyncheon was going to receive the “aristocracy” of the town, he was found dead and, according to rumors, someone among the guests said loudly Matthew Maule’s words: “God had given him blood to drink!”. From that moment on similar deaths in the family will be claimed to be the result of the curse and the ghosts of the past come back to haunt the living. At the present moment of the story the gothic Pyncheon mansion is inhabited by the spirits of the departed members of the family. Like *Seven Gables*, 124 is a site for the troubling past, wholly absorbed by it and inhabited by a specter that drains all the energy of its inhabitants: “The past lives in the house, haunts it, and shields itself from being unwritten, re-written or forgotten” (Jesser: online).

2.2.6. The House as a Symbolic Space

Both the Pyncheon mansion and 124, as gothic dwellings, are symbolic spaces with a strong metaphorical nature. In *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* the haunted habitation is a major metaphor with many different layers of meanings, which connect with the other important themes of the romance. As Hayes says about *Beloved*, “the

houses in African American women's literature are often palimpsests of all four kinds of space—architectural, geographic, psychic, and communal—and thus they are multilayered signifiers” (online).

Like the letter A in *The Scarlet Letter*, the abode of the Pyncheons is a very complex symbol in which all the metaphors of the narrative are embroiled.²⁷⁶ Even though its implications are numerous, there are three main aspects: social, historical and psychological. Socially, it is a reflection of the family and the patriarchal society of western civilization. The Pyncheon abode “seems to symbolize the whole life of the Pyncheon family, from the grim colonel, who built it, to that delicate Alice [. . .]” (Whipple: 360). Historically, it is associated with the history of the Pyncheon family, the transformation from an aristocratic to a democratic society and, in extension, to the history of America.²⁷⁷ The structure of the old mansion “is marked, haunted by ‘history’—the events of its own development [. . .]. That the house embodies the family history reminds us that the word “house” has two meanings relevant to Gothic fictions—it refers both to the building itself and to the family line” (Anne Williams: 45).²⁷⁸ Haunted castles or houses are related to particular families and Gothic plots narrate their histories.

On the other hand, 124 Bluestone Road also has strong symbolic implications. Historically, 124 cannot symbolize the family line as the Pyncheon mansion does. However, it does represent the matrilineal history of the family since Baby Suggs's liberation. Besides, as Samira Kawash claims, “we might understand a history of racial division and violence to be embedded in the very structure of the house itself” (74). Socially, like the Pyncheon house, it stands for the white male's tyrannical domination in the domestic sphere. As Arthur C. Danto says, “the house speaks to us precisely as the symbol of rulership, ownership, mastery, power” (qtd. in Askeland: 160). It not only symbolizes the patriarchal power structure of the society of the moment, but the tenant being a black woman, it stands for the white man's control over blacks, the haunting of slavery. Kawash believes that “American literature frequently figures the nation as a house haunted by the national shame or repressed trauma of slavery” (70). Mr.

²⁷⁶ Wayne Caldwell believes that the old house has the same emblematic nature as the letter A and he adds that the mansion is “the only element completely expanded into symbol” (36). Other critics emphasize the metaphorical nature of the Pyncheon house: Richard H. Fogle (1969: 111), Horne (460), Punter (174) and Gray (96). They have demonstrated Spenser's influence on Hawthorne, as far as the use of allegory is concerned, in the depiction of characters, situations and symbolic objects. See: Randall Stewart (1933: 196-206) and H. Arlin Turner (1936). “Hawthorne's Literary Borrowings”. *PMLA*, LI: 543-562.

²⁷⁷ For Wayne Caldwell the symbolism of the ruined building derives from the three major themes of the novel: antitheses between democratic and aristocratic, between psychological isolation and psychological non-isolation; and between appearance and reality (36).

²⁷⁸ According to Anne Williams, this connection is also clear in other important houses, such as Manfred's castle in *Otranto*, Poe's House of Usher and the houses in *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca* (45).

Bodwin's covert proprietorship and the white man's ownership exerted through the Fugitive Slave Act haunts 124. Even if Baby Suggs has remodeled her house, thus becoming apparently the owner of her place, the one who has power to lay down the rules of her communal center; the white men's invasion makes her realize that "not even a claim to one's self is a given in a society that justifies slavery" (Askeland: 172). Thus 124 stands for the vulnerability of the female, especially the black female, in the domestic domain. As in *Seven Gables*, it also symbolizes the disintegration of the family as a consequence of white patriarchy.

Socially, 124 is contrasted to the other habitations in *Beloved*, Sweet Home and Mr. Bodwin's house. The conventional plantation myth that Sweet Home presents connects the story with two of the essential themes of the Gothic romance, the patriarchal family and its colonial past. Sweet Home is a model Victorian house (Askeland: 165). As a farm for slaves, its name seems ironic for, as Paul D says very early in the novel, "It wasn't sweet and it sure wasn't home" (*Beloved*: 14), especially after Mr. Garner's death. It stands for slavery, even if of a mild sort, since slaves are not treated brutally and they are allowed to think of themselves as men and women. Under Mr. Garner, Sweet Home becomes an Edenic world for blacks: "An important site in *Beloved* presenting the multivalent symbolism inherent in the Eden myth is Sweet Home. This place that has seemed to the male slaves a virtual sanctuary—a prelapsarian world in contrast to other plantations" (Weathers: online). However, this is just a lie: slaves "were only Sweet Home men at Sweet Home", "One step off that ground and they were trespassers among the human race" (*Beloved*: 125). Blacks' mild treatment in Sweet Home is only a parody of freedom; since, it keeps among others the defining trait of slavery, blacks' movements are restricted. Mr. Garner's benign rule does not change the essential fact that blacks do not belong to themselves, but to a slaveholder. Mildness is among Mr. Garner's god-like prerogatives in the Edenic world of his plantation.²⁷⁹ The basic contradiction of a humane slavery is exposed after Mr. Garner's death. With Schoolteacher's arrival, the outside rules of enslavement are enforced in Sweet Home. The plantation becomes a living hell for Sethe and all the male slaves living there. In *Beloved* Morrison highlights that even though 124 is one step forward in the liberation of blacks, it is still under the white male's control.

²⁷⁹ In *Tar Baby* Morrison also deals with this theme. Like Mr. Garner, the benevolent white master, Valerian, is the paternal authority that controls and determines what both black and white members of the Street family do. As in *Seven Gables*, the Garner and the Street family evoke the American colonial past with its stratified society of white owners, black servants and poor workers. In the myth of the plantation, under Mr. Garner or Valerian's benevolent mask, the basic slave-system principles still rule the black servants' lives.

On the other hand, Mr. Bodwin's suburban house, unlike 124, is located in a white neighborhood protected from all invasion (*Beloved*: 143). The patriarchal house of the white man—even if he is an abolitionist—enforces racial prejudices: the black people who come into the house use the back door where the kitchen is, while the whites use the front door. In the Pyncheons' abode, racial and social distinctions are also kept: Mathew Maule, the carpenter, has to get into the old mansion through the back door where the black servant receives him.

According to Marilyn R. Chandler, 124 provides *Beloved* with “a unifying symbolic structure that represents and defines the relationships of the central characters to one another, to themselves, and to the rest of the world” (qtd. in Hayes: online). This is especially true of Denver because, despite the fact that she did not live slavery, she has a spiritual connection with her sister: she drank her blood when she was a baby. It is Denver who depicts the house as a person rather than a structure. 124 is her only company and she misses the spirit that haunts it when Paul D exorcises it.

Likewise, through all his symbolic machinery, Hawthorne establishes a psychological bond between the dwellers and the house, which he takes to its ultimate consequences by means of the master trope of synecdoche: “the human-house is the central character and [. . .] the people represent the parts of the whole house” (Beebe: 14). Thus, as in Gothic fiction, there is a correspondence, mutual influence and unbreakable link between the house and its occupants in *Seven Gables*: “The house, itself old and haunted, permeates the minds of its aging inhabitants” (*Gables*: 152).²⁸⁰ The mansion reflects the nature of its inhabitants as well as their experiences within it. As Edwin P. Whipple says: “To inhabit the house is to breathe the Pyncheon soul and assimilate the Pyncheon individuality” (qtd. in Arac: 6). The interrelation between the house and its inhabitants is everywhere, as we can see in their depictions, their behavior and, in general, their whole lives.²⁸¹ According to Richard Gray:

The characters belong to it, in the sense that they and the emblems accompanying them are defined by it, and to the extent that what happens to them is literally or figuratively a product of their being there in that particular place [. . .] it is the house that gives them—the characters—identity, imaginative shape and the scope for

²⁸⁰ Arac claims that “The consistent link in Gothic fiction between character and architecture [. . .] could be the 1830's blend with scientific concepts”. He connects the terms “milieu” and “environment” with the theories of “atmospheric influence”, which explained scientifically microcosmic relations of part and whole. For more information, see: Leo Spitzer (1942). “*Milieu and Ambiance*”. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* III, I- 42: 169-218 and (1962) “A Reinterpretation of ‘*The Fall of the House of Usher*’”. *Essays on English and American Literature*. Princeton: 51-66.

²⁸¹ Fogle argues that “family and house are interchangeable” (1952: 162); Arac says that Hawthorne uses the relations between the house and its inhabitants “as an idiom for historical and psychological speculation and analysis” (14-15). Maurice Beebe connects the number seven with the attachment between the Pyncheons and their habitation (7-8). For more information about this aspect, see: Leland Schubert (1944). *Hawthorne the Artist: Fine-Art Devices in Fiction*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 35-36.

action: which, of course, is just another way of saying that the house is an analogue of the book. (99)

Hepzibah has dwelt so long alone in the old mansion that she experiences a sort of symbiosis with it: "her brain was impregnated with the dry-rot of its timbers" (Gables: 59). The house haunts her visions. During her brief flight with Clifford, while the train passes through "miles of varied scenery", she sees that "This one old house was everywhere! It transported its great, lumbering bulk, with more than railroad speed, and set itself phlegmatically down on whatever spot she glanced at" (Gables: 258). Clifford is also an intrinsic part of the house as we can see when, after his blank moments, there was "a flickering taper-gleam in his eyeballs. It betokened that his spiritual part had returned, and was doing its best to kindle the heart's household fire, and light up intellectual lamps in the dark and ruinous mansion, where it was doomed to be a forlorn inhabitant" (Gables: 105).

Phoebe is deeply influenced by the house and its inhabitants, "She absorbs the gloom of the house and with it her share of the Pyncheon fate" (Horne: 462) on her way to adulthood. However, the young girl, the sunlight of the house, belongs to the garden, the Eden that she is going to restore. Holgrave is characterized as an uninvolved spectator and, as such, he is located in a remote gable where he is separated from the surrounding world. His fate is linked to the old house. Even Judge Pyncheon's greed connects his destiny to the ruinous abode of his relatives. From the beginning, he is a reflection of his predecessor, Colonel Pyncheon. He belongs to the house where he is compelled to return: "It is especially noteworthy [. . .] how persistently the Judge, having successfully abandoned the old Pyncheon house for his dream house of a sunny country-seat, is driven back to the house he has escaped" (Kehler: 144). The Judge, as well as his tyrannical antecessors, is associated with the parlor that contains many of the Pyncheon colonial emblems. The connection between Jaffrey Pyncheon and the house is so strong that when he dies, the old mansion seems to welcome him: "A rumbling kind of a bluster roars behind the fire-board" (Gables: 277).

As in other traditional Gothic narratives, Hawthorne not only links the characters with their setting, but, as Jonathan Arac writes, also with their physical environment: "The description first evokes the metaphorical usage of 'east wind' as the bad humor that Hepzibah seem to possess, and then moves to the physical environment, the 'atmosphere' of storm, of which she becomes only a 'phase,' as it possesses her, unsexing her, making her head 'its' head an turning her turban into its clouds. She becomes the passive medium through which the weather takes over the air of the house" (8). As Arac has shown, Hawthorne was adopting a notion common in the nineteenth century and very frequent in Gothic fiction, which was later also assumed by

Freud and his followers, that: “by observation of externals one can understand the depths of unconsciousness that are not directly available to the person being observed” (8).

The Gothic depicts the character’s space as liminal, both physically and psychologically, and, as Britton claims, the threshold has been the image used to express this state.²⁸² “the personified houses in both novels determine how and when the characters can come and go. Likewise, the threshold becomes the line of demarcation between the house and the outside world, with both authors calling repeated attention to the lines of inclusion and exclusion” (12). Hepzibah emerges at the doorway of her chamber and traverses the threshold into her shop. Clifford appears similarly: first, his steps are heard in the passageway and he finally pauses at the parlor threshold when he sees Phoebe (12). Millington observes Clifford’s “liminality”: “his inability to cross the threshold of the parlor [. . .] and by the way he flickers in and out of existence” (1992: 122). Phoebe arrives at the doorstep of the mansion. Judge Pyncheon as an unwanted visitor forces his way over the threshold; figuratively, he crosses the boundary from life to death. Millington points out how “Holgrave represents life on a cultural border or threshold” in his relationship to the inhabitants of the house, oscillating between participation and observation, and in his uneasy relation to his own family history (1992: 131).

Even the minor characters participate in this sort of movement. Ned Higgins is constantly crossing the threshold of the shop in search of gingerbread cookies and Uncle Venner, as a peripheral character, has a childhood memory of times when he used to sit at the doorstep of the mansion. According to Britton, “Crossing the threshold, in either direction, frequently denotes a change in characters’ psychological state, especially their freedom of will” (12).

2.2.7. Both Houses as Gothic Female Spaces

The gothic haunted house, especially in Female Gothic fiction, is always associated with entrapment for the woman, since, as Anne Williams argues, it has the power to evoke certain feelings, such as claustrophobia, loneliness (39). Like the Pyncheon mansion is for Hepzibah and Clifford, 124 means seclusion and isolation for its female inhabitants. In *Beloved* the true “captive” is Denver, who cannot leave the house until the end of the novel. On the other hand, Sethe keeps, for a part of the story, a weak link to the community through her job, which she loses after Paul D’s

²⁸² Edward C. Sampton argues that the frequent use of the word ‘threshold’ signals its importance in the story (qtd. in Britton: 12). Original text quoted: Edward Sampson (1961). *The House of the Seven Gables*. New York: New American Library. Holloway has also pointed out the liminality of *Beloved*’s existence (75).

departure. Mother and daughter are trapped in the haunted house almost as much as the old couple is in theirs. In fact, Morrison's romance makes us share the characters' claustrophobic feelings: "It is *Beloved*, with its confinement of the reader to 124 Bluestone Road and its inmates' interiority, that gives us some sense of what that experience might have been like in all its claustrophobic intensity" (Grewal 1998: 101).

Many gothic writers explore the woman's role in the domestic ideology. Hawthorne connects the female and the domestic realm through Hepzibah, the old maid, and Phoebe, whose abilities to deal with the house are idealized. In *Seven Gables* the different domains of male and female are clearly separated. The true female belongs to the domestic sphere. Her position is somehow spiritual, playing the part of the angel in the house, as we can see in Phoebe. On the other hand, the true man has a more aggressive role in the masculine world of economy and power, as in Judge Pyncheon. Phoebe is a gifted shopkeeper and very skilful in household chores: "an active busy housewife who has the knack, like the good fairy, of transforming her surroundings by her presence and disposition" (Buitenhuis 1991: 96). She has what Hawthorne calls "homely witchcraft": "a kind of natural magic, that enables these favored ones to bring out the hidden capabilities of things around them; and particularly to give a look of comfort and habitableness to any place which, for however brief a period, may happen to be their home" (*Gables*: 71-72). Crews claims that Phoebe's "homely witchcraft" is "a marriage of spiritual power and tidy domesticity" (187). Upon her arrival, Phoebe replaces Hepzibah as a housewife and provider. The young woman "embodies the domestic values that the book invokes as the moral center of community life. Hawthorne makes her centrality manifest by celebrating her mastery of the domestic arts and her consequent capacity to transform the dingy Pyncheon mansion into a version of the middle-class home" (Millington 1992: 115).

In *Seven Gables* the haunted mansion symbolizes the confrontation between the domestic sphere and the marketplace. Hepzibah is forced to open the cent-shop to provide for her brother's needs. However, she "cannot be part of that masculine world of competition and production nor can she fulfill the expectations of the cult of domesticity" (Pennell 1999: 194).²⁸³ Melissa M. Pennell analyzes the great influence that the community has on old genteel poor spinsters, such as Hepzibah, who are too proud to go into trade or accept charity. They become invisible as they retreat from the communal life, hidden behind the facades of houses, which reflect the financial decline

²⁸³ For more information about the conflicts between the "old gentility" and the "cult of the true woman", see: Gilliam Brown (1990). "Women's Work and Bodies in *The House of the Seven Gables*". *Domestic Individualis: Imagining Self in the Nineteenth-Century America*. Berkeley: University of California P: 63-95 and Joel Pfister (1991). *Production of Personal Life: Class, Gender, and the Psychological in Hawthorne's Fiction*. Stanford, CA: Stanford U P.

of their families (1999: 196). On the other hand, Phoebe is as good a saleswoman as she is a housekeeper. She had had a table at a fancy-fair and made better sales than anybody. As Hepzibah says, this is a quality that the girl may have inherited on her mother's side. Given her superior talent at selling, Phoebe relieves the old gentlewoman of her tasks as a shopkeeper. The young woman suggests various methods to increase business that the old maid accepts: manufacture yeast, brew a certain kind of beer and bake some spice-cakes. Phoebe, however, represents more the domestic sphere than the marketplace.²⁸⁴ Millington states that Hawthorne makes Phoebe the occasion,

for the exploration of the cultural possibilities and values, constitutive of middle-class culture, that she stands for: the home as refuge from the marketplace; woman as exponent within that refuge of a set of values that counter the cutthroat market; sympathy and moral influence as forms of power alternative to the domination and appropriation that infect the economic sphere. (1992: 116)²⁸⁵

Like Hawthorne, Morrison highlights the strong bond between the female and the domestic realm: "It's a feminine concept—things happening in a room, a house. That's where we live, in houses. Men don't live in those houses, they really don't" (Watkins: 50). As Weissberg says, "Living in a space that is feminised, women do not only become the bearers of children but also the bearer of history through their memory, or, as Morrison calls it, rememory" (115). In fact, since Baby Suggs' arrival 124 becomes a female's domain where the old black woman is in control as Phoebe is in the old mansion. The difference lies in the fact that the old black woman redesigns the space to feminize it, while Phoebe does not. However, it is not until the crime that 124 is shaped symbolically into a "gothic" female space, which stands isolated from the community: "Houses haunted by women provide a powerful image of the house as an embodiment of female tradition" (Carpenter and Kolmar: 15-16). The Pyncheon dwelling, on the other hand, has been haunted since its foundation by different ghosts, among them Alice Pyncheon's spirit. In 124 Bluestone Road the repressed "other", the female haunted by patriarchal forces, reigns; it is actually inhabited by the ghost of

²⁸⁴ Michael T. Gilmore argues that Phoebe embodies Hawthorne's "conviction—or more precisely his hope—that it is possible to be engaged in market relations without suffering a sense of violation" (177). Millington writes that Phoebe "has preserved some of the values associated with the 'face-to-face' transactions of a small-town economy" (1992: 115). For more information about rural economic life, see: Jack Larkin (1986). "The Merriams of Brookfield: Printing in the Economy and Culture of Rural Massachusetts in the early Nineteenth Century". *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 96 (April): 39-73.

²⁸⁵ For more information about domestic ideology, see: Nancy F. Cott (1977). *The Bonds of Womanhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Barbara Welter (1979). "The Cult of True Womanhood". *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women*. Ed. Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck. New York: Simon and Schuster; Ann Douglas (1977). *The Feminization of American Culture*. New York: Knopf; Kathryn Kish Sklar (1973). *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*. New Haven: Yale University Press; and Mary P. Ryan (1981). *Cradle of the Middle Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

race: “[This house] represent[s] the African American feminine Other by re-presenting it, by giving textual (and architectural) voice to its silences, its ways of knowing and being, and its power” (Hayes: online). It hides the dark female consciousness.

When the novel starts, Sethe’s dwelling is already a haunted house of women: “For 18 and a half of the 19 years covered by the narration, 124 is occupied exclusively by mothers and children, a dozen of those years exclusively by mother and their literal or figurative daughters” (Hayes: online). Buglar and Howard have fled the house, scared by the presence of the ghost. Women are the only ones who accept the revenant and do not flee. On the other hand, in *Seven Gables*, at the present time of the story, the old mansion is inhabited by Hepzibah, the crone, and her guest, Holgrave. But soon later Clifford is released from prison and Phoebe arrives at the house. Then the old mansion becomes an almost haunted house of women, since Clifford is just another ghost and Holgrave is only a tenant.

124 Bluestone Road encloses the culturally feminine, the maternal. It is like a womb-like space, both protective and destructive. As Hayes argues, *Beloved*’s mother-daughter plot is mediated through the house. It is remarkable how heavily this text is “invested in maternity and how frequent the references to physical maternal functions” are (online). 124 is associated with the matrilineal part of the family, whose women start with Baby Suggs, the mother-in-law—already dead at the beginning of the story—, Sethe, the mother, and Denver, her daughter, the present inhabitants of 124. Elizabeth T. Hayes thinks that in the house “maternal law supercedes paternal law” (online). Unlike 124, the maternal does not seem to have an important role in *Seven Gables*. There are surrogate mothers, Hepzibah and Phoebe, who take care of Clifford, but there are no true mothers. In Hawthorne’s romance the paternal acquires stronger proportions than in Morrison’s novel. The maternal is, on the other hand, almost avoided and, consequently, the absence of the mother figure achieves relevance.

Sethe’s dwelling becomes a site of “resistance to the patriarchal logos” (Hayes: online). 124, as a female Gothic space, not only stands isolated from the community, but also refuses entrance to males. Men do not seem to be allowed into 124. Upon his arrival at Sethe’s dwelling, Paul D does not want to go into the house immediately and prefers to stay on the porch. When he finally enters, he perceives some kind of evil, the ghost haunting the house, that makes him go back to the porch again,

Paul D [. . .] followed her through the door straight into a pool of red and undulating light that locked him where he stood.
“You got company?” he whispered, frowning.
“Off and on”, said Sethe.
“Good God”. He backed out the door onto the porch. “What kind of evil you got in here?”
“It’s not evil, just sad. Come on. Just step through”. (Beloved: 8)

When Paul D arrives, he fights Sethe's dwelling which is still haunted by the ghost of patriarchy. He wishes to be the "head" of the family and protect Sethe. However, throughout the narrative he must learn to redefine his role in the family and his manhood. During his time at 124, Paul D struggles to stay, while the revenant tries to throw him out. Sethe's dwelling, personified in Beloved, induces him to move to different rooms of the house. Finally, he is driven to the storeroom and then out into a shed where he is separated from the household. This movement is involuntary: "Paul D could not command his feet" (Beloved: 126). Paul D is literally thrown out of the habitation that cannot accept him. Beloved progressively takes over the house. On the other hand, in *Seven Gables*, Hepzibah confronts the threatening male force, Judge Pyncheon, who wants to enter the house. She cannot refuse him entrance to the old mansion, where he finally finds death. However, the other male characters, Clifford and Holgrave, who are not seen as a menace, do not suffer any kind of rejection from the women living in the house.

Even though Paul D stays in the haunted house for a while, he is finally driven away, since he cannot accept Sethe's infanticide and he feels guilty of his sexual encounter with Beloved. Then "124 becomes a place where the past possesses the present, a household without domesticity or familial hierarchies" (Carden: online). Sethe's dwelling "becomes entirely the house of the Other" (Hayes: online), the female Other. 124 truly reaches the ultimate gothic expression of the guilty feminine psyche, the embodiment of women's unconscious. "The thoughts of the women of 124, unspeakable thoughts, unspoken" (Beloved: 199), their most repressed feelings and thoughts, come together in a healing ritual. Indecipherable otherworldly female voices join the voices of the dead in a ceremony of possession, symbolizing the repressed history of the black victims of slave trade to whom the book is dedicated: "124 Bluestone is haunted as much by the 'patriarchal institution' of slavery as by the ghost named Beloved" (Askeland: 166). Sethe's habitation, containing the mother and two daughters, is more than ever "a Kristevan semiotic chora, a non-verbal, nonrational, maternal magic circle" (Hayes: online).²⁸⁶

Stamp Paid witnesses the women's ritual when, after many years of absence, he attempts unsuccessfully to enter 124 after Paul D's departure. The old man, who has entered every black house in the neighborhood, cannot even knock at the door. He feels guilty for having told Paul D about the dead child's murder. Stamp Paid can hear voices coming out of Sethe's household. 124 Bluestone Road is very loud. He can feel the recognizable but undecipherable thoughts of the women of 124. He "believed [that]

²⁸⁶ "Semiotic cora" is a term Julia Kristeva uses in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia U.P., 1984.

the undecipherable language clamoring around the house was the mumbling of the black and angry dead. Very few had died in bed, like Baby Suggs, and none that he knew of, including Baby, had lived a livable life” (*Beloved*: 198). For a few days, Stamp Paid tries over and over to gain entrance to 124. When he finally knocks, nobody answers him. Like Paul D, the old black man is not welcome in the house of the Other. In fact, in part 2, both men are kept away from what is happening in the house. However, Paul D will come back later to occupy his place in the household. Even though 124 rejects both males, it does not mean that Morrison aims at an exclusively feminist approach in *Beloved*. Sharon P. Holland and Michael Awkward believe that “Morrison arrives at a notion of ritual—women’s ritual—that must take place for the community to heal and for male and female narratives to rest side by side” (54).

As Hayes points out, 124 exemplifies the African American female Other in a position of resistance to the patriarchal order. Sethe’s dwelling represents and defines the relationships of the female characters to themselves—to their own subjectivities—to the other characters, and to the patriarchal world in which they live: “Extraordinary domestic space has become radical discourse space for the named and the unnamed women” in *Beloved* (online). Askeland argues that Morrison demonstrates “how to alter irreversibly the power structure of the patriarchal home” by showing a communal center where women and men can share their stories; “where that community can learn to love anything they choose and claim themselves in the domain of that love. If they indeed accomplish this loving claim, as we are given to hope at the end of *Beloved*, then the ghosts of the patriarchy may finally cease to have power over, if not to cease haunting, the houses of women’s fiction” (176).

In *Seven Gables* Hawthorne also shows the woman confronting the patriarchal system and her role in the domestic sphere. In addition, the alternative these two authors present to the Law of the Father at the end of their novels have some similarities. Both of them propose love between man and woman as a hopeful ending and a different dynamics of the male-female relationship, which questions the domination-submission pattern predominant in patriarchy. On the other hand, despite the importance that Hawthorne gives to the community, he does not suggest anything like Morrison’s communal center.

2.2.8. What Happens to the Houses

As regards their houses, Hawthorne and Morrison give different endings to their haunting stories. Dale Bailey distinguishes between the ghost story and the haunted house story and connects them to different narrative resolutions: “In the haunted house narrative, the danger signaled by ‘haunting’ derives from the very structure of the

house. Where a ghost may be banished or exorcized from a particular locale, or laid to rest when the elements which trouble it have been resolved, the only solution to a haunted house is total destruction” (qtd. in Kawash 71).²⁸⁷ In *Beloved* when Paul D arrives at Sethe’s dwelling, the haunted house changes into a ghost: “the site of the haunting shifts from the structure of the house to the agency of the ghost” (Kawash: 72). Thus the resolution of the haunting is no longer the destruction of the house as in conventional haunted house stories, but the exorcism of the ghost. 124 stands at the conclusion, since it becomes habitable when the haunting presence leaves.

However, Morrison is ambiguous in her final pages. On one hand, the ghost seems to have vanished, as the dog’s presence at 124 hints. Nevertheless, the haunting somehow persists since, after the exorcism, a little boy, down by the stream, sees Beloved in her African guise, “a naked woman with fish for hair” (*Beloved*: 459).²⁸⁸ Remnants of *Beloved* can be seen all over 124. When Paul D enters the house after the exorcism, he finds ribbons, bows, bouquets, the brightly colored clothes, the skates. He also recognizes, hanging from a wall peg, the dress Beloved wore when he first saw her. Like the phantom dress Denver had seen embracing her mother, it resembles a human being. Beloved’s footprints come and go behind 124, down by the stream. Sometimes “the rustle of a skirt hushes when they wake, and the knuckles brushing a cheek in sleep [. . .]. Sometimes the photograph of a close friend or relative [. . .] shifts, and something more familiar than the dear face itself moves there” (*Beloved*: 275). Beloved leaves the physical world to come back to her true place, the ghostly realm. Although Beloved is forgotten, as “an unpleasant dream during a troubling sleep”, occasionally she is present in their lives proving that “the spirit [. . .] continue to affect the physical world: in the spaces between sleep and consciousness” (Holland: 55). As Sonser asserts, “like the vampire of myth, Beloved continues to disturb them in sleep, ensuring that [. . .] the traces of the disremembered and unaccounted for are reclaimed and reintegrated into a newly emerging community” (102).

This ghostly presence which still haunts 124 seems to be the product of what Abraham and Torok term “transgenerational haunting”, in which something repressed is transmitted across several generations (qtd. in Nicholls: 142).²⁸⁹ The specter of

²⁸⁷ See: Dale Bailey (1999). *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

²⁸⁸ In southern regions of Nigeria water spirits receive the general name of “*Mammywata*”, “a mythical, marine figure that bequeaths wealth, but not children, to her devotees!” (qtd. in Ogunyemi: online). For more information, see: Ogunyemi (1996). *Africa Wo/Man Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

²⁸⁹ For more information, see: Nicolas Abraham (1987). “Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud’s Metapsychology”. Trans. Nicholas Rand. *Critical Inquiry* 13 (Winter): 287-292.

slavery can never completely vanish. *Beloved* will never fade away, since she is the past that comes back to haunt black people, the embodiment of the blacks' collective unconscious: "Beloved belongs to the community of the dead, of ancestors and spirits who are constantly among us" (Holland: 49). Emma Parker believes that *Beloved* "is an ancestral spirit, the spirit of the memory of her African ancestors, rather than simply the ghost of Sethe's daughter" (online).²⁹⁰ In *Beloved*, Morrison recovers the living demonic woman in Gothic fiction who "returns again and again, defying the laws of God and Man, leaving behind haunting images of beauty and power beyond the reach of social constructs once considered immutable. In her flickering image, Gothic narrative finds a subversive and, therefore, most discomfiting reflection" (Louis Gross: 52).

Nor does the haunted house collapse at the end of *Seven Gables* as the House of Usher does. The abode of Clifford and Hepzibah's forefathers stands. The Pyncheon mansion will guard the curse and the death that have pervaded it for generations. It stands as either as a remembrance of the Pyncheons and Maules' sad past or as a sort of warning to the descendants not to make the same mistakes again. Hawthorne seems to emphasize that the process of retribution started with the Judge's death can only be completed with the removal from the house where the wrong was inflicted. However, even though Hawthorne conveys disquietude about old mansions; as Kehler has pointed out, he also expresses concerns about modern buildings when, at the beginning of the story, he talks about the street where the old mansion stands "the old edifice was surrounded by habitations of modern date, they were mostly small, built entirely of wood, and typical of the most plodding uniformity of common life. Doubtless, however, the whole story of human existence may be latent in each of them, but with no picturesqueness, externally, that can attract the imagination or sympathy to seek it there" (*Gables*: 26-27). Kehler believes that Hawthorne considers America "a *homeless* society, and this fact makes the location and meaning of 'home,' as a concept, a concern of national as well as individual importance" (147). According to Kehler, with the new, democratic order, however, arises a completely new problem. Now that the old Colonial "American House" of European ancestry, no longer an acceptable model in the New World, has been "torn down", a new one must be built to replace it. Yet the new houses, so "plodding" in their "uniformity", reflect no sense of identity and there is no desire to return to the pastoral simplicity of Maule's hut: "Where is the new order to live? Where is the American House to be relocated? And what sort of House is it to be?" (147)

²⁹⁰ Linda Krumholz thinks that "Beloved stands as a contradictory image, both as the African ancestor, the beautiful African mother, and as the all-consuming devil-child" which Morrison resurrects so as she "—and the novel—will live on to haunt us" (1999: 116).

Hawthorne seems to propose a sort of rural retreat, the countryside house built by Jaffrey Pyncheon, “which is not weighted with the crimes and sorrows of the past” (Horne: 465). By shifting dwelling, Hawthorne suggests the withdrawal of the past and the chance for renewal, since “All in all, the House of the Seven Gables is an emblem of the unregenerate heart of man, full of envy, wrath, pride, lust, and the other deadly sins; this is why the other characters are so happy to escape from it at the end of the tale” (Buitenhuis 1991: 104). Departure from the house allows the old couple to be finally released from the curse of the Pyncheons: “Hepzibah and Clifford can go in peace to the Judge’s country house—the third house—marking the third stage of the family’s moral journey” (Horne: 465).

The Pyncheons and the Maules will be able to have a fresh start at the new residence: “This house, in which Pyncheon and Maule are united, comes as close as possible in earthly life to finding the perfection and ‘eternal beauty’ at the depths of the heart. But it is still not totally realizable” (Horne: 465). In accordance to the party of Hope, this wooden habitation belongs to the houses of democracy, since it can be much more easily destroyed and renewed. It will not last as much as the old mansion and, consequently, it will not be polluted by past crimes and secrets: “The new house will be built of wood. No family can build for its heirs; each generation must construct its own house [. . .]. The young couple who thus resolve in their love the age-old conflict of Pyncheon and Maule, move from the ancient house to a less permanent structure of wood, strong enough to last for one generation only” (McPherson: 28, 135). Through the symbol of the house Morrison emphasizes the need to confront the past that haunts its inhabitants and the impossibility of doing away with it. On the other hand, Hawthorne suggests a change from colonialism to a more democratic society, of which the new habitation seems to become the model.

CHAPTER 3

Family Romance and Gothic Self. Gothic Portraits

3.1. The Gothic Patriarchal Family.

Otranto's best claim to 'novelty' (in several senses of the word) lies in Walpole's grafting—or perhaps fusing—a dynastic, a family plot onto the Gothic atmosphere and setting already familiar in other modes. Perhaps equally important, he published it in the new private space that "the novel" offered its readers. Thus he generated the possibility of a narrative operating within the rules that govern the patriarchal family, and by extension, government and the Church, and yet at the same time threaten their destruction. Within the confining walls of those interlocking and interdependent structures, he invited his readers to contemplate the dark Others of their culture and of their selves.

ANNE WILLIAMS, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*.

The importance of the family in the Gothic leads Anne Williams to consider it an ordering principle for the gothic narrative: "the Gothic myth itself is the patriarchal family" (87). As Eve K. Sedgwick notes, "certain features of the Oedipal are consistently foregrounded" in the Gothic genre (qtd. in Anne Williams: 22).²⁹¹ Anne Williams argues that the haunted house is its "embodiment" and reflects "its dynamics". The "family structure" and its power relations substantially generate the Gothic plot: "Gothic plots are family plots; Gothic romance is a family romance" (22-23). The Gothic evinces the anxieties and imbalances at the core of the traditional family; the nuclear family is structurally problematic and the gothic form exposes its shortcomings (Chapman: 189, 190). Under its structure unspeakable crimes are hidden. Jodey Castricano argues that it seems that "'taboo,' 'horror,' 'transgression,' and 'guilt' are all grounded in terms of the family," which she considers as an "oedipalized territory" (as

²⁹¹ Original text quoted: Eve K. Sedgwick (1985). *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press: 91.

well as the Church, School, Nation, and Party) and a stronghold of identity (207). According to Elizabeth MacAndrew, in *The Castle of Otranto*, “the problem of evil is already presented as a psychological problem created in the ambience of the family” (qtd. in Chapman: 189).²⁹²

In the Gothic the dynamics between “male” and “female” are expressed in terms of the dysfunctional patriarchal family. Anne Williams states that “the Gothic conventions that emerged toward the end of the eighteenth century are crucially concerned with exploring the “rules” of patriarchy, such as the relative powers and qualities of the masculine and feminine and the interrelated and mutually supportive social structures like the family, the monarchy, and the church [. . .] (35). The Gothic reflects the violent tension between domination and submission or subordination which informs the family unit, frequently linked to the male-female relationship. The erotics of domination that prevails in the family structure generates violence and madness. Consequently, the household cannot be a safe place for women.

The Gothic reflects the domestic violence of which females are usually the victims. Talking about Edith Wharton’s fiction, Kathy A. Fedorko says, “hidden within social structures—families, friendships, marriages—are ugly secrets [. . .] that traditional society and the traditional home, with their traditional roles, are dangerous places for women. Female exuberance, ambition, and eroticism are suspect and therefore constrained. Women are made ill and ghostly because of their suppression (81). *The Castle of Otranto*, the primal gothic romance, and Gothic fiction since then give family violence and the feminine extreme predominance. Walpole’s novel focuses, as Valdine Clemens points out, on the ills arising from the tyrannical subjugation of women (40). Clemens believes that the atmosphere of terror and psychic turmoil of this romance arises from familial abuse: “Manfred’s tyrannical exercise of his sexual impulses and Hippolita’s unquestioning subservience to him suggest a critique of patriarchal power in *Otranto* that accords with recent feminist analyses of sexual politics” (37).

Both Hawthorne and Morrison focus on the theme of the patriarchal family. However, following the Female Gothic tradition, which is usually insistently domestic and especially concerned about the family and home; Morrison emphasizes mostly motherhood. On the other hand, as in Female ghost tales and novels, in *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne explores a typical feminine theme, spinsterhood.²⁹³ In Hawthorne’s

²⁹² Original text quoted: Elizabeth MacAndrew (1979). *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*. New York: Columbia UP.

²⁹³ In the nineteenth century, to be a spinster meant not to be a full woman or even to become an outcast. Women were only considered as completely fulfilled when they married and had children. Female writers delve into the theme of spinsterhood in their ghost stories, such as Edith Wharton’s “Miss Mary Pask”.

romance the consequence of the patriarchal family is the transgression of the boundaries of sexuality: the symbolic brother-sister incest and Clifford's ambiguous sexual identity. In *BeLoved* Morrison also deals with abnormal sexuality in the midst of the family unit: the revenant's lesbian and incestuous relationship with her mother and with her surrogate father. Both Hawthorne and Morrison use their stories to elaborate not only a familial, but also a national metaphor. They meditate on life in America and the meaning of national identity through the institution of the family. As Gothic fiction makes clear, through the family, the individual establishes his/her historical and social bonds. The family and the self are reflections and the center of the colonial history and society. Jonathan Arac says: "The enduring physical establishment of the house forms an interface between the family and history, just as the institution of the family joins the individual and society" (7).

Hawthorne gives a remarkable role to the family. He explores the values of the middle-class culture and the concept of home as a retreat from the marketplace. Hawthorne proposes a home-centered system, based on ethical and moral human relationships, as a social alternative unit to the one founded on economic principles. As Steven Mintz explains "during the Victorian era, the family represented the most important symbol of stability and continuity, the only embodiment of a tangible past in a period of rampant change and self-seeking individualism" (qtd. in Pennell 1999: 192).²⁹⁴ *Seven Gables* portrays Gothic anxieties about the American "aristocratic" family, which is in crisis: "The home [appears] as a frightening realm where desire is, as Foucault claimed, both repressed and determined by the law" (Chapman: 198). Its critical situation has historical and social sources: "The House of the Pyncheons develops Gothic motifs with which to explore psychology in the social context and historical depth of the family" (Arac: 11-12).

Hawthorne reflects the dynamics of power that rules the Pyncheon family. Clark Griffith analyzes how the Pyncheons' personality has assumed two different types over the years according to their dominant or submissive inclinations. Old Colonel Pyncheon, founder of the line, typifies one of these groups: "He was a man of 'iron energy,' a schemer endowed with common sense 'as massive and hard as blocks of granite'" (383). Some of his progeny, such as Judge Pyncheon, his ancestor's replica, have inherited these traits. For Griffith these characters are related to terms he calls "substance words", such as *iron, energy, massive, hard, granite, stable, stately*, which connote strength and vitality. On the other hand, Hephzibah and Clifford, who lack the strength characterizing some of their progenitors, belong to the group of the Pyncheon

²⁹⁴ Original text quoted: Steven Mintz (1983). *Prison of Expectations: The Family in Victorian Culture*. New York: New York UP.

family's weak members: "They tend to be ineffectual weaklings, 'sluggish and dependent,' given to vagaries of thought and action. Unfitted for a life of practical affairs, they brood endlessly over the past" (384). They are associated with terms Griffith calls "shadow words", for instance *sluggishness, mouldy, faded, dead, impalpable, delusion, shadowy*, which suggest weakness, decay or the insubstantial (384).

On the other hand, Morrison highlights the importance of the family in the black community. Black women writers frequently address the disruption of the mother-child relationship, the instability of the black couple and the heroine's efforts to reconstruct the family bonds that had been broken under slavery. According to Eugene Genovese, they usually subvert the paternalistic vision of the slave system, in which white slave owners were like "authoritarian fathers who resided over an extended and subservient family, white and black" (qtd. in Dearborn: 136).²⁹⁵ Morrison depicts how this unnatural patriarchal family makes pseudo-children of blacks, who have no identity or rights. They are not allowed to marry or have a family of their own. Like cattle they are raised to work. This artificial gothic family centers on the white slave master's supremacy: "While treating slaves as invisible spirits, American plantation homes—like 'Sweet Home'—are described as Gothic settings that feature slaves as invisible Blacks. Ghosts, therefore, do not signify the limitations of a white man's power, but a social order that relies on their presence" (Weissberg: 116). First, at Sweet Home, Mr. Garner imposes a benign patriarchy, but he is still the god-like master whose power cannot be defied and expresses it by disposing of his blacks' lives at his will. After his death, the patriarchal figure is Schoolteacher, who exercises his tyrannical rule upon the slaves.

In the aftermath of slavery, the black family still evinces the problematized power system of the western patriarchal society. At the beginning of *Beloved*, the family living at 124 is only made of women: Sethe and Denver. The men of the family are missing: Beloved's father, Halle, broken by his wife's "milk rape", did not make it to 124, and her brothers escaped. Paul D is somehow presented as a threatening paternal presence. After his arrival at 124, he takes possession of the place by exorcising the baby ghost who haunts the house. He becomes a sort of protector of the vulnerable women, Sethe and Denver, and manages to overcome the young woman's rejection. For a little while, they almost become a family. However, its transient unity is soon disintegrated by the revenant's appearance. Then, neither Denver nor Beloved accepts Paul D or his possible paternal role in the household. He cannot be the patriarch of Sethe's family.

²⁹⁵ Original text quoted: Eugene D. Genovese (1974). *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World of Slaves Made*. New York: Pantheon.

African American Gothic focuses on the disintegration of the family as a result of slavery, which destroys the bonds between woman and man and later with their offspring. Contrary to the mistrust of matrimony that white female writers expressed in their gothic novels, Morrison depicts Sethe's longing for a wedding dress and a ceremony to dignify her relationship with Halle. She wishes symbolically to confer on them a status of family in contrast to the simple mating of animals. A slave cannot get married, since marriage is the union of two free human beings. As chattel blacks can only mate to reproduce. Just after Sethe has chosen Halle among the black slaves at Sweet Home, she decides to ask Mrs. Garner about the wedding celebration. The white mistress treats her as an innocent girl, since everybody knows that slaves cannot marry. Mrs. Garner just tells her, "You are one sweet girl" (Beloved: 26). Sethe has never seen a nuptial rite, but she has heard the white mistress talking about hers and she cannot accept not getting married. She knows that their union will not be legally or religiously sanctified; however, she decides that there should be some kind of ceremony. For her it is not right just to move into Halle's house.

Sethe, who is only fourteen, resolves that at least she will have a dress for her 'wedding' and not the sacking she usually wears. So she starts stealing fabric from different places and sewing a dress on the sly. Sethe knows that she will have to take all the pieces apart and put them back where they belonged. Her bridal garment becomes "the worst-looking gown you could imagine" (Beloved: 59), but she is proud of it. Halle is waiting until she finishes it. For their honeymoon they go to the cornfield holding hands. The following day Mrs. Garner, who might feel guilt, gives the black slave a pair of crystal earrings, which Sethe will never wear until she is free. Once married, Halle was more like a brother than a husband since calling her "wife" means laying claim and he cannot, since they are slaves. Their life is not that of an ordinary married couple. They hardly see each other because Halle also works on Sunday afternoons, "the debt work he owed for his mother" (Beloved: 26). Except for the Sunday morning, the rest of the time, the married couple have to speak, touch or eat in darkness.

The effects of enslavement on the family unit are horrifying. First, the concept of mother changes, since under slavery blacks are regarded as animals and exploited economically. The black woman slave becomes a breeder, whose infant children can be sold away and make the white owner more profit. She represents a valuable chattel for slaveholders because she can both reproduce and work. Barbara Omolade thinks that the black female slave is "a fragmented commodity":

Her head and her heart were separated from her back and her hands and divided from her womb and vagina. Her back and muscle were pressed into field labor

where she was forced to work with men and work like men. Her hands were demanded to nurse and nurture the white man and his family [. . .]. Her vagina, used for his sexual pleasure, was the gateway to the womb, which was his place of capital investment—being the sex act and the resulting child the accumulated surplus, worth money on the slave market.

The totalitarian system of slavery extended itself into the very place that was inviolable and sacred to both African and European societies—the sanctity of the woman's body and motherhood within the institution of marriage. (qtd. in Keenan: 124-125)²⁹⁶

According to Bouson, to justify their sexual and economic exploitation in the institution of slavery, black women were associated with illicit sexuality and considered libidinous creatures. They were stereotyped using images of Jezebel and Mammy, whose excessive fleshly appetites seemed to explain their increased fertility:²⁹⁷

In examining in *Beloved* the economic and sexual exploitation of slave women and the shaming racist constructions of slave women as hyperembodied and hypersexualized, Morrison reflects the recent endeavors in the developing scholarly study of black women's history to challenge the "old image" of the slave woman as "collaborator with white oppression" and to show that the slave woman was "doubly oppressed in that both her productive and reproductive capacities were used and abused". (93)

Slavery sunders the mother-child tie, since female slaves are forced to work in the field. Meanwhile other black women "wet nurse" white babies and after them, they feed the other black women's babies. Sethe's mother could not nurse her and Nan, the crippled black female, had to do it instead. Morrison enhances "the materialization of the fundamental perversity of the institution which kills the slaves' selves by severing the bonds between mother and child" (Bonnet: online). In *Beloved* a dominant theme is the blacks' inability to unfold their own identities as a result of proper nurture-deprivation. As Holden-Kirwan says, "The slave mother's absence greatly impairs the development of the child's subjectivity" (online). Barbara Schapiro argues that,

If from the earliest years on, one's fundamental need to be recognized and affirmed as a human subject is denied, that need can take fantastic and destructive proportions in the inner world: the intense hunger, the fantasized fear of either being swallowed or exploding, can tyrannize one's life even when one is freed from the external bonds of oppression. (qtd. in Holden-Kirwan: online)²⁹⁸

Blacks cannot have a proper family, since, as property, they do not have any right to be raised or grow up with their kin. Nan was more of a mother to Sethe than her own, since she nursed her. Her name is the only thing her family left to her. On the

²⁹⁶ Original text quoted: Barbara Omolade (1984). "Hearts of Darkness". *Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*. Eds. A. Snitow, C. Stansell, and S. Thompson. London: Virago.

²⁹⁷ Sondra O'Neale has traced the devaluation of black women, who, "through the use of thoroughly pejorative connotations in literature and art created to accommodate the emerging slave trade, [. . .] were presented in societal media as icons of evil [. . .] [they] became a symbol of sexual excess in the white mind" (qtd. in Ochoa: online). Original text quoted: Sondra O'Neale (1986). "Inhibiting Midwives, Usurping Creators: The Struggling Emergence of Black Women in American Fiction". *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*. Ed. Teresa DeLauretis. Bloomington: Indiana UP: 139-156.

²⁹⁸ Original text quoted: Barbara Schapiro (1991). "The Bonds of Love and the Boundaries of Self in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*". *Contemporary Literature* 32.2: 194-209.

other hand, Sethe tends Mrs. Garner as if she were her daughter, but the white woman looks at her ultimately as chattel. The feelings related to family and motherhood are constantly foiled by slavery. In *Beloved* slaveholders' common practice of separating black families is associated with the image of clouds of gunsmoke. When blacks were caught in Africa, whites used their guns. One of *Beloved's* most terrible memories is family rupture in their native land. She recalls trying to help Sethe while she was picking flowers, but the clouds got in the way, "noisy clouds of smoke" (*Beloved*: 214). As Rachel Lee states, "Morrison implies how historical realities perpetuate a system that precludes intimate contact" (online). Denying love and family bonds, the system of slavery dramatically tramples upon blacks' humanity.

Baby Suggs has lost all her children except for Halle, her youngest, whom "she barely glanced at when he was born because it wasn't worth the trouble to try to learn features you would never see change into adulthood anyway" (*Beloved*: 139). Being a slave, the old black woman has never thought that she could have a family of her own. She starts thinking of gathering her children, for the first time, when she is free. Baby believes that it might be possible for her to find them, but after two years of fruitless attempts, she gives up. Despite that, the black community considers that she is lucky to have at least her daughter-in-law and her grandchildren with her, since many blacks have lost all their relatives. Sethe's own family is destroyed too. She loses her little crawling girl when trying to save her children from slavery. Later, her sons escape, terrified of the haunted house and a mother who had killed her own daughter. Sethe can only keep her youngest, Denver. When she recovers *Beloved*, like Baby Suggs, she starts dreaming of having her whole family together: "if her daughter could come back home from the timeless place—certainly her sons could, and would, come back from wherever they had gone to" (*Beloved*: 182).

Female slaves cannot afford to love their children, since they will be taken away from them. They feel distressed at being unable to keep their loved ones and guilt at not being able to remember them, once they have disappeared. Baby Suggs's scarce memories of her lost children make her sad. All she remembers is how one of her babies "loved the burned bottom of bread" (*Beloved*: 176). However, she wouldn't know her little hands "if they slapped me [. . .] nor the color of the gums, the shape of her ears, nor [. . .]" (*Beloved*: 176). Sethe remembers her mother-in-law's words and how she felt at not being able to conjure up images of her children. When she finally recognizes *Beloved*, she looks at her profile and thinks that now she will have time to memorize her physical features.

3.2. The Fragmented Gothic Identity

And the devastation of slavery was not that explosion and implosion of the family, but also the disassociation of the self, the breaking of the self into bits.
ANGELS CARABÍ, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*... 'And the Past Achieved Flesh'.

The Gothic, and especially American Gothic, explores personal identity through the roles of the individual in family and national history (Louis Gross: 2). As Louis Gross claims, the Gothic narrative examines the causes, qualities, and results of terror and tyranny mainly on the mind, but also on the body. Thus it becomes an "epistemological" quest: "Unlike the more traditional narratives of this kind, however, the Gothic journey offers a darkened world where fear, oppression, and madness are the ways to knowledge and the uncontrolled transformation of one's character the quest's epiphany" (1). The Gothic explores unconscious repressions, our most unspeakable and inconfessable inner feelings and thoughts. Fiedler states that playing with horror means to deal with the lowest and darkest of the human mind, "to carry the torch to the back of the cave" (141). Through the Gothic, the repressed is confronted by the individual. In *Powers of Horrors*, Julia Kristeva argues that, through the transgressive fantasies which gothic fiction provides, readers can experience the encounter with the repressed unconscious, a process which dismantles their own identity (qtd. in Noble: 174).²⁹⁹

The Gothic deals with the transcendence of conventional and articulate identity. Rosemary Jackson, Terry Heller and William Patrick Day, in their Lacanian analysis of the gothic, state that the fear of the Gothic provides the reader a thrilling escape from the fiction of coherent selfhood. Day claims that gothic subversion is developed through a game of domination and subordination in which the identity is defined as a conflict in a masochistic exchange of giving and receiving pain, "wielding power in turning the tools of power against itself rather than overtly challenging power" (qtd. in Noble: 179).³⁰⁰ In fact, the Gothic examines "the shattering of the protagonists' [sic] image of his/her social/sexual roles and legacy of, at best, numbing unease or, at worst, emotional paralysis and death" (Louis Gross: 1-2). As a result, the Gothic narrative becomes a quest for self-definition and transformation, which is frequently associated with the transgression of boundaries, mainly sexual. David R. Jarraway says that "In other related theories of Kristeva's, gothic identity becomes 'the subject in process/on trial,' tactfully negotiating a semiotic path of rhythmical force and energy along a 'thetic'

²⁹⁹ For more information, see: Julia Kristeva (1982). *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia UP.

³⁰⁰ Marianne Noble points out that that these masochistic aspects that the gothic shares with sentimental fiction "afford transgressive pleasures that arise from a fantasized transcendence of coherent identity" (165). For more information, see: Terry Heller (1987). *The Delights of Terror: An Aesthetics of the Tale of Terror*. Urbana: Illinois UP.

threshold or rim between maternal abjection, on the one hand, and paternal order, on the other [. . .]” (60-61).

Both Hawthorne and Morrison depict through their characters the destruction of the identity because of the patriarchal western society and its struggle for self-definition in the family and society. In *Seven Gables* the law of the Father is embodied by Judge Pyncheon, while the weak relatives, Clifford and Hepzibah, live in a state of oppression and isolation, which has shattered their identities. *Seven Gables* is about the loss of identity as a result of patriarchal oppression—Clifford, Hepzibah—, the disembodiment of the materialist—Judge Pyncheon—, or even the passage into adulthood—Phoebe and Holgrave. Hawthorne explores, especially in Clifford, the destruction of identity as a result of guilt and tyranny.

The old bachelor, like Rip Van Winkle or any other victim of time, is trapped by the past and thus described as “time-stricken”. Michael D. Bell argues that “as an old man returned to a new Salem after a lifetime in prison Clifford comes to represent the unreality of the imagined past” (223). Clifford has missed a great deal of his lifetime. He has undergone so much pain that he will never recover completely, “after the torpor of a heavy blow, the sufferer’s reviving consciousness goes back to a moment considerably behind the accident that stupefied him” (*Gables*: 170). That is why the traumatized old bachelor can only see the world with the eyes of a child: “Although physically and chronologically an old man, Clifford has the psyche of an infant. His cousin’s tyranny has kept him passive, dependent, absorbed in immediate sensual (but non-sexual) gratifications, uncontrollably moody, permanently impotent, a mental somnambulist. Exile has enabled the Maules to attain some sort of warped manhood, but Clifford has been kept a child. Not allowed to grow, he atrophies” (Baym 1976: 164).³⁰¹ His permanent infancy translates into an inability for a sex life characteristic of the sexually-handicapped gothic identity. According to Crews, “Phoebe’s company enables Clifford to retreat more easily into a state of childhood [. . .]—one in which his ‘gentle and voluptuous emotion’ [. . .] need meet no challenges from mature sexual reality” (185).³⁰²

Clifford’s lack of selfhood is so acute that he is associated with “a black shadow” as well as with a ghost: his mysteriously reluctant step, his filmy eyes, his forgetfulness of purpose. He lives in a torpor that contaminates all his gestures: “Clifford’s hold on

³⁰¹ Matthiessen (1967: 370), Horne (463) and Alfred Levy (461) express similar views about Clifford’s child-like nature. Junkins relates Clifford’s “childishness to his artistic sensitivities and to his sensuous pleasures” (204).

³⁰² Unlike Crews, I would rather stress, as critics in the majority have claimed, Phoebe’s therapeutic role, as we can see in Karlow (120). Abele, on the other hand, explains the destruction of Clifford’s sexual potency as a consequence of his long sentence in prison (1967: 400).

reality is so precarious, his connection is so tenuous, that he can hardly be pictured at all" (Fogle 1969: 117). The old bachelor becomes a gothic ghost, the living image of the disintegrated or disembodied self. His voice, a sort of moan, low and gentle and inexpressibly sad, unmistakably characterizes his phantasmal character: "It was strangely indistinct, however, and less like articulate words than an unshaped sound [. . .]. So vague was it, that its impression or echo, in Phoebe's mind, was that of unreality" (Gables: 95). Clifford embodies the dreamlike quality which is related to death in gothic fiction: a "poor, forlorn voyager from the Islands of the Blest" (Gables: 142), a mythical place where those who have died, but have been exempted from death, are taken by the gods.³⁰³ His state of consciousness oscillates between death and life, dream and reality. The suffering he has experienced has created a veil of a "gray texture woven of some dark calamity" (Gables: 144), under which his spirit is hidden and which detaches him from the actual world. Sometimes he would like to escape from his ghostly state and get into the world of reality. But, in the end, he always retreats to the safety of his illusory life: Clifford is the quixotic dreamer.

Clifford's favorite amusement of his childhood, blowing bubbles from the window, relates him to a universe of fantasy and dreams: "Little, impalpable worlds, were those soap-bubbles, with the big world depicted, in hues bright as imagination, on the nothing of their surface" (Gables: 171). As Buitenhuis writes, in one of the scenes, he is enjoying the game until a bubble bursts against Judge Pyncheon's nose, while he is just passing below the window. This token of reality puts an end to both the bubble and Clifford's happiness. He is terrified at his cousin's presence (1991: 77). At the moment of the Judge's death, Buitenhuis says, we can find an ironic reversal of the bubble image. When he dies, the author comments, "At his decease, there is only a vacancy [. . .] and a bubble or two, ascending out of the black depth, and bursting at the surface" (Gables: 309). In spite of his power and wealth, his death makes a bubble no more substantial than those of Clifford (Buitenhuis 1991: 77). According to Bewley, "Unlike houses of stone and timber, or landed estates, or gold, soap bubbles are too perishable to be inherited or willed to posterity, and yet (Hawthorne thinks) their momentary beauty embodies a life that is denied to more durable things. But once in touch with more durable things, they break and vanish, just as Clifford's own life had broken on the crude and harsh unscrupulousness of Judge Pyncheon" (447).

Beloved shows how the gothic world of slavery has a terrible impact on the black's self. However, females suffer its most atrocious effects. As Harriet Jacobs says: "Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the

³⁰³ Explanation given in the Norton Critical Edition of *The House of the Seven Gables*, ed. Seymour L. Gross (142).

burden common to all, they have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own” (79). Enslaved black females suffered all kinds of physical abuse, such as separation from their offspring, barbaric tortures, enforced childbirth or rape. The impact of institutionalized rape is a facet of colonialism that marks blacks’ experiences terribly, especially females, shattering their identities. They cannot forget the unspeakable violations they have suffered: the white boys who stole Sethe’s milk and whip her; Paul D’s sexual abuses at the hands of the white guards in Alfred, Georgia; Ella locked up by father and son who raped her repeatedly; Stamp Paid’s wife, Vashti, forced to have sex with her enslaver; Sethe’s mother who was raped systematically by the crew; Baby Suggs compelled to have sex with her master under the pretence that she could keep her child.³⁰⁴ The psychic wreckage blacks undergo as a consequence of slavery’s abhorrent dehumanization will continue to hinder their personal growth after slavery.

As Suero-Elliott has shown, in *Beloved*, the colonized African-American female self embodies the gothic tension between “the economy of pleasure and desire” and “the economy of domination and power” (online). Homi Bhabha’s definition of “colonial subject” helps to understand females’ commodification under slavery, which results in their psychological, emotional and spiritual damage:

The construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference—racial and sexual. Such an articulation becomes crucial if it is held that the body is always simultaneously (if conflictually) inscribed in both the economy of pleasure and desire and the economy of discourse, domination and power. (qtd. in Suero-Elliott: online)³⁰⁵

Slavery makes of the black woman, as Suero-Elliott argues, the sexual and racial “other”. This white othering of the African-American woman implies her fetishized identity (online).

Under slavery language is denied to the black individual. Only the white patriarch has the right to control it, since he knows its power. Black slaves lose their voice, which stands for the denial of their humanity. Consequently, even when they can talk, they decide not to because their voice will not be heard by the white owner. When Baby Suggs works with Mrs. Garner, she decides to speak as little as possible and Mrs. Garner is pleased with that. Even though the white woman does not abuse her slave, she does not treat her like a human being either, and prefers not to listen to her. One of the most terrible tortures slaveholders inflict on their blacks is the confining bit, “the

³⁰⁴ Sexuality is the erotic theme of the Gothic and rape is frequently its most terrible expression. As in *Beloved*, Hawthorne also deals with sexuality, rape and incest: the hinted rape of Alice Pyncheon by Matthew Maule, the carpenter; Holgrave’s near rape of Phoebe; the incestuous brother-sister adoration. For Morrison and Hawthorne sexuality is at the core of the Gothic drama.

³⁰⁵ Original text quoted: Homi K. Bhabha (1994). *Locations of Culture*. New York: Routledge.

barbaric symbol of silence and oppression” (Moblely 1990: 196), which forces an inhuman muteness on slaves stripping them of their language and humanity: Sethe’s mother wore it and Paul D, too. Sethe is acquainted with what this constraining iron does to those who wore it. She had seen the wildness in their eyes, the wildness that “shot up into the eye the moment the lips were yanked back” and lingered long after it was removed. The written word also belongs to the whites. The news that they can find in a paper is written by and for whites. So blacks are not concerned about it. They do not usually read it, or simply cannot read. African Americans realize that their news will not be published unless it is something really extraordinary. When Stamp Paid tells Paul D about Beloved’s murder in a clipping, he cannot believe it. He knows that “there was no way in hell a black face could appear in a newspaper if the story was about something anybody wanted to hear” (Beloved: 155). Even if blacks are “free”, the society, including its media, is completely controlled by the whites.

Morrison explores through language and the process of naming the complicated relationship between legacy and selfhood. Names are the ultimate expression of one’s identity: “Names have a concrete history; they keep alive the complex, painful, disorderly, creative reality of human experience that dominant, logocentric structures seek to suppress. They register the hidden expressions of life in defiance of the controlling Word. They are also liberating and magical” (Byerman 1990: 75). Under slavery blacks are nameless “niggers”, only differentiated by what they wear or the way they look, since whites refuse to recognize black humanity: Baby Suggs’s master before Sweet Home had never called her by any name at all and Sethe did not know her mother’s name. The absence of any kind of appellation results in the black slaves’ lack of self-knowledge and self-recognition. Only a few African Americans had a name of their own. Most of them, as Morrison claims, were given the last name of their masters (Carabí 1993: 108) and, as their first name, they got anything the white man wanted. Sometimes they were bestowed with a sort of label to mark them as a piece of chattel. Paul D and his brothers, Paul F and Paul A share the same name only differentiated by one letter, like identical items of property that must be distinguished. Some lucky blacks are given their names by their loving parents, like Sethe, who, as Carabí argues, is named after her father, the only child conceived with love (1993: 108). Denver also gets her name from the white girl who helped her mother to deliver her. Her name, as Carol E. Henderson claims, “represents the power language has to relocate and reidentify Sethe’s familial genealogy” (99). Sethe and Denver’s names are not attached to them as a sign of proprietorship.

Slaves lose the African cultural heritage they bring into America, which is scorned by the Western white culture. Edward Said says that blacks feel like exiles in their new homeland,

The exile [. . .] exists in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting, nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another. Being skilled at survival becomes the main imperative, with the danger of getting too comfortable and secure constituting a threat that is constantly to be guarded against. (qtd. in Ogunyemi: online)³⁰⁶

However, African cultural legacy is not completely erased. Throughout *Beloved*, as Barbara Christian points out, there are different kinds of African retentions (204), as if the African past had been transmitted unconsciously through images. In her monologue, *Beloved* brings to the present a scene of Sethe's past in the black continent. She says that "Sethe is the one that picked flowers, yellow flowers in the place before the crouching. Took them away from their green leaves" (*Beloved*: 214). The colors of those flowers are now on the quilt where they sleep. Another important image is the little antelope.³⁰⁷ When Denver remembers the story of her birth, the little antelope was helping her mother to go forward ramming her with its horns. It did not let her die. Sethe imagines that, since she has never seen one, this animal must have been part of the place where she was born. Even though almost unconsciously, blacks have been able to keep some of their culture. As Christian claims, "One keeps hearing this echo [. . .] that happened previous to their enslavement, that is, a life in Africa" (204).

In *Beloved*, escaping from the horrors of the gothic world of slavery is the first step for blacks to become true selves. All the slaves at Sweet Home try to flee once Schoolteacher has come to rule it. Morrison uses Judeo-Christian mythologies of a Promised Land and an Eden to portray the factual and fictional lives of African Americans seeking an escape from persecution (Weathers: online). Some of the slaves on the farm die while attempting to run away, some of them are caught and Sethe and her children make it to free land. However, the black's gothic search for authentic self-definition does not end with freedom. Except for Denver, who has born free, the rest of the characters, as Jane Suero-Elliott states, have internalized the colonizing discourse and the imposed objectivity of the white commodifying ideology, which is the legacy of slavery (online).³⁰⁸ Denver voices the real haunting of this gothic romance: "It's not the

³⁰⁶ Original text quoted: Edward Said (1996). *Representations of the Intellectual*. New York: Random.

³⁰⁷ According to Arlene R. Keizer, the dance and the antelope are fragments of an African system, in which slaves were valued as human beings. The dancers' imitation of the antelope reverses the constraining conditions of slavery. Through the remembering and re-enactment of this African practice, they are able to reconnect body and spirit and "to 're-member' themselves to some degree" (online).

³⁰⁸ Arlene R. Keizer expresses similar views (online).

house. It's us! And it's you!" (*Beloved*: 14); "External hauntings rooted in internal conflict and painful memories make a Gothic conundrum" (Booher: 128). As a consequence, these new freed blacks feel unable to get rid of this burden and develop their identities as human beings. They struggle to liberate themselves from the prevailing white definitions inside a free black community; a process that Satya P. Mohanty terms "decolonization", by which the individual resists the colonial perception of self as commodified inferior (qtd. in Suero-Elliott: online).³⁰⁹

Linda Koolish argues that "The struggle for psychic wholeness is a continuous one in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" (2001: 169). Sonser thinks that Morrison's repositioning of the gothic genre focuses primarily on delving into,

the gothic landscape of subjectivity as defined by socio-economic and political imperatives: identity that is conferred by the ownership of slaves; subjectivity withheld by dispossession as a consequence of race and gender; the subversion of relationships into an economics of reproduction; and the subversion of ontological certainty that destabilizes the idea of subjectivity and the self. (15)³¹⁰

Morrison's haunted narrative explores the gothic drama of the black individual psyche, which is inextricably woven into black people's history: "[. . .] critics, for the most part, perceive the Gordian portrayal of Sethe and *Beloved* as an occasion to unveil the implications of language, memory and story in forming the psyche or soul of the person" (Cowan-Barbetti: online). In fact, as Linda Anderson writes, *Beloved* is an "attempt to imagine a different relationship between subjectivity and history" (qtd. in Sonser: 18).³¹¹ According to Phillip B. Harper, for many marginalized groups in America, the "historical status of subjectivity is precisely that of never having existed," because their members lacked the power necessary to conceive of themselves as whole entities (qtd. in Fuston-White: online).³¹² Carol Henderson points out that "Beloved's presence within the novel suggests a need to confront personal and communal memory, reimagining it, reordering it in an effort to claim ownership of that freed self once the physical body has been emancipated" (91). Her reincarnation

³⁰⁹ According to Gloria Anzaldua, *Beloved* is a "mestiza text" because it shows Sethe's search for an alternative discourse outside colonial ideologies (qtd. in Suero-Elliott: online). For more information, see: Gloria Anzaldua (1987). *Bordelands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute.

³¹⁰ Iyunolu Osagie points out that in *Beloved* the characters have difficulty in distinguishing between their inner minds and the outer world. This blurring of inside/outside binds the characters together (online). In fact, this is a typical characteristic of Gothic fiction. In some of the most famous of Poe's scenes, it is difficult to differentiate what is real from what is imaginary, since we see things through the eyes of some delusional or mentally unstable characters.

³¹¹ Original text quoted: Linda Anderson (1990). "The Re-imagining of History in Contemporary Women's Fiction". *Plotting Change: Contemporary Women's Fiction*. Ed. Linda Anderson. New York: Routledge: 129-141. Speary expresses similar views (173).

³¹² Original text quoted: Phillip B. Harper (1994). *Framing the Margins: The Social Logic of Postmodern Culture*. New York: Oxford UP.

“precipitates the oppressed’s journey from object to subjectivity” (Carol Henderson: 98).³¹³

The struggle to become true human beings outside the colonizing discourse is slow and hard: “While the end of slavery sought to transform objects (slaves) into subjects (free men and women), the characters in *Beloved* find the passage into subjectivity somewhat elusive” (Holden-Kirwan: online). Ex-slaves must go through a process of fighting the perception of the black person as inferior: “Developing an empowered subjectivity involves learning to define oneself through a perspective uninformed by dominant definitions of black identity. Acquiring a perspective outside of colonial constructs of inferiorized subject positions subverts these constructs and thus decolonizes the self” (Suero-Elliott: online).³¹⁴ Morrison believes, as Suero-Elliott points out, that attempts at self-liberation will only succeed within a community that supports the individual, emphasizing the collective quality of the process of decolonization. Cooperation among African Americans is necessary to confront unresolved issues of the past to change their neocolonialist present (online).

Beloved shows how arduous and difficult the process of self-definition is for ex-slaves. At the beginning, when Halle has finally bought his mother’s freedom, Baby Suggs thinks that she is too old to need it, “What does a sixty-year-old slavewoman who walks like a three-legged dog need freedom for?” (*Beloved*: 141). However, even for an old woman, the feeling of being free is awesome. She could not believe that Halle, “who had never drawn one free breath, knew that there was nothing like it in this world” (*Beloved*: 1451). When Mr. Garner is driving her north, she sees, as if it was for the first time, her hands and thinks, “These hands belong to me. These *my* hands” (*Beloved*: 141). Then she discovers “something else new”, her heartbeat. Baby Suggs realizes that she does not know anything about herself, “having never had the map to discover what she was like” (*Beloved*: 140). She had never felt curious or cared until then. For the first time in her life, the old black woman can reclaim her body, her family relationships, her religious feelings and her place in the community. Freedom also inspires her preaching, in which she wants to transmit this recently recovered feeling of loving your body.

Decolonization and self-definition cannot occur without the appropriation of language. Renaming is an important part of the blacks’ process of self-definition: “Names for Morrison signal an identity derived from a re-created past. The individual must decipher and reanimate language and history, and learn the derivation of his

³¹³ Susan Spearey adds that subject formation must be faced “without resorting to [. . .] the principles of the very humanism that has made possible” Schoolteacher’s brutal methods (173).

³¹⁴ Mohanty expresses similar ideas (online).

name" (Dearborn: 95). As Morrison comments, under slavery African Americans called themselves nicknames that they considered their true names, since they had chosen them (Carabí 1993: 108). In the aftermath of slavery, dropping the old name and taking on another was usually the first act of a former slave so as to begin life anew as a free person. It was the blacks' way to repudiate slavery and claim subjectivity. Pérez-Torres highlights how "The community bestows names upon people, constructing through a communal act of rechristening a self meant to counteract the disempowerment of a slave past" (1999: 187-188). Renaming is how the black individual creates a historical and social self-identity, thus resisting and delegitimizing the master's power. As Morrison says, Stamp Paid, for instance, was born Joshua, but he changes his name (Carabí 1993: 108). He takes a new name because of a terrible experience he had. When he was a young man, his owner's son took his wife. For a year Stamp Paid could not touch her. Once she came back, his reaction was to direct his anger at her. He dreamed of breaking her neck. Instead he decided to change his name, which relates to his role as a helper of those black slaves who try to escape through the Underground Railroad. He is the "stamp paid" that guarantees slaves' journey to freedom. Thus his new name defines and dignifies his real identity.³¹⁵

African Americans must recover their cultural identity and heritage, from which they had been cut off during slavery, depriving them of their black selfhood. Blacks have been separated from their family and ancestors; they have forgotten the language of their childhood, their songs, their music. All the blacks' native tongues are wiped out. Sixo, the Indian slave, is the only one at Sweet Home who still keeps his original language. Sethe knew it when she was a child, but now she does not recall any of it. She seems to have forgotten what Nan had told her together with the words she told it in. She cannot remember anything before Sweet Home, except singing and dancing. However, when she is telling Beloved about her past, she cannot really call to mind the language, but she recalls what it meant. Nan had told her how the white crew had raped her mother and her many times and how her mother had thrown all the babies she had from them away.

Blacks have to create themselves almost from the nothingness. They must begin by loving their selves, which were scorned and tortured under slavery. Then they must claim their identities in the midst of their own community. Their process of self-definition also entails their appropriation of the white owner's language through the acquisition of

³¹⁵ Morrison comments that Baby Suggs is another example. Her legal name was Janey Whirlow. Whirlow being one of her owner's names (Carabí 1993: 108). Once she is free, she "renames herself, coining and claiming the name Baby Suggs to register the love and desire her slave husband felt for her and to help him find her if he should be in a position to look" (Keizer: online). Thus the old black woman keeps her identity tied to her relationship with her loved ones, rather than to her status as a slave.

literacy. In *Beloved* black characters have two different reactions towards literacy: Sixo, who refuses to learn the oppressor's language, and Halle, who uses it to his own advantage. Hazel V. Carby points out that literacy became "a means of asserting humanity and the slave's path to resistance and revolution" (qtd. in Keenan: 127).³¹⁶

The Gothic romance shows the transformation of the individual. Both Hawthorne and Morrison underline a significant and gradual metamorphosis of their characters, who undergo a process of self-affirmation. In *Seven Gables* most of the characters experience some kind of evolution or regeneration. They are able to confront the ghosts of the past and expiate the sins of their ancestors. On the other hand, the process of transformation for African Americans is more complex. The Gothic journey from slavery to true selfhood is strenuous and agonizing.

3.2.1. Disintegration and Insanity of the Gothic Self

The guilt which underlies the gothic and motivates its plots is the guilt of the revolutionary haunted by the (paternal) past which he has been striving to destroy; and the fear that possesses the gothic and motivates its tone is the fear that in destroying the old ego-ideals of Church and State, the West has opened a way for the irruption of darkness: for insanity and the disintegration of the self. Through the pages of the gothic romance, the soul of Europe flees its own darker impulses.
LESLIE FIEDLER, *Love and Death in the American Novel*.

Both Hawthorne and Morrison delve into the fragmentation of the Gothic individual's self, which is the result of the patriarchal system in which he/she lives. According to William P. Day, the traditional gothic is obsessed with the "fable of identity fragmented and destroyed beyond repair, a fable of the impossibility of identity" (qtd. in Sonser: 14).³¹⁷ In his psychological approach to Hawthorne's romance, Martin Karlow states that Hawthorne was a precursor of studies in schizophrenia and that *Seven Gables* is a study of the divided self. Judge Pyncheon, Karlow states, represents the false self who persecutes Clifford, the true self (113). The Judge is superficial, pure externality, almost a caricature. He is a stereotype, who maintains an appearance of perfect adjustment. Clifford is infantile and disembodied, his mind and body are split: "Clifford is pure subject, pure interiority without a substance, a ghost" (115).

Holgrave, as Karlow claims, represents another "true self figure", who, in his transformation, becomes the real self. The young reformer and Clifford are in a sense *doubles*. Both of them are artists and detached from the external world (125). Karlow asserts that they experience a curious reversal of roles during the train episode: Holgrave seems to be paralyzed at the sight of Jaffrey's dead body, while Clifford, on

³¹⁶ Original text quoted: Hazel V. Carby (1989). "Ideologies of Black Folk: The Historical Novel of Slavery". *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*. Eds. Deborah E. McDowell and Arnold Rampersad. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

³¹⁷ Original text quoted: William Patrick Day (1985). *In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy*. Chicago: Chicago UP.

his train trip, defends the reformer's theories about the past. The young man becomes Clifford and the old bachelor becomes Holgrave (126). They both get back to normal when Phoebe returns to the house. She is the rescuer of the two "half-selves" (127). From Karlow's point of view, *Seven Gables* is a parallel of Hawthorne's schizophrenia, "his own withdrawn and long-drawn-out youth" (129).

Other critics seem to confirm these ideas: "Hawthorne's work, particularly *The House of the Seven Gables*, is an extended meditation on the structural duplicity behind the notion of the voluntary self, a duplicity that, if unrecognized, would doubly embed the self in the social order" (Knadler: 282). Kilgour believes that the romance "raises the classic gothic problem, given the underlying similarity, of distinguishing pursuer and pursued, detective and criminal" (45). Judge Pyncheon is the oppressor, the pursuer, whereas Clifford is his victim, the pursued: "Like Victor [Frankenstein] and his creation, good and evil, innocence and guilt, pursuer and pursued are thus complex doubles of each other, locked together in a complex identity" (Kilgour: 42). Karlow's theory of the divided self parallels the gothic vision of a double identity.

The theme of a split self is also very familiar in Morrison's fiction, as it is in Gothic fiction. All of her novels explore, to some extent, the rupture within the individual caused by the confrontation between blacks' own definition of themselves and slavery's misrepresentation of African Americans as subhumans (Koolish 2001: 174). In *Beloved*, the psyche of the blacks cannot easily hold together because of their terrible memories: "This horror, found in the fragmented recollections of daily life, haunts the individual and collective memory to the extent that any formation of a new identity in the *aftermath* of slavery becomes predicated upon remembering and *disremembering* these moments" (Carol Henderson: 88). When psychic disintegration takes place, Koolish points out, the character splits into a "core self" and "alter". The individual has no memory or knowledge of that dissociation. It means that memories are pushed aside, repressed, placed in a box (2001: 173).

According to Jeanna Fuston-White, "Postmodern theory accepts that the view of the human psyche as an integrated whole is a misconception; more accurately, the subject can be described as incoherent, fragmentary, or decentered" (online). Morrison herself insists, "the trauma of racism is, for the racist and the victim, the severe fragmentation of the self, and has always seemed to me a cause (not a symptom) of psychosis" (1990: 214).³¹⁸ *Beloved* is the ultimate expression of the slave's shattered identity. There is a passage in which she plucks a tooth from her mouth and feels as if the rest of her body would "fly apart". Rebecca Ferguson says about her: "She [. . .]

³¹⁸ Rachel Lee expresses similar views (online).

contains the effects that slavery had, its profound fragmentation of the self and of the connections the self might have with others” (qtd. in Cowan- Barbetti: online). At the end of the story, Sethe also thinks that if Paul D bathes her body, it may come apart. In his ritual, the black man “takes all of her parts [. . .] and unites them in the person [. . .] he has named her, embraced her vast potential” (Cowan-Barbetti: online).³¹⁹ In the last scene, when Sethe lies on Baby Suggs’s bed under the quilt, maybe symbolizing their divided identities, both Sethe and Paul D may be able to reconstruct their fragmented selves.

As Lynda Koolish has shown, all the main characters of the story, but also, to some extent, every black character in the novel who has seen the revenant, “experiences Beloved either as a fractured aspect of Sethe's psyche or as a kind of doppelganger for his or her own feelings of loss, grief, confusion, and rage, and, in the case of Bodwin, feelings of accountability, culpability, and guilt” (2001: 170-171). Beloved is literally “the part of Sethe whose job it is to be a witness to her own pain, to ancestral pain, to Middle Passage” and “replaces the lost, the dispossessed, the murdered others who died during slavery, Middle Passage, and beyond” (2001: 178).³²⁰ Koolish thinks that there are numerous clues that corroborate this alternative reading. For instance, the haunted house is described as “full of a baby's venom”. However, Sethe and not Beloved is described as a snake.³²¹ Thus Beloved is “that serpent aspect of Sethe who is magical, dangerous but necessary, and potentially healing” (2001: 180), which is necessary for the black woman’s rebirth.³²² Another element that suggests that Beloved is her mother’s double is their common thirst. When Sethe firsts meets Stamp Paid, after she has delivered her baby, she refuses the smoking hot eel he offers her, and instead she begs for water and when she finishes it, asks for more. This episode is paralleled by Beloved’s arrival at 124, when she “gulped water from a speckled tin cup and held it out for more” (Beloved: 51) (2001: 181) .

The fragmentation of the Gothic self is closely related to madness, a typical Gothic theme, which is central to both Hawthorne’s and Morrison’s romances. These authors show the dementia the self is driven to as a result of the historical, social and familial conditions of western culture. The Gothic narrative uses the characters’

³¹⁹ Original text quoted: Rebecca Ferguson (1991). “History, Memory, and Language in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*”. *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice*. Eds. Susan Sellers, Linda Hutcheon and Paul Perron. Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 109-127.

³²⁰ According to Koolish, in *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola’s splitting self can serve as a prototype for Sethe and other characters in *Beloved* (2001: 174). Pecola, “is not *seen* by herself until she hallucinates a self” (Morrison 1990: 220).

³²¹ According to some critics, such as Mae Henderson, snakes were considered in classical mythology as agents of rebirth (qtd. in Koolish 2001: 180).

³²² In *Tar Baby* Morrison also uses the image of the shadow self and the snake to depict Son. See: Terry Otten (104) and (107), respectively.

temporary or permanent insanity to explore their subconscious. On one hand, in *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne deals with Clifford's deranged pattern of behavior: "Seldom has the pathos of mental instability and incompetence been so well reproduced as in this portrait of Clifford" (Buitenhuis 1991: 94). Dementia is associated with the western patriarchal white family and genetic inheritance: "Hawthorne's story connects with a more specific discussion of insanity in relation to the laws of heredity" (Knadler: 287).³²³ Samuel G. Howe, who was commissioned by the Massachusetts legislature to investigate idiocy in the state, confirms that congenital traits are a significant contributing agent:

In all such cases the fault lies with the progenitors. Whether they sinned in ignorance or in willfulness, matters not as to *the effect of the sin upon the offspring*. The laws of God are so clear that he who will read may do so [. . .]. The conditions of the law of transmission of hereditary tendencies to diseases of body and of mind are beginning to be known. (qtd. in Knadler: 287)³²⁴

Knadler believes that "Howe adapts a traditional religious outlook regarding sin to a new scientific epistemology. Infractions against the body's natural law have repercussions that will visit not only the individual 'sinner' in the form of madness but his or her descendants as well" (287-288). Thus Howe states the basic theme of Gothic fiction: the revisiting of the sins of the fathers upon their children.³²⁵

Hawthorne highlights Clifford's mental disturbances. He suffers from altered states of consciousness, such as mania, melancholia or some sort of dementia. On different occasions, he behaves in apparently unpredictable ways. He experiences the urge to break out of his social isolation and emerge into the stream of life when he is watching a political parade from a window and when he and Hepzibah try to go to church. The old bachelor needs a shock. He needs a deep plunge into human life to be born again as an ordinary human being. Clifford might be considered as a schizophrenic.³²⁶ As Buitenhuis argues, he suffers a radical disjunction of personality, alternating between frenzied activity and absolute lethargy. Sometimes he also has masochistic desires to feel pain so that he can know that he is alive, for instance when he asks Phoebe for a rose to press its thorns into his flesh (1991: 94).

³²³ Knadler points out that, in 1843 a committee of the Massachusetts Medical Society headed by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Edward Jarvis and John D. Fisher stated that "insanity arose from the interaction of hereditary character and environment" (287). For more information, see: Gerald Grob (1978). *Edward Jarvis and the Medical World of Nineteenth-Century America*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press: 91.

³²⁴ Original text quoted: Samuel G. Howe (1858). *On the Causes of Idiocy*. Edinburgh: Maclachlan & Stewart.

³²⁵ Walpole's first Preface through the assumed translator, William Marshall, complains about one of the author's defects, "I could wish that he grounded his plan on a more useful moral than this; that *the sins of fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation*" (7; emphasis added).

³²⁶ Among others, Karlow has pointed out Clifford as a schizophrenic (111)

Hawthorne associates the old bachelor's insanity with his imagination or his artistic nature: "The recollections and fantasies that occupy Clifford's mind are a token and effect of his imbalance even as he advances in his second growth" (Gollin: 158). His traumatic experiences make him reject the true essence of life, love, and turn to art, becoming "the lover of the beautiful". Hawthorne intimates the old bachelor's artistic temperament when he sends bubbles floating down. Those bubbles symbolize his fantasies and imaginative worlds.³²⁷ His love of beauty is a way to escape from the sorrows and struggles of real life. Michael Bell thinks that, like Clifford, Hawthorne with his "symbolic feebleness and spirituality" is "a poet, divorced from the world" who "comes to represent the unreality of the artistic imagination" (223).³²⁸

The old bachelor is a delicate hedonist, who takes pleasure in exquisite objects. One of the earliest manifestations of this trait is the delight he experiences with humming-birds. Matthiessen argues that when Clifford returns from prison, he "no longer possesses any intellectual or moral fibre to control his sensibility. His tastes express themselves only in a selfish demand for luxuries and in an animal delight in food, an exaggeration of the defects that Hawthorne always felt to lie as a danger for the artistic temperament, whose too exclusive fondness for beauty might end by wearing away all human affections" (370).³²⁹ At this point his Epicurean temperament makes Clifford extremely selfish, producing in him an aversion to his sister, Hepzibah, his provider, and to everything old or ugly, "beauty would be his life".³³⁰

Not to speak it harshly or scornfully, it seemed Clifford's nature to be a Sybarite. It was perceptible, even there, in the dark, old parlor, in the inevitable polarity with which his eyes were attracted towards the quivering play of sunbeams [. . .]. It was seen in his appreciating notice of the vase of flowers [. . .]. It was betrayed in the unconscious smile with which he regarded Phoebe [. . .]. Not less evident was this love and necessity for the Beautiful, in the instinctive caution with which, even so soon, his eyes turned away from his hostess, and wandered to any quarter, rather than come back. It was Hepzibah's misfortune; not Clifford's fault. (Gables: 108)

As Parker has pointed out, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was a tendency to pathologize racial difference in order to construct an Other against which the dominant conception of self could be defined (online). Sander L. Gilman shows that at the time insanity was linked to blackness as a result of the high incidence

³²⁷ Anthony emphasizes the old bachelor's quality as an artist when he says that "the soap bubbles suggest an anti-market aesthetic" (254).

³²⁸ Crews argues that Clifford is "an extreme version of the withdrawn Hawthornian artist". He is withdrawn from women, quality which is "associated with 'secluded artists'" (190).

³²⁹ Crews characterizes Clifford as "perhaps the supreme example in Hawthorne's fiction of a man whose feelings have become polarized between an exquisite aestheticism and frustrated sensuality" (184-185). Junkins expresses similar views (203).

³³⁰ Baym believes that, unlike Holgrave, Clifford is in reality "a castrated artist" (1976: 159). On the other hand, Alfred Marks insists on the role that Clifford's love of beauty plays in his spiritual and physical recovery (1967a: 419).

of mental problems among the African American population, as the US national census reflected (qtd. in Parker: online).³³¹ These results were used by anti-abolitionists who claimed that this elevated rate of dementia proved that blacks were genetically “unfit for freedom” (Parker: online). Ania Loomba believes that, in *Totem and Taboo* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud associated European male adulthood with civilization and rationality while he linked “non-Europeans, children, primitivism, and madness” (qtd. in Parker: online).³³² However, in Morrison’s novels, insanity is intrinsically connected to slavery and its consequences. Her characters often suffer mental disorders: “If the whitepeople of Cincinnati had allowed Negroes into their lunatic asylum they could have found candidates in 124” (*Beloved*: 250).³³³

In *Beloved*, the atrocities and tortures slaves endure do terrible, sometimes irreparable, damage to their psyches. Thus it is not strange that dementia becomes central in Morrison’s romance, as it is in Gothic fiction. According to Fuston-White, “Juxtaposing sanity and madness, Morrison begins to blur the dichotomous representations which in Enlightenment thought so easily categorized truth and falsehood, good and evil, history and myth” (online). The disintegration of the self is manifested in doubled and split characters and in demented states of consciousness. As Koolish claims, not just Sethe, but the other African Americans too, exist almost as dreamwalkers in a state of dissociation and denial as they remain determined to expend their psychic resources keeping the past at bay (2001: 169).³³⁴ Thus, in Morrison’s world, ‘madness’ is not a sign of weakness or failure, but, as Ronald. D. Laing and other psychologists argue, an act of resistance and survival: a brave attempt to face an unfair and terrible ordeal (qtd. in Koolish 2001: 173). The characters in *Beloved* have suffered such an unspeakable abuse that their mental disability, besides an external sign of their inner pain, is an expression of a healing process, which tells us of the blacks’ power to carry on with their lives.

Lynda Koolish has shown that, as in *Seven Gables* (especially Clifford), *Beloved*’s characters (Sethe, Denver, Beloved, Baby Suggs and Paul D) suffer from a sort of mental disorder called Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) or disassociative

³³¹ For more information, see: Sander L. Gilman (1985). *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.

³³² For more information, see: Ania Loomba (1998). *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge.

³³³ Iyunolu Osagie agrees with the communal neurosis in the novel, but adds that “The white community as well suffers from a strain of madness unique to the ‘peculiar institution’—slavery”, which ultimate statement is Sweet Home (online). Michele Bonnet believes that the pre-Oedipal bond in the mother-child relationship during the ritual of possession brings disorder and chaos and “the women’s attitude is explicitly described as that of lunatics” (online).

³³⁴ Jeanne Phoenix Laurel argues the importance of madness in twentieth-century American literary studies, particularly in women’s writing, in which has frequently functioned as a trope for various kinds of social dysfunction [. . .] reminiscent of the blurring in slave narratives between the mental-emotional states of slavery and freedom” (online).

states (2001: 170). According to Ronald D. Laing and other psychologists, who have researched on Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), schizophrenia and other mental illnesses can be understood as coping strategies used by people in order to bear an unlivable situation (Koolish 2001: 173).³³⁵ On some occasions, as Koolish points out, Denver hesitates: she cannot tell whether she is dreaming or awake. In the young woman's soliloquy chapter, she thinks, "I was safe at night in there with her [Baby Suggs]. All I could hear was me breathing but sometimes in the day I couldn't tell whether it was me breathing or somebody next to me" (*Beloved*: 207) (2001: 170). Occasionally, in the daylight during consciousness, Denver is not sure if her grandmother is alive. Koolish believes that the story not to be passed on in this and in other traditional slave narratives, is that of psychosis, dissociation (2001: 171).

On the other hand, Emma Parker, who draws on psychoanalysis and French feminist ideas, has pointed out that *Beloved's* characters suffer from hysteria. *Beloved* can also be considered as a hysterical symptom, thus representing the return of the repressed: the trauma in blood and flesh (online). In *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud and Breuer first described hysteria as a psychic disorder rather than as an organic physical illness. They thought that this mental affliction was the result of a trauma and, as a consequence, the event that produced it was excluded from consciousness and the repressed memories became bodily symptoms (qtd. in Parker: online). However, Parker thinks that Morrison challenges these theories (online). In *Beloved* repressed recollections are what she calls "rememory": the continued presence of something that vanished from the characters' lives. Sethe remembers "something she had forgotten she knew" (*Beloved*: 61). In addition, Morrison shows *Beloved's* trauma as a social-historic illness, since subjectivity can be shaped by the dominant order, whereas Freud reduces it to the personal or familial sphere (qtd. in Parker: online). In fact, only by analyzing hysteria as a social phenomenon, can issues of race be dealt with (online).

As Parker has shown, the difference between hysteria and other kinds of psychosomatic disorders is the mutability of its symptoms: its infinite corporeal manifestations. *Beloved* combines the feelings of a hysterical subject: hostility and desire, a longing for retribution and reconciliation, an inability to forgive together with a reluctance to do without the mother who killed her. Anger is one of her most important feelings (online). According to Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement, this violence is "suggestive of a metaphorical dissatisfaction with the established order".³³⁶ Consequently, as we can see in *Beloved*, the hysteric seems to want everything (qtd. in

³³⁵ For more information, see: Ronald Laing (1965). *The Divided Self*. (1959; rpt.) New York: Pelican Books.

³³⁶ For more information, see: Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement (1986). *The Newly Born Woman*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Parker: online). Parker thinks that Beloved's terrible sense of insatiability is a result of the fact that "nothing can make reparation for her death" (online). Thus Beloved's love of sugar exemplifies Elizabeth Bronfen's assertion that the hysteric represents himself/herself by imitating the culture that has provoked the hysterical symptoms (qtd. in Parker: online).³³⁷ Consequently, Parker comes to what I consider the forced conclusion that the revenant's appetite for sugar functions "as counterhegemonic form of mimicry" (online). However, I agree with Parker that, as Freud and Breuer state, hysteria could be the reversal of its cause, the trauma, Beloved's craving for sweets is an expression of her repressed bitterness (qtd. in Parker: online).³³⁸ But it is also, as Parker claims, the representation of a more general African American need for reparation, articulated through the substance deeply implicated in the enslavement of a race (online). This feature also defines her as a pre-Oedipal child.

3.3. Gothic Male Characters

3.3.1. Faustian Figures: Judge Pyncheon, the Iron Puritan Villain, and Schoolteacher, the Slaveholder

The villain was always the most complex and interesting character in Gothic fiction, even when drawn with a clumsy hand: awe-inspiring, endlessly resourceful in pursuit of his often opaquely evil ends, and yet possessed of a mysterious attractiveness, he stalks from the pages of one Gothic novel or another, manipulating the doom of others while the knowledge of his own eventual fate surrounds him like the monastic habit and cowl which he so often wore.

DAVID PUNTER, *The Literature of Terror: The Gothic Tradition*.

This element, though other factors are involved, explains Hawthorne's predilection for the mythic devil-image and the diabolic pact. The image dealt with man's most precious and mysterious possession, the soul, whose eternity could be menaced only by evil. Having had a radical function in Puritan moral thought, it was the bridge to Hawthorne's nostalgic connections with the Puritan past; and having had a long existence in the Christian tradition as the ritual expression of evil, it partook of the universal significance which was Hawthorne's test of truth. But the symbol seemed to attract him most because, as the nucleating idea of the Faust myth, it had proliferated not only a basic set of minor symbols but also an equation that promised the resolution of the problem of good and evil.

WILLIAM B. STEIN, *Hawthorne's Faust. A Study of the Devil Archetype*.

Both Hawthorne and Morrison depict the typical gothic confrontation between evil, the villain, and good, the innocent maiden. The hero-villain, one of the central characteristics of the gothic romance, is frequently represented as a menacing father figure with Faustian drives. His authoritarian behavior, and sometimes his inquiring

³³⁷ For more information, see: Elizabeth Bronfen (1998). *The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and Its Discontents*. Princeton: Princeton UP.

³³⁸ Luce Irigaray thinks that the combination of "Unbearable sweetness and bitterness" characterizes the hysterical person (qtd. in Parker: online). For more information, see: Luce Irigaray (1985). *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell UP.

mind, isolate him from humankind.³³⁹ In *Seven Gables* we can find different Faustian characters. Colonel Pyncheon allies himself with the devil when he accuses Maule of witchcraft in order to acquire his property, a manifestation of his Faustian desire for wealth and power. His progeny share this urge for wealth. Gervayse Pyncheon sells his soul to the devil when, out of his ambition to obtain the secret of the Pyncheons' claim, he allows a Maule to mesmerize his daughter. At the present moment of the story, Judge Pyncheon is involved in his uncle's death, the illegal destruction of his will and a conspiracy against his cousin, Clifford, the real heir, to make him the victim of a murder charge. Matthew Maule is another Faustian character, who gains control over Alice Pyncheon through his hypnotic ("supernatural") powers. Holgrave, his descendant, has his forbears' wicked abilities, which he compensates with honesty and respect for other people's souls.³⁴⁰

Jaffrey Pyncheon exerts an oppressive power over the members of his family through his paternal role: "He is the figure of the tyrannical father; though everything about him radiates sun and benignity, he is cruel, repressive and hard-hearted" (McPherson: 136).³⁴¹ Treated with a mixture of awe and hatred, he is always seen as an unspecified threat. The Oedipal desire to kill the authoritarian figure comes true with Judge Pyncheon's death, which makes retribution possible. That is why it takes a central position in the plot. Only then Clifford and Hepzibah can escape the impotence that his menace imposes on them. Phoebe and Holgrave marry and start a new life without his dark shadow. McPherson claims that Hawthorne's statement about the self is that individuals must supplant and re-integrate the forces of the parents. Instead of being overthrown, the father must be superseded (144).³⁴²

In *Beloved* the abusive and persecuting Faustian figure is Schoolteacher, the only character in the novel who is truly and unambiguously evil. Like Judge Pyncheon, he embodies the Law of the Father, deciding about all matters related to his slaves.

³³⁹ According to David Punter, Gothic villains usually blend the feudal aristocrat with the figure of antisocial power. These figures reflect a social anxiety which has a clear historical dimension: fears concentrated, at least to some extent, on the waning aristocracy (47). Louis Gross points out that the Gothic, both in Europe and America, is marked by Oedipal fears: "The revolt against God and King established by the American and French revolutions triggered tremendous repressive fears about the Father's power, and the exhilaration at overthrowing patriarchal figures met with an equally intense sense of fear, shame and guilt at such revolt" (29). For a discussion of this theme, see also: Devendra Varma (1966). *The Gothic Flame*. New York: Russell and Russell.

³⁴⁰ Hawthorne's interest in the Faust myth is also evident in some of his short tales, such as "Peter Goldthwaite's Treasure", which, as Buitenhuis has shown, is a clear source of many elements of *Seven Gables* (1991: 34-35).

³⁴¹ Both Crews (175) and Buitenhuis (1991: 102) argues that Jaffrey's role in *The House of the Seven Gables* is paternal, even though Buitenhuis points out his evil nature.

³⁴² Some critics, such as Norman H. Pearson, think that behind Judge Pyncheon, there was a true identity. Among the possible individuals were: Charles W. Upham, the leader of the Whig opposition, whom Hawthorne knew from the Salem Custom House and Mr. Justice Story. However, resemblances are just fragmentary.

Both of them inspire Oedipal feelings and are seen as a threat. Colonel Pyncheon's and Judge Pyncheon's patriarchal symbols of respectability and power are the sword and the golden cane, respectively. Schoolteacher, on the other hand, has his slave owner's attributes, his big hat and "his ever-ready shotgun" (*Beloved*: 224), a phallic instrument of power, which submits blacks to his will. Besides, knowing that they have the law on their side, slaveholders display their characteristic "Look", "The righteous Look every Negro learned to recognize along with his ma'am's tit. Like a flag hoisted, this righteousness telegraphed and announced the faggot, the whip, the fist, the lie, long before it went public" (*Beloved*: 157).

The tyrannical slaveholder starts the cycle of suffering and torture for the blacks at Sweet Home. His power is absolute: his slaves' lives are in his hands. Both Judge Pyncheon and Schoolteacher incarnate tyranny and sexual violence. Blacks, men and women, suffer all kinds of unspeakable physical abuses to show them who rules their existence. Schoolteacher allows his nephews to steal the milk of the innocent maiden, Sethe, and later he batters her. Slavery under Schoolteacher shows that "the absolute appropriation of the slave, body and mind [. . .] renders him or her inert matter on which the master writes his own script" (Keenan: 124). He inscribes Sethe's body with his mark of white male dominance (*Woidat*: 528). Schoolteacher develops a variety of corrections (his physical and psychological tortures), which he records in his notebook, to reeducate his blacks. He even tries to control the slaves' language: "Schoolteacher stands as the quintessential figure of white male authority, wielding the power of the word as well as the whip" (*Woidat*: 528).

Like other evil gothic villains, Judge Pyncheon and Schoolteacher are iron-hearted men. Schoolteacher was as hard on his pupils as he was on his slaves, except for the corrections. He is a cruel slave owner, whose god-like power over the lives of his blacks is unquestionable. On the other hand, in *Seven Gables*, Jaffrey Pyncheon's strong will enables him to accomplish any aims he may have; a trait he inherits from his progenitor, Colonel Pyncheon: "the Puritan [. . .] was bold, imperious, relentless, crafty; laying his purposes deep, and following them out with an inveteracy of pursuit that knew neither rest nor conscience; trampling on the weak, and, when essential to his ends, doing his utmost to beat down the strong" (*Gables*: 123). His 'self-seeking purpose' triumphs over every other humane consideration (Robert Harris: online). As in other Gothic romances, in *Seven Gables*, despotic power makes the oppressor and his victim form a complex unity: "every generation of Pyncheons and Maules repeats the story; that there is really only one Pyncheon and one Maule; or that both Pyncheon and Maule are parts of a single personality" (Baym 1976: 163). In the same way, in *Beloved*, as in other slaves narratives, the slave owner and his blacks, especially

females, are indisputably united by the bond of proprietorship and its consequent tyrannical relationship.

The Gothic novel usually portrays the dynamics of domination-subversion in the relationship between male and female, the most important of which is that between the Gothic villain and the innocent maiden.³⁴³ As Fleenor observes, “the Gothic is a form created by dichotomies and the subsequent tensions caused by the dialectic between the patriarchal society, the woman’s role, and the contradictions and limitations inherent in both” (1983a: 15-16). According to Sybil K. Vincent, persecuting/protecting males reflect the ambivalent position which males occupy in relation to females (156).³⁴⁴ Several couples in *Seven Gables* represent the oppressive villain who exerts his control over the ‘weak’ female character: Judge Pyncheon and Hepzibah Pyncheon; Mathew Maule, the carpenter, and Alice Pyncheon; Holgrave and Phoebe. Hawthorne also underlines the oppressive relationship that Colonel Pyncheon and, later in the story, Judge Pyncheon have with their deceased wives. Millington argues that this last is “connected to a degree of domestic tyranny and sexual violence—his wife is said to have gotten ‘her fealty to her liege-lord and master’ [. . .]—that identifies him as the enemy of the womanly power that makes the domestic the site of meaning” (1992: 127).

On the other hand, at the core of *Beloved*, as a Gothic slave narrative, there is an evil villain who disposes of the black female at will. This tyrannical relationship is taken to the limit, since Schoolteacher is the white slave owner and Sethe is only his property, to whom he can do anything he wants with impunity. Unlike Hawthorne, Morrison recreates the pattern of persecution that was so typical of early Gothic romances. Radcliffe’s plots center on the persecuted maiden’s flight through the pattern of escaping and getting caught by the villain-hero.³⁴⁵ In *Beloved*, Schoolteacher and his nephews come after the innocent black maiden, who has escaped from his oppressive rule. Sethe, the transgressive dark lady, defies his power when she flees and kills his property, her baby girl, thus challenging patriarchal

³⁴³ In the eighteenth century there was a significant marriage crisis, attributed mainly to problems of inheritance, which might have influenced literature. According to Punter, “there is a strong connection [. . .] between the Gothic novel in general and the evolution of perceptions about the subjection of women and the covert social purposes of marriage and marital fidelity” (83).

³⁴⁴ James Twitchell points out that the early gothic tells a specific family romance, in which the villain figure has a paternal dominance over the young maiden (qtd. in Louis Gross: 53). Original text quoted: James Twitchell (1985). *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror*. New York: Oxford UP: 42. According to James Carson, the subjective distortions of the heroine’s vision are due to the fact that she feels dread of, but is also attracted to the villainous paternal figures (271).

³⁴⁵ The motif of persecution is very important in Gothic fiction, as we can see in Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), James Hogg’s *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) or William Godwin’s *Caleb William* (1794). Fiedler considers the Maiden in flight as the main symbol of Gothic fiction which means, in the spirit of *The Monk*, “the uprooted soul of the artist, the spirit of the man who has lost his moral home” (131).

structures while she asserts her strength and her humanity: "Sethe ultimately defies schoolteacher's authority by murdering her own child [. . .]. Reaffirming her own humanity as well as her children's. Sethe denies schoolteacher the right to 'possess' her family as slaves" (Woidat: 528).

3.3.1.1. Characterization of the Faustian Figure

In a very traditional gothic-like way, Judge Pyncheon, as the evil principle of the gothic universe, is associated with darkness: "he is the reflection of the dark shadows that invade the sunlight of human life" (William Stein: 8). He is described as a dark, full-fed physiognomy: "The 'light' shed by the judge's sultry smile is deceptive. Despite his appearance he is really a creature of darkness" (Waggoner 1967: 405). His frown is compared to a menacing cloud and his voice to the noise of a thunder. When the Judge attempts to see Clifford in the old mansion, he puts aside Phoebe with "a voice as deep as a thunder-growl and with a frown as black as the cloud whence it issues" (Gables: 126). Buitenhuis says: "The blackness of his threat and presence darkens Clifford's life until the Judge dies and the shadow is at last lifted" (1991: 68). The Judge's blackness identifies him with the devil-archetype of the Gothic romance, Satan: he is "the embodiment of Pyncheon evil" (Fogle 1969: 115) and "striking as an evocation of the power of evil, a power which is projected by images of mass, of darkness, and of hardness" (Fogle 1952: 161). The jurist is dressed in black, except for his white neck cloth, and behaves like a gentleman, the Prince of Darkness's traditional disguise (Buitenhuis 1991: 68). As Stein comments, he is associated with a physical Faustian emblem, which is shown when he is angry: "a *red fire kindled in his eyes* [. . .] with something inexpressibly fierce and grim darkening forth" (Gables: 129; emphasis added) (125).

Morrison, on the other hand, reverses the parallelism between black and evil that made of black people animals and beasts prone to savagery. According to Woidat, Morrison changes "the narrative perspective so that white men become racial others, men 'without skin'" (540). However, she also uses the analogy between dark and evil when, the day after the party, Baby Suggs smells "the scent of their [the community's] disapproval lay heavy in the air (Beloved: 137). The black old woman wakes to it and wonders what it is. Later she realizes that her neighbors are angry at her because she has overstepped, "offended them by excess" (Beloved: 138). Then she closes her eyes, and behind this disapproving odor, she can smell another thing. Something "Dark and coming" (Beloved 138). She wonders again what this dark and coming thing could be.

Judge Pyncheon, the archetypal gothic devil-villain, is portrayed as an aged man with a benign countenance, which conceals his evil nature.³⁴⁶ Because of his social position, he takes great care of his general appearance and his social gestures of benevolence. Jaffrey Pyncheon "has been well rewarded for his assiduous cultivation of the public": he has the reputation of a model citizen showered with public honors, such as election to Congress (Gilmore: 179). But all this is just a facade to hide his corrupt soul, "Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. 23: 28). However, on certain occasions, his black soul is shown. Phoebe compares him with a serpent, one of the typical representations of Lucifer in the Bible. When the jurist attempts to kiss his young cousin, Phoebe, she says that he looks "very much like a serpent, which, as a preliminary to fascination, is said to fill the air with his peculiar odor" (Gables: 119). As Buitenhuis argues, this scene is connected with Eve's temptation by the serpent in the Garden. But this Eve is not fooled by Satan's tricks (1991: 68). As a demonic being, the Gothic villain of *Seven Gables* is linked to death. Like his progenitor, Judge Pyncheon seems to kill his wives and his dissipated son, whom he had cast off, also passes away just a week after his death.

Morrison also depicts Schoolteacher and his nephews as gentlemen. Like Judge Pyncheon, the slaveholder takes care of his appearance in the presence of the slaves: he "Always wore a collar, even in the fields" (Beloved: 36). Baby Suggs distinguishes them by their high-topped shoes. After the big party, the old black woman foresees something extremely wrong, but she cannot tell what: "she stood in the garden smelling disapproval, feeling a dark and coming thing, and seeing high-topped shoes that she didn't like the look of at all" (Beloved: 147). All of them, Schoolteacher and his nephews, "had pretty manners, all of em. Talked soft and spit in handkerchiefs. Gentle in a lot of ways. You know, the kind who know Jesus by His first name, but out of politeness never use it even to His face" (Beloved: 37). Their gentle and refined ways contrast with the brutal treatment they give the blacks on the farm.

Both Judge Pyncheon and Schoolteacher are ironical portraits: their images of gentleness contrast with their inward evil disposition. Despite the slave owner's "pretty manners," his apparent affability and "soft" talking, he is a cruel racist (Bouson: 95). On

³⁴⁶ The most powerful metaphor of Judge Pyncheon's inner corruption is the image of the "tall and stately edifice", which also stands for his hypocrisy. The gorgeous appearance of the palace with its richness and magnificence is deceptive in the whole, since "'beneath the show of a marble place [. . .] is this man's miserable soul!'" (Dillingham: 457). Buitenhuis argues that, in the Bible, Christ also uses a similar metaphor when he describes the hypocrite scribes and Pharisees, as "white sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matt. 23: 27) (1991: 65). Dryden thinks that this metaphor also stands for the "imprisonment of mind in the usages and institutions of the social matrix" (1971: 307).

the other hand, Judge Pyncheon's "demeanor of benevolence is a front for greed and treachery—an ironic inversion of Hutcheson's conviction that displays of benevolence are, by their nature, displays of virtue" (Flibbert: 120).³⁴⁷ Hawthorne deals extensively with the gothic villain's hypocrisy: "Judge Pyncheon's falsity [. . .] is manifested in excess and extremity" (Fogle 1969: 115).³⁴⁸ The jurist conceals his characteristic black frown to the world. When Judge Pyncheon comes to see Clifford, Hepzibah confronts him. Then the whole "show of a marble palace" disappears and "the frown which you at once feel to be eternal" (Gables: 232) remains. The sternness he hides is also associated with the east wind. When Jaffrey Pyncheon tries to kiss Phoebe and the girl refuses, the change in Judge Pyncheon's face startles her; involuntarily, his inner nature is betrayed: "He looks as if there were nothing softer in him than a rock, nor milder than the east-wind!" (Gables: 119).³⁴⁹

3.3.1.2. The Devil-Villain's Grasping Spirit

The materialism of the gothic devil-villain takes shape in Schoolteacher's and the Pyncheons' grasping spirit. They symbolize the aggressiveness of the patriarchal capitalist western society. Schoolteacher's greed is the force behind the cruelty and racist views of slavery. First, he clearly understands that the difference between hunting an animal and hunting blacks is that "Unlike a snake or a bear, a dead nigger could not be skinned for profit and was not worth his own dead weight in coin" (Beloved: 148). In the face of the most unbelievably inhumane situations, Schoolteacher's only concern is to increase the benefits blacks may bring to Sweet Home. After killing Sixo, the slaveholder mounts his horse and he can only think of the ruin that losing two niggers, or maybe three (because they have not found Halle yet) is for the farm. Then Schoolteacher starts making plans to augment the value of Sweet Home.

Later in the story, after seeing Sethe's infanticide, he is not overwhelmed by how slavery may lead blacks to commit those atrocities. He only thinks that Sethe has still at least ten breeding years left and he questions the way slaves have to be educated:

³⁴⁷ Flibbert claims that, in the Judge, Hawthorne explores humanitarian benevolence, which he sees as an attack on 'the lovers of humanity,' since "the truest experience of connectedness does not proceed from some vague affirmation of love for humanity but from sensitive and observant response to the needs of those closest to us" (117).

³⁴⁸ Many other critics have claimed Judge Pyncheon's hypocrisy: Gilmore (178); Robert Harris (online); Fogle (1952: 158); Mathews (33). Hawthorne uses the chapter "The Scowl and the Smile" to moralize on deceitful appearance and to contrast ironically Hepzibah and Judge Pyncheon. The scowl an innocent consequence of her near-sightedness belongs to Hepzibah, whereas the Judge's forced smile only hides his true evil character.

³⁴⁹ According to Fogle, the Judge and Hepzibah are mirror-images of each other, with attributes reversed. Hepzibah's apparent ill-disposition is deceiving, while the Judge hides her true evil character behind a benign mask (1969: 117).

blacks cannot be overbeaten, as Sethe was by his pupils, or then they will be of no use. If you go beyond the point of education, you can never trust blacks again. Schoolteacher only cares about the fact that "the whole lot [Sethe and her children] was lost" (Beloved: 150). Schoolteacher's big concern is to raise the value of the farm and he gives a price to his slaves. As Paul D thinks when he is captured: "He [Schoolteacher] knew the price of everything" (Beloved: 228). Slavery takes the materialist approach of white Western society to its ultimate consequences, putting a price on human life.

On the other hand, the Judge, as representative of the privileged class, is a greedy man whose only goal in life is to expand his wealth: "The Judge, in a word, is the typical Pyncheon: his images are sun and gold; he is iron-hearted, a lover of wealth, power, and the physical things of life; he is the man who, above all, gets things done [. . .]. In pursuit of power the Pyncheons have crushed everything that stood in their way" (McPherson: 137).³⁵⁰ Hepzibah says when her cousin attempts to see Clifford: "Cousin Jaffrey, this hard and grasping spirit has run in our blood, these two hundred years! You are but doing over again, in another shape, what your ancestor before you did, and sending down to your posterity the curse inherited from him" (Gables: 237). In his pact with the devil, Jaffrey Pyncheon has exchanged his soul for new riches: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8: 36). He accuses Clifford of murder to become the only heir and, later on, when the weak old bachelor is released from prison, he believes that his cousin knows where to find the parchment and he is determined to force the secret out of him.

To develop symbolically Jaffrey Pyncheon's greedy character, throughout the romance he is related to gold: the Judge carries a gold-headed cane, wears gold-bowed spectacles and has a respectably well-off social status. This metal stands for the fortune he has and is ambitiously trying to expand: the wealth that will lead him to death. Judge Pyncheon is associated with the precious metal when his Midas-like touch transmutes one branch of the elm into gold. Hepzibah tells the Judge that he has more than enough riches for his remaining years. But, Jaffrey Pyncheon just threatens her with sending his insane cousin to a public asylum if Clifford refuses to tell him the whereabouts of the Indian deed.

Hawthorne highlights how some individuals devote their lives to material things, such as wealth, power and authority; to the detriment of other spiritual things, such as the family: "Pyncheon to him was typical of a whole class of men who treasure form

³⁵⁰ Fogle points out that Judge Pyncheon is dehumanized by his preoccupation with these solid unrealities (1952: 158).

over substance and spend their lives in building up hoards of gold and qualities of real estate. From this base they seek political office and public honors. For the Judge the idea of family takes second place to the dream of wealth” (Buitenhuis 1991: 103). The "Governor Pyncheon" chapter tries to show us how man's riches, power or material and public ambitions are shadows or dreams. These are not realities, as Judge Pyncheon believes. Waggoner argues that the jurist's "circles in which he is involved are his only reality; his dreams of achievement, his plans for his day and for the continued building of his fortune, are as illusory as the dreams of permanent magnificence his ancestor embodied in the house" (1967: 405). All these materialistic dreams will finally vanish when we face the inevitable death to which all of us are condemned. It is difficult to say who is living more in the world of dreams, Judge Pyncheon or Clifford.³⁵¹

Hawthorne emphasizes the jurist's absurd ambitions when he describes in detail his numerous appointments for the fatal day of his death and all the missed opportunities for money and power. His life runs following the hands of his watch and he dies grasping it. The only thing left of him is its incessant ticking reminding us of the importance that time has for the avaricious politician.³⁵² It reminds us of all the other items of his memoranda for such a busy day. The day after the Judge's death, the narrator wonders whether he will rise to resume his delayed schedule or to repent for his sins. Ironically, the Judge, who had been striving all his life to add more wealth to his offspring's inheritance, will make his poor relatives rich and through them the last Maule, Holgrave.

3.3.2. Gothic Artist-Scientist Figures: Schoolteacher, the Racist-Scientist, and Holgrave, the Daguerreotypist

[. . .] the mad scientist [of Gothic fiction] is *our* dark double who reveals our current deep suspicion that all motives, including our own and especially any that lay claim to aesthetic detachment, disinterest, or scientific objectivity, are dark and sinister, weighted with power, Oedipal strife, propelled by self-interest [. . .] the dream of using art or even theory to deconstruct the world and remake it in a better form too often turns into a Frankensteinian nightmare.

MAGGIE KILGOUR, "Dr. Frankenstein Meets Dr. Freud".

Like Frankenstein, Hawthorne's artist-scientist characters, such as Holgrave, and Morrison's Schoolteacher derive from a romantic and Gothic symbol, the seeker after forbidden knowledge, connected with other myths such as the legends of Prometheus

³⁵¹ Judge Pyncheon is associated with material things, whereas Clifford is related to shadows and dreams. Ironically, the jurist kisses the empty air instead of Phoebe when he first meets her. Hawthorne compares him to Ixion embracing a cloud (Zeus punished Ixion for his attempts to seduce Hera by deceiving him with a cloud image of her). This information is taken from a footnote in Hawthorne's *Seven Gables* (118).

³⁵² Hawthorne's passion in depicting his distaste and mocking Judge Pyncheon has been considered autobiographical, as the expression of his triumph over the politician Charles Upham or as the expression of his feelings against worldly success.

and Faust. The Gothic makes use of extreme curiosity, “a kind of psychological symbol of the kind of behavior that is incited by the enemy of mankind” (William Stein: 39). Gothic Faustian figures are sinners who have distanced themselves from humankind because of their inquiring minds. In their intellectual search, many of them transgress boundaries between the natural, the human and the divine.³⁵³ Hawthorne and Morrison show great interest in the scientist-artist figure. Like other Gothic authors, they are concerned with the ethical purpose of science and their Faustian characters express the dangers of intellectual pursuits. The Faustian quest becomes demonic when scientific research is used against human beings.

3.3.2.1. Schoolteacher’s Scientific Experiment at Sweet Home

Schoolteacher, who is literate, comes to Sweet Home with “his spectacles and a coach box full of paper” (Beloved: 197), which characterize him as the representative of the science and knowledge of Western society. He is a Faustian figure who uses science to justify his racial views, cataloguing his blacks according to their animal characteristics. Schoolteacher is Morrison's embodiment of the scientific project grounded on the efficient management of slaves, which points to one of the most problematic parts of American culture: rationalism based on abstract reason and empirical observation, in the defense of the institution of slavery.³⁵⁴ Thus Schoolteacher’s racist discourse constructs blacks as animals, “fundamentally and biologically different from white people” (Bouson: 96). Racism has the power to justify whites’ disdain and degrade black individuals, inculcating in them a sense of self-contempt and disgust at their “inferiority” (Bouson: 96). According to Goldner, the slave catcher is almost bodiless because he personifies a discourse that denies the body. He represents the Western discourse, “which claims a disembodied perspective outside the physical phenomena it measures” (online).

Schoolteacher’s scientific experiment at Sweet Home apparently follows empirical rules. J. Brooks Bouson comments that the slaveholder is “A practitioner of the nineteenth-century pseudoscience of race, which included the systematic measurements” and “‘scientific’ inquiries, on documenting the racial inferiority of the Sweet Home slaves” (95). His scientific method “operates by dismemberment, dividing the bodies and minds of the slaves into separate parts and evaluating them through the

³⁵³ McPherson believes that the power of the hero-villain is intellectual, Hawthorne portrays him as a scientist (221). As William Stein states, the scientist-villain often looks for those kinds of knowledge that will make men gods. Man’s extreme reliance on his mind “denies the need of faith and humility” and becomes a “stronghold of overweening pride”, which “jeopardizes the basis of religion” (19).

³⁵⁴ In *Frankenstein* Mary Shelley also explores the ethics of science when she deals with the process of creation which Victor Frankenstein undertakes. She makes us believe in the doctor’s task as scientific research and Frankenstein, like Schoolteacher, is regarded as an enquirer after truth. Both *Frankenstein* and *Beloved* express great doubts about the moral nature of science.

use of scientific techniques” (Keizer: online).³⁵⁵ Schoolteacher takes a notebook with him and asks his slaves questions, recording their answers. At night he writes a book with all this information: “Schoolteacher, using Sweet Home as his laboratory, hypothesizes that Africans have animal-like features, as well as human characteristics. He engages his nephews in this social experiment, instructing them to list the human features of a particular slave and then match up the corresponding animal feature” (Fuston-White: online). Mae Henderson compares Schoolteacher’s physical measurements with those of Hawthorne’s Custom’s House Surveyor, which, despite their accuracy, disclose little except that the letter A was three inches and a quarter in length. In both cases, Henderson claims, “putatively scientific techniques prove altogether inadequate”. Yet unlike Hawthorne’s Surveyor, who finds himself confronted with a riddle he has little hope of resolving,³⁵⁶ “Morrison’s historical investigator remains hopelessly unconscious ‘of his own infirmity’” (88). According to Mae Henderson, Schoolteacher’s

methodology—based on numbering, weighing, dividing—suggests the role of the cultural historian (or ethnologist) who is concerned with sizes, densities, details, appearances, externalities, and visible properties [. . .]. Schoolteacher possesses the master(s) text, and as a data collector, cataloger, classifier, and taxonomist concerned with matters of materiality and empiricism, he divides or dismembers the indivisibility of the slaves’ humanity to reconstruct (or perhaps deconstruct) the sale in his text. (88)

To be treated like animals is even worse than physical torture for the blacks of Sweet Home: Sethe tells Denver that what tore Sixo up was not the beatings, but the questions that Schoolteacher asked them as part of his research on the black’s animal condition.

Schoolteacher is listing the human and animal characteristics of his black slaves so as to establish a cause and effect relation that would confirm his animalistic theory about them. As Mae Henderson points out, his historiography is based on the concepts of “wildness” and “animality” (88). The slaveholder’s definitions become facts for his students: “Under Schoolteacher’s tutelage, the pupils learn to turn people into animals. Property is property because of its assigned properties” (Jesser: online). Henderson argues that Schoolteacher invests the concept of “otherness” with a form of subhumanity that confirms his own sense of superiority. The slaves’ “savagery” reinforces his “civilization” and “humanity” (88-89). His interpretative methods are the opposite of Baby Suggs’s: “Rather than an engagement of the heart and imagination,

³⁵⁵ Keizer argues the we can see the metaphor of dismemberment in Baby Suggs’s description of the effects of slavery upon her: “slave life had ‘busted her legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb and tongue’ (Beloved: 87)” (online). Margaret Atwood (144) and Susan Spearey (176) express similar views.

³⁵⁶ Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* (42, 51).

schoolteacher's pedagogical tools are linguistic objectivity and scientific method" (Krumholz 1999: 112).

Not only does Schoolteacher write the pages of his notebooks with his racist "scientific" conclusions, but also his literal inscription of Sethe's back with his whip (pen) (Mae Henderson: 90).³⁵⁷ He appropriates reasoning and the control over language, while his blacks, like animals, are denied a voice. As Woidat argues, "Schoolteacher asserts his authority by controlling language. Unlike Garner, the first master of Sweet Home, he does not allow the slaves to speak their own opinions or to learn to read and write. Instead, he makes them the subjects of his own interpretation—measuring and dissecting them in his notebooks, silencing their voices with an iron bit" (538). Any kind of argument that they may provide when asked could be considered as impertinent and disrespectful. Only whites can define: they are the definers and blacks are just the defined. According to Edward Said, "Since the White Man, like the Orientalist, lived very close to the line of tension keeping the coloreds at bay, he felt it incumbent on him readily to define and redefine the domain he surveyed" (qtd. in Ochoa: online).³⁵⁸ The white man keeps his political and social hegemony by not allowing the blacks to have ideas of their own: they can only be the definitions of the whites.

As Fuston-White points out, through *Sixty* Morrison exemplifies whites' appropriation of reasoning. When Sixo steals a baby pig and eats it, Schoolteacher accuses him of stealing, but Sixo denies it: "He effectively uses [. . .] white reason, as well as a mastery of schoolteacher's language in his explanation of the shoat [. . .]. Sixo out-masters the master in this game of language and logic" (online). He tells Schoolteacher that because he is improving his owner's property with his work, feeding himself means more work for the white slaveholder and, consequently, cannot be considered stealing. The slaveholder considers Sixo's a clever argument, but he beats him anyway "to show him that definitions belonged to the definers—not the defined" (*Beloved*: 190). However, "by asserting ownership of definitions, Schoolteacher illustrates the social and linguistic construction of meaning, and the absence of absolute meaning [. . .]. Asserting ownership of definitions, of meaning, undermines any transcendent quality" (Fuston-White: online).

In *Schoolteacher* Morrison parodies the "objective" and "scientific" viewer who appropriates "Manichean oppositions" (Krumholz 1999: 112). His "scientific" method and the ways of slavery go together, giving the objective grounds to justify the

³⁵⁷ According to Mae G. Henderson, "Appropriating Sethe's 'milk' through a process of phallic substitution, schoolteacher uses the pen [. . .] to 're-mark' the slave woman with the signature of his paternity" (90).

³⁵⁸ Original text quoted: Edward Said (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.

commodification of slaves: “The dismemberment of schoolteacher’s method is the discursive analog to the dismemberment of slavery” (Mae Henderson: 89). However, even though the Western scientific project should be essentially rational and empirical, in fact, it prevents objectivity because its arguments are constructed around the racist qualities that are pre-assigned to blacks before any empirical research, denying those features that do not fit with that. Schoolteacher’s is an example of the kind of “scholarly” and “scientific” discourse in which the preconceptions of the investigator lead to great distortions: “From our cultural position we can see that these ‘facts’ are the product of a preset organization of categories and suppositions made invisible by the use of ‘objective’ methods. Nonetheless, the social authority of the schoolteacher and the logical clarity of his methods give his words the power of ‘truth’” (Krumholz 1999: 112-113). The way Schoolteacher uses science is the way whites have used it historically to justify their ideas and methods in dealing with blacks: “Through schoolteacher Morrison demonstrates that discourse, definitions, and historical methods are neither arbitrary nor objective; they are tools in a system of power relations” (Krumholz 1999: 113).

Scientific racist discourse cannot explain blacks’ behavior, since the qualities ascribed to Africans fit with their role as property, but they cannot account for their humanity. That is why Schoolteacher or his nephews cannot understand them. When they go to catch Sethe and her children, they fail to make sense of the blacks’ acts. The slaveholder cannot confront Sethe’s black eyes, or the other black people’s around her, which tell him that he is wrong. Neither Schoolteacher nor his nephews can recognize their feelings so they think every one of them is insane: “Speaking though the voice of universal morality, Schoolteacher’s nephew cannot understand why Sethe would bring harm to her children. Stunned by the scene [of her crime], he repeats ‘What she want to go and do that for?’ [. . .] he is witness to an inconceivable act, lacking any perceptible logic” (Fuston-White: online). According to Paul Gilroy, the slave owner can only see that Sethe has gone wild as a result of his nephews’ mishandling. Gilroy thinks that the master discourse denies them [the whites] meaning of these terrible experiences because, at least in part, they cannot be expressed through it (qtd. in Goldner: online).³⁵⁹

To refute rational discourse, Morrison restricts the scientific approach to the white characters, Schoolteacher and his nephews, who have a secondary role in the novel.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁹ For more information, see: Paul Gilroy (1993). *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard UP.

³⁶⁰ Goldner argues that “as *Beloved* limits the scope of the scientized world view to the minor white characters [. . .] it forges an alternative epistemology of witnessing” (online). Witnessing does not value

As Goldner writes, the distanced and cold objectivity of Schoolteacher's cruel methods appears as deprived of any human feelings or morality: his calculated and cruel plans to make Sweet Home more profitable; his pseudoscientific treatment of black people, measuring his human and animal characteristics; Sixo's monstrous murder of Paul A's hanging; his nephews' sexual abuse of Sethe and her subsequent beating, one of his "corrections" (online). As a cold scientist, Schoolteacher becomes the embodiment of irrational and brutal slavery. In contrast, most of the story depicts the black world as a denial or even inversion of this vision. By showing us blacks' humanity, Morrison delegitimizes the dominant culture's claim that the scientific project provides us with an objective and rational view.

3.3.2.2. Holgrave's Dispassionate Observation: the Daguerreotype and Mesmerism

At times, this person who has mastered the occult science of mesmerism and who captures other people's images on the silver surface of his daguerreotype plates, this mysteriously gifted person who might once have been suspected "of studying the Black Art, up there in his lonesome chamber" [. . .] seems to resemble a Merlin figure at work in his tower. For some primitive instinct within us immediately invests Holgrave with the same kind of magical stature as that which, in folklore and fairy tale, is reserved for those who are able to capture a creature's image in a drawing, effigy, or mirror. Holgrave's magical powers, however, derive solely from his insight.

EVAN KLEIMAN, "The Wizardry of Nathaniel Hawthorne: *Seven Gables* as Fairy Tale and Parable".

Hawthorne's fiction is crowded with scientist-artist villains.³⁶¹ In his stories and romances, he explores various ethical facets of the scientist's quest for truth. As McPherson has pointed out, when scientists and artists turn their empirical analysis to the human heart, they commit the "Unpardonable Sin:" "When the scientist works against rather than for mankind he becomes a demon. In the New England context he is the Black Man who makes the imperfection of his fellows a crime with which he endlessly tortures them, and who regards woman as a sinful temptress" (221-222). The Unpardonable Sin is the great sin of the Enlightenment—the idea of knowledge as an end in itself (Marx 1987: 436). Hawthorne's Faustian artists and scientists are distinguished by their dispassionate observation:³⁶²

Wakefield, who aloofly observes the center of his social and emotional life for twenty years from the next street; the Rev. Mr. Hooper, who looks at his

the "distanced and 'objective' view of science", but "the personal, morally-committed, and even passionate testimony that derives from [. . .] lived experience" (online).

³⁶¹ There are many Faustian characters in Hawthorne's fiction: Aylmer in "The Birthmark", Dr. Rappaccini in "Rappaccini's Daughter", Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hollingsworth in *The Blithedale Romance*.

³⁶² In a letter to Longfellow, Hawthorne characterized himself as an owl peering out of the darkness at his prey and removed from the "main current of life" (Flibbert: 124). See: Hawthorne (1984). *The Letters, 1813-1843*. Ed. Thomas Woodson et al.. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press: 251.

congregation through alienating shades of a dark veil; Heidegger and Aylmer, whose chilling detachment blind them to their deadly purposes; Ethan Brand, described as a “cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment”; Chillingworth, peering into the soul of Dimmesdale; Coverdale, staring into Zenobia’s and Priscilla’s chamber with ‘that cold tendency [. . .] which made me pry with a speculative interest into people’s passions and impulses. “Recall the image of Jaffrey Pyncheon staring into the shop window”. (Flibbert: 124)

Even though Schoolteacher shares Holgrave’s detached and “objective” approach to life, his cruel methods are taken to their ultimate consequences: he destroys, physically and psychologically, his object of study, the lives of those categorized as animals.

Hawthorne uses Holgrave, a central character, to represent the scientist and, through him, he expresses an ambiguous, but benign, approach to science and technology. Holgrave’s curiosity “borders on the unsympathetic search for sin” (Hansen: 46). In his relations with the inhabitants of the mansion, he seems to be in search of mental food and not heart-substance (Junkins: 198).³⁶³ Phoebe accuses him of being a cold observer of the Pyncheons’ plight: “The spiritual peril of Holgrave resides in his intellect. He is daringly speculative, prone to wander far from the safe center of things” (Fogle 1952: 157). The young woman cannot conceive his intellectual interest in her cousins and herself, since he does not get emotionally involved: they are only their object of study. Holgrave says: “It is not my impulse—as regards these two individuals—either to help or hinder; but to look on, to analyze, to explain matters to myself, and to comprehend the drama which, for almost two hundred years, had been dragging its slow length over the ground, where you and I tread” (Gables: 216). For Hawthorne,

the complete materialist, who is deluded by appearance and attempts to become appearance himself, is much less attractive [. . .] than the opposite, the man of pure intellect led astray by speculation. Westervelt of *The Blithedale Romance*, for example, offers less opportunity to insight than Ethan Brand, or Chillingworth, or even Rappaccini. These extremes meet, we may remark, in a common abstraction and disregard for human values. (Fogle 1952: 160)

Holgrave’s detachment from the object of his study makes it impossible for him to understand the complexity of life. The wizard’s descendant is just watching the Pyncheons’ drama, in which he finally becomes involved when the Judge dies. In the last chapters of the *Seven Gables*, Holgrave’s propensity for cool observation and isolation changes progressively, mainly as result of his love for Phoebe, who “aids Holgrave in restraining his tendency to be an ‘all-observant’ [. . .] peeper” (Crews: 191). His genuine concern for Clifford and Hepzibah’s ordeal, when they flee from the

³⁶³ Millington believes that “Holgrave’s connection with the ‘eye’ suggests a violation of the laws of sympathetic exchange that govern the domestic sphere; he becomes [. . .] a consumer of the experience of others rather than a sharer of emotional ‘sustenance.’ This kind of chosen marginality is not only isolating but, as we shall see, threatens to reproduce the appropriating relation to others that Jaffrey embodies” (1992: 132). Ringe (1950: 121), Buitenhuis (1991: 101), Rudolph Von Abele (1967: 398), Crews (191) and Fogle (1952: 157) express similar views.

house after Judge Pyncheon's death, shows that he has come to feel sympathy and responsibility for them.

Unlike Schoolteacher, Holgrave is not just a scientist, but also an artist, who uses his cameras to observe those around him, "motivated by an intellectual curiosity of which his daguerreotypes are emblems" (Male 1967: 436). According to Crews, he is "the character who most resembles Hawthorne-as-artist" (173). The wizard's descendant not only devotes himself to the daguerreotype, but he also shows other artistic tendencies, such as writing (his name is "on the covers of Graham and Goody"). Baym says,

Because Holgrave represents creative energy he is also a type of artist. Through him Hawthorne returns to some of the questions suggested in *The Scarlet Letter* and "The Custom House" about the nature of art and the problems of the artist in a repressive society. Holgrave is a kind of archetypal artist for he has mastered a variety of media and is unattached to his productions. Hawthorne often refers to him as 'the artist.' He is presented as a contrast, in his artistry, to previous Maules, in whom artistic energies were perverted [. . .]. (1976: 159)

Through the mesmeric powers he inherits from his family, Holgrave also shows his artistic and intellectual inclinations: his "dangerous curiosity and his potential power are both contained within his gift of mesmerism, which is for Hawthorne a violation of the human spirit" (Fogle 1952: 157). Unlike Schoolteacher, Holgrave, as a mesmerist, becomes a sort of wizard, a typical figure of the traditional gothic tradition, which was especially interested in pseudo-sciences. However, the hypnotist, like the slaveholder, subjects the spellbound person to his will. Consequently, both Holgrave and Schoolteacher's intellectual pursuits are associated with the enslavement of human beings (only women in Hawthorne's fiction). In the chapter "Alice Pyncheon", when Holgrave is telling Phoebe his story about their common ancestors, he induces in her a hypnotic state similar to that produced in the proud Alice by Matthew Maule. Even though Phoebe is vulnerable, he does not take advantage of the situation. The young wizard resists "the temptation to place the will of another Pyncheon in bondage to him" (Alfred Marks 1967b: 345). Holgrave's ancestor, like Schoolteacher, made Alice Pyncheon a slave to his will. However, the daguerreotypist shows respect for another's individuality and sets Phoebe free.

In Holgrave's tale, Hawthorne makes a clear association between sex and art, characteristic of Gothic fiction: "Alice Pyncheon's legend and the circumstances of its narration sum up everything Hawthorne has to say about the secret meaning of art" (Crews: 191). The daguerreotypist seduces Phoebe and casts a spell on her through art: "This hold has been won through the mesmeric power of art, and motivated not simply by desire but by the prying and rapacious tendency which in Hawthorne's harsh

view constitutes the artistic character” (Crews: 192).³⁶⁴ This scene parallels the typical rape (even if it is thwarted) of the innocent maiden by the gothic villain. However, Holgrave is only a potential villain, since he chooses to respect Phoebe. Baym thinks that,

Holgrave’s reading re-creates Alice’s erotic response in Phoebe; so Hawthorne demonstrates the sexual power of art and its near relation to witchcraft. Art and sex are both expressions of the creative energy which, ideally, they should celebrate [. . .] in a repressive society, art and sex are both inhibited and go underground. Denied legitimate expression, they erupt not only in actions that are deemed criminal by the society, but in acts that are deliberately perverse. (1976: 161)

Holgrave almost commits the greatest of all Hawthornian gothic sins: the profanation of the sacred human heart; but, unlike Schoolteacher, he refuses to treat people as property. Hawthorne emphasizes the daguerreotypist’s honesty: “If, early in his career, Holgrave is a relativist in some matters, he always preserves undefiled his personal integrity—and this matters most to Hawthorne” (Alfred Levy: 464).³⁶⁵ According to Crews, Holgrave is a model of self-restraint “from the morbid ‘experimentation’ upon womankind that is so tempting for Hawthornian males generally” (187). The young wizard is not like other mesmerists of Hawthorne’s fiction, such as Westervelt, who, as the slaveholder, forces his will upon other human beings. He respects the sanctity of the “souls” of the people close to him: “Holgrave had never sought to impose his will arbitrarily upon another, ‘had never violated the innermost man, but had carried his conscience along with him’” (Alfred Levy: 464). Holgrave’s “refusal to appropriate Phoebe breaks the relation between Maule and Pyncheon out of the determinism of gothic legend and reveals it to be part of a transformable history of human choices. And implicit in Holgrave’s act is an ethics of private relationship that understands the violability of the self as the condition of human connection” (Millington 1992: 140). This act means a rejection of the past, forecasting retribution. As Beebe points out, “With this [. . .] the first round of the circling spiral curve is completed, and a new cycle started” (11).

3.3.3. Paul D, the Last of the Sweet Home Men

Paul D as a Gothic character has no parallel in *Seven Gables*. However, he shares some traits with Clifford, Holgrave and even with Phoebe. In *Beloved*, as a Gothic romance, Paul D is the heroine’s male friend who, despite his own ghosts,

³⁶⁴ Abele claims that in the theme of Holgrave’s short story, “the exercise of occult powers is related to the sexual impulse—quite as if, by the by, a ‘gift’ for some sort of ‘magic’ were either adjunct to, or symbolic of, virility” (1967: 398). However, his powers are satirized when he hypnotizes one of the Pyncheon chickens (1967: 399).

³⁶⁵ Male thinks that Holgrave’s clothes, his simple inexpensive suit and clean linen, symbolize “that he has retained his integrity despite past vicissitudes” (1967: 436).

stands by her side and comforts her. He hints at the complicated male-female relationship and the disturbing nature of the traditional patriarchal family, characteristic of the Gothic genre. The Gothic has portrayed persecuting and threatening males, but also protecting males. As Molly Hite observes “the potentiality of men to be murderers as well as rescuers of dependent women is inscribed in the culture, as well as in the fictions the culture produces” (qtd. in Teeter: 226).³⁶⁶ N. Teeter claims that it is not surprising that a Female Gothic novel would “contain males who function as persecutors or saviors because they mirror the female’s ambivalence about herself” (229).

3.3.3.1. Paul D and Holgrave as Protecting Males

Unlike Paul D, a modern gothic hero, Holgrave fits more accurately the typical figure of early gothic fiction, an artist-scientist, a wizard and a daguerreotypist. Both Paul D and Holgrave share some general characteristics. They are the last members of their group: Paul D is the last of the Sweet Home men and Holgrave is the Maules’ last descendant. Neither of them has a proper place in the haunted house: Holgrave dwells in a remote gable; on the other hand, Paul D is removed by the feminine demonic force, Beloved, who commands him out of the women’s realm. They both defy the patriarchal system: Paul D, on different occasions, as when he tries to escape and kill one of his masters; Holgrave, as a radical rebel who attacks institutions and authority, criticizing the class system of the moment.

In his role as a protecting male, Paul D resembles Holgrave, who at the end of *Seven Gables*, withdraws his intellectual tendencies to get involved in Hepzibah and Clifford’s situation. In both *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*, Paul D and Holgrave are the heroines’ lovers. From his arrival at the haunted house, Paul D takes the role of the man who tries to protect and support 124’s vulnerable women. He initially saves them from the revenant which inhabits the house. In his Gothic role as a protecting male, at the end of the story, Paul D returns to the haunted dwelling to take care of Sethe, the woman of his life, and to meet his destiny. Sethe is broken-down when Paul D finds her. She is lying on Baby Suggs’s bed under a quilt of merry colors, humming the lullaby she used to sing to her children. Paul D and Sethe “Together [. . .] might form a story different from the suffering of Beloved’s story and from the tyranny of history that her story represents” (Pérez-Torres 1999: 192). He states his desire to build a future with Sethe. To have a future Morrison’s characters have to recover their past.

³⁶⁶ Original text quoted: Molly Hite (1989). “Other Side, Other Women: Lady Oracle”. *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narrative*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press: 127-167.

Both Paul D and Holgrave explore the dynamics of possession that regulates the traditional male-female relationship and patriarchal family, which characterize Gothic fiction. In *Seven Gables*, the last of the Maules' descendants almost mesmerizes Phoebe; in *Beloved*, Paul D's exorcism imposes his patriarchal control over the feminine household. At the very beginning of *Beloved*, when the last of the Sweet Home men expels the spiteful spirit who resides at 124 Bluestone, his action is perceived as the menace of the man, a possible patriarch, to the world of women. As Teeter writes, Denver blames him for getting rid of the only company she has had until then. Only Sethe "credits him (as a man) for that same act of exorcism and for taking 'its place for himself' (*Beloved*: 104) (227). Teeter points out that "The daughter perceives him as a threat and the mother sees him as her savior" (227).

Unlike Holgrave, Paul D, Mary P. Carden points out, finds impediments to putting together a nuclear family. In his patriarchal attempts, Morrison explores one of the most important Gothic concerns, the position of the traditional family as a means to reconstruct the shattered slave's self, especially the black female's. From the very beginning, Denver resents Paul D because of his usurpation of the spirit's space and his appropriation of her mother, with whom he can share common memories, while she is excluded. On the day of the carnival Denver begins to accept him, symbolized by the shadows holding hands, as a united family. Until the revenant's arrival, the novel deals with the couple's attempts at a new domestic order: a difficult task, since 124 has been a female realm for a long time, without any subjection to the authority of fathers or husbands (Carden: online). Denver welcomes the resurrected ghost, who becomes her companion. When Paul D asks Denver if *Beloved* had lifted the rocking chair single-handed and she lies, the chance of a relationship between the man and the young girl vanishes, "if there had been an open latch between them, it would have closed" (*Beloved*: 56). On the other hand, *Beloved*'s presence forces Paul D to act as a surrogate father figure to another defiant daughter (Carden: online). Later on, she will show his powerlessness. Morrison seems to question the black male's position in the family when his patriarchal attempts are finally frustrated by the revenant's demonic female force.

Beloved gets rid of the "threatening" male. First, she moves him from the rocker to Baby Suggs's room, then to the storeroom. Finally, he is forced out of 124 and into the cold house, far from Sethe's reach and under the ghost's control, "away from the communal flame of the kitchen" (Askeland: 173). There the ghost-girl forces him to have sex. His sexual encounter is so unspeakable that he cannot tell Sethe, instead he asks her if she would get pregnant. Carden argues that "Her pregnancy would prove his ownership in a culture that demands that men own women while producing a child

subject to his authority, thus creating normative family within intelligible domestic space” (online). This is Paul D’s last attempt at establishing the Law of the Father in 124’s household. However, it is not until the end of the story that he has a new chance to form a family: when he returns to occupy his position next to Sethe’s and renounces to establish any patriarchal dispositions in the household.

In the conclusion of *Beloved*, Morrison expresses the “necessity to give men their proper place in a world which, if it remains exclusively female, is doomed to mental suffocation” (Bonnet: online). On the other hand, in *Seven Gables*, the young reformer, like Paul D, decides to put his story next to Phoebe’s and together they abandon the old mansion to start a new life. At the end of both Morrison’s and Hawthorne’s gothic romances, heterosexual love succeeds and makes redemption possible, bringing new possibilities for a hopeful future.

3.3.3.2. The Wandering Man

Both Hawthorne and Morrison recreate the typical Gothic figure of the Wandering Man. In black communities, women remain stationary, in houses, representing domestic values, both the privileges and drawbacks of being attached to a place; whereas the black male’s wandering is associated with his capacity for freedom. He can go anywhere he wants to at any given time. But more than that, his endless traveling is a getaway: “If a Negro got legs he ought to use them. Sit down too long, somebody will figure out a way to tie them up” (*Beloved*: 38). It is a physical escape to avoid white men’s influence and power over his life, but it is also a psychological one, since the black male is trying to leave his memories of slavery behind. As bell hooks remarks, the gender disempowerment of slavery makes the black man repudiate his role as a provider and protector, while he does not necessarily reject his dominant male position toward the female (qtd. in Carden: online). Carden asserts that “In American culture, ‘man’ signifies head of household, protector of wife and children, giver of the law, guardian of culture. But black men, as travelers driven to ‘secondary routes,’ had no such foundation on which to base identity” (online). In contrast to the traditional Gothic figure of the Wanderer, Morrison recreates her own black version, which fits African American fiction. She depicts a “wandering black man, a man displaced by his social, economic, and political disfranchisement” and “his journey to find himself and his place among women-centered African American communities” (Carol Henderson: 87).

On the other hand, Holgrave as a wanderer embodies the nineteenth-century Emersonian man, a self-made man who can control his destiny. Only when Paul D and Holgrave meet their respective heroines, do they want to settle and end their

wandering days. Holgrave is depicted as a sort of adventurer who moves from profession to profession, from place to place.³⁶⁷ According to Henry James, Holgrave is a “young man still more modern, holding the latest opinions, who has sought his fortune up and down the world, and, though he has not found it, takes a genial and enthusiastic view of the future” (361). The young man is doomed to rootlessness because of his ancestors’ crime and wizardry: “Homeless as he had been—continually changing his whereabouts [. . .] putting off one exterior, and snatching up another to be soon shifted for a third” (Gables: 177). Hawthorne describes him as a true wanderer:

Though now but twenty-two years old [. . .] [Holgrave] had already been, first, a country schoolmaster; next, a salesman in a country store; and either at the same time or afterwards, the political editor of a country newspaper. He had subsequently travelled New England and the Middle States, as a pedler [. . .]. In an episodic way he had studied a practiced dentistry [. . .]. As a supernumerary official [. . .] he had visited Europe [. . .]. At a later period he had spent some months in a community of Fourierists. Still more recently he had been a public lecturer on Mesmerism. (Gables: 176)

His mobility associates him with one of the essential characteristics of American identity and society, its fluidity. Holgrave has gone away from his family roots. He has taken on a new identity. Holgrave stands as the Gothic transforming individual, whose disguised Maule identity is not revealed until the end of the story. According to Baym,

He has made the particularly American response for the past—left it behind, even to the extent of creating a new identity by taking on a new name. He has escaped history by avoiding the forms through which it is preserved and transmitted [. . .]. He must now discover if freedom is possible on any terms other than perpetual rootlessness and flight. He hopes to reattach himself to his sources without forfeiting any of his spiritual independence and flexibility, to be, like the fountain, at once fixed and fluid. (1976: 162)

However, “Though he does not realize it at first, he [Holgrave] is a man in search of roots. Beneath his shifting political beliefs and his varied occupations lies a yearning for stability” (Male 1967: 436). He is in pursuit of his heritage and his desire to settle is finally fulfilled with Phoebe: “Holgrave is drawn powerfully toward the sentimental values at the center of domestic ideology. He discovers within himself a deep need for the self-revelation made possible by sympathetic connection to Phoebe [. . .] the ‘home’ she creates enables him to ‘pour himself out as to another self’” (Millington 1992: 131).

Like Holgrave’s, Paul D’s life is an incessant traveling from one place to another: “This wandering marks him as a character with no roots, no sense of family or of community [. . .]” (Gallego 1994: 12). In his Gothic quest, Paul D, as a run-away slave, escapes to search for both physical and psychological freedom. First, he flees from

³⁶⁷ Baym associates Holgrave’s mobility with the vitality he brings to the old family conflict (1976: 162). On the other hand, Buitenhuis relates his rootlessness with the consumer process (1991: 100).

Sweet Home, but he is caught. Later, he and the gang of prisoners escape from prison and make it to a camp of sick Cherokee, who release them from their chains. From there, he decides to go North following the tree flowers, as the Indians had told him. Like Baby Suggs in the last days of her life, Paul D is tracking color, the color of the flowers that will lead him to freedom. Paul D does not believe he can abide one place. Until his arrival at 124, he tries to flee from all sorts of 'ties': "having lived as a wanderer in America, displaced and out of place everywhere he goes, Paul D is acutely aware of slavery's success in the severing of men from family" (Carden: online). Like Holgrave's, Paul D's search for a true identity and wish to settle are associated with the women of his life. First, for almost two years, the weaver lady in Delaware became his companion. Then when he arrives at 124, Paul D wants to settle with Sethe, since he realizes, from the very first moment, that she is the right woman for him. He thinks that, for seven years, he has been heading toward her, with whom he believes he can make a life.

Both Holgrave and Paul D, with the aid of their women, experience a deep transformation. In contrast to his predecessors, Holgrave represents an unquestionable improvement. Hoffman argues that "Holgrave is the only hero in Hawthorne's major romances who has the positive power of self-transformation. Like the folk heroes of popular culture, young Holgrave is a master of metamorphosis" (1967: 481). Holgrave possesses his family's hypnotic powers, but he respects the others' souls. Throughout the narrative, his intellectual approach to life changes. At the beginning of the story, he is only interested in Hepzibah and Clifford as an object of study and observation. However, he shows real concern for the old couple when they disappear after Judge Pyncheon's death. Holgrave's confrontation with death also brings him new awareness, since he discovers the true meaning of guilt and retribution.

At the end of the story, as Rudolph von Abele points out, Holgrave experiences a radical transformation into a settled conservative— partially due to his love for Phoebe—who accepts the domestic ideology of the middle class: "from a bearded, peripatetic and enthusiastic reformer to a settled and weary conservative—in part through the yeasty work of his love for Phoebe Pyncheon" (1967: 394). Alfred Levy claims: "Phoebe is the agent of this maturation, and he acknowledges her stabilizing influence" (465). Although the young woman is afraid that Holgrave's influence will take her away from her conservative life, the daguerreotypist thinks that it is going to be the other way around: from that point on, it will be his lot "to set out trees and to make fences, and to build a house for another generation" (Gables: 307). Thus the reformer admits that he already feels the traditional values. The young couple is at that moment standing under the portrait of Colonel Pyncheon, the "model conservative". At the end

of *Seven Gables*, both Holgrave and Phoebe experience a metamorphosis that allows them to attain full moral balance.

On the other hand, Paul D cannot settle with Sethe until both of them have confronted their memories. After Stamp Paid shows him the old newspaper clipping about Sethe's infanticide, Paul D asks her about the crime. He recriminates her harshly for behaving as an animal, since he still feels guilty about his sexual encounter with Beloved, "How fast he had moved from his shame to hers. From his cold-house secret to her too-thick love" (Beloved: 165). His accusations make a forest spring up between them: "the forest was locking the distance between them, giving it shape and heft" (Beloved: 165). As Carden points out, "the severed bond of the past takes precedence over the romantic bond that provides for the future" (online). Paul D, who has not finished dealing with his own memories, is not ready to start a relationship with Sethe on new terms. He must abandon the female realm on a self-discovery journey which helps him accept his past and reconstruct his manhood. As Carol Henderson argues, "his reencounter with Sethe forces him to confront the demons of the past and to search for the true meaning of manhood from both its African and American roots" (104).

After leaving 124, Paul D realizes that he has lost the only thing he has desired, Sethe, and this makes him cry. He thinks that his strategy for survival has failed. After the physical and psychological tortures he suffers in prison, he shuts his heart so as not to feel ever again. However, Paul D cannot keep his feelings buried or avoid the past any longer. His sex with Beloved has opened his tobacco tin and now he is vulnerable: "[he] who had locked the tobacco tin of his past in his chest, must come to remember" (Sale: 170). Paul D has to confront the memories he has tried a long time to annihilate. By himself, the wandering man faces his own ghosts, the only strategy that can give him back his whole selfhood.

At the end of the story, Paul D comes back to Sethe, in an act of self-affirmation, to settle with her. He has finally, at least partially, recovered his selfhood. David Lawrence suggests that now the memories of his haunting past "[are] constructive rather than destructive, giving him the freedom, finally, to choose his own desire" (98). Paul D needs Sethe so as to fulfill complete manhood: "The process is complete when he walks back into the house and puts his image firmly in place in Sethe's bed, again linking the notions of freedom of movement/territory and sex/manhood" (Cuder: 40). When Paul D is by Sethe's side, he remembers what Sixo told him about the Thirty-Mile Woman to describe what he felt for her, "She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order. It's good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of your mind"

(Beloved: 272-273). Sethe is a friend of Paul D's mind, "Sethe helps form the syntax of Paul D's life", and he wants "to put his story next to hers" (Beloved: 273) (Pérez-Torres 1999: 192). At the end of *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*, both Holgrave and Paul D can confront their troubling past and finish their gothic quest for self-definition next to their women.

3.3.3.3. Paul D and Phoebe as Agents of Change

As Britton claims, in both *Beloved* and *Seven Gables* Phoebe and Paul D, are newcomers who alter the relationships among the family members and bring renewal to a house inhabited by the ghosts of the past. Paul D, like Phoebe, is an agent of change who transforms 124 upon his arrival (14). They both are able to mend, at least partially, the broken bonds between the dwellings' inhabitants and their communities.

Paul D puts an end to 124's haunting, exorcising the baby ghost. When he touches Sethe's breasts, the house becomes violent and he fights it back:

"God damn it! Hush up!" Paul D was shouting, falling, reaching for anchor. "Leave the place alone! Get the hell out!" A table rushed toward him and he grabbed its leg. Somehow he managed to stand at an angle and, holding the table by two legs, he bashed it about, wrecking everything, screaming back at the screaming house. "You want to fight, come on! God damn it! She got enough without you. She got enough!"

The quaking slowed to an occasional lurch, but Paul D did not stop whipping the table around until everything was rock quiet. (Beloved: 18)

When the rumbling stops, the ghost can no longer be felt. Paul D has broken up "the place, making room, shifting it, moving it over to someplace else, then standing in the place he had made" (Beloved: 39). A new life seems to start for Sethe and Denver. In his rite of exorcism the Gothic hero manages to remove temporarily the demonic female force.³⁶⁸

On the other hand, Phoebe is an agent of change, who "mediates the ancestral pretensions of the aristocratic Pyncheons and the arrogant pride of the humble Maules, neutralizing generations of hostility. In the process the icy evil of clannishness melts into the common stream of love that invigorates the life of the community" (William Stein: 153). She unconsciously accomplishes the metamorphosis of those near her: "Her method is always to draw the potential from the individual, never to impose her will

³⁶⁸ As Trudier Harris claims in *Fiction and Folklore: The Novels of Toni Morrison* (1991), Paul D's exorcism can be seen as a contest between male and female forces. However, in my opinion, Trudier Harris' interpretation of this scene seems too stretched in its feminist implications. She believes that when the black man enters 124, he brings with him the ancient fear of women: he feels the physical threat of the house, as a representation of the womb or the vagina (1991: 155). It seems questionable that Paul D is in any way scared of females: he has just spent two years with the woman of Delaware and he wishes to settle with Sethe shortly after his arrival. However, it is true, on the other hand, that the traveling man is felt as a threatening male force by Denver and Beloved, mostly because they are jealous of him. Besides, before his departure, he appears as a patriarchal menace: he may try to impose patriarchy over the world of women.

on another—the cardinal sin for Hawthorne” (Alfred Levy: 469). The young woman manages to transform the radical Holgrave: “Phoebe cures the culturally outcast by moving them from the margins of the community outward its domestic center [. . .] her sympathy moves him from alienation to self-disclosure” (Millington 1992: 117). With her revitalizing capabilities she is able to bring the best out of everything: the inhabitants of the house and the fowls. Phoebe’s power of transformation allows her to change the decaying colonial past, thus symbolizing democratic renewal and the energy of ordinary people. She is the New England woman who is able to bring back the lost Eden to the old house.

Similarly, Paul D embodies healing and regenerating properties:³⁶⁹ he was the “kind of man who could walk into a house and make the women cry [. . .]. There was something blessed in his manner [. . .]. Strong women and wise saw him and told him things they only told each other” (Beloved: 17). According to Carden, “Paul D’s blessedness [. . .] facilitates relationships outside the power-inflected barriers raised between men and women [. . .] he gives women relief and outlet [. . .] a man women are drawn to on an instinctual level” (online). The black man has revivifying effects on 124’s female inhabitants. Empathy is probably his best and most important quality: “As though all you had to do was get his attention and right away he produced the feeling you were feeling” (Beloved: 7-8). Paul D exerts a strong revitalizing and rejuvenating influence on Sethe who tells him, “Man, you make me feel like a girl” (Beloved: 127). Because of his blessedness, Paul D is the only one who can cure Sethe and bring her back to life. He makes the nerves of her back, which has been “dead for years”, feel again, rubbing it in a healing ritual that reminds us of Amy and Baby Suggs’s previous soothing massages. Paul D is trying “to move Sethe away from the destructive past toward a new beginning [. . .] a movement beyond the structures of patriarchy and the violence of slavery” (Pérez-Torres 1999: 193).

Paul D resumes his healing when he comes back to 124 after the exorcism. He finds Sethe, as a defeated heroine, lying in bed broken down, as Baby Suggs was after the crime. Sethe, completely exhausted, has retired to her mother-in-law’s bed to die. When Paul D starts bathing her in a sort of cleansing ritual, she thinks that her parts will not hold together. However, when Sethe looks at him: “She realizes the need to connect with and to rely upon another” (Pérez-Torres 1999: 192). Paul D’s blessedness makes her cry and her tears signal a rebirth. Until then Sethe, as a

³⁶⁹ According to Chinwe Achebe, an “experienced healer who knows how to appease ‘Nue Mmiri’ with the appropriate rituals, does indeed, succeed in uncovering the chameleon-like nature of the ‘ogbanje mmiri’ [the ogbanje associated with water and water deities] phenomenon” (qtd. in Ogunyemi: online). Original text quoted: Chinwe Achebe (1986). *The World of the Ogbanje*. Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension: 36.

consequence of her maternal selflessness, has not accepted her own worth. When Paul D tells her that she is her best thing, she gets surprised. As David Lawrence argues “Paul D rescues Sethe from mute oblivion, reconnecting her with the talking spirit of companionship and community” (98). If Sethe really wants to have a future, she needs to start loving herself. The heroine’s search for self-affirmation cannot be fulfilled without recognition of her worthiness. Morrison says that “she [Sethe] can consider the possibility of an individual pride, of a real self which says ‘you’re your best thing’. Just to begin to think of herself as a proper name—she’s always thought of herself as a mother, as her role” (Darling: 251). Sethe, the demonic female, has finally completed the exorcism of her own ghosts.³⁷⁰

As a healer, the black man shares with Phoebe the ability to sing. He is called the ‘singing man.’ For the young woman, her gift associates her symbolically with the birds, youth and the goodness of nature. On the other hand, for the slaves this skill emphasizes their humanity. Not only does it help them reclaim and affirm their selfhood, but it also protects them against despair in the face of cruelty and inhuman treatment: “Musical improvisation is a practice that saves Paul D from madness and death. In Alfred, Georgia, while he is forced to work and live like an animal, he and the other slaves with whom he works help each other through the ordeal by singing” (Keizer: online). Singing allows Paul D to endure the enormous physical and psychological abuse he has suffered: “Singing about the traumatic event empowers Paul D to confront his horrific past and make meaning of his dehumanizing experiences” (Capuano: online). It offers him the opportunity to express his personal testimonies and gives him an alternate “voice:” “The songs he creates are [. . .] signs of his individual self” (Keizer: online).

In fact, Paul D, who has never been isolated the way the inhabitants of 124 have been, is able to mend—even though only temporarily—the broken social nexus between Sethe, Denver and the black community. He feels really happy the day of the carnival when he manages to open a door to the world for Sethe and Denver: “In fact there was something about him—when the three of them stood together watching Midget dance—that made the stares of other Negroes kind, gentle, something Denver did not remember seeing in their faces. Several even nodded and smiled at her mother, no one, apparently, able to withstand sharing the pleasure Paul D was having” (Beloved: 48).

On the other hand, Phoebe becomes the voice of the communal in *Seven Gables*. She is not only the angel of the house, but she is also part of the community.

³⁷⁰ Ana M^a Manzananas Calvo claims that, at the end of the story Sethe gets freedom from her unspeakable memories (96).

Phoebe is the only character living in the house that chooses to relate to people. Holgrave dwells in a proud and intellectual isolation whereas Clifford and Hepzibah keep a passive and “aristocratic” seclusion. The young woman brings them out of their detachment from society: “She enters the tomb of the seven gables where all seems divorced from normal relationships, and she restores an equilibrium to all three of the isolated inhabitants” (Alfred Levy: 468). According to Millington:

Phoebe is at once the creator of the home and the guarantor of the real; her touch ensures not simply one's comfort but one's place within the human community, one's escape from the meaningless, the 'delusion,' of a merely private selfhood. This celebration of womanly 'influence' has become an ontological claim; being is conferred by the communal connection presided over by women and beginning in the home. (1992: 118)

Phoebe becomes the bond to the community for the inhabitants of the old mansion.

3.3.3.4. Paul D and Clifford, the Suffering Men

Both Clifford and Paul D are victims of the unfair patriarchal systems and the tyrannical figures, Schoolteacher and Judge Pyncheon, who rule them. They suffer terrible ordeals, which make them appear as Christ figures. Despite being males their vulnerability in the face of injustice is enhanced. The consequences of the tortures they undergo are unspeakable and cannot completely be mended. However, Hawthorne highlights how the Fortunate Fall has beneficial effects: it makes individuals grow. On the other hand, the physical and psychological suffering the black man experiences test his humanity and ability to survive.

Clifford's great tragedy begins when Judge Pyncheon accuses him of his uncle's murder and he is sentenced to prison. His existence becomes a torment: “All his life long, he had been learning how to be wretched” (Gables: 149). At the beginning of the story, Clifford has been released from jail and Judge Pyncheon starts to harass him relentlessly so as to get the secret of the concealed map out of him. The old bachelor cannot endure more suffering; confronting him with his relative is “like flinging a porcelain vase, with already a crack in it, against a granite column” (Gables: 242). When the old bachelor looks fascinated at the waters of Maule's Well, he can see the shifting “shapes of loveliness that were symbolic of his native character, *and now and then a stern and dreadful shape, that typified his fate*” (Gables: 154; emphasis added).

Clifford parallels a typical character of earlier gothic romances, the rightful heir who has been dispossessed by the usurping villain. The basic plot is connected to a classic gothic theme: “the restoration of order to a world in which a usurper has broken the natural line of descent and seized possessions that are not rightfully his” (Ringe 1982: 19). The old bachelor is clearly the victim of this Gothic romance, since he has been unjustly dispossessed and has spent twenty years of his life in prison for a crime

he did not commit. His hereditary weakness has been enhanced by his long sentence and now he has become a ghost, an infantile and impotent man, who haunts the Pyncheon mansion: he “has been mutilated by contact with the Pyncheon curse” (Fogle 1952: 155).

Clifford is the “Adam” of *Seven Gables*, the childish representation of innocence that confronts the evil of a corrupted world. He is happy in his garden-life, “the Eden of a *thunder-smitten Adam*, who had fled for refuge thither out of the same dreary and perilous wilderness, into which the original Adam was expelled” (Gables: 150; emphasis added). As R. W. Lewis has shown in his book *The American Adam*, in many Gothic works, Hawthorne sees in the American experience a re-creation of the story of Adam and, through Clifford, he exploits the metaphor of the American individual as Adam (mostly after the Fall). Thus *Seven Gables* becomes a meditation on life in America and the meaning of national identity. Clifford as Adam is not completely innocent. His family past and the curse that hovers over it darken his birth. According to the Calvinistic doctrine, he has inherited a taint. However, Clifford is mostly innocent and his fall reveals his helplessness in facing the evil of the world.

Clifford’s fall is fortunate in the sense that it helps him mature. R. W. B. Lewis states that, according to the elder Henry James, in order to enter the ranks of manhood, the individual has to fall and pass beyond childhood in an encounter with evil, without which the self cannot grow: “the soul’s realization of itself under the impact of and by engagement with evil—the tragic rise born of the fortunate fall [. . .]. It is what has to happen to ‘golden youth’ if it is to mature” (122). There is a deeper happiness that can only be found after the fall, through suffering. Miriam, in *The Marble Faun*, offers the clue to this mystery: “Was that very sin—into which Adam precipitated himself and all his race—was it the destined means by which, over a long pathway of toil and sorrow, we are to attain a higher, brighter, and profounder happiness, than our lost birthright gave?” (434). Clifford’s fall is, in some aspects, an upward step, rising to true manhood.³⁷¹

As Buitenhuis has shown, Clifford becomes a Christ figure, who pays for the Pyncheons’ sins with a long sentence in prison. He is approximately the same age Christ was when he came out of his grave. The old bachelor is portrayed in various subtle ways as a type of Christ (1991: 66). He is “despised and rejected” (Isa. 53: 3). His pathetic childishness reminds us of Christ’s words: “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt.18: 3). Regarding weakness and foolish character, Paul said in the New

³⁷¹ See the chapter “The Fortunate Fall: The Elder James and Horace Bushnell” (R. W.B. Lewis: 54-73).

Testament, "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Cor. 1: 27). His face is described as a "record of infinite sorrow;" Christ is also described as "a man of sorrows" (Isa. 53: 31). Buitenhuis also finds a connection between Christ's crown of thorns at his crucifixion, and Clifford's desire to pinch a rose thorn to feel pain and prove himself awake. Finally, his sacrificial role is "central to the meaning of the novel. Through him, the house of Pyncheon is cleansed and redeemed from the repeated cycle of death and damnation" (1991: 67).

On the other hand, Morrison shows the heroic endurance of the black male slave's survival in the face of the most horrendous ordeal. His journey offers the most terrible Gothic overtones. Paul D, like Hawthorne's old bachelor, is a Christ figure. Like Christ, Paul D undergoes unspeakable tortures and is resurrected from his grave in Alfred, Georgia: "By making the sufferings of Paul D parallel those of Christ, Morrison intimates the depth of the pain experienced by black men" (Ochoa: online). Paul D's torments start on the farm. Like other slaves, he cannot remember his mother and did not see his father. However, he is lucky to have his half-brothers. At that time Paul D believes in Mr. Garner's "enlightened slavery". He lives "isolated in a wonderful lie, dismissing Halle's and Baby Suggs's life before Sweet Home as bad luck. Ignorant or amused by Sixo's dark stories" (Beloved: 221). However, Mr. Garner's benign ownership, he does not hesitate to sell one of his brothers when he needs extra money on the farm.

In the gothic world of slavery, the ordeal of the black male slave takes on unbelievable proportions, transforming him into a demonic self, a monster or an animal. Schoolteacher's rule shows the cruelest side of slavery. After Paul D's failed getaway, Schoolteacher kills one of his brothers and confines him to the bit. Then he sells the black male to a new master, whom he tries to kill. Paul D is sent to a prison in Alfred, Georgia, where he suffers physical and mental tortures. In prison he is "buried" in a nightmarish world: he sleeps underground in a box and comes out just to break rocks. Alfred marks Paul D's true Gothic descent to Hell (Bonnet: online). Under the guards' coercion and tortures, black men are unquestionably powerless and vulnerable to the dominant patriarchal white rule.

Under the abhorrent circumstances of the prison, survival seems impossible. The chain gang, while working in the fields, sing so as to kill "the flirt whom folks called Life for leading them on. Making them think the next sunrise would be worth it; that another stroke of time would do it at last. Only when she was dead would they be safe" (Beloved: 109). They sing and dance "two-step to the music of hand-forged iron" (Beloved: 108) to affirm their humanity in the face of their absolute and devastating

dehumanization. Paul D feels that he stays alive just to sing songs that murder life and to watch an aspen, “his little love”, which replaces his beloved tree on Sweet Home, Brother, and helps him to keep some of his humanity. As Bonnet argues, the hellish Gothic world of Alfred can only be seen as a synonym of death: “It is thematized by the prisoners’ songs to ‘Mr Death’ and symbolized by a number of details: the pall-like mist that shrouds the scenery, the latter’s uniform colorlessness, the underground cages that are reminiscent of the netherworld, the image of ‘the unshriven dead, zombies on the loose’ [. . .]” (online).

3.3.3.5. Emasculation and Transgressive Sexuality

Both Clifford and Paul D undergo a process of emasculation, while they also hint at the gothic blur of sexual distinctions. Tyranny is the source of their effeminacy and dehumanization. In *Seven Gables*, Clifford’s emasculation is the result of his long sentence, his weakness and his impotence in the confrontation with the dominant patriarch. The mentally handicapped Clifford is unjustly sentenced and spends a long time in jail, about which we know nothing; but when he is released, he is completely dehumanized, a shadow self.³⁷² The threat of the tyrannical villain, Judge Pyncheon, hovers over him. On the other hand, through Clifford’s femininity, sterility and homosexuality, Hawthorne expresses gothic anxieties about transgressive sexuality. The old bachelor is delicate and his smile has a “charm of wonderful beauty”, which contrasts with the characteristic Pyncheon frown. His gentleness makes him helpless against the Judge’s ruthless energy and his womanliness is highlighted, hinting at Clifford’s homosexuality: “Feminine traits, moulded inseparably with those of the other sex!” (Gables: 60), a face “almost too soft and gentle for a man’s” (Gables: 92), his “affection and sympathy for flowers is almost exclusively a woman’s trait” (Gables: 147). Clifford’s suggested homosexuality parallels the frequent association, in Gothic fiction, between effeminacy, aristocracy, decadence and even art.³⁷³ His ambiguous sexuality and even sterility is also contrasted to the “over-determined sexuality” of the Italian organ-grinder’s monkey, indicating whites’ anxiety over black males’ sexuality.

³⁷² Because of her ghostly nature, Beloved can be compared to Clifford. The old bachelor of the Pyncheon house is seen as a ghost-man, who has unjustly spent a twenty-year sentence in prison. However, Beloved is a real ghost who has taken flesh.

³⁷³ Louis S. Gross recalls that Eve K. Sedgwick (*Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire*) claims that the nineteenth-century aristocratic homosexual role is the crystallization of a cluster of associations which included effeminacy, connoisseurship, high religion, and an interest in Catholic Europe, all related to the Gothic. Gross adds that, in American tradition, the cluster of associations differs, since homosexuality is linked to “decadent” art: “In fact, the entire Southern Gothic movement of Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, Carson Mc Cullers and William Inge is shaped by those qualities culturally associated with gays, and therefore defined as unhealthy” (59).

On the other hand, Paul D represents emasculation under slavery, while, as Hortense Spillers observes, enslavement blurs gender distinctions:

The captive body is rendered genderless [. . .] diasporic plight marked a theft of the body—a willful and violent [. . .] severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire. Under these conditions, we lose at least gender difference in the outcome, and the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific. (qtd. in Carden: online)³⁷⁴

Slavery also determines the black man's role in the traditional patriarchal household, which is very different from the white male's. Angela Davis points out that "If Black women were hardly 'women' in the accepted sense, the slave system also discouraged male supremacy in Black men [. . .] since Black women as workers could not be treated as the 'weaker sex' or the 'housewife,' Black men could not be candidates for the figure of 'family sex' and certainly not for 'family provider'" (qtd. in Carden: online).³⁷⁵ The black male slave cannot protect his loved ones much less provide for their needs. Halle goes crazy when he watches impotently as the white boys take the milk from Sethe: "the husband of a slave has no power to protect her" (Jacobs: 37). In the final image we get of him, he is by the churn putting butter on his face while remembering his wife's abuse.

When Paul D is on the farm, he still believes that Sweet Home black males are men. In fact, Mr. Garner asserts his black slaves' manhood to the other farmers; but, ironically, he sees himself as a "maker" of men, who "raises" them, as one would chicken or cattle. Paul D's true emasculation starts, after his failed escape,—when he is caught and has a bit put in his mouth—with "Schoolteacher's 'corrections' which are the immediate catalyst for Paul D's psychic disintegration and loss of manhood" (Keizer: online). He cannot forget that while he was wearing the bit, as if he were an animal, he watched a rooster, significantly called Mister, and he felt inferior to it.³⁷⁶ Paul D thinks that the chicken had more freedom and control over its existence than he has. The rooster is a metaphor for manhood:³⁷⁷

Mister was allowed to be and stay what he was. But I wasn't allowed to be and stay what I was. Even if you cooked him you'd be cooking a rooster named Mister. But

³⁷⁴ Original text quoted: Hortense Spillers (1987). "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book". *Diacritics* 17: 65-81.

³⁷⁵ Original text quoted: Angela Davis (1983). *Women, Race and Class*. New York: Vintage.

³⁷⁶ Lee states that "Paul D's rooster becomes the only way for him to express a degradation so severe" (online).

³⁷⁷ Susana Vega González claims that the rooster symbolizes, among other things, masculinity as shown in its phallic representations in Roman sculptures (79). Paul D feels dispossessed of his manhood as a result of slavery, while the rooster's condition is not as degraded as his. Male slaves are emasculated when they are treated as animals, but also when they are treated as children, who must be protected and taken care of. That is why whites call blacks, no matter how old they are, 'boys'; as when Schoolteacher and the other men comes to Bluestone Road searching for Sethe and sees an old black man. They refer to him as "the old nigger boy" (Beloved: 148).

wasn't no way I'd ever be Paul D again, living or dead. Schoolteacher changed me. I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub. (Beloved: 72)

Mr. Garner's death makes it evident that the slaves' masculinity comes from the white owner's authority: Paul D borrows a provisional second-order manhood from a master who allows his slaves to do things the other slave owners did not let them do (Carden: online). He becomes aware of "The limits of their domain and the degree to which they had been isolated in Mr. Garner's 'wonderful lie' [. . .]. They were, under Mr. Garner as under schoolteacher, simply 'the defined' as men, and never the definers of themselves" (Askeland: 166).³⁷⁸ In his Gothic search for self-definition the black male has to confront the fact that his manhood is denied under slavery: "the masculine discourse of unified self-control positions him [Paul D] as a subject, contradicting his dehumanising position as object in the discourse of slavery" (Fitzgerald: 119).

The Gothic world of Alfred terribly destabilizes and transgresses the boundaries of the male slave's sexuality and gender. The first thing in the morning the chain gang gets out of their boxes, "climbs out and up to the ground above" where the slaves kneel down, waiting for their guards' whims: they may want a fellatio from one of the prisoners or even from all of them. The prisoners are asked "Breakfast? Want some breakfast, nigger?" and "Hungry, nigger?" and then they are forced to reply: "Yes, sir" (Beloved: 107).³⁷⁹ Paul D learns how little a black slave's life is worth. If one of the blacks takes a bit of foreskin, he is shot in the head. As Carol Henderson says, "the guards in this instance chose to challenge African American male identity in the context of power. That is, the construction of black male identity becomes predicated upon one's willingness to take a bullet to the head or acquiesce to the guards' demands" (104).³⁸⁰

Black males' bodies are feminized by the whites guards' brutality, putting their manhood into question. In *Homographesis* Lee Edelman argues that, by forcing the prisoners to express homosexual desire, they are symbolically "castrated": "white racists (literarily) *castrate others* while homosexuals (figuratively) are *castrated themselves*" (qtd. in Barnett: 80). They are emasculated by passive homosexuality, when they assume the "faggot" identity (qtd. in Barnett: 81). Carden argues that

³⁷⁸ Weathers wonders if "like Adam naming the animals, did Garner make Paul D a man by simply calling him one, and did schoolteacher, who replaced Garner as chief gardener, a perverse god, make him less than a man when he called him a brute?" (online).

³⁷⁹ Pamela E. Barnett points out that the eating imagery, which had already appeared in Sethe's rape, shows again in the morning ritual of Alfred (80).

³⁸⁰ According to Keizer, Paul D knows that he does not measure up to Sixo's definition of manhood. However, he more than meets the criteria established for manhood by the standards of the slaveholding patriarchy. Paul D cannot simply adopt Sixo's model. He must be a different kind of man (online). Even though Paul D doubts his own masculinity, he knows that having power, as the guards had, and being a man are two very different things.

“Completely subject to the physically weaker white guards, the prisoners occupy the abjected position of powerless women. Their feminization is graphically illustrated in the abuse they suffer each morning” (online). These sexual assaults are one of Paul D’s most painful memories, he “cannot speak of that experience in a language that does not account for the sexually victimized male body or that casts that body as feminized” (Barnett: 83). Sometimes his traumatic memories of his terrible ordeal at Alfred seem to blur and he cannot tell if it was him or somebody else: “Paul D thought he was screaming; his mouth was open and there was this loud throat-splitting sound—but it may have been somebody else” (Beloved: 110).

Later, at 124, the revenant ‘forces’ Paul D to have sex with her and he cannot do anything but surrender to her wishes: “[she] weakens his manhood by compelling him to have sex with her against his will—like the slave owner [. . .] ‘studding his boys’” (Askeland: 173).³⁸¹ His automatic repetition of the words “red heart”, once he has “reached her inside part,” reminds us of a zombie’s behavior. His will is under the ghost’s control. Paul D believes that his sexual acts with Beloved eclipse his days in Alfred: “What shames him is not his slavery, but his dishonor toward Sethe” (Booher: 127). Beloved’s “rape” distorts the male and female’s roles of the Western patriarchal society:

The description of the sex between Beloved and Paul D turns the power dynamics embedded in the heterosexual scene upside down by assigning “womanish” feeling to Paul D and by reversing the gendered gestures of seduction: Beloved forces herself on Paul D, he resists, she prevails. This confusion of male-dominant and female-submissive positions leads him back to the illusory manhood of Sweet Home. (Carden: online)

Beloved’s power over Paul D makes him question his own masculinity again: he is “a victim of a supernatural rape that he feels has emasculated him just as the guards in Alfred, Georgia,” did (Barnett: 82). His affair seems to validate that he is an animal, as Schoolteacher thought he was, and not a man, since he cannot control his sexual drive: “Beloved is Paul D’s nightmare, a projected other who serves as a confirmation of his worst sense of himself” (Koolish, 2001: 190). Paul D connects his feelings with Sweet Home and remembers the impotence he felt with Schoolteacher, but also how Mr. Garner seemed to have created his manhood. Until that moment, his weakened confidence had lain in knowing that Schoolteacher was wrong and that, in Alfred, the white men’s masculinity resided in their guns. However, now Paul D has serious doubts about his real manhood: “he had come to be a rag doll—picked up and put back down

³⁸¹ Thus Beloved’s victory over Paul D is finally achieved through sex: “Paul D compromises his parental authority when the chameleonic [. . .] Beloved [. . .] lures him into the murky waters of what looks like incest” (Ogunyemi: online). As in *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison deals in this scene with a typical gothic sin, the “father-daughter” incest. Lori Askeland sees in Paul D’s violation Beloved’s tyrannical patriarchal influence on the other characters (173).

anywhere any time by a girl young enough to be his daughter” (Beloved: 126). When Paul D suddenly asks Sethe to get pregnant, “She suspects he wants to use her body as a marker, a way of establishing a legacy for himself. By using her body to bear him a child he leaves behind a sign affirming both his manhood and his existence” (Pérez-Torres 1999: 191).³⁸² His masculinity is compromised and he tries “to hold on to her, document his manhood and break out of the girl’s spell—all in one” (Beloved: 128).

3.3.3.6. Rebirth and Self-Assertion

After his thirty years of imprisonment, Clifford is a man “With a mysterious and terrible Past, which had annihilated his memory, and a blank Future before him” (Gables: 149), a ghostly self who gets scared of everything that surrounds him: street objects—such as the omnibus, the water cart and the train—baffle the old bachelor. He is alternately attracted and frightened by the incessant activity and terrible energy of nineteenth-century life. Clifford becomes the isolated and vulnerable gothic individual who can no longer live in the community, which startles him as an alien and potentially hostile reality. His efforts to restore her mutilated life are even more deplorable than Hepzibah’s, but as significant as hers. After his release, like his sister, he struggles fruitlessly to renew his ties to his community. He undergoes an invigorating process with the aid of Phoebe’s beneficial influence. The young woman, as a surrogate mother, represents the old couple’s best chance for rebirth: “Phoebe is repeatedly characterized in the novel by her therapeutic effect on Clifford and the other residents of Seven Gables” (Knadler: 295).³⁸³ As the narrator tells us, throughout the story Clifford is in “a state of second growth and recovery” and “constantly assimilating nutriment for his spirit and intellect from sights, sounds, and events” (Gables: 173).

Clifford, like Paul D, must leave the haunted house and then return to find his destiny. His gothic quest leads to his integration into society. The shock Clifford needs is provided by his discovery of Judge Pyncheon’s dead body. When Hepzibah finds her brother on the threshold of the room where the Judge lies dead, Clifford, in an allusion to *The Pilgrim’s Progress*—tells Hepzibah that they must escape from Giant Despair’s dungeon before the corpse catches them. This is the Puritan allegory of the soul’s search for salvation.³⁸⁴ Judge Pyncheon’s death has lasting beneficial effects on Clifford, who has been relieved from the oppression and torture inflicted by his cousin. From that moment onwards the old bachelor feels a new energy:

³⁸² Pérez-Torres expresses similar views (1998: 132).

³⁸³ As early as 1833, Amariah Brigham linked the nation’s sanity to the necessary beneficent influence of women on the male character (qtd. in Knadler: 289). For more information, see: Amariah Brigham (1833). *Remarks on the Influence of the Mental Cultivation and Mental Excitement upon Health*. Boston.

³⁸⁴ This information is taken from a footnote in Hawthorne’s *Seven Gables* (252).

The shock of Judge Pyncheon's death had a permanently invigorating and ultimately beneficial effect on Clifford. That strong and ponderous man had been Clifford's nightmare. There was no free breath to be drawn, within the sphere of so malevolent an influence. The first effect of freedom, as we have witnessed in Clifford's aimless flight, was a tremulous exhilaration. (Gables: 313)

Clifford thinks that he can definitely leave the old mansion and its morbid influences. He flees the house, dragging his sister with him, in a strange state of excitement. They start off on a stormy day; a gothic menacing atmosphere, which enhances the vulnerability of the old couple's situation. The railroad trip is the old couple's more serious attempt to take control of their lives, but they cannot do it on their own. As soon as Clifford is on the train, his terrible memories seem to vanish and he becomes an advocate of contemporary ideas.

On their trip the inexperienced and innocent old couple cope with an uncomprehending and recognizably hostile gothic world. However, their flight means their return to "the great current of human life". They have started a process of liberation from the old mansion, their literal dungeon; and, consequently, from the dungeon of the heart. This is the beginning of a painful rebirth for sister and brother. Clifford's temporary madness, as a consequence of his cousin's death, signals his definite rebirth after his death-like life. As R. W. B. Lewis points out, in the old bachelor's escape, we can find the first principles of Adamism, an ironic motion "backwards from old age to golden youth" (115). As Clifford tells the passenger he meets in the train:

Sir, the farther I get away from it [the seven-gabled house] the more does the joy, the lightsome freshness, the heart-leap, the intellectual dance, the youth, in short—yes, my youth, my youth!—the more does it come back to me. *No longer ago than this morning, I was old.* I remember looking in the glass, and wondering at my own gray hair, and the wrinkles, many and deep, right across my brow, and the furrows down my cheeks and the prodigious trampling of crow's feet about my temples! It was too soon! I could not bear it! Age had not right to come! I had not lived! But now do I look old? If so, my aspect belies me strangely; for—a great weight being of my mind—I *feel in the very hey-day of my youth, with the world and my best days before me!* (Gables: 262; emphasis added)³⁸⁵

On the train Clifford feels completely renovated, but this is just an illusion: "Clifford, too, wants to make that leap from memory to hope; his Adamic ambition is an ingredient in the novel; but his leap is Icarian" (R. W. B. Lewis: 115). The old couple's search for self-definition can only be fulfilled with Phoebe's and Holgrave's help. Even though they will not accomplish a complete renewal, departing from the house and

³⁸⁵ This is an ironic version of the myth D. H. Lawrence attributed to the direction of Cooper's Leatherstocking novels (from old age in *The Pioneers* to youth in *The Deerslayer*, except for *The Prairie*) and to America: "The Leatherstocking novels [. . .] go backwards from old age to golden youth. That is the true myth of America. She starts old, wrinkled and writhing in an old skin. And there is a gradual sloughing off of the old skin, towards a new youth. It is the myth of America" (qtd. in R. W. B. Lewis: 103). Original text quoted: D. H. Lawrence (1962). *Studies in Classic American Literature*. New York: Viking.

sharing their new life with the youngsters in the midst of the community can make a difference. As Buitenhuis says, unless the characters escape from their past, both historical and familial, and accept their common democratic destiny, they will remain in a state of perpetual infancy; they can never become fully mature, free human beings (1991: 105).

On the other hand, unlike Clifford, Paul D escapes from prison, maybe standing for his capacity of defying the patriarchal system; while the old bachelor's closest attempt to rebellion occurs on his railway trip when he delivers his reformist speech. After eighty-six days buried, life is dead for Paul D. However, one day a terrible storm, which threatens to drown them, gives the gang chain a chance to run away and they manage to make it to freedom. As for Clifford, Paul D's escape from prison means his return to life: "the symbolic rebirth of the prisoners when they reemerge from the mud" (qtd. in Bonnet: online), a physical symbolic resurrection. However, after the horrors they have lived, slaves cannot just go on with their lives. To endure their suffering, some of them, like Paul D, make it their strategy for survival to stop feeling. After Schoolteacher and Alfred's systematic and psychically devastating torture, Paul D has learned to shut "down a generous portion of his head, operating on the part that helped him walk, eat, sleep, sing" (Beloved: 41). Closing off their hearts was necessary so as to put up with their unbearable recollections and not to lose their minds: "Paul D has learned to limit the scope and therefore the effects of the potentially painful stimuli that he is willing to confront" (Holland: 50).³⁸⁶

Throughout the Gothic narrative his heart is described as being closed or locked away in a sort of container, a "tobacco tin buried in his chest where a red heart used to be. Its lid rusted shut" (Beloved: 72-73), where he keeps all his painful memories. According to Keizer, "The tobacco-tin metaphor is a striking one, making it clear that Paul D sees his ruined heart as a product of slavery, as much as tobacco itself was. His life is circumscribed by commerce, and it invades his body as well" (online). Consequently, Paul D does not allow himself to love big because that would split him. He has learnt to love just a little bit. He thinks it is dangerous for an ex-slave to love the way Sethe does. Paul D must learn to let his tin open while Sethe must unlearn the

³⁸⁶ On the contrary, there are those blacks that cannot take any more. Halle has worked extra time for years to free his mother and has never complained. However, what he sees in the barn the day the black slaves have planned to escape breaks him. Paul D tells Sethe that a man's suffering has a limit, "A man ain't a goddamn ax. Chopping, hacking, busting every goddamn minute of the day. Things get to him. Things he can't chop down because they're inside" (Beloved: 69).

choke-hold of the “circle of iron” (Keizer: online).³⁸⁷ He must learn to set his heart and his head free.

Beloved’s rape makes Paul D re-experience his previous traumatic sexual assaults in prison and eventually serves as a healing: “without this nightmare experience, Paul D would not be able to overcome his numbing defense mechanism” (Barnett: 82). From the very beginning, he has felt ashamed of the contents of his tobacco tin and does not want Sethe to know about them. He believes that “nothing of this world could pry it open” (Beloved: 113), but Beloved is not of this world. The revenant forces him to acknowledge the self he has suppressed and feel again: the flakes of rust “fell away from the seams of his tobacco tin” and then “the lid gave” (Beloved: 117). Their sexual encounter finally opens Paul D’s rusted tobacco tin, allowing his red heart to emerge: “[it] is unlocked by this contact between the living and the dead [. . .] [which] is equivalent to keeping in touch with his own past” (Osagie: 431).³⁸⁸ Paul D’s words “red heart” reminds us of his heartbeat and the ability to feel he thinks he has lost. According to Susan Corey, “these sexual encounters are important for Paul D’s recovery of self,” since

the arousal of his bodily responses is accompanied by an awakening of his emotion and memories: the lid of the ‘tobacco tin’ protecting his heart gives way, leaving him vulnerable to the repressed emotions from his past—his feelings of guilt at his failure to join Sixo [. . .] his shame at being harnessed with a bit [. . .]. Through his contact with her [Beloved], Paul D has begun to reconnect to his body, his emotions, and his unconscious memories. (114)

After the sexual intercourse, Paul D is revived into a new awareness and consciousness: “he is awakened not only from a literal dream but from a waking nightmare, a prolonged period of dreamwalking, of dissociation” (Koolish 2001: 190). As Beloved is a reflection of Paul D’s repressed self and the dissociative state of his mind, when he enters the revenant’s “inside part,” he is symbolically touching his own (Koolish 2001: 190). The revenant stands for the disintegrated Gothic self’s encounter with his own ghosts. Paul D is almost ready to start a new life with Sethe. However, he must first abandon 124. Unlike the old bachelor who leaves definitely the ruined mansion to go and live in a different residence, the black male must return to help Sethe heal, to be her lover and companion.

³⁸⁷ As in *Seven Gables*, Morrison uses iron and rust metaphorically. Paul D becomes associated with iron and the rust of his tobacco tin. According to April Lidinsky: “the bodily effects of enslavement on both men and women are linked through images of ‘animality’ and ‘iron’ [. . .]. Like the iron bit schoolteacher forces Paul D to wear, concretizing the horse-like dressage of slavery, Sethe’s ‘iron eyes and back bone to match’ (Beloved: 9) are linked to his M/master inscription of her enslaved body” (102).

³⁸⁸ Most critics, such as Carden (online) and Susan Bowers (217), agree that having sex with Beloved is a healing experience for Paul D.

3.4. Gothic Female Characters

The paradoxical social views concerning nineteenth-century women resonate in their roles in Gothic fiction. The Victorian conception of the female's sexuality is behind them. The heroine of the gothic romance often falls into two stereotypes: the Dark Lady and the Fair Maiden. While the Fair Maiden succeeds, the Dark Lady is usually constrained or even annihilated: "in a formulaic genre such as the Gothic [. . .] the duel of abstractions between the Dark and Light Women reveals the attempt to confine, even destroy, the demonic woman and her powers of metamorphosis" (Louis Gross: 39).

Hawthorne takes over the old images of the Dark and Fair Lady to explore the gender relations of his day and the female self. His fictional women are frequently portrayed in contrast to his Faustian-scientific men, who usually control them and deny their true nature. A large number of his female characters are victimized by male power. Yet many of Hawthorne's women are redemptive figures for their men, who have frequently severed their ties to a nurturing community. He presents the complexity of females' lives at a time when the society was undergoing profound social changes, offering rich images of women with their dreams and frustrations. They are depicted as being closer to nature and less corrupted by civilization than men. Hawthorne analyzes the role of domesticity: the woman as the Angel in the House. His females are frequently more appealing than his male characters. Hawthorne also uses these two stereotypes of Gothic fiction to delve into the ambiguous position of the female in his time.³⁸⁹ However, Hawthorne creates a wider range of fictional women: his witches and old maids, such as Mistress Hibbins and Hepzibah, often have minor, but very important symbolic roles in his stories.

On the other hand, Morrison is especially concerned with portraying black females. In fact, she says that she is "just interested in *finally* placing black women center stage in the text [. . .] flawed here, triumphant there, mean, nice, complicated women, and some of them win and some of them lose" (Christina Davis: 231). Her Gothic heroines combine her preoccupation with feminism and ethnicity. Morrison attempts to reassess to what she considers culturally black female qualities, nesting and nurturing.³⁹⁰ According to Carolyn Denard, she is more concerned with the particular female cultural values of her own ethnic group than with those of women in

³⁸⁹ Among Hawthorne's very famous dark ladies we can mention Beatrice in "Rappaccini's Daughter", Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*, Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance* and Miriam in *The Marble Faun*. On the other hand, he also depicts some important fair ladies: Phoebe in *Seven Gables*, Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance* and Hilda in *The Marble Faun*.

³⁹⁰ Morrison talks about the importance of these two qualities in her interview with Charles Ruas (Taylor-Guthrie: 104).

general (1988: 171). In novels such as *Tar Baby*, Morrison seems to criticize the modern black woman's social position, which excludes the connection with the female community because it considers traditional black womanhood old-fashioned and its roles unfulfilling. Thus contemporary "liberated" women, such as Sula, usually return to the community or are haunted by a feeling of betrayal of the black females' cultural values and traditions, as is Jadine (Denard 1988: 175).

As in the nineteenth-century Female Gothic, Morrison's women usually have complex personalities. They are still vulnerable, but they have more freedom and control over their own fate than previous gothic ladies. These black females are on a Gothic quest for definition in a patriarchal society, subjected to double oppression: to whites and to black males. Her Gothic Ladies represent the unique feminine qualities that black females had developed in spite of, but also because of the domination they suffered under slavery (Denard 1988: 172). Morrison breaks with popular stereotypes of black women in western literature. Her heroines, especially her dark females, are not usually very conservative about their sexuality, which they express with much more freedom than their white counterparts.³⁹¹

3.4.1. Phoebe and Denver, the Innocent Maidens

Between Milton and Hawthorne lie nearly two hundred years of Sentimentalism, which sought to make of marriage another, better Eden, and of woman an innocent savior capable of restoring man to it. Hawthorne's fallen pairs, therefore, walk forth from their several false Gardens to a truer bliss; and his Gretchen-Eves sustain their trembling Adams, aware that, unlike their primal mother, they at least have not brought sin into the world.

LESLIE A. FIEDLER, *Love and Death in the American Novel*.

Phoebe is the Fair Lady of Hawthorne's gothic tale and Denver, Sethe's youngest child, is Morrison's. Denver is in some aspects a parallel of Phoebe Pyncheon. They are young women of only 19 or 20 at the time of the stories. Throughout the narratives, they grow and mature, becoming wiser. As gothic heroines, these young females incarnate ideals of womanhood. For different reasons Phoebe and Denver represent the future for their respective families. Phoebe stands for the New England woman and Denver symbolizes the self-reliance of the free-born black female. They both stand as bridges of transition between different historical moments: Hawthorne's heroine, from the colonial era to democracy and Morrison's, from slavery to emancipation.

³⁹¹ Among Morrison's most important Dark Ladies are: Sula in *Sula*, Jadine in *Tar Baby* and Sethe in *Beloved*. Some of her memorable Fair Ladies are: Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*, Nel in *Sula*, Hagar in *Song of Solomon* and Denver in *Beloved*.

Phoebe is described as beautiful and so small that she could be almost childlike. She is graceful as a bird and pleasant as a ray of sunshine.³⁹² In the sentimental tradition as well as in the early Gothic fiction, the true female is related to feminine qualities, such as experiencing feelings. Phoebe is a sensitive young woman. Although the little lady is a Pyncheon, she is different from them; she lacks their sternness. Alfred Levy argues that Phoebe “brings to the dying mansion pleasant qualities—light laughter and bubbling life [. . .]. Phoebe stands for all that is young and growing, all that is hopeful and has no reason to be disillusioned” (467). Like many gothic maidens, Phoebe is an orphan, who sets out on the journey that will transform her. Denver, however, only lacks her father; but she feels like an orphan, since she is scared of her mother. Denver knows Sethe had killed her sister and just missed killing her brothers, who told her ‘die-witch’ stories so she could know how to murder her mother in case she tried to murder one of them again. As a child Denver had a recurring nightmare in which her mother cut her head off every night. Denver has waited years for her daddy, whom she has idealized, to save her from her mother, imagining that something is holding him up.

Denver has never fully understood the motives of her mother’s actions so she cannot reconcile her love for Sethe with her fear. Her intuition is that her mother must have had a good reason to do what she did. However, Denver is still scared that “the thing that happened that made it all right for my mother to kill my sister could happen again” (Beloved: 205). She does not want to know what that thing was, but she believes that it comes from the outside, so she decides not to leave the house. Her fears then, even though attached to her mother’s potential and unpredictable violence, are associated, as in early Gothic fiction, with intrusion, as they were for the other black women at the time: “Whatever it is, it comes from outside this house, outside the yard, and it can come right on in the yard if it wants to. So I never leave this house and I watch over the yard, so it can’t happen again and my mother won’t have to kill me” (Beloved: 205). From an early age Denver feels the aloofness and oppression that characterizes the Gothic self. She is so lonely that she looks for company in the baby ghost and afterwards in Beloved.

In the Gothic romance the Fair Lady has traditionally had the conventional role. In the nineteenth century she belongs to the “Cult of True Womanhood”, which was the standard in the society of the time:³⁹³ women should be pious, passive and submissive.

³⁹² Buitenhuis states that “The literary origins of Phoebe are clear. Her prototype is the fair lady of romance tradition, domesticated and sentimentalized by nineteenth-century melodrama” (1991: 95). Gray states that Phoebe’s real source can be clearly traced in Hawthorne’s wife, Sophia (90).

³⁹³ For more information about True Womanhood, see: Barbara Welter (1966). “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860”. *American Quarterly*, 18 (Summer) (rpt. in her book *Dimity Convictions: The*

The powerless and vulnerable Fair Lady was the reflection of the tamed and controlled woman of the patriarchal society. Syndy McMillen Conger considers these heroines as “physically slight, emotionally passive, and intellectually ill-trained” (94). Phoebe, however, is not passive. Upon her arrival at the old mansion, she takes control of the old house and the cent shop. She is determined and independent. On the other hand, for most of the story, Denver is, in her own fantasy, the passive Fair Lady, or princess, who is waiting to be rescued: “Because she has not yet developed her own independent self, and since her mother is in some way the enemy, rescue is only possible in Denver’s fantasies about her missing father, where he features as the knight saving the beautiful maiden held captive in the tower; a fantasy which reveals both her loneliness and her imprisonment” (Cuder: 41). It is not until almost the end of the novel that Denver takes an active role, when she steps out of 124 to ask for help and find a job.

Through the stereotype of the Fair Lady, gothic stories affirm conventional middle-class domestic values: women devoted to their household, while men belonged to the economic and social world.³⁹⁴ Morrison’s gothic women, like Denver, embody domestic roles and values, though not exclusively; they usually also have a job outside home. Denver, however, will not become a true female until the very end of the romance, when she replaces Sethe as 124’s provider. On the other hand, Phoebe also represents the values of the marketplace, the face-to-face economic transactions, even though she truly stands for domestic values, which are at the core of the communal life. She has a “purifying influence” on the household. The young woman “far from reproducing the grasping materialism of her family, is a sunny, domestic angel” (McPherson: 28). In her figure, Hawthorne contrasts the materialism of the capitalist society with the values of the hearth.

The White Lady, as J. M. S. Tompkins comments, has an important moral role of ennobling men (qtd. in Clemens: 43): to be their salvation. Phoebe’s function is “to preserve the sanctity of the home life, the private sphere to which their mates could return and be refreshed after venturing out into the contaminating world of commercial competition” (Clemens: 43). She is like Hilda and other Hawthornian gothic heroines who “in affirming the social virtues of hearth and home, provide an alternative to the often misdirected intellectuality of those men who probe the dark side of human experience” (Ringe 1982: 175). They guide their men away from their unhealthy moral and intellectual positions (Ringe 1982: 175). Phoebe, the innocent maiden, saves

American Woman in the Nineteenth Century, Athens, Ohio University Press, 1976: 21-41); Herbert Ross Brown (1959). *The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860*. New York: Pageant Books.

³⁹⁴ Consistently with the domestic ideology Phoebe symbolizes, her role as a woman is conservative. In contrast to Holgrave’s own law, it is the girl’s nature to obey rules.

Holgrave from his black powers and from his intellectual detachment. She prevents him from becoming a true villain:

Without Phoebe's compassion Holgrave could become, at best, another Clifford; at worst, another evil wizard. Dwelling in the isolation of his gable; above the teeming life of the street, may not only give him the perspective he requires, but may also foster a pride that cuts him off from all human feelings and instincts. Phoebe's concern helps to link Holgrave's room in the gable with the earth below, helps to strengthen his involvement with humanity. Together they are able at moments to achieve a sense of transcending life while still being totally immersed in it, "transfigur[ing] the earth, and [making] it Eden again". (Kleiman: 299)

Both Phoebe and Denver have maternal roles in these gothic romances. In *Seven Gables* Hepzibah and Clifford are like two old orphan children, useless and vulnerable, whose lives are shadowed and crippled by Judge Pyncheon's menacing paternal figure. It is Phoebe, Hawthorne's heroine, who becomes the mother figure in this romance. According to Crews, "despite her youth Phoebe stands in the place of an ideal parent, a selfless breadwinner and moral guide who can replace the tyrannical parent of guilty fantasy" (187). She feels an intuitive love for mankind. Phoebe tells Holgrave, "How is it possible to see people in distress, without desiring, more than anything else, to help and comfort them?" (Gables: 217). The young woman stays in the gloomy old mansion out of her love for Hepzibah and Clifford. She is happy to take care of her relatives, who need her. Even though Hepzibah has tried to look after her brother, it is the young woman who finally becomes his surrogate mother. She has to attend the old bachelor, the lover of the beautiful, who cannot stand his sister's presence. Both brother and sister need the young woman to overcome their harsh past and find some happiness in the present. As the old couple's provider, Phoebe is "a force of physical and emotional health" (Gollin: 160).³⁹⁵

On the other hand, Denver adopts a maternal role to her ghost sister from the very moment she arrives at 124. Her relationship with the revenant somehow parallels Phoebe's relationship with Clifford. Both Beloved and the old bachelor are like children, who need to be taken care of. Morrison's young heroine feels happy to have an apparently helpless girl she can look after: "Denver tended her, watched her sound sleep, listened to her laboured breathing and, out of love and a breakneck possessiveness that changed her, hid like a personal blemish Beloved's incontinence" (Beloved: 64). However, it is not until Denver fears for her mother's life, almost at the end of the tale, that, like Phoebe Pyncheon, she takes over the role of family provider and caretaker. Knowing that Sethe depends on her makes the young woman realize that she is as Jesser argues, obsessively entangled in her dealings with the past: "The

³⁹⁵ Karlow states Phoebe's role as a surrogate mother (119); Baym recognizes Phoebe's role as provider, but she also argues that the young woman is not a liberating agent for her old relatives (1976: 166).

rough choice that Denver must make is between risking entrapment in a narrative written by the white power structure, a fate ready and waiting for her, and being swallowed up into a closed and exhausting relationship with that past that has marked and nourished her—as she drank her own sister’s blood” (online). In gothic fiction the heroine has to get freed from her haunting past in order to grow up and attain adult female identity.

3.4.1.1. The Fair Maiden and the Powers of Darkness

As is *Seven Gables* for Phoebe, *Beloved* is a true Gothic narrative of education, a *Bildungsroman*, for Denver: the gothic heroine grows through her confrontation with evil. In the gothic struggle between good and evil, Phoebe embodies purity, righteousness and virtue: “Hawthorne’s practical embodiment of love and redemptive vigor” (Gatta: 40). She is “the pale moon girl [. . .] whom we see in the mythological tales as Ariadne” (McPherson: 238); a young woman who is incapable of an evil act (Alfred J. Levy: 467).³⁹⁶ According to Crews, “her effect on the ancestral property is to cancel or reverse many of its dark implications” (186). Phoebe represents innocence and is frequently compared to an angel throughout the narrative, in contrast with Jaffrey, who represents evil: she stands for “the truth of the heart” and “the best of human ties and human feelings” (Fogle 1952: 155). Hawthorne tells us that she is a religion in herself and her spirit is capable of Heaven: “her simple ethic of love transforms her into an angel come to vivid life and transforms what she stands for to a religion” (Alfred J. Levy: 470).³⁹⁷ In her angelic qualities she fits the concept of the woman as the Angel of the House.

Phoebe has nothing to do with Hawthorne’s dark ladies. She “is not a Hester, a Zenobia, or a Miriam, women whose intellectual development and profound penetration into evil reflect their earlier experiences with the powers of darkness. Phoebe is delicate, ethereal, and pure, a woman who has escaped the Black Man’s mark (McPherson: 238). She is the mate

Hawthorne wants for his nineteenth-century heroes. Such men as Holgrave and Coverdale want a sunny, spiritual, golden-haired creature who will understand the rare nature of their love and accept their mercurial vision. They need a woman who will ‘marry’ them to the sunny realities of the empirical realm. The obsessively sexual Dark Lady really belongs to the European tradition. The American hero’s bride will be free of the Christian and Puritan taint—an immaculate Phoebe or

³⁹⁶ Whelan expresses similar views (68).

³⁹⁷ According to Waggoner, Phoebe has a strong emblematic character that fits into the Gothic tradition (1967: 405). Griffith believes that both Judge Pyncheon and Phoebe are equally defined through these descriptive terms “to suggest their common kinship with the real world beyond the house and with the values of that world” (387).

Priscilla who, like Cadmus's Harmonia, will be at once a 'daughter of the sky' and a fecund 'domestic saint'. (McPherson: 224)³⁹⁸

Fair Maidens' value usually lies in their moral impeccability, embodying the Victorian ideal of stainless womanhood: females defined by their sexual honor, virginity. In early gothic romances, the White Heroine is shown as devoid of passion to reinforce the social idea that women were basically "pure." They are Eves before the fall. The desexualizing image of the nineteenth-century fictional female goes hand in hand with her role as a mother and pure Angel in the House. Thus her denied sexuality would take on an Oedipal significance. This is the paradox of nineteenth-century veneration of motherhood and its attempt to deny women sexuality (Louis Gross: 38).³⁹⁹ the woman as an Angel in the House is in conflict with her erotic passions. At that time, maternal and sexual impulses were irreconcilable due to the laws and customs of the society of the time. Besides, women's asexuality was also the consequence of the changing socio-economic conditions.⁴⁰⁰ The importance of the female at home supposedly compensated for her exclusion from the public arena and provided her with the purity that the state of motherhood required.

The Gothic romance reflects the eighteenth-century social code which considered it a crime for women to admit their real feelings or confess passion. Hawthorne seems to state Phoebe's purity and innocence as a parallel of asexuality. Crews thinks that "Hawthorne deliberately puts her [Phoebe] within a sexual perspective in order to declare her exempt from erotic inclinations. She dreams, but cheerfully; she has 'brisk impulses' [. . .] but they urge her to hike in the countryside; her 'ordinary little toils,' unlike Hester Prynne's, do not register unfulfilled desire but merely 'perfect health'" (186). He associates the young woman's asexuality with her maternal role in the romance (187). However, like other gothic heroines, Phoebe, the Fair Lady, really experiences sexual temptations.

³⁹⁸ Many critics consider Hawthorne's dark ladies more appealing than his blond ones. Barbara and Allan Lefcowitz emphasize Hawthorne's "obvious fascination and involvement with the psychological profundities of the dark ladies [. . .] and the superficial, even stereotyped treatment of their virginal counterparts, who become increasingly abstract and unreal" (341-342).

³⁹⁹ For more information about this aspect, see: Mary P. Ryan (1975). *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: Franklin Watts; Ann Douglas. *The Feminization of American Culture*; Susan Phiney Conrad (1976). *Perish the Thought: Intellectual Women in Romantic America, 1830-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press and Mary Kelley (ed.) (1979). *Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in America*. Boston: G. K. Hall, Inc..

⁴⁰⁰ According to Lawrence Stone, "by committing adultery a woman lost all moral and legal rights as a mother" (qtd. in Clemens: 57). Original text quoted: Lawrence Stone (1990). *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Besides, women's chastity was essential to guarantee the appropriate lines of succession and inheritance (Clemens: 45). See: Mary Poovey (1984). *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hawthorne resorts to the story of Alice Pyncheon to suggest the repressed sexual desires involved in the relationship between Holgrave and the young female: "The thinly euphemistic nature of this scene presumably enabled its first readers to ignore, or at least to perceive indistinctly, the implication that cheery little Phoebe is endowed with sexual desire. She unconsciously welcomes her seducer, and he 'involuntarily' tightens his hold on her" (Crews: 191-192). This episode is based on Radcliffe's gothic stories of a maiden whose virtue is in peril. Hawthorne exploits the woman's concealed passions and the threat of sexual violence and rape. Phoebe's initiation to sexuality is confirmed by the parallelism of Alice Pyncheon's seduction and her own, as well as by her resemblance with her ancestor. The little female is, in some ways, a kind of reincarnation of her great-great-grand-aunt.⁴⁰¹

As in other Gothic works of fiction, the female is strongly associated with nature: the little woman truly belongs and mimics with the natural world. As a fair lady, her connections to nature follow the Rousseaunistic tradition, emphasizing its pure and beneficial aspects. Phoebe has the grace of a bird, the "twittering gaiety of the robins in the pear-tree" and her harmonious singing makes her "seem like a bird in a shadowy tree" (Gables: 76) (phoebe is the name of a very common small song bird in New England). The fact that she is becoming a woman is related to the blossoms on a "young fruit-tree". Phoebe even says that she has learnt the secret of how to talk with hens and chickens. From the very beginning, she is frequently linked to the white roses she picks from the garden and puts in her bedroom "indicat[ing] her symbolic repudiation of the complex web of evil spun round the musty old house" (Alfred Levy: 467). Her "natural magic" confronts the evil influence of Judge Pyncheon and the curse.

Phoebe is related with the color white (she dresses in white) and with light as opposed to darkness, both symbols of good. In this romance the biblical and gothic emphasis on light and darkness as the equivalents of good and evil prevails (Buitenhuis 1991: 67). The young woman is frequently associated "with that life-giving thing, the sun, which is also responsible for the 'truthfulness' of Holgrave's daguerreotypes" (Abele 1967: 401). Abele calls her the "apostle of light", "a 'country cousin' who brings life and light to a 'decaying' and 'weather-beaten' house" (1967:

⁴⁰¹ Both of them adore flowers and music. Phoebe's correlation with her kinswoman is repeated on some occasions, such as in Chapter XIII, "Alice Pyncheon". However, there are also some important differences between them: Alice Pyncheon comes from Europe and has brought with her genteel delusions, whereas the young maiden comes from a village in New England, representing the new democratic woman; Phoebe seems to be always happy, whereas Alice's music was exquisitely mournful; Alice's tragic end comes after her sexual enslavement to the carpenter, who has tainted her purity while Phoebe keeps her innocence.

401).⁴⁰² This connection is enhanced by the fact that the name Phoebe comes from the Greek *Phoibe*, feminine of *Phoibos*. In Greek mythology this was the name of Artemis, the goddess of the moon, identified with the Roman Diana whereas the masculine Phoibos was the god of the sun. In *Seven Gables*, “Phoebe’s sunlight [. . .] dispel[s] the darkness of the old Pyncheon mansion” (Gatta: 40). During her absence, days of storm darken the old mansion: with her, the sunlight returns. The innocent maiden symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness, the wrongs of the past.

In *Beloved*, Denver, unlike Phoebe, is a modern heroine who combines positive and negative attributes of earlier feminine characters of the Gothic tradition. She is freed from the nineteenth-century fair ladies’ ideal of moral perfection which Hawthorne’s heroine incarnates. Denver has many flaws that make her closer to the traditional Gothic *femme fatale* and is somehow connected to the demonic or supernatural realm. However, she is a charmed baby from her almost miraculous birth: her pregnant mother had been beaten and almost dies in her attempt to escape. Amy Denver, the white girl from Boston, saves her from a certain death. Later on, she is rescued again when Sethe attempts to throw her against the wall, when she had already killed her sister, and Stamp Paid manages to take her away from her mother’s hands before it is too late. Denver has never been a slave as her other brothers and sisters were: she is the free-born baby that brings hope for the future.

From her very birth, Denver has lived on the border between death and life: a twice-spared Gothic heroine, who symbolizes the blacks’ condition. After Sethe’s crime, Baby Suggs gives the little baby to her mother so she can nurse it; Sethe, absent-mindedly, takes it without letting her dead girl go. The old black woman manages to take the little dead body away from her mother, but she cannot make Sethe clean away the blood from her chest. Finally, Denver sucks her mother’s milk along with her sister’s blood: “Beloved is my sister. I swallowed her blood right along with my mother’s milk” (*Beloved*: 205). At the present time of the story, Baby Suggs tells Denver that she is a charmed child, since while her mother was in prison, rats would bite everything but her. Nor can the baby ghost hurt her because she took her blood. The blood that she drinks stands for the legacy of enslavement she inherits despite the fact that she has never been a slave. Denver also symbolizes the union between the realms of the living and the dead through the sacrament of communion: she swallowed her sister’s blood and now Beloved’s flesh is part of her own. The dark side of her soul is suggested in her alliance with the demonic or supernatural through a vampiric ritual.

⁴⁰² Wayne Caldwell indicates that Phoebe’s “main function in the story is to provide the light in contrast to her dark relatives” (40). Waggoner (1967: 405), Alfred J. Levy (1967: 469), Crews (185) and Fogle (1969: 115) emphasize her connection with light and her redemptive role in the romance.

The Fair Lady's final triumph over evil, through her angelic qualities and her maternal role, points to the defeat of the Law of the Father and expresses the fracture at the heart of the western patriarchal family. At first when Paul D arrives at 124, Denver thinks it is her father, since nobody comes to her house any more. She feels disappointed when she discovers who he really is and that he wants her mother, not her. From the very beginning Denver rebels against Paul D, the male authority; maybe a hint at her attempt to destroy the patriarchal order that threatens the females' realm. Like Phoebe, who seems to express her rejection of patriarchy when she instinctively refuses Judge Pyncheon's kiss, Denver is the gothic heroine who confronts the patriarchal system embodied by the "threatening" male. The young black woman only starts to accept him the day of the carnival when he becomes like a father to her and a bond to the community she has been away of for a long time. However, this situation does not last, since Beloved's arrival changes everything.

3.4.1.2. The Fair Lady's Return to the Community

Denver undergoes a radical transformation. At the beginning of the story, she is an isolated and traumatized young woman who is in search of self-definition. Denver suffers because of her dramatic family circumstances and her mother's trauma: she "lives psychically paralyzed inside her own mind" (Koolish 2001: 169). She "is as trapped by Sethe's past" as Sethe is (Krumholz 1999: 119). Her dual inheritance of freedom and slavery makes her lose her sense of identity and tears her apart: she was born on the river that divides "free" and slave land in the midst of Sethe's flight from slavery" (Krumholz 1999: 119). Unlike Phoebe's, her gothic self is fragmented:

it is Denver's fragmented history that Sethe wishes to piece together, providing for her a context from which to carve out her own unique identity. Although Denver bears no physical marks or scars directly attributable to slavery—she was born in a "middle passage" of sorts, born when Sethe was on the run—her connection to slavery is immediate because of her mother, her father, her sister Beloved, and her grandmother Baby Suggs. (Carol Henderson: 99)

As Fuston-White claims, Denver has to find who she is and place herself in her own family and community. She lacks a true self, since she has no community and no cultural legacy. She refuses to know her family's history as slaves:

Hidden inside 124 Bluestone Road, afraid to leave unaccompanied and finding her only companionship with the ghost of her deceased sister, Denver lacks an identity, which is in turn contingent upon her lack of history and community. Denver attempts to center herself in her history, wanting only to hear the story of her birth and nothing of the time before. In so doing she separates herself from that identity which is constructed in the experience of struggle and exile. (online)

The young black woman only wants to know about her birth. According to Keenan, "As the only story of the past Denver wants to hear and as the story of her own birthing, it is synonymous with her identity: she is this story" (124). The story of her birth is key to

her self, as it is for the black individual's, since it stands for a moment of transition between slavery and freedom, past and future.

Beloved, as the reincarnation of the past Denver has tried so hard to avoid, aids the gothic heroine in her process of self-knowledge. To keep the revenant's attention, the young female tells her stories about her mother and her. Storytelling helps Denver learn about herself and, that way, she grows into an adult. Spearey says that Denver "ultimately realizes [that] she has no self without Beloved, that it is in her connections with this figure of and from the past, and in the stories they create together, that her very selfhood lies" (178). When the revenant inquires about her birth, Denver is delighted to talk about it. For the first time, she becomes aware that Sethe was approximately her age when she had her. She begins to understand how it must have been for her beaten and pregnant mother to escape, and, finally, deliver a baby all by herself. Beloved, initially willed by Denver as a potential agent of revenge, becomes an agent instead of forgiveness and healing (Koolish 2001: 188).

However, it is not until almost the end of the story that Sethe's youngest daughter realizes how mistaken she has been about her mother, a big step on her journey to self-definition. For a time after Paul D's departure, she is happy and the communion of 124's women grows deeper and deeper. But once her mother discovers who Beloved is, she cuts Denver out of her games with the revenant. Now when the young female listens to her mother explaining to Beloved the reasons for the murder, she understands why Sethe killed her own daughter. Her perception of her mother changes. Denver's concern about the revenant vanishes and her attitude towards her turns from indifference to irksome: Beloved begins to wear her out. For the first time the young black woman is truly worried about Sethe. Then Denver decides to leave 124 and ask for help because "Neither Sethe nor Beloved knew or cared about it one way or the other. They were too busy rationing their strength to fight each other. So it was she [Denver] who had to step off the edge of the world and die because if she didn't, they all would" (Beloved: 239). Leaving the haunted house is the final step in Denver's metamorphosis. The young woman is terrified at the thought of abandoning the maternal domestic space; however, she fears for her mother's life. Finally, Denver becomes her own savior when she confronts them and walks out the family grounds: "Wearing Beloved's shoes [. . .] she [Denver] too makes a return from the grave that 124 has become" (Carolyn Jones: online). When the black heroine steps out of her tomb, she experiences a sort of resurrection:

She, the child who ingested blood and breast milk, is as much a symbol of Sethe's pride as is Beloved. Denver, too, has been exiled, trapped in Sethe's memories. But Baby's spirit tells Denver that life is risk, and only through risk, relationship, and rememory is the self formed. Armed with this knowledge, Denver acts. She

practices what her mother could not at the funeral—humility—and does what her mother could not—she asks for help. Her humility causes the community, especially the women, to rally around the family in 124. (Carolyn Jones: online)

It is in April when Denver makes it to her old teacher's house in her bright carnival clothes. Without mentioning Beloved, she tells the mulatto woman about her mother's sickness and also about their precarious situation at 124. Lady Jones feels sympathy for her and kindly pronounces the words, "Oh, baby": "She [Denver] did not know it then, but it was the word 'baby' [. . .] that inaugurated her life in the world as a woman" (Beloved: 248). The old teacher also gives her some food. From that time on, Denver finds baskets with victuals at the edge of the yard, containing little paper scraps with the written names of the people who help her. The young female returns them and thanks her benefactresses, getting to know the black community of Cincinnati:

Only through the discovery of other histories, other truths, can Denver begin to develop an identity and shed the shame she has felt while living on the margins of her community, both literally and figuratively. Stepping outside of 124 Bluestone Road brings community to Denver. Offerings of food, work, and friendship liberate her, granting her confidence, dignity, and presence in a world that has all but forgotten her. (Fuston-White: online)

In *Seven Gables*, the Pyncheons and the Maules have developed through generations and we can see morally progressive changes in their last members. Phoebe has Alice's beauty and her love of music without her arrogance. She achieves maturity over the course of the narrative. At the beginning of the story, Phoebe is just "seen at the brink of womanhood" (Crews: 186). In her stay in the old mansion, she learns from her experience of looking after the ageing Pyncheons: Clifford and Hepzibah. Her transformation is evident, "a change grew visible; a change partly to be regretted, although whatever charm it infringed upon was repaired by another, perhaps more precious. She was not so constantly gay, but had her moods of thought [. . .]. She was less girlish than when we first beheld her, alighting from the omnibus; less girlish, but more a woman!" (Gables: 175). Phoebe's looks and ways become more thoughtful and wise within the gloomy walls of the old house. The young woman has grown and is less cheerful:⁴⁰³ "Phoebe is both influence and influenced. She has brought her completeness with her to the House of the Seven Gables, but she is not immune to either Holgrave's awful power or the curse that is on the house. (The *either* is not quite accurate: Holgrave's hereditary power and the curse are actually one)" (Beebe: 11).

When the romance starts, Phoebe is still a young innocent female, who has not blossomed: she has not discovered her passions. She goes through a metamorphosis as a result of her experiences in the shadowy house and her love for the young

⁴⁰³ Horne states that "She [Phoebe] absorbs the gloom of the house and with it her share of the Pyncheon fate" (462). Gollin (160) and Griffith (390) express similar views.

reformer. As Clifford says when he sees the young couple together, "Girlhood has passed into womanhood; the bud is a bloom" (Gables: 220). Hawthorne's heroine manifests, from the very beginning, strong self-reliance and her process of maturation lies in her new knowledge of the world that surrounds her. Phoebe's transformation is more complex than Denver's and undergoes different stages: first, she leaves the mansion for a short period of time; then she comes back to confront death with Holgrave: they both travel to the underworld where their love finally flourishes. However, at the end of the story, she must definitely abandon the old house to find happiness and retribution in her marriage to the daguerreotypist.

Like Phoebe Pyncheon, at this point of the story, Denver becomes the only bond of 124's inhabitants with the community. On her gothic journey for identity, the black woman has already faced her past and now she is trying to find her place in the midst of the community. Morrison, like Hawthorne, thinks that the Gothic self can only achieve redemption as a part of the society. Cuder says,

Denver is actually drawing the map both of the world and of her own self. Her progression is the opposite to that of the women in the preceding generations: whereas Baby Suggs and Sethe found their free selves as they arrived at 124, Denver discovers and develops her self only when she leaves. At the same time, she completes the progression of her family from slavery to freedom, by becoming a free being freely interacting with others and inserting herself as members of a community. (42)

While Denver improves her outside relationships, her life at 124 deteriorates. She decides to stop relying on kindness and hire herself out somewhere. When leaving the house to find a job, Denver meets Nelson Lord, whom she had already known from her time at Lady Jones's. He tells her "To take care of herself" and these words "open her mind" (Beloved: 252). This is the reversal of the question which had blocked up Denver's ears a long time ago when they were only children. Then the young black female begins to be aware of her own identity, "It was a new thought, having a self to look out for and preserve" (Beloved: 252). Carolyn M. Jones thinks that "Denver [. . .] becomes the agent of reconciliation" (online). Her encounter with Nelson represents another step ahead in her gothic search for self-definition. Like Paul D, the young black man comes to be another protecting male in Morrison's gothic narrative.

At the end of the story, Denver has finally assumed her mother's troubled situation and started a romance with Nelson Lord. She is now part of the community and a key element in its revival: the young female "provides a link to the white community and a sign of potential interracial healing" (qtd. in Bloom: 45). Unlike Phoebe, who starts her relationship with the young reformer early in the novel, Denver does not engage in an emotional relationship with a man until very late in the narrative. For Hawthorne restoring paradise on earth means conventional marriage and

domesticity; Morrison's hopeful future relies on an independent new woman and a possible heterosexual romance, not necessarily marriage.

When Denver meets Paul D after the communal exorcism, her metamorphosis has already been completed: she looks more like Halle than ever. She is working for the Bodwins and has truly become the family provider. Denver tells Paul D that Mrs. Bodwin wants to "experiment" on her and that she may go to college in Oberlin. When Paul D hears it, he thinks: "Watch out. Nothing in this world more dangerous than a white schoolteacher" (*Beloved*: 266).⁴⁰⁴ However, as Krumholz argues, Denver is now in a position to "usurp schoolteacher's position; she must take away from him the power to define African-Americans and make their history in a way that steals their past, their souls, and their humanity" (1999: 121).⁴⁰⁵

As with Phoebe, at the end of Morrison's gothic narrative, we can see Denver's dramatic transformation from a shy child into a self-reliant woman, her "resplendent independence [. . .] representative of a sturdy new African-American freedom" (Muckley: online). Her desire to help her mother and her new contact with the community have metamorphosed her. Denver is now a modern gothic heroine, who is able to accept the past and move forward: she "represents both the future and the past: Denver will be the new African-American woman teacher, and she is Morrison's precursor, the woman who has taken on the task of carrying the story through generations to our story-teller" (Krumholz 1999: 119). As Sally Keenan says, Morrison's stories of two daughters represent a double movement: "the story of *Beloved*, a pulling back into the past; the story of Denver, a pulling forward into the future" (133). Denver "is the site of hope in Morrison's novel. She is the daughter of history" (Rushdy 1998: 145). Both Phoebe and Denver have become full women that bring hopefulness to the gothic world they are leaving behind.

3.4.2. Sethe of the Iron Eyes

[. . .] the girl on the run and her pursuer become only alternate versions of the same plight. Neither can come to rest before the other—for each is the projection of his opposite—*anima* and *animus*, actors in a drama which depends on both for its significance. Reinforcing the meaning of the haunted victim and the haunted persecutor (each the other's obsession) is the haunted countryside, and especially the haunted castle or abbey which rises in its midst, and in whose dark passages and cavernous apartments the chase reaches its climax.

LESLIE FIEDLER, *Love and Death in the American Novel*.

⁴⁰⁴ Corey claims that this evokes Schoolteacher's scientific experiments with slaves, intimating the "'ambiguity' of the ending" (qtd. in Bloom: 45).

⁴⁰⁵ The black characters of *Beloved* have a different position toward literacy. While Sixo decides to keep his cultural integrity and his oral tradition, Halle and Denver decide to accept education to make their ways in the white society.

The Dark Lady, the *femme fatale*, of the Gothic romance embodies less conventional and more transgressive meanings than the Fair Lady. The demonic woman of the Gothic tradition shows the patriarchal ambivalence towards the female (Louis Gross: 38): through her, the return of the repressed is equated with the woman, the Other of the Western culture. The Dark Lady's subversive character is revealed in her rejection of the Father's Law, which makes her go beyond the societal and moral constraints of the community, questioning the nineteenth-century social conceptions about the female. As Hugo McPherson argues, "This so-called 'monstrous' woman is peculiarly the plague of sun men, particularly Puritans" (234). The traditional Dark Lady is usually guiltless, but she may become a destructive force. The *femme fatale* displays an independent and defiant spirit, passion and moral fallibility. Her vitality and rebellious character are transmitted through her identification with nature and the wild, with ethnic or exotic elements, and ultimately with sex.

As a passionate creature and a sinful temptress, the traditional Dark Woman is associated with unleashed sexual desire: she becomes impure, a "fallen woman." Female sexuality appears as the focus of male horror. McPherson claims that "Freudian critics would have it that she [the 'female monster'] represents the maternal sex taboo which the young hero must overcome [. . .] such creatures suggest male sexual fears" (233). Sexual passion was considered as dangerous, since it meant a threat to patriarchal institutions, especially marriage and family. Dark Ladies would be punished for expressing their overt sexual desire. They are demonic characters who have an alliance with the devil. The villainy of the *femme fatale* in many important gothic works has been immeasurable. There are memorable dark ladies, such as Matilda in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*; old women, who are deliberately wicked, such as Signora Laurentini in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* or the abbess in *The Monk*. The *femme fatale* is usually a more complex and fuller character than the Fair Maiden, since it shows woman's capacity for good and evil. Both Morrison's and Hawthorne's demonic females "evoke uneasiness in their families and their communities" (Trudier Harris 1991: 189). They reinforce the belief that women can be "mysterious and dangerous": "While such characterizations retain the inherent trait of defining women as 'Other,' the alternative side of the coin would suggest that such characterizations simultaneously show their power" (Trudier Harris 1991: 189). Despite her demonic power, she is still vulnerable in the patriarchal society.

Sethe is the Dark Lady of *Beloved*.⁴⁰⁶ Mae Henderson connects her name with the Old Testament Hebrew name “Seth,” meaning “granted” or “appointed” (Eve named her third-born son Seth, saying, “God has granted me another child in the place of Abel”).⁴⁰⁷ Thus Sethe seems to signify the baby whose life was spared or “granted” by her mother, who did not keep the offspring she had with the whites (96). Deborah Horvitz amplifies the idea:

Perhaps Morrison’s Sethe, too, is a ‘replacement’ for her brothers and sisters murdered by the system of slavery and lost to her nameless ma’am. If so, then the inevitable confrontation between Sethe, the replacement child saved by her ma’am, and *Beloved*, the protected child murdered by hers, represents the impossible choice available to the enslaved mother. (62-63)

There is no demonic woman in *Seven Gables*, however we can find extraordinary similarities between Sethe and the heroine of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne.⁴⁰⁸ Terry Otten argues that, because of the way Sethe looks for forgiveness yet seems unwilling to relinquish her guilt, she “appear[s] to be something of a black Hester Prynne” (qtd in Woidat: 528). These two females represent the bold and independent modern woman. Like Sula, one of Morrison’s most demonic females, Sethe is a twentieth-century woman, “independent, uncontained, and uncontainable”.⁴⁰⁹ Like Hawthorne’s dark ladies, Morrison’s transgressive heroine is full of sensuality. When Paul D finds her for the first time after eighteen years, she is “shining”. Unlike Hawthornian *femmes fatales*, Sethe’s carnal pleasures are not concealed or insinuated, since Morrison’s women live their sexuality quite freely. In *Beloved* the impotence to have sex is seen as a symptom of the fragmented self, while sexuality is a necessary step in the regenerative process the characters undergo toward a whole identity. When Paul and Sethe try to have sex for the first time, they are unable, since they have not had a real life for so long: “sexuality between Paul D and Sethe ignites in each of them an awareness both of the splitting self and of the possibility of healing” (Koolish 2001: 189).

Sethe has the queenliness of the Hawthornian *femmes fatales*, Zenobia or Hester. For Denver, her mother is “a ‘queenly woman’ who controls herself, responds

⁴⁰⁶ However, *Beloved*, the revenant, can also be considered a dark lady, since, as Mae G. Henderson writes, she symbolizes “women in both the contemporaneous and historical black communities” (93) and she has all the qualities of the *femme fatale*.

⁴⁰⁷ Bonnet believes that Sethe’s name calls to mind the legend of Seth, the biblical character. She argues that the tree that Sethe’s name suggests is the tree stamp on her flesh that duplicates its meaning in the story: “It brings into play the forces of life and death and, because of the part the tree plays in Christ’s Resurrection, foretells what the narrative gradually reveals—the victory of Life over Death” (online).

⁴⁰⁸ Jan Stryz finds similarities between Hester and another of Morrison’s heroines, Pilate of *Song of Solomon*: “Hester [. . .] provides a literary prototype for the female pariah figure who derives her identity from the community and serves a purpose within the community, and who is so central to Morrison’s work” (145).

⁴⁰⁹ Morrison characterizes Sula with these words in an interview she had with Bill Moyers in 1989 (269).

calmly to emergencies, and stares everything, including death, in the face” (Trudier Harris 1991: 180). The ordeals of her life have made her an extraordinary person. Sethe does not look away when a man gets stomped to death by a mare right in front of the restaurant where she works. When the baby’s spirit slams Here Boy into the wall and breaks his legs and dislocates his eye, she takes a hammer and knocks him unconscious, pushes his eye back and sets his leg bones. Despite her strong and reckless character, Sethe spends most of her time “beating back the past”, without succeeding. Like Hester, both dark ladies claim the power of self-creation and self-affirmation. In Sethe’s infanticide, she expresses her complete determination.

Sethe’s distinctive features as a demonic female are her iron eyes, whose irises are the same color as her skin: They “did not pick up a flicker of light. They were like two wells into which he [Paul D] had trouble gazing. Even punched out they needed to be covered, lidded, marked with some sign to warn folks of what that emptiness held” (Beloved: 9). As Louis S. Gross says of Elsie, the main character in *Elsie Venner*, “her diamond eyes are more than emblems of dark womanhood. They are at once the seal of her transforming power and the clue to that power” (43). Like Judge Pyncheon, the iron man, Sethe is metaphorically related to this metal, which symbolizes her strong will and determination: it stands for the transgressive character of the Dark Lady. The iron in Sethe’s eyes becomes evident after Mr. Garner’s death when Schoolteacher comes to put things in order.

3.4.2.1. The Maiden’s Flight to Freedom

The typical Gothic maiden is a young female who, deprived of maternal love and guidance, is in search of her own identity. Like early gothic heroines, both Hester and Sethe are, as Joanna Russ describes the typical gothic lady, “young, orphaned, unloved, and lonely” (32).⁴¹⁰ Sethe is vulnerable and innocent when she arrives at Sweet Home. She lacks models in her early life. When she is on the farm, there are no other slave females she can talk to or help her.⁴¹¹ She has to learn to take care of her children on her own. Sethe tries to remember how the women she knew before Sweet Home looked after their offspring. She recalls how they gave their babies a leaf to chew on, but she cannot recall what it was. Hester also stands alone in her everyday life.

⁴¹⁰ Motherlessness has been a central theme in Female Gothic fiction. The gothic heroine without a guide and model has to find her own way to adulthood. Motherlessness can explain the idealization of maternal figures and the patriarchal strictures about the nature of women and of women as mothers in Gothic fiction (Fleenor 1983a: 7).

⁴¹¹ Angels Carabí comments, in her interview with Toni Morrison, how, while “Sethe was living on the plantation she did not have other women” she could talk to or “tell her how to take care of her children” (1993: 108).

Beloved follows the escape-persecution pattern typical of early gothic romances and slave narratives: the young black woman, Sethe, runs away and the despotic villain pursues her. As Cohen-Safir claims, “the female gothic depicts women in the paradoxical situation of persecuted victims and courageous heroines” (105). When Sethe is at Sweet Home, she starts thinking about fleeing when Schoolteacher takes over. Then she learns that Halle will not be allowed to work outside the farm so he will not be able to buy any of them out: they will all continue to be slaves, including her children. That is why Sethe decides to run away. The same day of the escape Schoolteacher’s nephews steal her milk. Sethe tells Mrs. Garner about it. When the slaveholder finds out, he has her whipped. A clump of scars, in the shape of a chokecherry, is the result of the beating, the symbol of Sethe’s life as a slave. This is the mark that patriarchy inscribes on her, symbolizing her status as a piece of property.

As Hester does with her “A” in *The Scarlet Letter*, Sethe aestheticizes her scars as an emblem of her transgression: they become a tree in full bloom, a sign of life and comfort. Bouson points out that when Amy describes the pattern of Sethe’s wounds as a chokecherry tree, her “description [. . .] serves to aestheticize the shame and trauma of Sethe’s situation” (98). As Hawthorne transforms Hester’s badge of shame into an artistic mark of triumph and defiance, Morrison changes the painful legacy of slavery into a beautiful work of art. Both Sethe and Hester are characterized by the generative elements that define them as artists and represent life. Ogunyemi thinks that Sethe is “a thwarted artist”, whose occasional bizarre actions recall the irrationality and creativity of the abiku. He also believes that her very body produces stories. The marks on her back would be “a dizzying text in motion” (online). Morrison emphasizes Sethe’s extreme vulnerability when, pregnant and beaten, she finally runs away from Sweet Home, using all her strength and determination to defy Schoolteacher. Once Sethe settles at 124, she feels like a free woman: she decides never to escape again from anything in her life: “No more running—from nothing. I will never run from another thing on this earth. I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul D Garner: it cost too much! Do you hear me? It cost too much” (*Beloved*:15). At the end of both stories these two American Eves come back to the midst of their communities.

Like *The Scarlet Letter* is for Hester, *Beloved* is the story of Sethe’s “quest for social freedom and psychological wholeness” (Bernard Bell: 53). Morrison describes the Dark Lady’s *Bildungsroman* in search of her own self-definition. On her gothic journey we witness her awakening to a true black female consciousness: “Sethe’s black awareness and rejection of white perceptions and inscriptions of herself, her children, and other slaves as nonhuman [. . .] are synthesized with her black feminist

sense of self-sufficiency” (Bernard Bell: 54-55). Sethe’s getaway from Sweet Home is compared with a birth: she dies as a slave to be born as a free woman. Amy, the white girl, is her savior. When Amy massages the black woman’s feet and legs, she tells Sethe that it is going to hurt her, “Anything *dead* coming back to life hurts” (Beloved: 35; emphasis added). The white female’s healing hands rub Sethe’s lashed back and swollen feet, but she also attends at Denver’s birth. Amy knows that if the black woman survives the night, she will have a chance to live. When Sethe wakes up, she feels as if she had come back from the dead, “it took a while to come out of a *sleep she thought was death*” (Beloved: 82; emphasis added). As Stanley Crouch writes, a “moment of transcendent female solidarity” is represented by Amy Denver, who, despite her suspicions, helps pregnant and needy Sethe: “Woman to woman, out in nature, freed of patriarchal domination and economic exploitation, they deliver baby Denver” (28). Morrison enhances sisterhood, a typical Female Gothic theme, in the face of the injustices of the patriarchal system.⁴¹²

The Dark Lady controls her destiny, which has at its core the defiance of the oppressive patriarchal system. Fleeing from Sweet Home is Sethe’s first important achievement. She manages to save all her children from slavery without Halle’s help. Her rebellious character and strong perseverance to go ahead make it possible. Sethe cannot stand the idea that her own children could be treated as animals. When she thinks about the successful escape, she is happy at the idea that she has saved her babies from Schoolteacher’s cruel rule and racist methods.

3.4.2.2. The Demonic Woman’s Crime

Sethe has just 28 days of unslaved life, “the travel of one whole moon” (Beloved: 95), before Schoolteacher’s arrival at 124.⁴¹³ These are days of ‘healing’ and communal solidarity for her. She starts learning what being free means: “to wake up at dawn and *decide* what to do with your day” (Beloved: 95). When she first gets to 124, she cannot fully realize her new situation. Then Sethe begins to understand that escaping from slavery is not everything, she still has to vindicate her freed self. Then after this short period of authentic freedom, the demonic woman’s monstrous deed occurs. Sethe is squatting in the garden when she sees the slave catchers coming and recognizes schoolteacher’s hat. His arrival is preceded by little hummingbirds which

⁴¹² According to Elaine Showalter, women’s literature before 1840 did not have a sense of communality and self-awareness (qtd. in Fleenor 1983a: 7). For more information, see: Elaine Showalter (1977). *Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelist From Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁴¹³ In what may be a forced reading, Bernard Bell believes that, foregrounding the theme of motherhood, “Morrison divides the text into twenty-eight unnumbered mini-sections, the usual number of days in a woman’s monthly menstrual cycle, within three larger, disproportionate sections. Within these sections, Sethe experiences twenty-eight happy days [. . .]” (55).

beat their wings and stick their needle beaks into Sethe's hair. As a phallic symbol, they stand for the menace that white men represent for her and her family.⁴¹⁴

The past pursues the Gothic self and does not let it start anew. Like Hester, Sethe is a rebellious *femme fatale*, who rebels against the tyrannical villain, Schoolteacher. As a Dark Lady she commits the ultimate act of transgression, infanticide, with the purpose of keeping her children out of slavery. She kills her third baby girl and attempts to murder the others. In the patriarchal system slaves are their owner's proprietorship, his script. However, when Sethe kills her child, she is stating: "I am a human being. These are my children. This script I am writing".⁴¹⁵ In her demonic act, like Hawthorne's Hester, she defies the Law of the Father. Given her terrible circumstances, Sethe's actions go beyond any moral or ethic considerations.

Slavery and the ensuing murder of her daughter prevent Sethe from having a full life. From this time on, she just tries to survive: "Her deprivation had been not having any dreams of her own at all" (*Beloved*: 20). As Ann-Janine Morey comments, the emptiness of her existence is associated with her incapacity to appreciate color. The last color she recalls is the red of her baby's blood and then the pink chips of her headstone (online), "After that she became as color conscious as a hen [. . .] she could not remember remembering a molly apple or a yellow squash. Every dawn she saw the dawn, but never acknowledged or remarked its color. There was something wrong with that" (*Beloved*: 38-39). The day after Paul D arrives, Sethe is kneeling in the keeping room and she notices the two orange squares on the quilt. Then she realizes how lifeless 124 really is. That is why, once she knows who *Beloved* is, Sethe wants to give her the world of senses she has missed, which is represented by colors. She spends her savings, thirty-eight dollars, on fancy food and colorful ribbons. In an apparent celebration of happiness at their final reunion, 124's women make bright clothes and get dressed as in carnival.

Both Hester and Sethe are nonconformist demonic women, who are determined to defy an unfair system. They claim the power of self-creation and self-affirmation. Hester and Sethe challenge community norms, renouncing the traditional morality of their society and following their own laws, dictated by their hearts. Hester refuses to name her daughter's father and she does not accept her adultery as a crime. On the

⁴¹⁴ This scene suggests the terrible images of the birds' attack in Alfred Hitchcock's film *The Birds* (1963). According to Tim Dirks, the symbolic meaning of this movie makes more sense if interpreted in Freudian terms. This film deals with three needy women and another one from a younger generation. In *Beloved* the story is also about destitute females. The attack from birds represents men's assault to the world of women. For more information, see: "The Birds". 1996-2004. On line at: <http://www.filmsite.org/bird.html> (consulted 1.12.2005).

⁴¹⁵ Morrison pronounced these words, in a conversation with Bill Moyers, while she was talking about Margaret Garner's story (272).

other hand, despite the cruelty of her act, Sethe insists that it was the right thing to do. Both women establish a law of their own: “the world’s law was no law for her [Hester’s] mind.’ She alone dared renounce utterly the dead forms of tradition and dared follow the natural laws of her own instinctive nature to the end” (Frederic Carpenter: 294). They question the notions of female passivity and victimization.

In her unspeakable crime, Sethe becomes a monster, the woman’s identity in Female Gothic. For the whites her monstrous condition is an example of the inhuman acts free blacks are capable of when they are not properly guided and taken care of by the slaveholder. As Karen F. Stein argues, monsters are particularly prominent in the gothic work of women writers and the concept of self as monster has been frequently associated with narratives of female experience, as we can see in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*: “In their Gothic narratives women reveal a deep-seated conflict between a socially acceptable passive, congenial, ‘feminine’ self and a suppressed, monstrous hidden self. The monster remains an apt symbol for turbulent inner compulsions, particularly in poetry” (123). In *Literary Women* Moers also connects the monster phenomenon with Gothic female writers and themes, such as self-hatred, self-disgust and the impulse to self-destruction.

Wildness and primitivism are qualities of Hester as a Dark Lady, and are usually traits of the black woman. Her connection with the wild, the metaphoric abode of evil, relates to her “amorality” and symbolizes her freedom. Joel Porte claims that “Hester’s ‘lawless passion’ has turned her into a kind of white Indian and she becomes in Hawthorne’s mind a focus for all those associations of knowledge with sexual power which we have already observed [. . .] in Cooper’s mythic red men and dark ladies” (qtd. in Herzog: 15).⁴¹⁶ On the other hand, under slavery, the black female is an animal, a breeder. Sethe remembers one day, one of her most abhorrent recollections, when she is working in the yard and overhears Schoolteacher and his nephews listing her human characteristics in one column and her animal ones in another. It is the first time Sethe realizes that, for her master, she is only an animal. Throughout *Beloved* Morrison compares her heroine to a snake. When Sethe is about to meet Amy Denver, she refers to herself as being “like a snake. All jaws and hungry” (*Beloved*: 31). As in Louis Gross’s analysis of Elsie in Oliver W. Holmes’ *Elsie Venner* (1861), Sethe’s ophidian character may signal her rational and instinctual nature and, as Holmes’ heroine, she becomes “a living embodiment of Eve’s struggle with the Devil” (43).

Sethe’s scar is not only an emblem of degradation and suffering (Corey: 110), but also a deformity by which Sethe is characterized as a monstrous gothic character. As

⁴¹⁶ Original text quoted: Joel Porte (1969). *The Romance in America: Studies in Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and James*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press.

Susan Corey says, it links her to other characters of the novel, who also bear malformations, bodily marks of the cruel tortures and abuse they have suffered under slavery: Baby Suggs has an injured hip and she limps; Sethe's mother has the brand of a cross on her skin; Nan, Sethe's wet nurse, has lost half of one arm; Ella's skin is imprinted with scars "from the bell [. . .] thick as a rope around her waist" (*Beloved*: 258); and Paul D has the mark of the iron collar on his neck. These physical deformities serve to highlight "the monstrous character of slavery written on the bodies of its victims" (110). According to Bouson,

Sethe's scarred back is a visible reminder of her traumatic abuse, both her physical violation and her psychic wounds, and it also concretizes her marked identity as the racially and stigmatized Other. The fact that even Paul D comes to react with revulsion to Sethe's scarred back points to the way that victims of extreme trauma and humiliation may be viewed by others as tainted and damaged. Thus, Paul D, even though he identifies with and honors Sethe's suffering, also perceives her, on some level, as an object of shame and disgust. (98)

Neither Hester nor Sethe regret their crimes, which are the result of their passionate nature. According to Frederick Carpenter, Hawthorne's dark lady "never repented of her 'sin' of passion, because she never recognized it as such" (294). In their transgression, they typify romantic individualism. According to Darrel Abel, "the romantic individualist repudiates the doctrine of a supernatural ethical absolute. He rejects both the authority of God, which sanctions a pietistic ethic, and the authority of society, which sanctions a utilitarian ethic, to affirm the sole authority of Nature" (1988a: 301).

After *Beloved*'s murder, Sethe, the demonic woman, experiences the horrors of hell. She goes to jail with her daughter, Denver. Sethe recalls that when she comes back from prison, after being rescued by the Bodwins, she has to buy her murdered baby's name on the gravestone with sex.⁴¹⁷ The ten-minute sex encounter with the cemetery engraver makes her scare of becoming so numb that prostitution could seem a way of earning a living: "I got close. I got close. To being a Saturday girl. I had already worked a stone mason's shop. A step to the slaughterhouse would have been a short one" (*Beloved*: 203-204). Those Saturday women went to the slaughterhouse yard when the men got paid and had sex behind the fences. Sethe compares their smiles to her mother's artificial one, consequence of the bit. Neither of them could have

⁴¹⁷ Jan Stryz highlights the fact that the engraver becomes a symbolic father who brings *Beloved* into written existence: he provides her with a name. Thus "This story of motherhood cannot seem to escape the issue of patriarchal authority in writing" (144). On the other hand, David Lawrence thinks that "In order to acquire the inscribing power of the white man's chisel, she [Sethe] must transform her body into a commodity; he will grant the cherished script provided he first be granted the right of sexual inscription" (90).

a real smile. However, she remembers that when the Bodwins got her the cooking job at Sawyer's restaurant, that "left me able to smile on my own" (*Beloved*: 204).

Sethe and Hester are transgressive dark ladies who, because they defend their crimes and social values, have to live outside their communities. They become outlaws: *The Scarlet Letter* and *Beloved* "examine the lives of women who have broken a law or taboo, who have been 'marked' and ostracized by their respective societies" (Sonser: 17). Sethe's behavior is repudiated by the blacks: "This is the very ambiguity of the specter of an injustice or what Morrison elsewhere refers to as the 'specter of enslavement,' for, as long as she lives within her trauma, Sethe is not only a witness to the past but also a pariah in the community" (Spargo: online). As Jan Stryz points out, both women "violently refuse [. . .] to relinquish their children to the hands of authority" and experience alienation from the community because of them (146).⁴¹⁸ Sethe and Hester are condemned to ostracism by their communities, which repudiate their proud attitude. John Gerber claims that Hester's isolation is as complete as Dimmesdale's: "For seven years now, heaven and earth 'have frowned on her.' Even though society has grown more benign, it has never really accepted her save in time of sickness or death" (287). Hester and Sethe are proscribed women who are punished and segregated from their communities. Only the love of their children sustains them in their long solitude. Like Hester Prynne, Sethe can be "read through the prism of the gothic, as an alienated, solitary individual isolated from a social context and threatened by unseen and possibly malevolent forces" (Sonser: 18). Morrison's heroine embodies the myth of the self-made dark lady who confronts alone the patriarchal order, represented by Schoolteacher.

Hester's scarlet letter and Sethe's scar are their marks of transgression.⁴¹⁹ The scarlet letter, from the magistrates' point of view, characterizes Hester as a sinner and threat to the community. However, the exquisitely embroidered graphic character also connotes passion and rebellion, meanings which are both aesthetic and political. In *Beloved*, Morrison achieves Gothic effects by using the rebellious mark of the deforming tree-shaped scar. Kate Cummins claims that "The liberation of the body is accordingly dependent upon taking back the flesh, reading its surface as marks of

⁴¹⁸ Stryz comments on the parallels between two key episodes of Hawthorne's and Morrison's romances. In the opening scene of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester, holding her daughter Pearl, emerges from prison with "a haughty smile, and a glance at would not be abashed", while the crowd gathered contemplate her (60). In *Beloved* the black community silently watches Sethe, who carries her living baby girl, walk past with "head a bit too high" and "back a little too straight", as she climbs into the cart that will take her to the entry of the jail (152) (146).

⁴¹⁹ Sethe's ignominious mark is a powerful and multivalent image whose meaning changes according to different perceptions and circumstances, signaling its complexity and ambiguity.

resistance” (qtd. in Manzanar: 95).⁴²⁰ In Sethe’s scar, Sonser sees “The pre-or trans-linguistic modality of inscription [which] undermines the idea of fixed meanings or stable identity, and, more concretely, it challenges hegemonic social and cultural practices”. She believes that both “Morrison’s and Hawthorne’s texts concern the intersection of subjectivity and social power at which junction occurs the ability to interpret and to control” (24).

Sethe thinks that her infanticide was inevitable under the circumstances: “There was nothing to be done other than what she had done” (*Beloved*: 89). However, she blames herself for Baby Suggs’s breakdown. She knows that the pain caused by her crime was the reason why her mother-in-law died in grief, embittered against the whites and without hope for the future. Despite Sethe’s apparent confidence in the righteousness of her dreadful decision, she has really felt guilty all along. Since the day of the crime, the black woman, a “free” slave, lives in a psychic bondage, trying to keep “the past at bay”. Her happy twenty-eight days of communal life are followed by eighteen years of ostracism and solitude. The community wrong Hester and Sethe, the demonic women, who live ostracized in the midst of it. However, both Hawthorne’s and Morrison’s heroines “choose to remain at the scene of their sorrow and guilt, and are at last reconciled with the community” (*Woidat*: 541). They acknowledge the dependence of the individual upon society and the need for the individual to become part of the community that surrounds him/her. It is in society that the individual has a chance to have a future life.

3.4.2.3. Transgressive Motherhood

Mothering becomes a central trope in the novel because it is defined as a key feature of the moral and historical imagination. The slave mother persevered to create identity, both personal and familial; in her image—on her body—were inscribed the twin imperatives to survive and to create new meaning. The recurring images of water, milk, and blood combine in the novel to suggest some of the material condition in which one creates the conscience of race, for the race needs to survive, both physically and in our imaginations, before we can examine its moral choices.

SATYA P. MOHANTY, “The Epistemic Status of Cultural Identity: On *Beloved* and the Postcolonial Condition”.

Maternity is one of the key themes of the Male Gothic, but it acquires a stronger significance in Female Gothic and ghost stories, whose “concern with the building and nurturing of families” (Louis Gross: 91) is usually surrounded by anxiety and ambiguity.⁴²¹ Claire Kahane thinks that both women and men maintain an uneasy

⁴²⁰ Original text quoted: Kate Cummins (1990). “Reclaiming the Mother(‘s) Tongue: *Beloved*, *Ceremony*, *Mothers and Shadows*”. *College English*, 52: 552-569.

⁴²¹ Motherhood and the feminine have a remarkable role in Male Gothic, as we can see in Lewis’s novel, *The Monk*. In fact, “Motherhood was still a problematic issue in Lewis’s time, and it is perhaps an indication of how truly ‘unspeakable’ the issue was that so few reviewers articulated their response to

relationship to the mother's image, which due to the monopoly of the female over infancy, reappears in all images of women:

Before we know where the self ends and the world begins, the mother-woman is experienced as global, all-embracing, all-powerful. Embodying in her very being the world's body and our own, the mother becomes culturally confirmed as the realm of the flesh, and is made the bearer of our ambivalence toward it. Furthermore, because the mother is invariably female, women experience that ambivalence more intimately. (243)

Cohen-Safir points out that "[Freud] connected the uncanny with recurrent images of sexuality and femininity, all linked to the central Mother image" (105). Gothic female authors explore the power of women as a source of nourishment or destruction.

In *Seven Gables* Hawthorne does not apparently cope with the theme of maternity. The world he depicts in this romance is overwhelmed by the presence of the almighty Patriarch, while the absence of the mother pervades the story. However, in *Beloved*, as in *The Scarlet Letter*, motherhood is one of the most important themes: "There is a central multidimensional Mother imagery" (Cohen-Safir: 109). In fact, as Mae Henderson says, "Morrison uses her metaphor of maternity to establish an alternative to the metaphor of paternity common in white/male historical discourse. This recurrent structuring metaphor complements and amplifies the images of the female body encoded in the text" (94). Morrison's narrative emphasizes the maternal trauma women suffered under slavery, while, in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne's focuses on the situation of a single mother in a patriarchal society.

Hester Prynne and Sethe go to jail for their sins, which are related to their motherhood. They are sustained in their solitude by their children's love. In fact, they only live for them. Hester and Sethe are transgressive dark ladies in their role as a mother: "Both women assert a power that is terrifying in its ability to undermine patriarchal structures, the ability to name, to destroy, and to legitimize. By breaking the taboo associated with the construct of motherhood, Sethe and Hester confront and challenge the patriarchal and racist frameworks of their respective societies" (Sonser: 20). Sethe's maternal role is fully subversive. Her resistance to the white slave owner is conveyed through her mothering and the desire to nurse her own children: "Despite the fact that Sethe is shamed when she is objectified as the sexualized breeder woman and the Jezebel-Mammy, that is, as the sexually aggressive wet nurse, she continues

what is unarguably one of the most horrific aspects of the novel: its repeated and graphic violations of the feminine, and particularly the maternal, realm" (Clemens: 72). On the other hand, motherhood is also very important in Female Gothic and ghost stories by women, as we can see in Shelley's romance: "*Frankenstein* [. . .] is not merely a 'woman's story,' it is a '*mother's story*'" (Anne Williams: 177). Shelley suggests that Victor Frankenstein's desire to create life is the result of his inability to deal with his mother's death. There are many ghost stories which deal with motherhood: Glasgow's "The Shadowy Third", Counselman's "The Unwanted", Bacon's "The Children" (1913), Hildegard Hawthorne's "A Legend of Sonora" (1891), Cornelia A. P. Comer's "The Little Gray Ghost" (1912), etc.

to identify herself primarily as a mother, taking deep pride in her fiercely protective mother love” (Bouson: 98). Hester, whose first appearance with the child at her breast resembles ‘the image of Divine Maternity’ (Hoffman 1988: 344), also defies the patriarchal society when she decides to be a single mother and fights for the custody of her child. Her strength to confront the whole world comes from her daughter Pearl.

Slavery distorts the concept of maternity in patriarchy, since black slave women are considered breeders, not mothers. When Sethe arrives at Sweet Home, she is only thirteen. However, she already knows that she has to choose one of the male slaves for a partner. It takes her a year to make a decision. Then she selects Halle. Despite her youth the black girl does not accept her role as a breeder and tells Mrs. Garner that she wants to get married. When Sethe and Halle make love for the first time, it is in the cornfield where animals mate. However, the black woman’s own definition of motherhood differs from the image that slavery has of the black female’s maternal body and role:

Sethe’s maternal subjectivity is figured in this defiant claim to her own definition of motherhood, motherhood being not a state she finds herself subjected to for someone else’s economic advantage but, rather, the part of herself which exceeded the bound of slavery, which refused its limits and thus her own means of self-inscription. (Keenan: 125)

As Keenan argues, Morrison “is able to delineate the particular interrelation between maternity and the history of African Americans and to undo the stereotypical mythologizing of black women’s identities” (121).

The milk stolen from Sethe and that she was denied as a child stands for her maternal role, but also for the disruption of motherhood during slavery. Her mother could not feed her and her surrogate mother had to feed the white babies first, “There was no nursing milk to call my own. I know what it is to be without the milk that belongs to you; to have to fight and holler for it, and to have so little left” (Beloved: 200). Nursing is so important for Sethe that when the white boys steal her milk, it is worse than a rape. They have violated what is most sacred for her, her motherhood: Schoolteacher’s nephews “cruelly mock the maternal associations of nursing by treating Sethe as an animal to be milked” (Barnett: 80).⁴²² It is her determination to feed her baby girl that gives her the strength to flee the farm. Sethe knew that “Nobody was going to get it to her fast enough, or take it away when she had enough and didn’t know it. Nobody knew that she couldn’t pass her air if you held her up on your shoulder, only if she was lying on my knees. Nobody knew that but me and nobody had her milk but me” (Beloved: 16). According to Giménez-Rico, “La leche [. . .] llega a simbolizar el amor, la

⁴²² Ernest Jones associates Sethe’s assault by the white boys with the kind perpetrated by the “alps,” the German nightmare figures that suck milk rather than semen or blood (qtd. in Barnett: 80). For more information, see: Ernest Jones (1931). *On the Nightmare*. New York: Liveright.

unión, la entrega de una mujer no sólo a sus hijos, sino a todas las personas a las que ama” (38).

Sethe projects her whole self onto her children: “At these crucial moments—moments when she believes she is going to die—she consistently envisions herself only as her children’s mother, eschewing any identification of herself for herself. She also identifies her children as ‘parts’ of herself—the only parts she wants to claim” (Keizer: online). As Bonnet claims, she has problems renouncing the pre-Oedipal fusion with her children and shows a potentially dangerous sense of possession: “Mother and child must outgrow their initial relationship, namely the symbiosis that typifies that period of life in which they are engrossed in each other, locked up in the exclusive dual relationship characteristic of the pre-Oedipal stage” (online). Sethe’s love for her children is so all-consuming that it becomes dangerous, her “motherlove was a killer” (*Beloved*: 132).⁴²³ For Paul D Sethe’s love is too thick and an ex-slave cannot afford it. He has never allowed himself to love big. However, for Sethe, “Love is or it ain’t. Thin love ain’t love at all” (*Beloved*: 164). She can only love big. That is why when Paul D asks her to get pregnant, Sethe feels happy; but she is afraid of what it takes to be a mother, “Needing to be good enough, alert enough, strong enough, that caring—again. Having to stay alive just that much longer” (*Beloved*: 132). Sethe’s conception of motherhood leads to an overprotectiveness which psychologically cripples Denver, who does not even dare step out of the home. Bonnet argues that the fact that the young woman has no self is a terrible consequence of her mother’s exclusive, paralyzing, withering kind of love (online).

Sethe is completely subjected to her offspring’s needs: she does not have a life of her own. Her pride and reason to live reside in being a nurturer, “replac[ing] her individual identity with her maternal role” (Fitzgerald: 117).⁴²⁴ Thus, ironically, she sees herself in terms of her nurturing function, just as slavery, which considers her a breeder. Maternity may threaten to eradicate the mother’s identity. As Bendixen says of one of Wilkins’s stories, the Gothic expresses ambivalence toward maternity, suggesting that “motherhood may require self-sacrifice to the point of sacrifice of self” (1986: 249). Morrison has said in her interview with Gloria Naylor that Margaret Garner’s story made her realize that motherhood could mean complete feminine selflessness. In addition, in Camille Billop’s *The Harlem Book of the Dead* (an album featuring James Van Zee’s photographs of Harlem funerals), Morrison found the tale of

⁴²³ Marilyn M. McKenzie thinks that Toni Morrison’s last three novels are a trilogy about excesses of love: *Beloved* is about excesses of mother love, *Jazz* is about excesses of romantic love and *Paradise* is about excesses of religion or the love of God (228-229).

⁴²⁴ Barbara Christian expresses similar views (217).

an eighteen-year-old girl who was shot by her ex-boyfriend.⁴²⁵ Both stories have something important in common, which Morrison tried to convey in *Beloved*, “A woman loved something other than herself so much. She had placed all of the value of her life in something outside herself” (Naylor: 207).⁴²⁶ One of the most important things Sethe must achieve in her gothic search is to value her own self.

3.4.2.4. Mother-Daughter Relationship: the Demeter-Persephone Myth

For the mother represents what the woman will become if she heeds her sexual self, if she heeds the self who seeks the power that comes with acting as the mother, and if she becomes pregnant. The ambivalences surrounding the conflict with this awesome figure are in part shaped by the twofold knowledge that to become the mother is to become the passive and perhaps unwilling victim of one's own body. Pregnancy and childbirth are sometimes undesired and are an automatic, unconscious process. The drama of pregnancy [. . .] leads to constriction not freedom, madness not sanity, and monsters not symmetry. Because this conflict is central to most if not all women's lives—through their own mother's pregnancy and their subsequent birth, if not their own pregnancy—the popularity of the Gothic for women writers and readers appears to exist not because it allows escape but because it expresses this confrontation with one of the central enigmas of female existence, the relationship of mother and daughter. And that confrontation, finally, is with the mother, not the father, with the female self, and not the male.

JULIANN FLEENOR, *The Female Gothic*.

Female gothic novels assert the matrilinear, recasting ancestry in terms of the mother, and explore relationships within the family and between women, especially mothers and daughters. The heroine hints at her uncertain feelings towards motherhood and, in particular, the mother-daughter relationship, which is presented ambiguously, as we can see in Morrison's *Beloved*. The Gothic has been a form “Women writers have used [. . .] to convey a fear of maternity and its consequent dependent mother/infant relationship as well as a fear of the mother and a quest for maternal approval” (Fleenor 1983b: 227). Nancy Chodorow states that while boys can use their masculinity to differentiate themselves from the engulfing maternal presence, girls are subjugated to the emotional bond with their mothers. They feel confused about their identity because they share the same gender and, consequently, mothers tend to

⁴²⁵ Morrison tells that story in *Conversations with Toni Morrison* (Naylor: 207).

⁴²⁶ Morrison explains how she created *Beloved*, the revenant, to express this idea: “It's peculiar to women. And I thought, it's interesting because the best thing that is in us is also the thing that makes us sabotage ourselves, sabotage in the sense that our life is not as worthy, or our perception of the best part of ourselves. I had about fifteen or twenty questions that occurred to me with those two stories in terms of what it is that really compels a good woman to displace the self, her self. So what I started doing and thinking about for a year was to project the self not into the way we say 'yourself,' but to put a space between those words, as though the self were really a twin or a thirst or a friend or something that sits right next to your and watches you, which is what I was talking about when I said “the dead girl.” So I had just projected her out into the earth [. . .]. So I just imagined the life of a dead girl which was the girl that Margaret Garner killed, the baby girl that she killed” (Naylor: 208). On the other hand, Jan Stryz states how Morrison had already dealt with these issues in *Sula*, in her character Eva Peace (142).

see a reflection of themselves in their daughters (qtd. in Rigney 1997: 63).⁴²⁷ The mother-daughter relationship is essential to both *The Scarlet Letter* and *Beloved*: “The two characters [Hester and Sethe] have a similar type of bond to their daughters, who serve to punish them while also providing their hope for redemption” (Woidat: 541). In Hawthorne’s romance, Pearl’s “mission is to keep Hester’s adultery always before her eyes, to prevent her from attempting to escape its moral consequences” (Fogle 1988: 313). As Sonser argues, when Hester throws the letter away in the forest, her daughter forces her to retake it. Thus Pearl’s role is similar to *Beloved*’s “serving as a constant reminder of her mother’s transgression” (22).

In *Beloved*, the mother-daughter relationship becomes obsessive and overwhelming.⁴²⁸ Deborah Horvitz highlights how the “Mother-daughter bonding and bondage suffuses Morrison’s text” (59). It is even more important than in *The Scarlet Letter*, since there are different mother-daughter couples: Sethe and her mother and Sethe and her two daughters.⁴²⁹ Sally Keenan comments that “Morrison creates a subjective language of enslavement which articulates the metonymic relation between the bodies of mothers and daughters which the institution of slavery would deny” (121). Unlike Hawthorne’s narrative, in Morrison’s story, two of these relationships, Sethe with her mother and with *Beloved*, follow the pattern of a severed mother-daughter relationship, the myth of Demeter and Persephone. Sethe feels that her mother abandoned her, as does *Beloved*.⁴³⁰

The myth of Demeter and Persephone is a main theme for Female Gothic while Male Gothic centers on the Oedipus story: the absence, abandonment or violent separation of a daughter from her mother, or the other way around, that is at the core of *Beloved*. According to Marianne Hirsch, the psychoanalytic plot has silenced the mother’s response to separation, “an untold maternal experience,” [which] “urges feminists to shift their political allegiance back from father to mother, even as it urges us to sympathize with our mothers’ position in patriarchy” (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 111-112).⁴³¹ Like the majority of slaves Sethe does not have a normal parental relationship. She hardly knows her mother (not even her name), who could not nurse her and,

⁴²⁷ For more information, see: Nancy Chodorow (1978). *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

⁴²⁸ Morrison herself in her interview with Angels Carabí comments that Sethe “is impacted by the feeling of abandonment” (1993: 107).

⁴²⁹ According to Mae G. Henderson, Morrison tracks Sethe’s past and that of the community along ‘motherlines’ and thus the image of motherhood is used to explain history. Sethe’s past is read back tracking four generations of black female slaves (95).

⁴³⁰ Grewal says that “In *Beloved*, white men take captive the daughter of the African mother gathering flowers; the same sundering [as in the Greek myth] is true for Sethe and her mother” (1998: 112).

⁴³¹ Original text quoted: Marianne Hirsch (1989). “Clytemnestra’s Children”. *Alice Walker*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House.

consequently, Nan, the black woman who feeds the babies, becomes her surrogate mother.

Sethe's bond to her mother is painful. She feels emotionally hurt by the fact that her mother was not there for her: "Even though Sethe is familiar with the conditions of slavery, she cannot help but resent her mother's incessant unavailability" (Holden-Kirwan: online). Sethe says about her: "She never fixed my hair nor nothing. She didn't even sleep in the same cabin most nights I remember" (Beloved: 60-61). Morrison's heroine wonders why her mother was executed. She knows that the usual reason for a plantation owner to hang a slave, and thus lose a valuable piece of property, was to serve as a warning and a deterrent for those who could be tempted to escape. That is why Sethe assumes unconsciously that her mother was killed for running away. She thinks her mother deserted her: "In recalling the fate of her mother, Sethe brings to the surface feelings of anger, bitterness, and sorrow" (Holden-Kirwan: online). The feeling of abandonment has pursued her all her life: "Because she was my ma'am and nobody's ma'am would run off and leave her daughter, would she? Would she, now?" (Beloved: 203).⁴³²

The consequences of the mother-daughter separation are devastating since, as Jung says, "The psyche pre-existent to consciousness (e.g., in the child) participates in the maternal psyche on the one hand, while on the other it reaches across to the daughter's psyche. We could therefore say that every mother contains her daughter in herself and every daughter her mother, and that every woman extends backwards into her mother and forward into her daughter" (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 112).⁴³³ In *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*, Dorothy Dinnerstein points out that women's early care for their babies has tremendous consequences on their psyches: people's most intimate fears and fantasies are linked to the image of the mother (qtd. in Kahane: 243).⁴³⁴

As a result of slavery Sethe is bereft of maternal care and the repercussions are terrible: "Sethe is denied daughterhood [. . .]. Deprived of a mother, however, Sethe can never be a daughter and thus never achieve subjectivity through daughterhood; furthermore, the absence of the maternal look as a child continues to deprive Sethe of

⁴³² In *The Monk* Lewis stresses the importance of the maternal presence and nurturing in the individual's development. Most of *Frankenstein* also deals with the retribution visited upon the monster and creator for deficient infant care. For more information about this aspect, see: Mary G. Lund (1962). "Mary Godwin Shelley and the Monster". *University of Kansas City Review*, 28: 253-258; Elizabeth Nitchie (1953). *Mary Shelly: Author of "Frankenstein"*. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press: 13-21; Sylvia Norman (1970). "Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley". Ed. Kenneth Neill Cameron, III. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press: 399.

⁴³³ Original text quoted: Carl Jung (1959). *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Princeton: Princeton U P.

⁴³⁴ For more information, see: Dorothy Dinnerstein (1977). *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*. New York: Harper & Row.

subjectivity as an adult [. . .]. In giving birth to her own children, she attempts to achieve subjectivity through motherhood” (Holden-Kirwan: online). Being deserted by her mother makes Sethe feel incomplete and look for fulfillment in her own family. She is obsessively determined to keep them united. As Keizer comments, “Her mother’s abandonment of her and the fact that Sethe never got enough milk when she was being nursed are the tragedies at the very base of Sethe’s life, and she tries to compensate for her own motherlessness by being a supermother to her own children” (online).

Julia Kristeva’s concept of the mother as a “continuous separation, a division of the very flesh. And consequently a division of language” (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 113) does not apply under slavery. Her idea of a preverbal “maternal semiotic, a pre-oedipal language preceding” its formal acquisition by the child is problematized (Grewal 1998: 113).⁴³⁵ Sethe cannot even remember her mother’s African language: “she [Sethe] recognizes that she has been robbed of mothering and her first language—in short, her birthright. This knowledge has *not just drifted away*, it has been taken from her by the slave system” (Keizer: online). Sethe has lost her heritage, except for her vague memories of some African songs and dances that, now and then, come to her mind. As when she is going to give birth to Denver, the movements of her unborn child remind her of her mother’s African antelope dancing (Carabí 1993: 109). Deborah Deborah Horvitz says:

Stored in childhood but only now unlocked, the link between the unborn Denver’s kicks and the dead ma’am’s kicks as she danced the antelope erupts in Sethe’s memory. As she bears the next generation her matrilineal line, Sethe keeps her mother’s African antelope dancing alive: she links the pulses of her unchained, vigorously moving mother and her energetic, womb-kicking daughter forever. (61)

Horvitz points out that “This cycle of mother-daughter fusion, loss, betrayal, and recovery between Sethe and her mother plays itself out again in the present relationship between Sethe and Beloved” (62). However, in Sethe and Beloved’s kinship there is not only desertion, but the mother’s terrible feelings of guilt at having deprived her daughter of life. As in *The Scarlet Letter*, in which Pearl signifies “a pre-Oedipal semiotic toward which Hester is drawn as ‘mother and daughter stood together in the same circle of seclusion from human society” (Sonser: 22), in *Beloved*, Sethe and her ghost daughter, during the ritual of possession, live in a sort of pre-Oedipal space, ostracized from the black community. Beloved devours her mother in her hunger for love, robbing her of her identity since, as a ghost, she does not have her own. Almost at the end of the story, the revenant has practically eaten her mother’s life

⁴³⁵ Original text quoted: Julia Kristeva (1986). “Stabat Mater”. *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia U P.

up and Sethe just “sat around like a rag doll, broke down [. . .] from trying to take care of and make up for” (*Beloved*: 243). The indomitable dark lady has been reduced to a shadow, a ghost stuck in the past. There is a moment when Sethe and *Beloved* seem to have changed places; *Beloved* looks like the mother and Sethe, the child.⁴³⁶

Dressed in Sethe’s dresses, she [*Beloved*] stroked her skin with the palm of her hand. She imitated Sethe, talked the way she did, laughed her laugh and used her body the same way down to the walk, the way Sethe moved her hands, sighed through her nose, held her head [. . .] *it was difficult for Denver to tell who was who.* (*Beloved*: 241; emphasis added)

As in Female Gothic, this part of the story reflects Morrison’s ambiguity about motherhood: “the ambivalence of slave women about motherhood that violates their personal integrity and that of their family” (Bernard Bell: 55). As Barbara Christian says, that might explain why the mother figure appears as both the one who loves and the one who can destroy (213).

According to Carl Jung, *Beloved*, as a recreation of the Demeter-Persephone myth, “exists on the plane of mother-daughter experience, which is alien to man and shuts him off [. . .] the feminine influence so far outweighed the masculine that the latter had practically no significance. The man’s role in the Demeter myth is really only that of seducer or conqueror” (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 112). As Grewal argues in 124 men must move out the scene for a time while the suffering women become the center of attention (1998: 112). When Paul D leaves the house, “Sethe locked the door, the women inside were free at last to be what they liked, see whatever they saw and say whatever was on their minds” (*Beloved*: 199). He is “left out of the vortex of mother-daughter guilt and pain” (Grewal 1998: 112).

3.4.3. Hepzibah, the Old Maid

A grotesque old spinster, simple, childish, penniless, very humble at heart, but rigidly conscious of her pedigree. Hepzibah Pyncheon, with her near-sighted scowl, her rusty joints, her antique turban, her map of a great territory to the eastward which ought to have belonged to her family, her vain terrors, and scruples, and resentments, the inaptitude and repugnance of an ancient gentlewoman to the vulgar little commerce which a cruel fate has compelled her to engage in.
HENRY JAMES, “*The House of the Seven Gables*”.

Like Hawthorne in *Seven Gables*, Morrison advocates a domestic ideology, although according to the traditional values of black womanhood. In fact, as Carolyn Denard claims, she enhances the dignity and the inner strength of those females who performed domestic roles. Morrison highlights their historical ability to keep their households together, what she calls the “tar quality” (from the African myth of the “tar baby”) (1988: 174,175). These women are the matriarchs of her fiction, who contrast to

⁴³⁶ This blurring and confusion of identities is another typical theme of Gothic fiction, which Hawthorne also deals with, for instance in *Holgrave* as a concealed Maule.

the typical gothic patriarchs (which does not mean that these characters have no drawbacks): Mrs. McTeer in *The Bluest Eye*; Eva Peace in *Sula*; Pilate in *Song of Solomon*; Ondine in *Tar Baby* or Baby Suggs in *Beloved*. Their ways stand against the Law of the Father. According to Denard,

They are the 'tar women' whom Morrison applauds and whose value, she believes, should not be minimized by attention to the wrong value system or by existential longings and separate self-definitions [. . .]. [They] are the heroines of Morrison's fiction [. . .] [they] kept their vision and their energies focused on that which was worthwhile and sustaining. Morrison's emphasis on their selflessness and their strength is not to romanticize their limited opportunity for adventure or fulfillment outside the boundaries of their own communities. Instead it is to show the value and the difficulty of the role that they did serve. (1988: 177-178)

Morrison thinks that the value of these women had been frequently diminished and ridiculed and she tries to attack these prejudices and misconceptions. Her fiction gives new dimensions to the strong grandmother stereotype, such as Eva Peace, who does not always feel the conventional love for children. Some of Morrison's extraordinary matriarchs, Eva and Pilate, remove ordeals for their daughters, Hannah and Reba, who become emotional weaklings. On the other hand, their granddaughters, Sula and Hagar, seem to grow up almost wildly and their love relationships are destructive.

There are a few coincidences between Morrison's old women and Hepzibah. Morrison's old females are real matriarchs, who live on their own terms and can become over-controlling, as in Eva Peace's god-like ways; on the contrary, Hawthorne's spinster is very dependent and vulnerable. These black women establish a matrilinear descent that does not exist in *Seven Gables*. In *Beloved*, the family line is drawn around females: Baby Suggs, her daughter-in-law, Sethe and her two granddaughters, Denver and Beloved. Hepzibah does not have the strong spirituality or witchlike power of some of Morrison's old women, such as Baby Suggs or Pilate. Nor does Hepzibah have the role of a guider, as Baby Suggs, Pilate or Circe do. Only once does the old maid lead the way: when the railway trip ends and Clifford is exhausted.

Morrison's old females rule in their domestic realm, defending their households. When Baby arrives at 124, she redesigns her home. Like Morrison's matriarchs, Hepzibah, who is not very competent in her domestic role due to her genteel inclinations, makes unsuccessful efforts to become the family provider.⁴³⁷ For a time she becomes the housekeeper until Phoebe takes over. However, in both novels, the

⁴³⁷ As in *Seven Gables*, in early gothic novels, the old woman appears as foolish and useless. In *The Monk*, Antonia's guardian, Leonella, is presented as stupid and vain. Elvira is ineffectual, since she fails to protect her daughter Antonia and dies at Ambrosio's hands. In *Dracula*, Lucy's mother is well-meaning; however, she causes her daughter's death. She removes the garlic flowers that protect her daughter.

domestic sphere, even though under feminine management, is ultimately dominated by outside patriarchal forces. Neither Hepzibah nor Clifford can oppose Judge Pyncheon, who is ultimately the one who rules over the inhabitants of the mansion. Nor can Baby Suggs oppose Schoolteacher's invasion into her yard. In her devotion to her brother, Hepzibah tries to be a nurturer and a mother: "She becomes a protectress and mother who shields Clifford from contact with the sunny world, especially the scorching sunniness of Judge Pyncheon's 'philanthropy'" (McPherson: 139). However, in contrast to "the tar quality" of Morrison's matriarchs, which make them keep their families together, Hepzibah cannot even be near her brother, since he cannot stand her presence.

In contrast to the strength and selflessness of Morrison's tar females, Hepzibah is essentially weak. However, she can find some vigor as a result of her devotion to her brother. Hepzibah struggles to overcome her repugnance to trade because she loves Clifford and wants to provide for his sustenance. The old maid makes courageous attempts to prevent Judge Pyncheon's from getting near the old bachelor. She becomes "amazingly like the dragon which, in fairy tales, is wont to be the guardian over an enchanted beauty" (Gables: 126): "Hepzibah, diminished and physically worn though she is at the start of the romance, still has the strength to resist her cousin Jaffrey and to persevere in her faltering attempts to extend charity within her narrow sphere" (Gatta: 40).⁴³⁸ But the old maid is only fierce in her appearance and Judge Pyncheon is quite aware of that. Although Hepzibah is finally defeated in the struggle with her kindred, she proves her integrity. Unlike Hepzibah, Baby Suggs is a strong woman from the beginning. Like Hawthorne's heroine, who experiences a sort of rebirth after the opening of the cent-shop and Judge Pyncheon's death, the old black female experiences a renewal after she is set free. Then she claims her right to self-definition and becomes the spiritual leader of her community.

American Gothic is deeply concerned with political and social problems. Through Hepzibah, *Seven Gables* explores the class conflict in nineteenth-century America: the transformation of an outmoded feudal and "aristocratic" society inherited from the Old World into a new democratic one. Hepzibah, as a gentlewoman by birth, is "both symbol and victim of the old order, sheltered and weakened as well by its unbased gentility. She is a soul led astray, wandering in a maze, estranged from life by inherited and vicarious guilt" (Fogle 1952: 154). This old woman portrays the decayed gentry based on her genteel delusions: "her life" is "circumscribed by a code of gentility and decorum" (Pennell 1999: 193). Hepzibah, as representative of the "aristocratic" class, is

⁴³⁸ Male believes that Hepzibah "is also and above all an indomitable human being", as "her staunch resistance to the Judge" proves (1967: 437). Pennell expresses similar views (1999: 195).

contrasted to Phoebe, who stands for “new Plebeianism”: “They differ not merely in age and temperament, they represent radically different views of society” (Dooley: 33). She not only represents the genteel past of the Pyncheons, she sees “herself as guardian of the house and repository of Pyncheon family lore and tradition” (Pennell 1999: 193). On the other hand, Baby represents the transition between slavery and its aftermath. She symbolizes the new awareness of those who become free and have to learn to love themselves. Enslavement has crippled them both. However, Hawthorne’s spinster’s bondage is psychological.

Through the old lady Hawthorne analyzes the cultural values of the nineteenth-century society regarding old unmarried women. Hepzibah represents the archetypal “spinster”, the old stricken virgin who has never known what love means. Her black silk gown characterizes her as a classic old maid. Crews states that Hawthorne hints at the sexual implications of her state from the moment he introduces her in mock-erotic terms (183): “Far from us be the indecorum of assisting, even in imagination, at a maiden lady’s toilet!” (Gables: 30).⁴³⁹ Hepzibah’s virginity is associated with incestuous feelings, although more spiritual than physical, towards her brother. On the other hand, Morrison’s matriarchs are not usually virgins, since most of the time they are grandmothers in a family made of women, such as Baby Suggs, Eva Peace or Pilate. At the present moment of their lives, men do not seem to be important in their lives, devoted to their women kin and their community.

As a living symbol of the past, Hepzibah shows in her body the terrible passage of time: she is old and ugly. Despite the time she spends on her morning repair and beautifying, she cannot conceal her unattractiveness. According to Harmon, an archetypal analysis of Hepzibah’s character suggests three aspects of the Fates, the daughters of the Night, which are also typical gothic features of the old female:

She is patently a virgin; also, in her own way, a nurturer, particularly of her beloved brother Clifford; she is also the crone, whose physical form reflects the ravages of age and the inevitable decay of the body (which Hawthorne repeatedly emphasizes in the narrative). As crone/witch Hepzibah’s sexuality remains closeted; as nurturer, she will be replaced by the sunny Phoebe, and thereby neutralized as a life force. (106)

Unlike Hepzibah, Morrison’s matriarchs are life forces. Baby Suggs’s cleansing ritual when Sethe gets to 124 or her speeches in the Clearing are examples of her capacity to heal the wounds of slavery. However, after the crime, she gives up. Baby suffers from a breakdown that takes her to bed, blaming the whites for the blacks’ misfortunes.

⁴³⁹ Pennell reminds us of Hawthorne’s pejorative use of the words “old maid”, which are frequently repeated, as indicative of “how the community defines a woman of Hepzibah’s age, marital status, and prospects” (1999: 193).

Hawthorne portrays Hepzibah in a very typical Gothic way, using emblems which characterize her allegorically: the turban, her black silk dress, her scowl, the east wind. Even though Judge Pyncheon is the real representation of the east wind, it is Hepzibah who is associated with it: "As for Hepzibah, she seemed not merely possessed with the east-wind, but to be, in her very person, only another phase of this gray and sullen spell of weather; the East-Wind itself, grim and disconsolate, in a rusty black silk-gown, and with a turban of cloud-wreaths on its head!" (Gables: 223). The most successful emblematic device used to describe the old lady is her wretched scowl: "Although she is, in reality, warm and kind, her myopic frown stamps her as sour and bitter" (Dillingham: 457). It has become so habitual that any change of her mood invariably evokes it. For everyone in the neighborhood this gesture is the result of her "ugliness of temper" and the "mischief in her eye". However, it is her "her weakened vision" which causes "her to see others in a distorted and imperfect way" and "also insures that others will misread her" (Dryden 1971: 304). Her apparently wicked brow contortion contrasts with old Colonel Pyncheon and Judge Pyncheon's awful and real one, a reflection of their stern iron hearts. As Dillingham points out, through Hepzibah's scowl and the Judge's smile, Hawthorne expresses his concern with "the deceptiveness of outward appearance" (457): Hepzibah is harsh on the outside, but all tenderness inside.⁴⁴⁰ Like the other characters in *Seven Gables*, she is also identified by her voice, a sort of croak, one of the symptoms of her melancholy, which symbolizes the whole history of her misfortunes: "such voices have put on mourning for dead hopes; and they ought to die and be buried along with them" (Gables: 135).

Hepzibah is described with the adjective "rusty:" "a gaunt, sallow, rusty-jointed maiden" with a "rigid and rusty frame" whose gown is "of rusty black silk". As Leo Levy has shown, this word has many symbolic meanings: it links the old maid to the ruined mansion, the "rusty wooden house", from which she is inseparable; it connects her with the deteriorated past, "iron" Puritanism; it associates her with the qualities of strength and weakness she shows when she confronts the patriarchal power (151). Her inner strength is revealed not only in the fact that she fights to defend her brother, but also because even though she is poor and has problems subsisting, she does not ask Jaffrey for help and thus keeps her independence: "Her rejections of Jaffrey's offers of income or shelter on his country estate symbolize her refusal to submit to Jaffrey's power or to accept his version of family history and destiny" (Pennell 1999: 195).

On the other hand, the metaphorical characterizations of Morrison's old females are usually related to their witch-like or spiritual powers. Pilate is a sort of freak, since

⁴⁴⁰ Fogle thinks that Hepzibah "is a reminder of the complexity of moral meaning and of life itself in the discrepancy between her appearance [. . .] and her real nature" (1952: 154-155).

she has no navel, which might imply her lack of natural family ties, but more probably, as well as her height, points to her sorcery.⁴⁴¹ Circe is truly described as a conjurer: she is so old, about two hundred, that she is colorless except for her mouth and eyes. Even though she is so ancient that she should be dead, she has the “strong mellifluent voice of a twenty-year-old girl” (Song of Solomon: 262). Despite her wrinkled appearance, Milkman seems to perceive her youth, since he has an erection once he holds her in his arms. Eva Peace shows her god-like powers when she calls the three children that she takes in with the same name “Dewey” and, mysteriously, they become an inseparable unit: “a dewey—joining with the other two to become a trinity with a plural name [. . .] inseparable, loving nothing and no one but themselves” (Sula: 38).

Thérèse also has special supernatural powers. She is a descendant of the mythic blind horsemen who ride the island. Thérèse is a wise woman, a guardian of folk traditions and an intermediary between the real and the spiritual world: “Several events in the novel make clear that she is capable of seeing without seeing (by using the eye of the mind) and knowing without knowing. Her near-blindness highlights the fact that she is more intuitive than empirical in her understanding of the world, that she shares ties with the forces around her that transcend rational, scientific explanations” (Trudier Harris 1991: 147).⁴⁴² In *Beloved* Baby Suggs is characterized through her role as a spiritual guide for the blacks. She teaches them to love their bodies and help them recover their dignity and their sense of self-worthiness.

Hepzibah, as a Gothic character, experiences a metamorphosis over the course of the narrative. At the beginning of the story she is completely dominated by the past. She is powerless and useless. However, because of her love for her brother she overcomes her fears and confronts the democratic present, opening the cent-shop. This is the first step in her transformation: “she had been enriched by poverty, developed by sorrow, elevated by the strong and solitary affection of her life, and thus endowed with heroism, which never could have characterized her in what are called happier circumstances” (Gables: 133). Even though the old lady’s attempts at trade fail she has learned some good lessons from this experience. She also tries to fight, without any results, against her isolation. Hepzibah’s process of advancement is partial: her democratization cannot be entirely fulfilled, since Phoebe takes over the cent-shop and the house. As Alfred Levy asserts: “Hawthorne does not repudiate her efforts to regain a normal tempo, but he implies in her failures that she is no longer

⁴⁴¹ Trudier Harris calls her “the witchlike godmother” (1991: 85). Harris believes that Pilate’s lack of a navel symbolizes her “extranatural mothering role” (1991: 92) and stands for her “otherness” (1991: 92).

⁴⁴² Thérèse’s special qualities are shown when she smells Son’s presence on the island; she has “magic breasts” (Tar Baby: 108) which have given milk long beyond her child-bearing years. Thérèse knows from the beginning that Son is one of the horsemen, since she has seen him in a dream (Tar Baby: 104).

equipped to succeed" (461). The old lady has been too long imprisoned in the old mansion and it is too late for her to completely abandon her old aristocratic beliefs. She will stand as the symbol of the impossibility of escaping the past.

On the other hand, as Francis Battaglia has shown, the old maid experiences a gradual transformation which consists of a development of her faith in God (584). Hepzibah tries to pray in the house on several occasions. First, in Chapter II (Gables: 30-31); later in the day, she offers her pleas to God. She also attempts, together with Clifford, to attend church. The old woman yearns to reconcile herself to God and man because both brother and sister have been too "long separate from the world, and [. . .] scarcely friends with Him above" (Gables: 168). However, they turn back unable to deal with humankind. Hepzibah tries to invoke God again when Judge Pyncheon comes to visit Clifford and she feels his threat. It is not until the Judge's death, when Clifford is no longer able to lead them, that the old lady is able to pray (Battaglia: 585):

She knelt down upon the platform where they were standing, and lifted her clasped hands to the sky. The dull, gray weight of clouds made it invisible, but it was no hour for disbelief;—no juncture this, to question that there was a sky above, and an Almighty Father looking down from it!

Oh, God!"—ejaculated poor, gaunt Hepzibah—then paused for a moment, to consider what her prayer should be—"Oh, God—our Father—are we not thy children? Have mercy on us! (Gables: 266-267)

According to Francis Battaglia, Hepzibah can finally trust God enough to call his name: the old gentlewoman has achieved true faith in the Almighty (585).

Baby Suggs, on the other hand, also experiences a complete renewal when she becomes free. Then she discovers that she has a body, which she starts to recognize and love. For the first time, she believes that she can have a family and starts planning on gathering her children. The old black woman even realizes that she has a spiritual role in her community, which she puts into practice when she transforms her house into a shelter and in her speeches in the Clearing. Unlike Hepzibah, Baby's depression ends up with her personal advancement and never again recovers from the terrible blow that Sethe's crime represents in her life.

CHAPTER 4

Sin and Redemption of the Gothic Individual

4.1. Sin and Guilt

The House of the Seven Gables, one for each deadly sin, may be no unmeet adumbration of the corrupted soul of man. It is a ghostly, mouldy abode, built in some eclipse of the sun, and rafted with curses dark; founded on a grave, and sending its turrets heavenward, as the lightning rod transcends its summit, to invite the wrath supernatural. Every darker shadow of human life lingers in and about its melancholy shelter. There all the passions allied to crime,—pride in its intensity, avarice with its steely gripe, and unrelenting conscience, are to be expiated in the house built on injustice.

EVERT A. DUYCKINCK, "The House of the Seven Gables: Marble and Mud".

In both Hawthorne's and Morrison's Gothic narratives, sin and guilt are the source of darkness. Many critics, beginning with Melville, speak of the 'blackness' in Hawthorne's fiction. In *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), D. H. Lawrence claims to have discovered in Hawthorne a writer who delves deeply into the black heart of man, "and see[s] the inner diabolism of the symbolic meaning. Otherwise it is all mere childishness" (qtd. in Buitenhuis 1991: 16).⁴⁴³ Truly, darkness is at the core of Hawthorne's gothic romances and tales:

Yet Hawthorne, perhaps even more than the categorized Gothic writers Charles Brockden Brown or Washington Irving, will find the appropriate way to give American Gothic its *Lettres de Noblesse*. Because he defined the major trauma at the root of colonial America in terms of sin and witch trials, he transplanted the Protestant cherished case of conscience into New England. Hadn't Walpole set the mode itself inherited from Biblical saying whereby "The Sins of the Fathers are

⁴⁴³ Original text quoted: D. H. Lawrence (1962). *Studies in Classic American Literature*. New York: Viking. According to Warren, Hawthorne's reading of *The Newgate Calendar* may have influenced his meditations on sin and crime (482). For more information, see: George P. Lathrop (1871). *A Study of Hawthorne*. Boston., 1876, 67: 73-74; J. T. Fields (1900). *Yesterdays with Authors*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co..

Visited on their Children" [sic]. This is both the moralistic statement of *The Castle of Otranto* and Hawthorne's personal obsession. (Cohen-Safir: 102)

Claude Cohen-Safir comments that "Hawthorne [. . .] established the American rules of the Gothic. 'Although the grand gloom of European Gothic was inappropriate, the commonplace of American culture was full of little mysteries and guilty secrets from communal and family pasts' [. . .].⁴⁴⁴ By insisting on the psychological dimension and perhaps expansion of the 'guilty conscience,' Hawthorne is a true precursor of psychological Gothic fiction" (103).

Toni Morrison also makes evil the central element of *Beloved*: "Melville, Hawthorne, Poe, wrote riddling allegories about the nature of evil, the haunting of unappeased spirits, the inverted opposition of blackness and whiteness. Morrison has with plainness and grace and terror—and judgment—solved the riddle, and shown us the world which haunted theirs" (Plasa: 18). She unveils the issues of blackness and race that hide under the evil of gothic romances. When Bill Moyers asked Morrison about the absence of these topics in white writers' works in the period of traumatic conflict over abolition and slavery, on the eve of the Civil War, she answered that they are in Hawthorne, "They're in Fenimore Cooper. They're in Melville. They're everywhere in Poe. I don't care where they find their story; writers are informed by the major currents of the world" (264).

David Punter points out that American Gothic is "intensely preoccupied with the pathology of guilt" and posits that the source of this obsession can be found in "Puritanism and its legacy" (165). Likewise, as Cohen-Safir writes, "Puritan concepts of guilt could impregnate Morrison's fiction through the use of the Gothic" (110). However and despite Hawthorne's Puritan legacy, he never eliminates free will from his sinful world. He shows how the inner disposition of the sinners and the determinants of their lives restrict their freedom, but they never completely eliminate it.⁴⁴⁵ Klaus Hansen argues that Hawthorne's sense of tragedy is somehow triggered by the fact that he is caught between two contradictory world-views: a Puritan one, in which the universe is determined by God, predestination and morality, and another, not God-centered, undetermined and morally indifferent (25).

In the nineteenth century, the Americans' approach to the Calvinistic doctrine of inherited guilt, "the imputation to the living individual of the disempowering effects of a sin 'originally' committed by the first man in the first hours of the race's history" (R. W.

⁴⁴⁴ Quoted from Fred Botting. *Gothic*. London: Routledge, 1996 (115)

⁴⁴⁵ For more information about "fatalities" before and after the sinful action, see: James S. Mullican's article (1979). "Determinism, Fatalism, and Free Will in Hawthorne". *Philosophy and Nature* 3: 93.

B. Lewis: 28), is diverse.⁴⁴⁶ R. W. B. Lewis considers Hawthorne's attitude as ambiguous: "the characteristic situation in his fiction is that of the Emersonian figure, the man of hope, who by some frightful mischance has stumbled into the time-burdened world of Jonathan Edwards" (113). Hawthorne does not reject the Calvinist doctrine of inherited guilt. On the contrary, his fiction is deeply concerned with it and highly influenced by the Old Testament.

We can find the source for Hawthorne's sense of sin and guilt in his forefathers. The Puritan leaders of his fiction blend with his ancestors.⁴⁴⁷ Hawthorne inherited the sins of his 'fathers' just as the Pyncheons of later generations inherit their progenitors' sins. Judge Hathorne's guilt, as a consequence of his participation in the Salem witchcraft trials, was transmitted in the history of his family in the same way it is in *Seven Gables*.⁴⁴⁸ During these proceedings, Judge Hathorne and another judge had John English and his wife arrested on charges of witchcraft. That was the beginning of a feud between the Hawthorne and English families, which was resolved many years later when a grandson of Judge Hathorne married a great-granddaughter of John English. Thus the English house, one of the oldest in Salem, passed into the possession of a Hathorne.⁴⁴⁹ This feud and its resolution may have been used as a model for *Seven Gables*.

Crews believes that Hawthorne's Puritan ancestors gave him "a *guilty identity, which was better than none*" (38). Like his forefathers, Hawthorne explores, in his novels, the minds of characters who tried to find sin in other people. While Puritan

⁴⁴⁶ Emerson claims that there was a dualism, a split between two polarized parties: the party of Hope and the party of Memory. According to the hopeful creed, America had no past, but only a present and a future; "innocence" was its key word. Emerson, one of the main representatives of the hopeful, thought that, in America, one could make life anew. On the other hand, the party of Memory, "the nostalgic", believed in the Calvinist doctrine of inherited sin. On the contrary, R. W. B. Lewis considers that we must distinguish at least three voices in American intellectual history. He adds a third party, the party of Irony, to which Hawthorne would belong and which examined the two opposed tendencies and sustained an unusual, ambivalent traditionalism.

⁴⁴⁷ William Hathorne, Hawthorne's first American forefather, may have been the model for some of Hawthorne's colonial heroes in his early historical tales. He became a model Puritan and symbolized the dark side of Puritanism: intolerance, cruelty, pride and vengeance.

⁴⁴⁸ William Hathorne's tradition of authority, vengeance, and cruelty was handed down to his son, John, one of the three judges at the Salem witchcraft trials (1692), in which four hundred men and women were accused and twenty executed. In the Hawthorne family, a story was passed down that one of the witches had pronounced a curse on Judge Hathorne and all his posterity, although it was actually made against the Rev. Richard Noyes, another judge at the trials. According to Crews, "the coincidence of family guilt with the guiltiest public event of New England history provided Hawthorne with rich materials for his favorite themes of moral self-delusion and righteous sadism" (36). See: *The Paternal Ancestors of Nathaniel Hawthorne: Introduction*. On line at: <http://www.hawthorneinsalem.org/page10110/> (consulted 14.03.2006). In the introduction of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne writes about his ancestors and the curse that may pursue them as a result of their cruelties. He takes shame upon himself so as to remove it (9; emphasis added).

⁴⁴⁹ All these facts can be found in Ebenezer Hathorne's account in *The American Notebooks* (August 27, 1837).

leaders searched for the sins of the people in the community, Hawthorne shows and delves into his fictitious characters' sins. In depicting the guilt of the Puritans, Hawthorne tends to exaggerate their cruelty and sadism and thus to treat Puritan times as some sort of nightmare. This seems to be connected to Hawthorne's oppressive sense of ancestry and his inner qualms about being an artist.⁴⁵⁰ As Peter Buitenhuis tells us,

This turbulent, lurid, and sensational Hawthorne and Manning inheritance, as well as its now faded legacy of power, wealth, and influence are all clearly evident in the narrative of *Seven Gables*. Hereditary guilt, hereditary pride, hereditary property, hereditary claims, hereditary decay, and the links between all five form the basis of the tale. (1991: 31)

Buitenhuis claims that "Hawthorne recasts family history as a form of confession and expiation" (1991:31).

Unlike Hawthorne, who takes his ideas for the Pyncheon crime and feud from his family history, Morrison gets her most important and definite inspiration for Sethe's crime in the historical account of Margaret Garner's infanticide, an episode which, as David Dudley states, is as Gothic in nature as anyone could imagine (295).⁴⁵¹ According to Walter Clemons, Morrison herself says that when she read the newspaper clipping about Margaret Garner, she decided that she "had to deal with this nurturing instinct that expressed itself in murder" (qtd. in Reyes: 81).⁴⁵² That way Morrison "both historicizes fiction and fictionalizes history" (Mae Henderson: 82). However, even though Morrison takes this story as the main thread of her plot, she also recognizes that she did not research further into the black female slave's life, since she did not want her book to be about it.

4.1.1. Sin and Moral Depravity

A condition in which the center of spiritual activity is capable of its own pollution predicates a number of considerations basic to human experience, including the

⁴⁵⁰ Jose Luis Borges believes that "Like Stevenson, also son of Puritans, Hawthorne never ceased to feel that the task of the writer was frivolous or, what is worse, even sinful" (59). Crews expresses similar views (31).

⁴⁵¹ In her interview with Gloria Naylor in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, Toni Morrison herself tells us that, to write her story, she got her inspiration in two or three little fragments of stories that she had heard in different places. However, her main source is Margaret Garner's story. Morrison came across it while editing *The Black Book* in 1974, a collection of memorabilia representing 300 years of black history. In January 1856 Margaret Garner, a slave, escaped from her owner, crossed the Ohio River and attempted to find refuge in Cincinnati, where she was apprehended with several family members. Margaret Garner succeeded in cutting the throat of her little daughter to prevent her from becoming a slave. Later, she tried to slaughter her other children and kill herself, but she was overpowered before she could complete her desperate action (206-207). According to Marilyn S. Mobley, Morrison feared that the Black Power movement would affirm a romanticized African past and the heroic deed of a few great men, while the equally heroic deeds of ordinary African-Americans, who had resisted and survived the painful traumas of slavery, would pass inadvertently (1990: 190).

⁴⁵² Original text quoted: Walter Clemons (1987). "A Gravestone of Memories". *Newsweek* 28 (Sept.): 74-75.

iron fatality anterior to crime and shame, the omnipresence of sin, and the kinship of guilt which constitutes one of the most important links in Hawthorne's great chain of humanity.

JOHN W. SHROEDER, "That Inward Sphere: Notes on Hawthorne's Heart Imagery and Symbolism".

Sin and guilt are central to Hawthorne's and Morrison's work, as they are to gothic fiction. Mobley says: "Certainly, the thematics of guilt and the complex fragmentation of time that shape Morrison's fiction are inherent in Faulkner's writing, as well as in the work of many other white authors of the American literary tradition" (1990: 190-191). Both *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* commence with sin and guilt and show us the ways of punishment and retribution, so typical of the gothic mode. Their tragic vision of the sinful man is stressed since, as Hansen argues, manifest sin may not be a moral failure, but, up to a point, an accident of fate (34). In *The Marble Faun* Miriam says: "As these busts in the block of marble [. . .] so does our individual fate exit in the limestone of time. We fancy that we carve it out; but its ultimate shape is prior to all our action" (116). When "guilt strikes some individuals", they are caught in an inescapable doom (Hansen: 34).

Many critics, such as Carlos Kling, have seen evil as "the ultimate reality in Hawthorne's work" (qtd. in Schoen: 26).⁴⁵³ Buitenhuis claims that *Seven Gables* "reflects its author's continuing obsession with sin and moral depravity" (1991: 7).⁴⁵⁴ Greed is one of the main sins in Hawthorne's and Morrison's romances: "the lust for wealth that has held the dominating Pyncheons in its inflexible grasp" (Matthiessen 1967: 369). It is the cause of the Colonel's, Gervayse's and also the Judge's crimes. The Colonel's avarice for Maule's spot makes him conspire to take it away from the old wizard. Gervayse Pyncheon, as a clear reflection of his ancestor, suffers from the same greed. His covetousness brings about his daughter's death. Jaffrey Pyncheon shares his ancestors' obsession, to increase his wealth: "He represents in his

⁴⁵³ Original text quoted: Carlos Kling (1932). "Hawthorne's View of Sin". *Personalist* 12 (April): 119-130.

⁴⁵⁴ In fact, Hawthorne had a thorough knowledge of Spenser and Dante, both of whom had made an important use of the seven deadly sins in their poetry. For more information about Hawthorne's knowledge of Spenser, see: Randall Stewart (1933: 196-206) and Buford Jones (1967). "The Faery Land of Hawthorne's Romances". *Emerson Society Quarterly*, 48: 106-124. For Hawthorne's knowledge of Dante, see: J. Chesley Matthew (1940). "Hawthorne's Knowledge of Dante". *University of Texas Studies in English*: 157-163. As early as 1967, Evert Duyckinck established a connection between the seven gables and the seven sins (351); however, it is Carol Schoen who analyzes in detail the relationships between the seven gables and the seven sins. She tries to prove that each chapter of the book is associated with one of the seven sins and she also finds examples of how these are related to some of the characters. She claims that Hawthorne is trying to "to reveal the depth of evil in the heart of man" (32). Even though Schoen is right when she states that one of the principal objectives of the book is to show how evil is intrinsically linked to human nature, I agree with Buitenhuis that "it is not necessary to accept that Hawthorne intended such an exact correlation of each of the sins with each chapter of the book" (1991: 63).

generation a long line of avaricious Pyncheons” (Dillingham: 453). The very same night that the Judge dies, he contemplates his future, his ‘shadowy’ greedy ambition:

For the Judge is a prosperous man. He cherishes his schemes, moreover, like other people, and reasonably brighter than most others; or did so, at least, as he lay abed, this morning, in an agreeable half-drowse, planning the business of the day, and speculating on the probabilities of the next fifteen years, or twenty—yes, or perhaps five-and-twenty!—are no more than he may fairly call his own. Five-and-twenty years for the enjoyment of his real estate in town and country, his railroad, bank, and insurance shares, his United States stock, his wealth, in short, however invested, now in possession, or soon to be acquired; together with the public honors that has fallen upon him, and the weightier ones that are yet to fall! (Gables: 269-270)

As Buitenhuis comments, this meditation resembles Christ's parable of the rich man who thinks of what he will do with his wealth. The irony is that the Judge will never enjoy his riches, as his ancestor never did before (1991: 65). Everything he has accumulated in his life goes to his rejected relatives, Clifford and Hepzibah. Thus Jaffrey Pyncheon's greed will never be satisfied, as we can find in the Bible: "Thus saith the Lord. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches" (Jer. 9: 23).⁴⁵⁵

Greed is also at the roots of slavery. The white slaveholder does not hesitate in using any kind of torture to make his slaves profitable. Any dealings with the Negro depend only on his prospects of increasing the value of his property. Schoolteacher does not show any scruples about killing Sixo or selling Paul D when they have become useless for his future plans. Even after the Indian's atrocious death, he can only think of how he could make the farm more lucrative. In *Beloved* greed acquires tragic and unspeakable Gothic tones because the property is not land, but human beings.

Hypocrisy is another typical sin of the gothic mode: evil is frequently disguised with an appearance of virtue, as in *The Monk*, where Ambrosio the priest is known by his saint's ways while he hides his true nature. In *Seven Gables* this theme is developed from chapter XV, when Hepzibah's scowl is contrasted with Judge Pyncheon's smile, until the very end of the book. Because of her scowls, townspeople regard the old woman, despite her tender heart, as acrid and unpleasant. Conversely, her uncle's character has two sides: the one he shows to the world, his apparent

⁴⁵⁵ “Peter Goldthwaite's Treasure” can be considered as a clear source for the Judge's desire for wealth (Buitenhuis 1991: 35). Old Peter, an impoverished businessman, has spent his life ineffectually chasing a fortune by investing in illusory plans. Now his only belonging is his old gabled house, in which, according to a legend, there is a hidden treasure. His mania to find this treasure is analogous to the Pyncheons' hereditary obsession with the deed to the eastern land of Maine. Peter destroys the old house in his search, only to find a worthless bunch of old treasury note bills. His life is built on false hopes and illusions, like Jaffrey's belief in the map that comes to be a delusive one, making his life vain and senseless.

kindness and honor, and the prevalent one that he tries to hide, his greed, his iron determination and his evil ways. Judge Pyncheon is the personification of hypocrisy, he “seems benevolent but is really a villain of the first order” (Dillingham: 457). Likewise, Schoolteacher is represented as a gentleman with soft manners. However, he is cruel and has no mercy on the blacks who are under his rule. His corrections can be terrible. Under Schoolteacher’s apparent niceness, a cold and brutal individual, who is capable of the most appalling sins, hides.

Pride is another of the most remarkable sins of *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*. The Pyncheon family’s conceit is closely linked to their members’ aristocratic pretensions. Hereditary haughtiness makes it very difficult for Hepzibah to cope with the opening of the cent shop. Arrogance is also one of the main features of Alice’s character. Hawthorne says of her: “if ever there was a lady born, and set apart from the world’s vulgar mass by a certain gentle and cold stateliness, it was this very Alice Pyncheon” (Gables: 201). Her loftiness irritates Matthew Maule and makes her the ‘victim’ of his evil powers.⁴⁵⁶ On the other hand, as Carolyn M. Jones has shown, Sethe’s individual sin is her appalling infanticide, but her sin against the community is pride, which “becomes a shield against her grief” (online). When Baby Suggs dies, the community do not enter into 124, so Sethe refuses to go to the funeral. At the graveside, blacks neither sing for Baby Suggs nor comfort Sethe, therefore Sethe does not eat their food, nor do they eat hers. Finally, the black community ostracize Sethe and her family. Both the community and Sethe engage in a cycle of pride that does not allow them to honor Baby’s spirit (Carolyn Jones: online). According to Jones, “Sethe has to yield her fierce pride to become her true self” (online).

As Hansen has shown, Hawthorne’s view of sin mostly coincides with Thomas Aquinas’ “Seven Deadly Sins”:⁴⁵⁷ pride, covetousness, lust, envy, drunkenness, anger and sloth. However, Hawthorne omits sloth and replaces it with self-isolation. He also creates a new type of sin, which was very popular in gothic fiction: the “unpardonable sin”, the sin of the intellect (38).⁴⁵⁸ In a passage from the *American Notebooks*, Hawthorne writes:

⁴⁵⁶ In fact, as Hawthorne reminds us, the girl is not exactly a victim. From the first moment, Alice is struck by the carpenter’s strength and energy: she is “conscious of a power [. . .] that can make her sphere impenetrable, unless *betrayed by treachery within*” (Gables: 203; emphasis added). Schoen claims that the three kinds of pride which Dante had already discussed are dealt with by Hawthorne: arrogance of family; vanity in artistic talent; and the conceit of power. See: *The Divine Comedy, Purgatory*, XI, 11: 108-142. Trans. by H. R. Huse. New York: Rinehart, 1954: 221-222.

⁴⁵⁷ The seven deadly sins (also known as the capital vices or cardinal sins) as they are considered in their present form, were formulated in the *Summa Theologica* by Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century.

⁴⁵⁸ For more information about the unpardonable sin, see: Joseph T. McCullen and John C. Guilds (1960). “The Unpardonable Sin in Hawthorne: A Reexamination”. *NCF* 15: 223.

The Unpardonable Sin might consist in a want of love and reverence for the Human Soul; in consequence of which, the investigator pried into its dark depth, not with the hope or purpose of making it better, but from a cold philosophical curiosity, content that it should be wicked in whatever kind of degree, and only desiring to study it out. Would not this, in other words, be the separation of the intellect from the heart? (1932: 106)

Hansen claims that Hawthorne usually treats sinners of passion with certain sympathy. However, those who become judges and detectives of other people's failings seem to forget about their own impurity, "By denying the equality of sinners which Hawthorne saw as part of the divine plan, intellectual sinners were both unbearable on earth and probably damned in heaven" (49). Hansen points out two features of those who are intellectual sinners: they are solitaries; and their faults are pride, vanity and egotism (48). As Frederick Crews argues the intellectual sinner presumes that he can attain self-sufficient knowledge without heavenly help. His confident mind denies the need of faith or humility and relies on pride: "Man's reliance on the natural powers of his intellect jeopardizes the basis of religion. The perfectionism of the teachings of the church is at once degraded and challenged" (19). Morrison also deals with intellectual sin. Schoolteacher's cold "scientific" research on the animal characteristics of his slaves is seen by the blacks as even more dehumanizing than the terrible tortures he may inflict on them. His intellectual pursuits are the expression of the whites' sense of superiority and, at the same time, their prejudiced racist rationale.

The violation of the soul, which, in *Seven Gables*, is closely associated with the villain's domination of the innocent maiden, is one of the most important sinful acts of Hawthorne's fiction. For Hawthorne the fact that someone tries to impose his will on others is terrible. He treats this matter extensively in the Matthew Maule-Alice Pyncheon affair and the Holgrave-Phoebe counterpoint. The malign possession of another's soul is also related to witchcraft, the evil powers by which a wizard can control humans' will.⁴⁵⁹ In *Beloved* the violation of both blacks' body and soul is taken to the limits in the physical and psychological tortures and abuses of slaveholders.

A basic tenet of Hawthorne's perspective on sin and guilt is the humanizing effect of guilt, "the fortunate fall".⁴⁶⁰ According to Hansen, the sinner's fall may give rise to positive consequences, among them the spiritual growth of the human soul. Sin can

⁴⁵⁹ Witchcraft appears from the very beginning of the story. It is the time of the purge of witches in Salem. Matthew Maule is executed because he is accused of being a wizard. Hawthorne changes the treatment of sorcery according to the new spirit of the age and deals with a modern version of witchery, mesmerism, of which Holgrave is a practitioner.

⁴⁶⁰ For more information, see: Barris Mills (1948). "Hawthorne and Puritanism". *NEQ* 21: 83; Donald A. Ringe (1950: 130-132); Edward Wagenknecht (194-196); Melvin W. Askew (1962). "Hawthorne, the Fall, and the Psychology of Maturity". *AL* 34: 338 ff.; Crews (219 ff.); David R. Mayer (1979). "Hawthorne's Theological-Psychological View of Sin and Forgiveness". *Kyushu American Literature* 20: 181 ff..

educate: “It is the paradox of the ‘fortunate fall’ that Hawthorne’s sinners become superior human beings precisely through their flaws. Sin and evil have a positive function, and this is part of their justification in Hawthorne’s theodicy” (29). Guilt is always followed by pain and the sinner’s misfortune is the just punishment of God, but, as Hansen says, it also brings about the remorse that is a prerequisite for forgiveness (32).

On the other hand, in *Beloved* Morrison tries to define sin from a perspective different from that of Western religions. When Baby Suggs addresses her people in the Clearing, she urges them to love their tortured bodies. Michele Bonnet argues that the old black woman, thus, distances herself from the established religion and the Christian notion of sin (online). This perception, she says, is confirmed by the second occurrence of the word “sin”. When Paul D takes Sethe and Denver out to the carnival, up and down a lumberyard fence, they see old roses dying. Then the narrator says: “The sawyer who had planted them twelve years ago to give his workplace a friendly feel—something *to take the sin out of slicing trees* for a living—was amazed by their abundance [. . .]” (*Beloved*: 47; emphasis added). Bonnet points out that, trees, as natural elements, serve as a sort of sacred law to man. Morrison seems to imply that the “religious referent that transgression is measured against is not Western religion or even some secular yet holy human law, but man’s natural environment” (online). This seems to be confirmed by the fact that trees play a prominent role in the novel as well as in African religion (Bonnet: online).⁴⁶¹

As in Hawthorne’s fiction, especially *The Scarlet Letter*, one of Morrison’s basic principles regarding sin is accountability. Some critics, such as Carolyn Denard, have highlighted the importance that blacks must be held responsible for their sins even if they are the direct consequence of enslavement.⁴⁶² As Denard argues, blacks still have to answer for their actions before the black community and themselves (1997: 44). They have to be punished and their future is impaired until expiation is consumed. Sethe must pay for her crime with ostracism despite the fact that her acts are the result of slavery. As Abel says about Hester Prynne,

Although we are expected to love and pity Hester, we are not invited to condone her fault or to construe it as a virtue. More a victim of circumstances than a willful wrongdoer, she is nevertheless to be held morally responsible: in her story Hawthorne intimates that, tangled as human relationships are and must be, no sin ever issues solely from the intent and deed of the individual sinner, but that it issues instead from a complicated interplay of motives of which he is the more or

⁴⁶¹ Mbiti states that trees, especially sacred groves, play a crucial role in African religions; they are considered as intermediaries between God and man—they are even worshipped by some tribes as God himself (qtd. in Bonnet: online). For more information, see: John Mbiti (1970). *African Religions and Philosophy*. New York: Anchor.

⁴⁶² See: Denard (1997: 44).

less willing instrument. Even so, however strong, insidious, and unforeseeable the influences and compulsions which prompted his sin, in any practicable system of ethics the sinner must be held individually accountable for it. This is harsh doctrine, but there is no escape from it short of unflinching repudiation of the moral ideas which give man his tragic and lonely dignity in a world in which all things except himself seem insensate and all actions except his own seem mechanical. (1988a: 307-308)

Through Hester and Sethe, both Morrison and Hawthorne state the accountability of the sinner who must be held responsible for his/her actions.

Besides, Morrison does not think that blacks respond to evil in the same way as whites: "Blacks never annihilate evil. They don't run it out of their neighborhoods, chop it, or burn it up. They don't have witch hangings. They try to protect themselves from evil, of course, but they don't have that puritanical thing which says if you see a witch, then burn it, or if you see something, then kill it" (Taylor-Guthrie: 8). In *Sula* Morrison makes an extensive reflection on evil as another force in the universe. The community protect themselves from Sula, the evil woman. They call her bad names, but they do try to hurt her. Somehow they accept her. In *Beloved*, the black females who come to 124 to exorcise the revenant do not want to destroy the devil woman. They just want to save Sethe.

4.1.2. "Abnormal" Sexuality

In the Gothic narrative the power of the sexual drive is extreme.⁴⁶³ The sexual threat to the innocent maiden is at the very center of the gothic story. The gothic reproduces the power tensions inherent in society, expressed through the feminine-masculine relations of oppression, repression and submission, which are associated with sexuality. As Chapman says, the view of sexuality in the gothic plot, at least in early gothic romances (especially in the female gothic), oscillates between the heroine's subversiveness against the patriarchal system and her desire for domination, her masochistic wish for a lover who will control her (184). Thus the relationship between man and woman is defined through a process of domination and submission in which the female becomes a servant of the male's will, thus eliminating her identity. Man's oppression makes women disembodied spirits, which have no more reality than their images in a looking glass.⁴⁶⁴ Thus tyrannical relations and the ensuing violence is closely linked to sex in both Hawthorne's and Morrison's gothic romances. Crippled love, rape and abnormal sexuality are their direct consequences.

⁴⁶³ According to Roy R. Male, *The House of Seven Gables* contains the most overt allusions to sexual symbolism in Hawthorne's work: the carpenter's rule, Gervayse's sword and the Judge's gold-headed cane (1957: 73). Schoen adds to these the figure of the magical hand in the story of the Wizard Maule, Holgrave's "mystic gesticulations" (Gables: 211) and Matthew's uplifted arms (Gables: 32).

⁴⁶⁴ Some critics, such as Michelle Massé or Marianne Noble, have stated the destruction of women's identity as a result of male's domination.

In *Seven Gables*, there are clear hints of at least a symbolic rape in the legend of Alice Pyncheon and Matthew Maule. As Hawthorne says about Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance*, the mesmerist, the wizard, subjects the innocent maiden to himself, “a his familiar spirit”, and uses her as a “medium” to communicate with the spiritual world (173). Matthew Maule, the carpenter, transforms the proud lady into a sort of spirit, no longer a true human being, becoming the master of her soul. The mesmeric power that he exercises over Alice is a substitute for sexual activity.⁴⁶⁵ Consequently, when Holgrave refuses to control Phoebe’s will as his ancestor did before, he triumphs on a symbolic level over the temptation of lechery.

On the other hand, in *Beloved*, among the horrors black slaves have to suffer during slavery, the most important one might be sexual abuse and rape. Pamela E. Barnett associates Sethe’s infanticide with the depiction of and allusions to rape. Sethe kills her child so that a white man will never “dirty” her, so that no white man with “mossy teeth” would ever hold the child down and suck her breasts (73).⁴⁶⁶ Behind Sethe’s crime is the idea that “being brutally overworked, maimed, or killed is subordinate to the overarching horror of being raped and ‘dirtied’ by whites; even dying at the hands of one’s mother is subordinated to rape” (75). Lee thinks that “reinscribing her breasts as sites of violation and instruments through which to deprive her children of sustenance; they [Schoolteacher’s nephews] also epitomize how ‘private’ body parts become commodified, public, and un-‘own’-ed by the self” (online). Sethe protects her beloved daughter and also herself from “undreamable dreams” in which “a gang of whites invaded her daughter’s private parts, soiled her daughter’s thighs and threw her daughter out of the wagon” (*Beloved*: 251) (Barnett: 75). *Beloved* is full of incidents of sexual abuse.

Morrison highlights the connection between rape and infanticide. Sethe’s killing of her child is not so inconceivable during slavery. It was not unusual among black women to murder those children they had from rapes, as part of their resistance to enslavement. Ella, the woman who helps Stamp Paid on the Underground Railroad, “had delivered, but would not nurse, a hairy white thing, fathered by ‘the lowest yet’” (*Beloved*: 259); the child dies a few days later of neglect. Sethe’s mother also commits infanticide on a few occasions. She throws away all the babies that she has as a consequence of rape: she “threw them all away but you [Sethe]. The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The others from more whites she also threw away”

⁴⁶⁵ William McDougall supports Hawthorne’s use of hypnotism as an equivalent for sexual relation. William McDougall (1926). *Outline of Abnormal Psychology*. New York: Scribners Sons: 331-332.

⁴⁶⁶ According to Bouson, “That Sethe kills her infant daughter to prevent her from being defined as racially inferior and animalistic—and thus from being dirtied—underscores the historical shaming of African slave women that Morrison is intent on exposing in *Beloved*” (92).

(*Beloved*: 62). Later, Baby Suggs does not kill the baby she has from her white owner, but she clearly says that she does not love it. Infanticide seems understandable and “justified” under the harsh conditions which black women slaves endured.

The “abnormal” sexuality at the heart of the Gothic signals the transgression of boundaries. As Louis Gross says “The significance of incest in Gothic narrative illustrates the power of taboo sexuality in these texts” (53). As we have seen, the use of incest in gothic fiction is remarkable. “Abnormal” sexuality is generated in the household realm as a consequence of the social and psychological control of the tyrannical father figure. Jodey Castricano claims that, in the Gothic, “psycho/socio/sexual relations appear to be modeled upon the family, legitimized by the (word of the) father” (206). There the individual is taught what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call “resignation to Oedipus” (qtd. in Castricano: 208).⁴⁶⁷ In fact, deviation and aberrancy in sexual relationships have their ultimate origin in the family as an “oedipalized territory”.⁴⁶⁸ In *Beloved* the source of oppression is the artificial family that slavery creates, whose despotic father figure is the white slaveholder. Sexual abuse and “abnormal” sexuality are generated by this cruel oedipalized system. Incest is an important theme in Morrison’s romance. *Beloved*’s devotion to her mother has incestuous overtones. As Lawrence says, as a consequence of “*Beloved*’s tender kisses”, “she [Sethe] finds herself forced against the wall of the incest taboo” (94). Besides, the father-daughter sexual relationship, typical of early gothic romances, has a parallel in Paul D’s sexual encounter with the revenant. However, Morrison reverses the roles: the young woman rapes her surrogate father.

In *Seven Gables* incest is a hidden theme because it was not a subject that could be openly dealt with in the nineteenth century. In fact, Hawthorne does not cope with it overtly in his fiction, with the exception of his early story “Alice Doane’s Appeal”. In *Seven Gables* “abnormal” sexuality is the aftermath of sexual oppression in the midst of the nuclear family. In *Hepzibah* and Clifford Hawthorne recreates the unbalanced Gothic family, a consequence of the Western patriarchal society. They, (together with the Father figure, Jaffrey Pyncheon), provide the “inappropriate” family unit that, Louis Gross claims, is necessary for the Gothic narrative (7). This family is found in almost every Gothic story: “Since the education of characters in these tales is also education in familial identity, the lack of living parents, loving spouses, and healthy children intensifies the sense of isolation, oppression or sterility these characters fear” (Louis

⁴⁶⁷ For more information, see: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP.

⁴⁶⁸ Castricano talks about the “oedipalized territories” of western culture: Family, Church, School, Nation and Party (207).

Gross: 7). Consequently, impotence and sterility, in a social and sexual sense, become two basic themes in Hawthorne's fiction.

The Pyncheons become powerless because they have not adapted to the new democratic society, which the Maules represent. The aristocratic family has proved to be incapable of normal sexuality, as hinted when Hawthorne alludes to the Maules' secret privileges to "haunt [. . .] the chambers into which future bridegrooms were to lead their brides" (Gables: 9). Besides, as Buitenhuis argues, the use of the antiquated custom of calling this long-established family "a house", which was part of the archaic aristocratic terminology used in postcolonial America, also suggests incest: "The decayed remnants of the House of Pyncheon cling to the decayed House of the Seven Gables in a comprehensive symbolic representation of inbreeding and lingering aristocratic pretension" (1991: 32).

Clifford and Hepzibah's impotence and weakness are associated with the castration complex that the child experiences when he/she comes face to face with society's laws and conventions through the father's authority.⁴⁶⁹ Anne Williams states that Lacan posited,

at the Oedipal crisis the father intervenes between mother and child; this "*nom du père*" represents the threat of castration to the child (son). Although the Symbolic offers a substitute for the mother (in the always deferred "signified") the system is phallogocentric; the son inherits the blessings of the father's law, including his secure and gratifying position as the linguistic and conceptual norm the unmarked term ("male" rather than "female"), the center of the system. But the speaking subject pays a price, enacts a kind of Faustian bargain—exchanging power (through access to the Symbolic) and consciousness for his prior, blissful symbiosis with the mother (a paradise always about to be regained in the deferred "other" of the "signified"). (58)

Jaffrey's role is paternal and the other characters are symbolically his children. He is "The Oedipal villain [. . .] an embodied idea of paternal punishment for thoughts of incest, and the form actually taken by such punishment is impotence" (Crews: 182).

The erotic relationship between brother and sister is the major underground concern of American gothicists in general. The Gothic explores anxiety about the limits of traditional sexuality, primarily adult brother-sister pairing, which is at the core of American Gothic fiction, as we can see in Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Fielder speaks of Hawthorne's life-long obsession with the theme (420).⁴⁷⁰ In *Seven Gables* an

⁴⁶⁹ The castration complex was first formulated by Freud. Freud believes that castration anxiety is the result of the boy's fear that his father may intervene in the relationship with his mother by cutting off his penis, which he associates with his desire for his mother. On the other hand, the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan considers the castration complex as part of the psychosexual development of both boy and girl as a reaction to the threat that the father may put an end to their early sexual activities. It is the first time that the individual faces authority, the father, as a menace to his/her sexuality and, through him; he/she is confronted to the conventions and laws of society.

⁴⁷⁰ Hawthorne's own sense of guilt seems to be rooted in incest and patricide. Fielder even speaks of a secret sin, which haunted Hawthorne through his life and that his friend, Melville, had penetrated. This is

incestuous relationship between present Pyncheon family members, Hepzibah and Clifford, is hinted at in many details of the story. The direct consequences are their unfulfilled sexuality and sterility. They are both single and they have always lived together, except for the years that Clifford was imprisoned. Hepzibah's real devotion is her brother Clifford, for whom she professes "suspicious" love and to whom she has dedicated her whole life, "the only substance for her heart to feed upon" (Gables: 32). The old maid keeps a Malbone miniature of her loved brother as a treasure in a secret drawer of her escritoire. Yet they are probably only spiritual lovers.

On the other hand, the two stories between Maule-males and Pyncheon-females, the Matthew Maule-Alice Pyncheon and Holgrave-Phoebe affairs, not only exemplify the typical gothic plot of the tyrannical villain who exerts control over the innocent maiden, they somehow hint at the paternal incest tale. Gothic heroines often desire their "father" while simultaneously fearing him. Hepzibah herself had somehow been attracted to the imposing image of the first Colonel Pyncheon: "She, in fact, felt a reverence for the pictured visage, of which only a far-descended and time-stricken virgin could be susceptible" (Gables: 34). As Mary Chapman argues, the erotics of domination and paternal incest are grounded in the family structure which was dominant in nineteenth-century Western society. This structure was founded in the law of the Father and generated the daughter's erotic desire toward the father (186). Chapman claims that many gothic novels depict the Oedipal girl's efforts to get rid of her incestuous attachment to a father figure by finding a suitable partner. The home is the safe site of affect, its inevitable result is incest (191). Mary Chapman claims that even though in American gothic there are few scenes of paternal incest, many American gothic texts "gesture toward this taboo without being able to represent it openly" (184).

The Pyncheon chickens, a reflection of their owners, also keep incestuous relationships. They are descendants of an ancient breed, which has degenerated as a result of inbreeding, trying to preserve the purity of the species. They are compared periodically to the Pyncheon family and are somehow "mixed up in its destiny". These old and withered fowls, like the owners of the house, lead a solitary aristocratic life. The analogy between the chickens and the Pyncheons is evident: one of them has a funny tuft on its head that can be easily paralleled by Hepzibah's turban. Incest in the Pyncheon family, as in its poultry, can explain at least in part its degeneracy. In Gothic

related to the unproven belief of certain critics that the incestuous Pierre of Melville's gothic romance was intended to be a portrait of Hawthorne (Julian Hawthorne: 419). Besides, through the *Annals of Salem*, Hawthorne was acquainted with a celebrated case of alleged incest in his family. In 1680 Hawthorne's maternal great-great-grandmother accused her husband, Thomas Manning, of incest with his two sisters.

fiction sterility is associated with the consequences of sexual transgression. Only Phoebe is excluded from the incestuous tendency of her ancestors, since she is the daughter of a Pyncheon who marries out of the family. Thus she brings new blood and regeneration to the decayed Pyncheon race.

Seven Gables, as a Gothic romance, deals with the transgression of socially and morally sanctioned notions of the family, breaking taboos such as incest, but also patricide. The members of the family, who suffer from despotism and oppression (Clifford and Hepzibah) want to kill symbolically the “father” figure. Clifford seems to murder the symbolical father when Jaffrey suffers from an attack when he sees his ghostly figure. Therefore, the Oedipal desire to kill the authoritarian figure comes true with Judge Pyncheon’s death, which takes a central position in the plot. Thus the themes of filial hatred and patricidal guilt are at the core of this gothic story. In *Beloved* Sethe tries to murder Mr. Bodwin, when she mistakes him for Schoolteacher. In this scene blacks’ desire to murder the Father figure, the slaveholder, becomes incontestable.

4.1.3. Evil and Crime

She [Margaret Garner] said that when the officers and slave-holders came to the house in which they were concealed, she caught a shovel and struck two of her children on the head, and she took a knife and cut the throat of the third, and tried to kill the other—that if they had given her time, she would have killed them all—that with regard to herself, she cared but little; but she was unwilling to have her children suffer as she had done.

I inquired if she was not excited almost to madness when she committed the act. No, she replied, I was as cool as I now am; and would much rather kill them at once, and thus end their sufferings, than have them taken back to slavery, and be murdered by piecemeal.

TONI MORRISON, “Rediscovering Black History”.

“Gothic plots always include some past heinous crime” (Booher: 126) whose ultimate consequence is the individual pursued by his/her guilt. In Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, the mysterious haunting can be traced back to Manfred’s usurpation of Lord Alfonso’s royal title and his life. The ghosts and revenants of the story are the result of Manfred’s guilt: “All sins are expiated in Walpole’s novel, but each character lives out a melancholy life of painful memory to produce a rather ambivalent ending” (Booher: 122). As in *Otranto* and many other Gothic novels, in Hawthorne’s *Seven Gables* and Morrison’s *Beloved* the past haunts the characters as a result of a crime.

In *Seven Gables* the primal crime committed by Colonel Pyncheon against the wizard, which stands for the class conflict engendered by a colonial era, burdens the Pyncheons’ lives. In fact, sin and guilt surround his dealings with the wizard and haunt his offspring until the present generation. His unrighteous acquisition of poor Mathew Maule’s land brings about the plebeian’s hanging. Colonel Pyncheon wickedly seeks

the old wizard's condemnation under false accusations. Ever since Maule's death, the Colonel's wrongdoing has generated devilish intrigues, mysterious deaths and vengeful retributions. Recently, the Judge's machinations to inherit his uncle's fortune have led to Clifford's imprisonment. According to Kleiman, "*The House of the Seven Gables* is a story about America. The attempt to found a 'house' or nation on 'stolen' land cannot help but trigger a continuing conflict which, as the Old Testament records, may result in the 'iniquity of the fathers [being visited] upon the children'" (291). As a result of the primal crime, as Punter points out, Hawthorne's characters remain locked in their circles of guilt, "In Hawthorne, the vision has been decisively betrayed, the cornerstone of the house is stained with blood, the blood of the persecuted, and nothing can clean it" (176). Marcus Cunliffe says that the Maule-Pyncheon antagonism is chiefly a metaphor of imperfect repression, which is the agent of justice in the novel: every tyrant is punished by his victim and, in the end, Judge Pyncheon's death leads to "the revenge of the impotent against the overweening" (1964: 90). Thus the original Colonel Pyncheon might have died of qualms of conscience, his punishment for abusing his social and political power.

Although it is the Pyncheon family who commits the primal crime and the curse is upon it, we can also see evil in the Maule family. Thus Matthew Maule might be a wizard or not when he is executed, but it seems that his ghost and his posterity clearly become witches. They are invested with malignant powers because of the wrong they have suffered and they seek "revenge upon the Pyncheons, thus implicating themselves in that contagion of original sin which Colonel Pyncheon's pride and avarice began" (Hoffman 1967: 477). In Holgrave's tale Matthew Maule, descendant of the old wizard, is given evil powers,⁴⁷¹ which he uses to exercise his vengeful desires. Like the aristocratic family, the carpenter becomes responsible for the death of an innocent victim, Alice Pyncheon: "Wrong breeds wrong; action occasions reaction. A Pyncheon is responsible for the death of a Maule and so, inevitably, a Maule will be responsible for the death of a Pyncheon" (Kleiman: 298). Holgrave is also tempted to use his inherited evil powers, mesmerism, on Phoebe but he sets her free out of his respect and love for her, and, in that way, he "breaks his links with the past and decadence and opens a door for renewal" (Buitenhuis 1991: 68).

Beloved is "a horror story of maternity" (qtd. in Fleenor: 83).⁴⁷² Sethe kills one of her own kin, her baby daughter, to save her from slavery. There is no more terrible crime than that committed against one's own progeny. Even though Morrison refrains

⁴⁷¹ Hoffman claims that some of the lore in Holgrave's tale can be traced back to oral traditions reported in Whittier's *Supernaturalism of New England*: "the unquiet ghost who protests the division of his estate, and the use of hypnotism to enter the world of spirits" (1967: 478).

⁴⁷² These are Ellen Moers' words.

from either condemning or condoning Sethe's desperate deed, guilt is her curse after the crime, as it is for the members of the Pyncheon family. Sethe steals Beloved's life and, because of this, the past will pursue her: "Morrison suggests, we bear a kind of haunting from these choices that in turn haunts the future" (Jesser: online). The black woman will have to face the ghost of her murdered daughter—first, as a spirit haunting 124 and, later, as a resurrected revenant. Sethe will have to confront the "insatiable guilt [she] levels against herself" (Morey: online). The corporeal ghost of Beloved tortures Sethe for her infanticide, a crime which becomes a representation of all those committed under slavery: "a Gothic specter [Beloved] can encapsulate a primal crime that is really the whole history of slavery" (Hogle: 221).

Even though Morrison does not explicitly pass judgement on Sethe's action, in her comment on the sawyer's misdeed she seems to point out that all life is sacred. Bonnet claims that Morrison calls cutting the trees a sin to draw the readers' attention to the saw that Sethe uses to sever Beloved's throat and thus underlines the similarity of both actions. She adds that this parallelism is enhanced because Beloved, the victim of the murder, is frequently associated with a felled tree: she is first seen sitting on a stump and this circumstance is repeated on other occasions (online). Sethe may have very good reasons to partly legitimize her crime; however, hers is a major transgression, since murder infringes the principle of the holiness of life. However, her sin against "Life" is amplified in the whites' same type of violations and iniquities against the blacks.

Sethe's crime, which marks the end of the happy free life she has enjoyed for twenty-eight days, takes place the day Schoolteacher, his nephew, one slave catcher and the sheriff come to catch her. As Linda Krumholz points out, Morrison uses the apocalyptic image of the four horsemen to conclude with a sense of doom and judgment (1999: 118). They stand for the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in the Bible: War, Famine, Pestilence and Death. They arrive with the 'righteous Look' that every black has learned to recognize since his/her childhood, "Like a flag hoisted, this righteousness telegraphed and announced the faggot, the whip, the fist, the lie, long before it went public" (Beloved: 157) (Jesser: online). Their advent means the end of Sethe's free world. As Jesser points out:

The day of reckoning comes in the form of a tremendous violence, the flowing of blood, and a disruption of the maternal relationship that suggests the upheavals of Judgment Day. The unleashing of Sethe's wrath is like that of the God of righteousness. She has been betrayed not only by the evil of white people and the world they rule, but also by the pride of her own people, who turn their backs and worship false idols. (online)

The community fails to warn Sethe and her family of the slave catcher's arrival. Thus "its 'sin of omission' makes it no less responsible for Beloved's death than Sethe's 'sin of commission'" (Mae Henderson: 100).

When Paul D asks Sethe about her crime, the narrator explains what happened:

She was squatting in the garden and when she saw them coming and recognized schoolteacher's hat, she heard wings. Little hummingbirds stuck their needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair and beat their wings. And if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them. Over there. Outside this place, where they would be safe. (Beloved: 163)

Sethe's reaction is an emotional and physical response to Schoolteacher's presence. The hummingbirds suggest frenzy and confusion and her physical urge for flight (Krumholz 1999: 123). However, this apparently natural phenomenon is unnatural, since the birds thrust their beaks into the black woman's hair (Krumholz 1999: 123).⁴⁷³ As Krumholz argues, Sethe is compelled to take her children "through the veil", which represents the division between life and death, the only escape from the threat of enslavement (1999: 123). She is trying to keep her family united in the hereafter, but she fails. In her defiant maternal opposition to the patriarchal order, Sethe has become useless to a system, slavery, since its perpetuation resides in childbearing. Thus she is finally able to stop Schoolteacher: "her murdered child in her arms, the symbol of the ultimate taboo and violation [. . .] sets her, and her remaining children, safely outside the social order" (Sonser: 30).

After the crime, Sethe remembers her baby's murder as "humming. No words at all" (Beloved: 152). She is incapable of explaining why she did what she did: "it's unspeakable": "Highly emotional experiences like this one, where the rational has no place, are indescribable with the medium of language" (Booher: 127). Andrew Levy notes that "unspeakability" is the challenge Morrison works with, "because the institutionalized parameters of guilt and responsibility do not provide the vocabulary to 'tell,' legally or narratively, the anomalies of a slave mother's infanticide" (qtd. in Grewal

⁴⁷³ As Susana Vega González says, Toni Morrison frequently uses birds and their flight as metaphor: "Morrison's powerful use of birds in all her novels is often disruptive and unconventional. Insanity, hatred, terror, slavery, selfishness, and evil are all conveyed through images of birds (76). So the bird imagery is associated with the horror of slavery and the ensuing alteration of human nature. Vega González claims that hummingbirds, as aggressive birds, are related to Sethe as the maddened mother who tries to save her children from the slaveholder: "Like the bird, she defends her ground at all costs; and [. . .] wins as successful warrior in that Schoolteacher will not have her baby" (82). On the other hand, Teresa N. Washington sees birds as spiritual media, which regularly assist Morrison's women in their confounding actions (online).

1998: 97).⁴⁷⁴ After her crime “[Sethe] enters a living death, signified by her blood-coated dress, which stiffens ‘like rigor mortis’” (Jesser: online).

Sethe’s infanticide confronts the reader with a complex moral dilemma, which Morrison herself explains in the following words: “[Sethe] did the right thing but she didn’t have the right to do it” (Moyers: 272). Despite the brutality of slavery, is it right for a mother to murder her children instead of turning them over to a living death? Morrison shows how hard it is to judge the murderer: Baby Suggs, ancestor figure and moral beacon, “could not approve or condemn Sethe’s rough choice” (Beloved: 180).⁴⁷⁵ As Bonnet points out, the murder is only overtly branded as a crime or a sin by the people of the community and Paul D. Nevertheless, it is suggested that the ultimate culprit is not the individual who commits it, but the system, slavery, that creates the conditions for it (online).⁴⁷⁶ As Trudier Harris says,

Killing a child is certainly antithetical to the basic roots of our society, but Morrison forces us to ask again and again what we might have done under the circumstances. And she succeeds in making Sethe so simply human and American (the God-given right to motherhood, love of one’s children, desire of a better life for them, love of freedom, nonconformity) that we cannot easily condemn her act even when we clearly do not condone it. The moral issues, therefore, lock us into participation in the novel. We are constantly encouraged to ask questions: “Is Sethe right to kill Beloved? What would I have done under the same circumstances? Are some conditions of life worse than death?” (1991: 171)

Sethe’s crime, as Harris argues, makes us wonder about the nature of what it means to be human and how slavery may alter it and how both black and white people respond to such circumstances (1991: 171). Slavery makes both blacks and whites behave in the most inhuman ways. As in the historical account of Margaret Garner, Morrison stresses that Sethe is not mad when she commits infanticide so as to emphasize how, under the terrible circumstances of slavery, a black female mother can perform unspeakable and unnatural actions, such as murdering her own babies. She says about Sethe: “She ain’t crazy. She love those children. She was trying to outhurt

⁴⁷⁴ Original text quoted: Andrew Levy (1991). “Telling Beloved”. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* XXXIII (Spring): 114-123.

⁴⁷⁵ As James Phelan says, Morrison does not take any clear ethical stand on Sethe’s rough choice (online). That is why she offers three tellings of Sethe’s crime from different points of view: the white men, Stamp Paid and Sethe’s. These versions become increasingly more sympathetic. Phelan says that Morrison gives other tellings of the crime so we do not think that Sethe’s story is the authoritative version, since her motivations, love and safety for her children, do not eliminate the horror of her murder (online). On the other hand, Phelan claims that neither Stamp Paid nor Paul D can accept Sethe’s choice. Stamp Paid does not reduce Sethe to an animal as Schoolteacher and his nephews do, but he clearly thinks that her instinctive reaction is ultimately wrong and a frightening overreaction (online). Paul D, the most sympathetic audience Sethe can find, since he knows first-hand the evils of slavery, immediately rejects Sethe’s judgments (online).

⁴⁷⁶ Phelan expresses similar views (online).

the hurter” (*Beloved*: 234).⁴⁷⁷ As Fuston-White argues, “The desperate strategy of infanticide [. . .] proved the only course of action for the slave mother who loved children she did not own and could not otherwise protect; thus, the immorality implicit in her infanticide lay with the slave system, not with the slave mother” (online).

4.1.4. Sethe’s Infanticide

As also occurs in *The Scarlet Letter*, Morrison relates motherhood with a crime, both central themes of the Gothic plot. In *Beloved* Sethe has a very difficult relation to maternity, since she suffers the terrible contradiction of feeling in between the whites’ image of the black woman as a breeding animal and her own need to nurture her offspring. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins states: “Racial domination and economic exploitation profoundly shape the mothering context” (qtd. in Patton: 13). Women treated as animals and chattel cannot possibly be real mothers. As sexed females, they may give birth, but only gendered women may mother (Patton: 14).⁴⁷⁸ The black slave mother confronts a tragic dilemma between the need to lay claim to her ‘own’ children and the impossibility to do so because she is the white owner’s property.⁴⁷⁹ Through her crime, Sethe reclaims her role as a mother and the freedom to love her children:

It is only in this context, the context of slavery, that the whole question of laying claim to children and asking who possesses them, who owns them, comes up, but it is intensified by the system of slavery. And whether children should be owned by their parents to the extent of determining whether they live or die is of course partly the question that *Beloved* comes back to ask. (*Christian*: 214)⁴⁸⁰

As Keenan states, “Sethe’s double act of flight and infanticide was her way of renaming herself, not animal but mother [. . .]” (126).

⁴⁷⁷ In *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, Morrison herself says about Margaret Garner’s story in relationship to Sethe’s crime, “[. . .] what struck me was that when they interviewed her [Margaret Garner] she was not a mad-dog killer. She was very calm. All she said was, ‘They will not live like that. [. . .]. Her mother-in-law, who was a preacher, said, ‘I watched her do it. And I neither encouraged her nor discouraged her’. So for them, it was a dilemma. Shall I permit my children, who are my best thing, to live like I have lived, when I know that’s terrible? So she decided to kill them and kill herself” (*Moyers*: 272).

⁴⁷⁸ To clarify the female slave’s situation, I am using the term “sexed” to talk about animals, while “gendered” could only be applied to human beings.

⁴⁷⁹ Venetria K. Patton argues that Sethe reinterprets mothering from the perspective of an escaped slave: “Motherhood becomes a means of asserting both her humanity and her femininity—it becomes a site of engenderment” (127). Sally Keenan states how Sethe “in the face of slavery’s destruction of the mother-child relationship, insisted upon its indissolubility” (130). Escaping slavery allows Sethe to love and mother her children in a different way. For more information, see: Patricia H. Collins (1994). “Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood”. *Representations of Motherhood*. Ed. Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey and Meryle Mahrer Kaplan. New Haven: Yale UP: 45-65.

⁴⁸⁰ According to Gurleen Grewal: “If the master could subject the slave children in bondage to a slow ‘social death,’ the mother could release them through physical death” (1998: 97). The concept of social death is developed in Orlando Patterson (1982). *Slavery and Social Death*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. On the other hand, another theme that Morrison has treated insistently throughout her novels is the question of when love becomes possession.

Sethe describes her own violent crime as an act of protection: “I took and put my babies where they’d be safe” (Beloved: 165). However, neither Stamp Paid nor Paul D can understand how “Sethe talked about safety with a handsaw” (Beloved: 164).⁴⁸¹ She asserts her right to her children: “In the face of her impotence as a mother, Sethe believes that killing her children is the only way that she can protect them” (Patton: 13). Infanticide also becomes, for Sethe, a mother’s desperate act of “thick” love. She refuses other alternatives: Paul D’s principle of life, to “love small”, or Ella’s advice, “don’t love nothing” (Beloved: 92). As Mar Gallego writes, “Their past has shown them that loving is dangerous, too risky, because of the emotional involvement it implies” (1994: 14).

Sethe can be compared with Euripides’s *Medea*. Both Medea and Sethe are criminals, but not without a cause. Their murders are the consequence of their love. Sethe loves her children so much that she cannot permit them to become slaves. On the other hand, Medea’s extreme passion for her husband, Jason, makes her seek revenge on her own offspring when she knows that she will be separated from him. Both Sethe and Medea have strength and dignity even if their circumstances are quite different. Morrison herself points out an important difference between their stories:

It occurred to me that the questions about community and individuality were certainly inherent in that incident [Margaret Garner’s infanticide] as I imagined it. When you are the community, when you are your children, when that is your individuality, there is no division [. . .]. Margaret Garner didn’t do what Medea did and kill her children because of some guy. It was for me this classic example of a person determined to be responsible. (qtd. in Gilroy: 36)

Morrison achieves her most terrible Gothic effects by “a conflation of extremes in the images of nurturing mother and murderous monster” (Sonser: 29).⁴⁸² In *Sethe*, both extremes clash as a result of slavery. The black woman is the provider for her children, described as having “milk enough for all” (Beloved: 100) and a “deep and wide” capacity for love. But, on the other hand, she is also capable of murdering her offspring to save them from the horrors of enslavement. Even Paul D, once he is told about her crime, recriminates her animal behavior: “You got two feet, Sethe, not four” (Beloved: 165). Through her monstrous murder, she seems to confirm Schoolteacher’s racist definitions and ironically reproduces the negative animalistic attributes that slavery assigns to blacks. However, as Anna Sonser writes, “Sethe undermines the animal characteristics ascribed to her by Schoolteacher at Sweet Home by remaking those qualities and reinvesting them with an overpowering monstrosity” (29).

⁴⁸¹ Teresa N. Washington points out that, from a Western African point of view, when Sethe kills her baby with a handsaw, one of the iron implements of Ogun, she is using a tool of facilitation to ensure her children’s safety by returning their creations, or embodiments of herself, to the Great Mother (online).

⁴⁸² As Anna Sonser argues, the black mother, as a killer, becomes the most terrible monster, since she is an icon in both black and white cultures, the central link which holds the family together (29).

Sethe's "monstrous act has the effect of emasculating both nephews and the patriarchal system they represent" (Sonser: 30).⁴⁸³ Her infanticide disintegrates and drains the language of patriarchy of its power: "Schoolteacher's 'place of knowing,' the Law of the Father/Master, is momentarily usurped by the bodies of Sethe's children. Sethe's act—the killing of her child—suspends the order of the word, exposes the implicit violence of the symbolic, points to the arbitrariness of a system that names her as slave and Schoolteacher as master" (Heffernan: 564). According to Evelyn J. Schreiber, "Sethe's plan for infanticide and self-mutilation represents her assertion of her own subjectivity in defiance of her object position in schoolteacher's gaze. The reemergence of schoolteacher foregrounds Sethe's slave identity, and Sethe must flee this identification to regain her equilibrium and subject status" (online). Thus, as Sonser argues, metaphorically, Sethe's infanticide blinds her (30). When Schoolteacher and his nephews look at her, they see "those [eyes] of the nigger woman who looked like she didn't have any [eyes]. Since the whites in them had disappeared and since they were as black as her skin, she looked blind" (Beloved: 150). Sonser argues,

The gaze, as the conduit to self-recognition, is dependent on the other's gaze, the ideology of representation revolving around the perception of the subject. Within the symbolic, Sethe's identity as slave was produced within an economic framework and authorized at the scopic level. Now she cannot be looked at, that is, objectified as chattel, and her unseeing gaze no longer reflects the subjectivity formerly conferred upon her. (30)

Morrison contrasts the dominant metaphors of the white male master('s) narrative about Sethe's infanticide—wildness, cannibalism, animality, destructiveness—with the black female's counternarrative that reconstitutes her humanity and shows her mother's love (Mae Henderson. 97-98). Fuston-White argues that "Wildness", which reinforces white prejudice, serves as "a site of repression", "justifying the reduction of African Americans to animality" (online), but bell hooks insists that "the same sites of repression, must be understood as sites of resistance" (qtd. in Fuston-White: online). "Wildness" enables Sixo, "the wild man", to show what a real man he is and also empowers Sethe, the dark lady, to liberate her children, even if it means destroying them. Suero-Elliot claims that the black woman's murder can be explained as a "counterstance" against the white colonial forces that define her and her children as property, thus becoming an attempt to fight the oppressive colonial system by an inversion of roles. Sethe tries to control her children's fate by occupying the role of the colonizer (online).

⁴⁸³ Sally Keenan believes that Morrison chooses this story of infanticide despite the fact that it was not an especially prevalent phenomenon in slave life because "the scandalous nature of the slave mother's resistance" and "its transgression of conventional moralities". Besides, this issue could have a strong emotional and political resonance in the contemporary United States when a vociferous debate regarding abortion and the rights of the fetus over those of the mother was happening (129).

Infanticide is Sethe's act of defiance and part of the slave community's response of resistance. As Bouson says "In focusing on the doubly oppressed slave woman and slavery's disruption of the mother-child bond, *Beloved* also dramatizes that the slave woman's 'resistance tactics' to 'forced miscegenation' included infanticide, as recent historians have pointed out [. . .]" (94).⁴⁸⁴ Sonser explains that "Beloved's murder is a necessity, a rejection of the dictates of capital, its attendant values and practices, and a rebuke of a system of sign values whereby individuals are situated within a consumer society and must submit to its domination through the activity of consumption" (125).⁴⁸⁵ Pérez-Torres argues that,

Sethe stakes her position against the injustice and violence of history by using the only language she has at hand. The power to name is the power to mark, the power to locate and identify [. . .]. Sethe's language, like her mother's language, is one of denial and rejection. Hers is a discourse—a language of desperation—that says No to that which is not acceptable [. . .]. Her instrument is a handsaw; her text is her beloved baby; her sign is the mark of a great refusal. (1999: 188-189)

Carolyn M. Jones points out that "Sethe's act, however brutal, signals individual defiance to the oppression of slavery and the beginnings of claiming and defining the self, of breaking the physical and psychological boundaries of oppression" (online).

4.1.5. Guilt and the Curse

In *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne had explored the themes of original sin, retribution, and redemption. In *The House of the Seven Gables* his version of the myth of the Fortunate Fall dramatizes expulsion from Eden and the visiting upon the sons of the sins of their fathers. There is a curse upon the house of Pyncheon, a curse well earned, which cannot be expiated or escaped until the inherited pattern of complicity and reduplication of the original sin is broken. Each generation has the chance to exercise free will in breaking the fateful pattern, but this happy ending to mankind's heritage of woe takes place only in contemporary New England. After two centuries of guilt and sorrow, the bloodlines of the wronged Maules and the blighted Pyncheons at last produce a generation of the new unfallen Americans whose advent Crèvecoeur had so confidently announced.

⁴⁸⁴ Darlene Hine discusses three methods used by female slaves to resist their economic and sexual oppression: sexual abstinence, abortion, and infanticide. While there are only a "small number of documented cases" of infanticide, the fact that it happened at all is "significant" in Hine's view. Far from viewing such actions as murder, slave parents who took their children's lives may have done so out of a higher form of love and a clearer understanding of the living death that awaited their children under slavery. Infanticide may also have been a response to rape or forced pregnancy and sometimes slave children were used "as pawns in a power struggle between plantation owners and their slaves" (qtd. in Bouson: 99-100). See: Darlene Hine (1994). "Female Slave Resistance: The Economic of Sex". *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-construction of American History*. Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Co.. Steven Weisenburger emphasizes that the infanticidal mother is mirroring the master's violent politics in a profoundly disruptive way (qtd. in Bouson: 100). Original text quoted: Weisenburger (1998). *Modern Medea: A Family History of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South*. New York: Hill and Wang: 263. For more information, see: bell hooks (1990). "Marginality as Site of Resistance". *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*. Ed. Russell Ferguson, et al. New York: Museum of Contemporary Art & MIT P: 341-343.

⁴⁸⁵ On the contrary, Mary J. Suero-Elliott believes that Sethe's act of infanticide manifests her internalization of the oppressive ideologies that justify her enslavement and it is the result of the destructive subjectivity she has developed in her resistive process to the oppressive dominant ideology (online).

DANIEL G. HOFFMAN, "Hester's Double Providence".

Hence, too, might be drawn a weighty lesson from the little regarded truth, that the act of the passing generation is the germ which may and must produce good or evil fruit, in a far distant time; that, together with the seed of the merely temporary crop, which mortals term expediency, they inevitably sow the acorns of a more enduring growth, which may darkly overshadow their posterity.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, *The House of the Seven Gables*.

In both Hawthorne's and Morrison's romances the crime is connected to a curse, which is its ensuing consequence. A terrible evil is derived from it and haunts the characters of the two stories. However, in *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne deals with the curse as in early Gothic novels. Mathew Maule, the wizard, calls down iniquity on the Pyncheon family and its descendants with his malediction. On the other hand, Morrison deals with the curse as the evil that seems to come in answer to Sethe's crime and the legacy of slavery.

Hawthorne might have taken the idea for Maule's curse and the Pyncheons' form of death from Hutchinson's story of Sarah Good in *The History of Massachusetts* (1795), which he knew well. He says about her farewell to Mr. Noyes, one of the judges at the Salem witchcraft trials in 1692:⁴⁸⁶

One of these women (Sarah Good, an accused) being told at her execution by the minister Mr. Noyes, that he knew she was a witch, and therefore advised her to confess, she replied, that he lied, and that she was no more a witch than he was a wizard; and if he took her life away, God would give him blood to drink. (Hutchinson: 328-329)⁴⁸⁷

It is also clear that the Old Testament deeply influenced *Seven Gables*.⁴⁸⁸ In fact, according to Jose Luis Borges, "Hawthorne's [world]" is "the wrath and punishment of the Old Testament" (56). As Buitenhuis writes, the curse is related to God's promise to Moses in the Book of Numbers to visit "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" (Num. 14: 18). The biblical source for the specific words used in the curse, "God will give him blood to drink", is in the *Book of Revelation* (1991: 61).⁴⁸⁹ As Julian Smith has shown there is a precedent for the wizard's anathema in "Edward Randolph's Portrait" in *Legends of the Province House* (19). Edward Randolph's curse, consequence of his acts against the people of

⁴⁸⁶ This information is taken from a footnote in Hawthorne's *Seven Gables* (329).

⁴⁸⁷ Among the people of Salem, there is a tradition about the peculiar circumstance that attended the death of Robert Calef; he choked with blood, which makes them suppose Sarah Good, a witch, or at least, a Pythonissa [Hutchinson's note] (Hutchinson: 329).

⁴⁸⁸ As Buitenhuis writes, Colonel Pyncheon's false accusation against Matthew Maule is probably inspired by Ahab's plot to gain Naboth's vineyard through spurious imputation (1 Kings 21: 22). Like Naboth, Maule is condemned to death (1991: 61).

⁴⁸⁹ In the *Book of Revelation* the prophet talks of the seven angels and the seven last plagues of the wrath of God. The third angel "poured out his vial of wrath upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood". The angel declares, "they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink" (Rev. 16: 4-6). The importance of blood for atonement is seen throughout the Old Testament and is transformed, in the New Testament, into the ceremony of Eucharist (Buitenhuis 1991: 61-62).

Massachusetts, resembles the damnation that Colonel Pyncheon brings on the Pyncheon family: “the curse of the people followed this Randolph where he went, and wrought evil in all the subsequent events of his life, and that its effect was seen likewise in the manner of his death” (Hawthorne 1989: 169) (Julian Smith: 18). Both Edward Randolph and Colonel Pyncheon, Smith comments, die in a similar way. Randolph gasps for breath at his dying hour and complains “that he was choking with the blood of the Boston Massacre” (1989: 177). Colonel Pyncheon and some of his descendants, especially Jaffrey, are reputed to have been asphyxiated by blood (Julian Smith: 18).

Seven Gables is the story of a family “haunted by the guilt of its founder and the ghost of his victim” (Gollin: 152). The House becomes the “Haunted Mind”, “where remembered guilt and grief emerge from secret recesses during nightmare [. . .]. The old portrait is the demon of guilt within the haunted mind” (152-153). The entire plot of *Seven Gables* is “concerned with relating the effects of this [Maule’s] curse and the way that it is finally lifted” (Alfred Marks 1967a: 426).⁴⁹⁰ The efficacy of Maule’s anathema is shown when the Colonel dies on the very same day he opens the house for his friends. Since that day, the secret location of the deed to the Maine estate is lost and “Thenceforth his [the Colonel’s] offspring come under the spell of the curse by seeking these documents whose hiding place is known only to the Maules” (William Stein: 124). Thus the Pyncheons bring true damnation “upon themselves through their obsessive desire to build up real estate and other forms of wealth” (Buitenhuis 1991: 17) or what Hawthorne calls “the energy of disease” (*Gables*: 23), the Pyncheons’ insatiable greed. Judge Pyncheon becomes “the living symbol of the curse” (Alfred Marks 1967a: 418).

In his dealings with the curse, Hawthorne applies some basic aspects of his view of guilt and sin, which are somehow similar in *Beloved*. Once a sin is committed, it will burden both the sinner and his progeny (Hansen: 19). In Edwards’ *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, we can find a clear antecedent of the inheritance of guilt and sin as “an evil taint on any individual soul, in consequence of a crime committed twenty or forty years ago, remaining still, and even to the end of the world and for ever” (*Gables*: 66). The inheritors of the property, the Pyncheons, know of the wrong inflicted on the Maules and have failed to rectify it. This way they have inherited

⁴⁹⁰ As Paul Connerton says, “[. . .] a curse seeks to bring its object under the sway of its power; once pronounced a curse continues to consign its object to the fate it has summoned up and is thought to continue in effect until its potency is exhausted [. . .]. Curses [. . .] presuppose certain attitudes [. . .] they effectively bring those attitudes into existence by virtue of the illocutionary act” (qtd. in Ogunyemi: online). Original text quoted: Paul Connerton (1989). *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

their ancestor's guilt, which has been transmitted from generation to generation in the Pyncheon family: "In times of growing social enlightenment when the heir cannot help knowing that his ancestor violated the rights of the commoner Maule, he is the willful recipient of stolen goods. If he would share the spoils he must share the guilt" (Lawrence Hall: 377). The spirit of Matthew Maule, as the result of the guilt the Pyncheons experience, has become an extricable part of their offspring's life. The Original Sin generates sin.⁴⁹¹ However, "By the Judge's death the curse is [finally] removed" (Alfred Marks 1967a: 426).

Every member of the Pyncheon family appears to be contaminated by the sin just because they belong to the family, "all Pyncheons labor under the curse of his [their] ancestors" (Flibbert: 124). And it also seems that everything in contact with them suffers the same sort of corruption. The pollution of Maule's well (the symbolic focus of his malediction) is its first effect: "the first Maule had built his cottage beside its sweet spring, but Colonel Pyncheon's house befouled it" (Gollin: 156). The natural spring of soft and pleasant water turns brackish. Nothing can escape the influence that sin exerts on the family and its environment. Borges asserts that *Seven Gables* attempts to show that "the evil committed by one generation endures and persists in its descendants, like a sort of *inherited punishment*" (60; emphasis added).⁴⁹²

Evil acquires a strange kind of immortality: "The ghost of a dead progenitor, perhaps as a portion of his own punishment, is often doomed to become the Evil Genius of his family" (Gables: 21). Its malevolent influence extends over the following generations through its periodical resurrection in the family's history, "a sort of intermittent immortality on earth" (Gables: 19). These evil Pyncheon individuals become the gothic villains who crowd this romance from Colonel Pyncheon, Gervaise Pyncheon until its last representation, Jaffrey Pyncheon. On the other hand, the Maules also suffer a special sort of curse. They have been historically ostracized from the community because of their family aloofness and their heretical opinions. Their offspring's heritage is "those feelings of repugnance and superstitious terror with which the people of the town, even after awakening from their frenzy, continued to regard the memory of the reputed witches" (Gables: 26).

Maule's curse produces a continuing degeneration and decline in the Pyncheon family. At the beginning of the story, only a few of its members are alive, of whom only

⁴⁹¹ In general, just as the Colonel's original sin is perpetuated in his family, society cannot get rid of the ghosts of the past. This is well exemplified in the Italian organ grinder's puppets. Just as the puppets dance and dance repeatedly, the Pyncheons, from generation to generation, will commit the same mistakes again and again.

⁴⁹² Whelan emphasizes "deadening influence that Sin—both Original and Actual—always has upon the individual human soul" (67). Frederick C. Crews' *The Sins of the Fathers* takes almost the same view of Maule's Curse (178-179).

Phoebe, who is no longer a true Pyncheon, can continue the family history. The Pyncheon family line is on the verge of extinction because of their lack of progeny. As Roy Male argues, in its dominant strain,—those members that can be considered as strong—children are limited because of their sexual aggressiveness. Colonel Pyncheon wears out his three wives by the hardness of his character in the conjugal relation. Jaffrey also exhausts his wife and his only son dies of cholera (432). On the other hand, Male points out, the sterility of the weak members of the family can be seen in Clifford, who has "never quaffed the cup of passionate love", and Hepzibah, the "time-stricken virgin" who has never known "what love technically means". Thus, without descendants, the degenerative family line is dying, in Hawthorne's words, "in respect to natural increase, the breed had not thriven" (Gables: 24) (432). The Maules' lineage is also waning. In fact, they are believed to be extinct until we discover that the only descendant is Holgrave. Thus it seems that the curse affects both families and leads to their vanishing.⁴⁹³

The first effect of the wizard's malediction is Colonel Pyncheon's death, whose sign is represented by a gurgling noise, "Old Maule's Curse is fulfilled as the Pyncheons of one generation after another are struck dead with a gurgle of blood in their throats" (Hoffman 1967: 477).⁴⁹⁴ Colonel Pyncheon's ruff, which symbolizes his status, also relates to the beginning of the curse as a result of a blemish of blood on it: "there were the marks of fingers on his throat and the print of a bloody hand on his plaited ruff" (Gables: 16). As Buitenhuis argues, this blot is later repeated, expressing the continuity of Maule's anathema, in the bloodstain across Judge Pyncheon's "snowy neckcloth", when he dies in the same way as his ancestor did before. The blood on the Pyncheons' neck cloths can also be connected with the way Matthew Maule is executed with the halter around his neck (1991: 111).

As does *Seven Gables*, *Beloved* deals with the emancipation from a sort of curse, the crime Sethe commits to save her children from slavery, which haunts her and her progeny: this is not exactly a hereditary malediction, but it is also transmitted and persecutes the rest of the family. Sethe pays for her action throughout most of the novel. Her crime "is her most repressed memory, whose recollection and recreating are essential to her recovery. The nature of repression makes this event indescribable—it

⁴⁹³ The New England Calvinist legacy can explain the decline of the Pyncheon family. Pennell argues that "poverty or financial failing was punishment for sin, a public sign of God's displeasure with an individual or family" (1999: 193). Besides, its waning also suggests the potential loss of place, social and psychological, in a changing modern world. In Hawthorne's times financial prosperity became an indicator of success in both secular and spiritual callings (Johnson: online).

⁴⁹⁴ Susan S. Williams points out that when the Colonel's ghost appears late in the novel—ready to reveal the secret—other shades "press their hands over his mouth and he is again choked with blood" (231). Williams argues that this scene reminds us that the Pyncheon's fate is to die while trying to speak (a Derridean fate).

is part of the inarticulate and irrational unconscious, like an inner ghost plaguing and controlling Sethe's life" (Krumholz 1999: 122). Besides, as in *Seven Gables*, guilt burdens her progeny. Even though the black woman has saved her daughter from slavery, her grief and guilt impair Denver's life. According to Susan Bowers, "*Beloved* is a novel about collecting fragments and welding them into beautiful new wholes, about letting go of pain and guilt but also recovering what is lost and loving it into life" (105).

According to Carolyn M. Jones, as "both victim and victimizer", Sethe "reenact[s] the myth of Cain" (online). Morrison shares with Hawthorne a basic aspect of this myth. Like Sethe, some of the Pyncheons commit a crime against one of their own kin: out of greed, Gervayse Pyncheon condemns his daughter, though indirectly, and Judge Pyncheon does not hesitate to frame his cousin for their uncle's death. Jones argues that the mark of Cain sets Sethe apart from personal identity and from community, since she refuses to acknowledge the implications of her act and to mourn her child properly: "[the] sense of our finitude and the necessity for contact with the 'other' that is central to the Cain myth is what Toni Morrison retains in the stories of her marked women" (online).⁴⁹⁵ In *East of Eden*, John Steinbeck also says that the Cain story is "the symbol story of the [rejected, guilty] human soul" (qtd. in Carolyn Jones: online). However, as Carolyn Jones points out, Cain cannot be banished forever but, somehow, must come home, or else neither he nor the community could achieve retribution (online).⁴⁹⁶ At the end of the novel, Morrison depicts how Sethe finally finds her way to selfhood and reunion with her black sisters, "the first step in Cain's return [. . .]. The curse of Cain, of guilt and alienation, is broken when Sethe can mourn and when she can tell the tale with moral imagination and, thereby, find a truth different than the master's truth" (Carolyn Jones: online).

Like the intermittent reincarnations of Colonel Pyncheon, the ghost of the baby girl, the embodiment of Sethe's guilt, plagues the lives of 124's inhabitants. Its spell is full of rage and sadness. For eighteen years, the house is haunted by the tormented spirit of the murdered child. It is not until Paul D's arrival that the revenant vanishes, but not without putting up a fight. However, guilt cannot be exorcised so easily. When the baby phantom disappears, the curse becomes flesh in *Beloved*: "Beloved has become, at least in part, the embodiment of slavery's patrimony to Sethe and her daughter: a conscience who refuses to understand and forgive the ambiguity of Sethe's simultaneously loving and cruel response to the mock freedom granted by the Fugitive

⁴⁹⁵ However, Jones finds an important difference between Cain and Sethe. She does not act out of jealousy, but out of pure desperation (online).

⁴⁹⁶ Carolyn Jones asserts that "When Sethe accepts her mark, she finds the true meaning of her name. She is no longer Cain, the exile, but is both Set, crucified by the tree on her back [. . .] and Seth, the son who carries on the line of Adam and Eve and who foreshadows Christ" (online).

laws" (Askeland: 173). When the spirit returns from the afterlife, Sethe believes that now she will be able to live in the present. At first, Sethe tells herself: "See, she came back, and I don't have to explain a thing" (Beloved: 200). Guilt burdens Sethe and she seeks forgiveness from her daughter. She tries very hard to convince her that it was the right thing to do. She explains to her daughter over and over again the reasons for the murder: "I won't never let her go. I'll explain to her [. . .]. Why I did it. How if I hadn't killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her. When I explain it she'll understand [. . .]" (Beloved: 200). However, as Morrison comments, "she could never explain enough. It's herself she can't forgive" (Carabí 1993: 110).

The revenant cannot stop blaming her mother, because she represents, as Morrison claims, "350 years of indifference" (Carabí 1993: 110). Beloved is an example of how guilt can take possession of your existence until it drains it of life. Her dangerous and exaggerated neediness, her desire to possess Sethe completely and to take her to "the other side", "magnify Sethe's mother-guilt and encourage her obsessive effort to make amends for the murder to the point of nearly giving up her life, becoming death-focused and mired in the past" (Corey: 112).⁴⁹⁷ So even though the black woman devotes her life to Beloved, keeping Denver away, she cannot get the forgiveness she is looking for, since she is the only one who can absolve herself. Her guilt conscience makes her the revenant's victim, thus reversing their roles. In her efforts to expiate her crime, "Sethe herself risks self-destruction as she repents and seeks forgiveness from the ghost of her daughter" (Denard 1997: 43).

As in *Seven Gables*, where Hawthorne depicts the curse that colonialism and aristocracy send down on the inhabitants of New England, in *Beloved*, Morrison deals with the curse that slavery casts on the blacks, leading them to their moral and physical annihilation. Not only Sethe, but all of the other characters are haunted by their ordeals as slaves and their inability to cope with the terrible situations they have survived. To be saved from the curse, blacks have to expiate the guilt of their past as slaves.⁴⁹⁸ Their actions cannot be excused by the horrors of slavery. Blacks cannot only accept that they have been the victims of a terrible and unfair system. Their sense of guilt cannot depend on the immorality of slavery. They must face their actions on the blacks' ethical and moral values and then forgive themselves to go on living. Morrison tries to

⁴⁹⁷ Marie Nigro expresses similar views (online).

⁴⁹⁸ Their terrible past becomes a sort of "curse" for all the blacks. Some privileged blacks, chiefs and their henchmen, participated in the slave trade. They betrayed their own people. They sold other Africans into slavery and then they became accomplices in their enslavement. All the descendants might be under this curse. If there is a curse, there should be also an expiation. They cannot escape their past as slaves which pursues them and threatens their free lives.

show us how the enduring and indomitable spirit of the blacks, their humanity, allowed them to confront their guilt and depicts their struggle to survive the trauma of slavery on their own terms, with their own code of ethics:

the horror of slavery seems a reasonable cause for a violation of ethics, it does not exempt from punishment the violators of the community's code. Nor does it exempt them from their personal need to repent and ask for forgiveness. Indeed, much of the present-time focus of the story concerns the characters' working out, or facing the consequences of violating their own codes [. . .] they must answer to themselves and their community before they finally achieve forgiveness and are able to move forward.

This is the powerful subject of the novel: how a people try to keep their humanity intact in a world whose morality and humanity is turned upside down—and how they succeed. (Denard 1997: 43-44)

Slavery is not just a curse for blacks, but also for whites. Stamp Paid realizes that in dehumanizing blacks, whites dehumanize themselves. They find in the blacks the wildness and savagery, the “jungle” they have planted in there, which spread and contaminate them too. In their colonization of other human beings, whites behave like animals:

Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood. In a way, he [Stamp Paid] thought, they were right. The more coloredpeople spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside. But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who had made it. Touched them every one. Changed and altered them. Made them bloody, silly, worse than even they wanted to be, so scared were they of the jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own white skin; the red gums were their own. (Beloved: 198-199)

Slavery degrades both blacks and whites. As David Lawrence says: “Under the regime of white authority, the ‘blackness’ of the slave’s body represents for ‘whitefolks’ an animal savagery and moral depravity that, ironically, ends up remaking them in the image of their own fears” (88). In both Hawthorne’s and Morrison’s romances, colonialism is the primal source of the curse, which sends evil and dehumanization down on all human beings.

4.2. Isolation and Community

The Gothic world is the fallen world, the vision of fallen man, living in fear and alienation, haunted by images of his mythic expulsion, by its repercussions, and by an awareness of his unavoidable wretchedness [. . .]. Gothic heroes and heroines are on their own, stumbling alone, sometimes in foreign countries, through appalling complexities of decision and action, obliged to find their own solutions or go under; estrangement from family ties is their normal condition [. . .]. Protagonists

are frequently orphans, or they are foundlings or adopted, their family origins mysterious.

KATHY PRENDERGAST, qtd. in "Introduction to the Gothic Tradition. 'The Gothic Tradition'".

Isolation is a very important element of the gothic mode, since it is a key element to create the gloomy atmosphere of the gothic setting, to inspire fear and to increase the vulnerability of the characters. Fiedler thinks that at the center of the gothic plot is the individual's awareness of his aloofness in a world whose communal values have collapsed or turned into clichés.⁴⁹⁹ In the gothic quest the individual explores her/his identity in relation to the family and the society in conditions of isolation, entrapment and oppression. The alienated gothic hero or heroine faces annihilation as they confront a hostile dark world. In both *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* detachment is the result of the characters' crimes and their consequent punishment and expiation. *Pride* destroys their bonds with the community and makes them relinquish their position in society. Hawthorne emphasizes the unpardonable sin, in which the intellectual sinner's curiosity isolates him from humankind. Life is his mental food. However, it is not the intellect, but the human heart that binds human beings. On the other hand, Morrison focuses on those sins that are the result of the characters' racial oppression, annihilating the sinner's self and disintegrating the fellowship of black people. Hawthorne and Morrison move between isolation and the community. Their romances deal with the fact that an individual cannot be removed from humankind for long, since this detachment gets him away from the parade of life. Their guilt-burdened characters lead solitary lives that are finally redeemed in the midst of their communities.

Much of Hawthorne's obsession with the theme of isolation has been explained through his life. Beebe insists on autobiographical relevance to assert that "the House of the Seven Gables is Hawthorne and that *Seven Gables* is the story of his escape or salvation from the curse of isolation" (12). In fact, aloofness "from society was conspicuous in the members of Hawthorne's own family" (Beebe: 12). As Borges explains, when his father, Captain Hawthorne, died, his mother became a recluse in her bedroom. The family did not eat together and scarcely spoke to one another; their meals were left on trays in the hall. Hawthorne spent his time writing and, at dusk, he would go out for a walk (49). This way of life lasted for twelve years until his wife, Sophia Peabody, saved him from his seclusion. He felt the terrible effects of his solitary years when he wrote to Longfellow,

⁴⁹⁹ Fiedler thinks that gothic writers are ambiguous when dealing with this isolation. On the one hand, they depict the characters' fear of solitude as endemic to freedom. On the other hand, they attack institutions that might inhibit freedom (131).

I have been carried apart from the main current of life, and find it impossible to get back again [. . .]. I have secluded myself from society; and yet I never meant any such thing, nor dreamed what sort of life I was going to lead. I have made a captive of myself, and put me in a dungeon, and now I cannot find the key to let myself out—and if the door were open, I should be almost afraid to come out [. . .]. For the last ten years, I have not lived, but only dreamed about living. (qtd. in Beebe: 12)⁵⁰⁰

Hawthorne's removal from society was not only the result of his family background, but also of his desire to become a detached artist. In fact, Henry James believes that "alienation was the vital principle of all of Hawthorne's art [. . .]. '[Hawthorne] is [. . .] outside of everything, and an alien everywhere. He is an aesthetic solitary'" (qtd. in Buitenhuis 1959: 219). As Edgar Dryden points out, Hawthorne realizes that by living in seclusion one is freed from the materiality of the world and can devote himself to artistic creation.⁵⁰¹ However, he also thinks that the writer must engage in an interchange with his audience (296-297). In the preface to *Twice-told Tales*, Hawthorne calls these stories, "attempts, and very imperfectly successful ones, to open an intercourse with the world" (qtd. in Millington 1992: 45). In "The Custom-House" he says that "unless the speaker stand in some true relation with his audience—it may be pardonable to imagine that a friend, a kind and apprehensive, though not the closest friend, is listening to our talk" (S. L. : 5). In this call to the reader, Millington sees that "To be rescued from estrangement, to become real, even to oneself, one must be discovered by another" (1992: 46).

On the other hand, Morrison, in her interview with Robert Stepto, claims that the "neighborhood" has had an enormous influence in her life. She says that even without knowing it, it was always there, a strong life-giving sustenance for black people. As she remembers, the community took all the responsibilities, "So that people were taken care of, or locked up or whatever. If they were sick, other people took care of them; if they needed something to eat, other people took care of them; if they were old, other people took care of them; if they were mad, other people provided a small space for them, or related to their madness or tried to find out the limits of their madness" (11). Morrison speaks about the strong connection that united blacks in the midst of their neighborhood: "They also meddled in your lives a lot. They felt that you belonged to them. And every woman on the street could raise everybody's child, and tell you exactly what to do and you felt that connection with those people and they felt it with

⁵⁰⁰ In 1840 Hawthorne also wrote a moving passage in his Notebooks about this period of time: "And now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber, and why I could never break through the viewless bolts and bars; for if I had sooner made my escape into the world, I should have grown hard and rough, and been covered with earthly dust, and my heart might have become callous" (qtd. in Borges: 63).

⁵⁰¹ Dryden highlights the artist's dilemma between involvement and withdrawal from society: "[. . .] while a return to the world momentarily revitalizes man, it soon leads to a loss of freedom and creative power, for here are forces which inevitably neutralize and devalue" (1971: 298).

you. And when they punished us or hollered at us, it was at the time, we thought, so inhibiting and so cruel, and it's only much later that you realize that they were interested in you. Interested in you—they cared about your behavior" (ibid).

4.2.1. The Origin of Ostracism

In both Hawthorne's and Morrison's romances, the main characters have been isolated for long periods of time. In *Seven Gables* Phoebe's arrival and Clifford's release from jail finally open the ruined house to communication with the contemporary world that surrounds them. Hepzibah has been secluded in the old mansion practically her whole life, while Clifford has spent much of life in prison for a crime he was framed for. Holgrave, the last Maule, leads a solitary existence aloof from the other house's inhabitants. In *Beloved* the dwellers of 124 have been completely alienated from the rest of the community for eighteen years after Sethe's infanticide. As Morrison writes, "Those twenty-eight happy days were followed by eighteen years of disapproval and a solitary life" (*Beloved*: 173). Sethe's crime makes 124 a haunted place and its residents some sort of phantoms.

In *Seven Gables* ever since the crime committed by Colonel Pyncheon, a burden of guilt has separated his progeny from the community. Maule's curse announced that the Pyncheon family should be destroyed by their sin against the old wizard: "Maule's Curse is at the root of that 'certain remarkable unity' of the Pyncheon family fate, and the house, a product of both Pyncheons and Maules, must remain isolated until the two strains are merged into one" (Beebe: 8). To preserve their gentility, the Pyncheons have shut themselves off from the current of mankind. They face destruction as a result of their imprisonment in the dismal house and their consequent lack of offspring: "They [the Pyncheons] shall ultimately be destroyed by the solitude which they built for themselves at Maule's expense in the shape of the House of the Seven Gables, where the Colonel died alone at the beginning of the story and where (reincarnated in the character of the Judge) he returns to die alone at the end" (Lawrence Hall: 383). Ostracism is Colonel Pyncheon's legacy for his decadent offspring and the ultimate cause of their destruction.

In *Beloved*, the shunning of 124's inhabitants starts with the feast Baby Suggs gives to celebrate her daughter-in-law's arrival and her "reckless generosity on display at 124" (*Beloved*: 137). This party starts spontaneously when Stamp Paid brings the old black woman two buckets full of blackberries to commemorate the family reunion. Baby Suggs makes pies of them and, with the community's donations, produces a lot of food to be eaten and enjoyed: "This generation of food, brought by the whole community and eaten to excess by the whole community, suddenly becomes a source

of violent reaction, forcing a breakdown in solidarity” (Jesser: online). As Jesser claims, the miracle of the food causes rivalry and violence among the blacks (online). Baby Suggs’s loving gesture toward her daughter-in-law is disapproved of by the community: “Too much, they thought. Where does she get it all, Baby Suggs, holy? Why is she and hers always at the center of things? How come she always knows exactly what to do and when?” (Beloved: 137). The black community considers Baby’s celebration to be a gesture of pride and cannot forgive her extreme generosity: “Loaves and fishes were His powers—they didn’t belong to an ex-slave” (Beloved: 137).⁵⁰² Teresa N. Washington points out that, from a Yoruba perspective, “Sethe and Baby Suggs have trespassed a law of Aje that ‘one must not display wealth’ [. . .]. The community, acting very much as a society of traditional African elders would, punishes Baby Suggs with silence after she celebrates her spiritual and material wealth with the magnificent feast” (online). Besides, the black community is jealous of her preaching, her hospitality and her good fortune at having so many relatives with her.⁵⁰³

The feast means isolation for Baby Suggs, who, as the preacher, has kept a very strong bond to her community until then. Because of their anger, the Blacks refuse to warn 124’s inhabitants of the slave catchers’ presence: “the party [. . .] explained why nobody ran on ahead; why nobody sent a fleet-footed son to cut ‘cross a field soon as they saw the four horses in town hitched for watering while the riders asked questions” (Beloved: 157).⁵⁰⁴ Thus, the black community shares responsibility for the baby’s death. As Mary J. Suero-Elliott argues “Sethe’s community both perpetuates the legacy of slavery, demonstrating a collective internalization of the commodification discourse, and plays an important role in the process of the development of her subjectivity against colonial lessons of disempowerment” (online). The repressed violence of a free black community which fights for its survival in a hostile environment destroys the bond between its members, preventing them from warning Sethe. Its vulnerability and latent hatred of whites determine its ambivalent reactions. As blacks cannot confront their real enemy, the whites, they direct their frustration and anger to the weakest members

⁵⁰² Baby Suggs’s miracle resembles Jesus’ generation of bread and fish to feed a multitude of 5,000 people (John 6: 4-13). It may mean, as in the Bible, that the community will provide for the individuals’ needs if they rely on one another.

⁵⁰³ Charles Scruggs points out that “Somehow the members of the black community imagine that Baby Suggs has not suffered in slavery as they have suffered” (qtd. in Suero-Elliott: online). Original text quoted: Charles Scruggs (1992). “The Invisible City in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*”. *Arizona Quarterly* 48.3: 95-132. According to Barbara Christian, in this scene Morrison shows the hard reality of the life in the community, without sentimentalizing it (218).

⁵⁰⁴ One of the images that is related to the whites as oppressors is their high-topped shoes. The morning after the big celebration for Sethe’s arrival, Baby Suggs wakes as a result of a scent of disapproval, which hides something dark and evil. Baby just can make out high-topped shoes. Mary J. Suero-Elliott thinks that “the people of the community tacitly withdraw their support by denying Sethe, without warning, access to a system of communication developed by and for the community” (online).

of their own community, destroying themselves. Gloria Anzaldua explains this process using the concept of border culture:

two worlds merging to form a third [. . .] [a] borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition [. . .]. The only 'legitimate' inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites. Tension [. . .] ambivalence [. . .] and unrest reside there and death is no stranger. (qtd. in Suero-Elliott: online)

As Suero-Elliott shows, the roots of the violence within contemporary African-American communities lies in slavery and white oppression. The community must face the system of slavery if they want to find peace (online). Blacks must learn “how to create themselves from the conflict of two cultures [black and white]” (Keizer: online).

In their reaction to Sethe’s proud attitude, the black community become aggressors and thus the initial difference between oppressors and victims is somehow effaced: “The oppression enforced by slaveowners is now perpetuated by the oppressed themselves. As a unit, the community itself remains an ‘ex-slave,’ unable to define itself outside the parameters of the slave experience” (David Lawrence: 92).⁵⁰⁵ As Suero-Elliott asserts, the new free black community, which struggles for its existence against a dominant colonial white culture, validates its position by suppressing blacks’ individual identities (online). Anzaldua says that in colonized communities such as the black, “[t]ribal rights over those of the individual insured the survival of the tribe [. . .]. The welfare of the family, the community, and the tribe is more important than the welfare of the individual. The individual exists first as kin—a sister, a father, a padrino—and last as self” (qtd. in Suero-Elliott: online).

Until the day of the murder, Sethe is part of the community and participates in Baby Suggs’s speeches. After the infanticide, Sethe just walks out of the house with her head up and goes to jail. She is later taken out by abolitionists and goes on living as if nothing has happened. As Teresa Washington writes, Sethe has committed a terrible crime and does not seem repentant: “Showing no remorse and exuding an air of ‘serenity and tranquility’ after her actions, she loses communal respect and consideration” (online). Thus the black community ostracizes Sethe because they consider her actions too extreme and her response to the infanticide irreverent and arrogant. As Morrison says, “She [Sethe] did not come home and weep and say: ‘Oh my God, look at what I did!’. She didn’t say: ‘Help me’. She didn’t say: ‘I don’t know why I did that’. They recognize the beginning of that arrogance and that keeps them away

⁵⁰⁵ According to Girard, reciprocal violence “gives birth to fierce rivalries and sets members of the same family or social group at one another’s throats” (qtd. in Hinson: 153). Original text quoted: Rene Girard (1972). *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.

from her" (Carabí 1993: 111).⁵⁰⁶ The community leaves her alone: "They will not condemn her, but neither can they condone the murder" (Reyes: 80). From that time on, Sethe lives in isolation, with a self-sufficiency that the community cannot forgive. Morrison points out that "The survival of the individual is dependent on the community. Sethe makes a valiant effort to live without the community. And she can't [. . .]. She is saying to the community: 'I'll get along without you' and they know she's saying this, so they let her try" (Carabí 1993: 111).⁵⁰⁷

The community has somehow failed in its responsibility towards its members: it abandoned one of its individuals when she needed it most. According to D. Scot Hinson, this situation erodes African-Americans' traditional values, "engender[ing] a range of breaches of social conduct within the community" (155). After Beloved's murder, Baby Suggs breaks down and never recovers. Heart broken as a consequence of the crime, she gives up her role as spiritual leader and spends the last eight years of her life contemplating the colors on her quilt. She dies alone and resentful against the whites, whom she blames for what has happened to Sethe. Thus, as Hinson claims, the weakened religious pillars of the black community fail and threaten a deeper crisis (155). According to Rene Girard: "When the religious framework of a society starts to totter [. . .] the whole cultural foundation of the society is put in jeopardy. The institutions lose their vitality [. . .] social values are rapidly eroded, and the whole cultural structure seems on the verge of collapse" (qtd. in Hinson: 155).⁵⁰⁸

The disintegration of the black community's social and religious values seems evident in its response to Baby Suggs's death. At her funeral nobody, except for Stamp Paid, enters 124. This is an injury that Sethe pays back by refusing to attend Reverend Pike's religious service, instead she goes to the gravesite. Nor does she join the rest of the community in the hymns they sing in Baby's honor. In return, the mourners do not eat Sethe's food in the yard of 124. Nor do Sethe or Denver touch theirs. Thus Baby Suggs, who has "devoted her freed life to harmony, was buried amid a regular dance of pride, fear, condemnation and spite" (Beloved: 171). The ostracism of 124's inhabitants becomes even harder after the old woman's death. The family within the house creates a "self-sufficient" unity entrapped by the burden of the past and haunted by Beloved.

⁵⁰⁶ Teresa N. Washington claims that, from the outset, Sethe is condemned on the grounds of being too proud (online). However, Sally Keenan emphasizes that "What separates Sethe from the other ex-slaves and isolates her from them is that she had the mind to commit an act that encompassed the enormity of slavery's contradiction and to take responsibility for it" (130). Susan Corey, on the other hand, points out that "the community projects its fears onto Sethe" (111).

⁵⁰⁷ According to Susan Corey, Morrison is "critical of the community's failure to love and forgive" (111).

⁵⁰⁸ Original text quoted: Rene Girard (1972). *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.

4.2.2. The Isolation of the Gothic Self

Both *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* depict the essentially isolated nature of the Gothic self, its vulnerability in a hostile world. Their detached heroes and heroines are burdened with guilt while they yearn for fellowship and move towards retribution. They can only defeat the sins of the past as part of the human community. Both Hawthorne and Morrison state that the alien individual's true Gothic search for self-definition can only end in the midst of the community.

The House of the Seven Gables is a "statement on Hawthorne's old theme of human isolation, of the individual cut off from society and reality" (Bewley: 446).⁵⁰⁹

Like much of Hawthorne's fiction, *The House of the Seven Gables* is concerned with the theme of isolation. Hawthorne appears to have believed that a person who lacks a balance between the three parts of his being—intellect, sense, and spiritual "intuition"—is inevitably separated from the great chain of human sympathy and that isolation from mundane and spiritual reality is the worst evil that can befall man. (Beebe: 9)⁵¹⁰

As Hansen writes, Hawthorne's individual cannot live by himself, since he derives his value from his belonging to the "chain of humankind",

Every individual stands in the center of a series of concentric circles. The first contains the family, the second the friends and relatives, the third the neighbors and townspeople and so forth to the outer world and from this center which simultaneously describes his functions as husband, father, brother, friend, neighbor, etc. He derives his personal importance. By stepping aside and abandoning this center the individual loses his significance and becomes [. . .] "the outcast of the universe". (74)

In *Seven Gables* the characters of the novel represent various forms in which man can be detached from human brotherhood: the Pyncheons are all "afflicted with the family curse of pride but manifesting it in different ways" (Beebe: 9). According to Paul E. More, "All the characters that move within the shadow of that House of the Seven Gables are involved in one tragic idea assimilated by the author's imagination from the religious inheritance of the society about him—the idea that pride, whether worldly or unworldly, works out its penalty in the separation of the possessor from the common heart of humanity" (182). Clifford, Hepzibah, Holgrave and the Judge, the most important isolated characters, are shown in contrast to those who are a part of the "united struggle" of mankind: Phoebe and Uncle Venner. Hepzibah and Clifford are recluses in the old gloomy mansion because they are dominated by the past: "[they] are the ones who must travel furthest in their attempts to progress inwardly from isolation and inner desolation to communion and trust" (Gatta: 39). Judge Pyncheon and Holgrave are also alienated, though for different reasons.

⁵⁰⁹ Dillingham has also stated the importance of the theme of isolation in *Seven Gables* (450).

⁵¹⁰ For more information, see: Darrel Abel (1951). "The Theme of Isolation". *The Personalist*, XXXII: 42-59 and 182-190.

Like Colonel Pyncheon, Judge Pyncheon is isolated because of his greed. Although, to the world, Judge Pyncheon might seem a philanthropic and kind person, he is actually separated from mankind.⁵¹¹ As Dryden claims, he lives in society by constantly seeking collective approval and has become a master of its forms and usages; however, "in accepting the image which appears in society's mirror as his authentic self he transforms himself into a creature which is destroyed rather than nourished by its own blood" (1971: 308). In Phoebe's rejection of Judge Pyncheon's kiss, Hawthorne shows that "Despite the ties of blood between them, she [Phoebe] realizes that he is a stranger to her world" (Dillingham: 454).

As Hepzibah is the main representative of the Pyncheons' aristocratic way of life, she is, together with Clifford, the ultimate example of isolation. Hepzibah has dwelt too much alone: "In her grief and wounded pride, Hepzibah had spent her life in divesting herself of friends;—she had willfully cast off the support which God has ordained His creatures to need from one another;—and it was now her punishment, that Clifford and herself would fall the easier victims to their kindred enemy" (Gables: 245). Her estrangement is related to her symbiosis with the ruined mansion: "Hepzibah is a prisoner of home because she associates it so completely with the beams and clapboards of the House of Man, rendering herself unable to function in the constantly changing world outside the house" (Kehler: 149). Hepzibah is utterly inexperienced in worldly matters at her sixty years of age. Her aristocratic ways and her beliefs in tradition keep her apart from universal brotherhood. Completely dominated by the past, she is unable to cope with the present. Maryhelen C. Harmon argues that Hepzibah is not only physically imprisoned in her old mansion, but she is also culturally constrained (114). On the other hand, another reason for her isolation is that the old woman has been misrepresented by the community. On different occasions, the narrator reclaims "a true estimate of Hepzibah's character from the shallow but powerful misperception of the community" (Millington 1992: 112). Gradually, she is presented in her true light. Despite her aristocratic pretensions, Hepzibah has a sensitive and kind heart.

Hepzibah begins to overcome her isolation when she opens the cent-shop because she has to take care of Clifford: "Hepzibah Pyncheon too has barred herself in her home, only the opening of her shop within its walls signifying the momentous fall of the 'barrier between herself and the word,' a realization driving her to weep" (Harmon:

⁵¹¹ Joseph Flibbert claims that he is not even really philanthropic. He says that in Hawthorne's world "Those who assume an attitude of love for humanity [. . .] are almost always posturing egotists who cultivate the sentiment as a form of self-aggrandizement. The individual whose benevolence extends to everyone usually steps on those closest to him. Rappaccini destroys his daughter to heal the world. Ethan Brand annihilates Esther in an experiment that originated in hillside musings prompted by love of mankind" (115).

105).⁵¹² Harmon claims that the old woman, in her efforts to sustain her “hearth and home”, evokes the Greek goddess Hestia, a nurturing fertility figure; their names also being similar (105). Hawthorne depicts the old maid’s attempts at trade as “pitiful, yet magnanimous”: “Hepzibah, ‘the recluse of half a lifetime,’ proved pathetically incapable of merging with humanity in the common struggle for existence” (Lawrence Hall: 380). However, her fall from gentility marks “the beginning of her return to psychic and even physical well-being” (Buitenhuis 1991: 92). Even though Hepzibah tries to surmount her isolation, she has lived too long in the past and her attempts fail: “Hepzibah is too old to carry them through with vigor; the final affirmation, implicit in the spiral curve, remains for the young people, who, nevertheless, learn from the old lady” (Alfred Levy: 461).

Like Hepzibah Clifford is detached from society: “Out of prison after thirty years of unjust confinement, Clifford at *Seven Gables* continues to be imprisoned in himself, shut off from the world as much as he had been before” (Bewley: 446). Not just his long captivity, but also his nature keeps him apart from mankind because he is a sybarite who can accept only the beautiful: “Had his character been allowed an opportunity for full natural development his taste or aesthetic temper might have been so perfectly cultivated as to have ‘completely eaten out or filed away his affection,’ thus making even more complete his isolation from the human heart by which men live” (Lawrence Hall: 381). His radical love of beauty is his way of escaping the grim reality he lives as a consequence of his past seclusion in prison and his partial acceptance of reality. Clifford cannot experience affection for Hepzibah, as she does for him, because she is an ugly old maid: “He cannot feel even the closeness of kinship and love for Hepzibah that she feels for him, for she does not possess the beauty his nature requires for adoration” (Dillingham: 453).

The Maules are also removed from the stream of human sympathies. Suspicions of witchcraft have transformed them into outcasts. Holgrave is not different from his ancestors. He has lost contact with the community and dwells in a lonesome chamber in one of the remotest gables of the house. The young reformer is an observer of life and, because of that, he is estranged from it, “He has moved restlessly from one occupation to another because, following ‘a law of his own’ [. . .] he would form no permanent attachment with life” (Beebe: 10). He represents another type of alienation: his “social disassociation and isolation are the inevitable consequences” of the intellectual sin (Hansen: 49). Hansen believes that “the detectives of sin elevate themselves ‘above the ordinary experience of mankind,’ shutting their eyes to their own latent sinfulness, the common bond between mortals. They cut themselves off from

⁵¹² Patrick K. Dooley insists that “it is the need to work that forces her [Hepzibah’s] change” (34).

'universal brotherhood' and exclude themselves from Hawthorne's egalitarian universe" (73). However, Holgrave is able to surmount the curse that has doomed his family for generations. His integrity and growing affection for Phoebe help him leave his cold and withdrawn position and become involved in family life and social affairs.

Like Hawthorne, Morrison depicts the Gothic self which is isolated because of its sins. In *Beloved* the black community condemns the inhabitants of 124 to ostracism. Sethe, Baby Suggs and Denver become outcasts. Both Sethe's and Denver's detachment is "genocidal for the race" and "serve[s] to further divide the African community and, as a consequence, leave[s] it vulnerable to the oppression and exploitation of the slave society" (Mbalia: 90). Sethe is the black woman who has been sentenced to aloofness by the white world she defies and by her own community, which repudiates her proud attitude. Suero-Elliott thinks that "Sethe is punished severely for trying to assert her own and her daughter's rights to subjectivity by a community still operating within a ruling ideology that commodifies black personhood" (online). As Morrison says, Sethe's life in those eighteen years is "unlivable": "She [Sethe] is all alone leading the solitary life of a widow" (Carabí 1993: 111). Sethe devotes herself to fighting back the past. As a result of her crime, Suero-Elliott claims, she cannot continue learning how to claim her freed self: "Sethe's 'solitary life' is static; there is no potential for personal growth [. . .]. The redundant cyclicity of 'eighteen years of solitary life' cannot end, and Sethe cannot break through the stasis of her existence, until she can step outside the confines of the dominant colonial discourse. She cannot do so without finding resolution to her relationship with her daughter" (online).

Paul D's arrival starts to change things. Sethe believes that the hopeful sign at the day of the carnival, the handholding shadows, may mean a family for Denver, Paul D and herself. But once Paul D departs and she realizes that her daughter has come back from the dead, she begins to think that she was wrong and that her true family only includes her daughters. She convinces herself that "Whatever is going on outside my door ain't for me. The world is this room. This here's all there is and all there needs to be" (*Beloved*: 183). Sethe finally decides to devote her life to Denver and *Beloved*, nothing else matters anymore. This is the beginning of her breakdown. She is repeatedly late for work until she loses her job. Then the three women stay within the limits of 124. Sethe accepts her complete isolation from the community and plunges into her past, renouncing a present or a future. Kristeva claims that retreating into the house ("withdrawal into the semiotic"), even though revolutionary, "leads to psychosis or even death" (qtd. in Parker: online).

Together with her mother, Denver is the chief figure of estrangement in *Beloved*. Unlike Phoebe, who has always been connected to the outside world, she lives in complete isolation for most of her infancy and adolescence until the very end of the novel: her “loneliness marks her existence devoid of any sense of belonging or sharing with others” (Gallego 1994: 13). First, Denver is left alone with her mother when her brothers run away from home. Then, twelve years before the beginning of the story, she definitely breaks her bonds to the community. She is seven when she goes to Lady Jones’s house to learn the basics. Denver feels the other children’s rejection and realizes that she is stigmatized, even though she cannot understand why. She stops going there when Nelson Lord makes her the dreaded question about her mother’s crime. She is so traumatized that she becomes deaf: “[her] prolonged hysterical deafness is a kind of denial itself. Denver doesn’t want to know the horrible past” (Booher: 126). Denver does not recover her hearing until two years later when she hears the baby girl crawling up the stairs:⁵¹³ “Denver is returned to hearing when she acknowledges the self she has silenced, the shadow self who has knowledge of her mother’s violent act” (Koolish 2001: 187).

As a result of her extreme aloofness, Denver learns to appreciate the baby ghost that haunts the house. She takes pleasure in its company, while her mother accepts and takes this presence for granted. Like Clifford who, after being released from prison, finds comfort and relief in the Pyncheon garden where he spends precious moments with the young Phoebe, Denver, as a lonely child, creates a world of her own, a secret place in the woods behind 124, a sort of bower made of leaves and branches, which begins as a playroom and later becomes a shelter. There she usually isolates herself: “she takes refuge in her boxwood room, which is in fact a symbolic womb into which she crawls back, and where she is naked, nurtured and protected from the outside world” (Cuder: 40). Both Morrison and Hawthorne depict solitary and distressed gothic characters who find consolation and solace in nature.

Sethe intentionally avoids telling Denver about the past: “the job Sethe had of keeping her from the past that was still waiting for her was all that mattered” (*Beloved*: 42). She has tried to protect Denver from her terrible memories, but, in fact, she is denying herself and her daughter a future: “Sethe further fixates on the past by never mingling with the Black community, by protecting the only child who stays with her, her daughter Denver, from the past without seeming to ever think of the girl’s future or

⁵¹³ Jean Wyatt points out that Denver’s paralysis allows her to retreat “into her mother’s world, making the rejection of speech and the obsession with the unnamed” an equivalent of “her mother’s wish that the story remains unspoken [. . .] the memory repressed” (qtd. in Carol Henderson 2002: 100). Original text quoted: Jean Wyatt (1993). “Giving the Body to the World: The Maternal Symbolic in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*”. *PMLA* 108.3 (May): 474- 488.

need for community" (Demetrakopoulos: 54). Despite her good intentions, Sethe's protection increases Denver's "loneliness", since she lacks "a past that could make her relate to the other characters, feel with them" (Gallego 1994: 13):

Denver's relation to the past is primarily historic rather than personal. Denver's personal stake in retrieving the past, like the reader's involves a familial and ancestral inheritance, and her encounter with the past is "necessarily painful" [. . .]. Without knowledge of her mother's past, Denver must remain in isolation from history and from her position in the world that can only be understood through history. (Krumholz 1999: 120)

Beloved's appearance changes everything. For Denver, the revenant could not come at a better time, since she has felt more lonely than ever after Paul D's exorcism and now she can be friends with a girl her age. According to Kimberly J. Devlin, the young woman no longer requires her mother because she has Beloved's gaze, which "fulfills her desire to be acknowledged and recognized, to be a somebody rather than a nobody" (qtd. in Holden-Kirwan: online).⁵¹⁴ However, she sometimes feels lonely and miserable, since the revenant only needs and loves Sethe. Denver fears that the revenant might leave them and being without Beloved means going back to her previous terrible loneliness. Denver cannot stand the idea of being alone again. Anything is better than complete isolation. When the revenant disappears in the cold house, the young woman panics. She realizes that "she has no self" (Beloved: 123). She has sought to dissolve herself in her ghost sister and, with her disappearance, she believes that she will vanish too (Holden-Kirwan: online). Denver stays in the cold house grabbing the hair at her temples to stop her disintegration and feels relieved at the girl's reappearance.⁵¹⁵

The community also ostracizes Paul D when he decides to leave 124 as a result of his sexual encounter with Beloved and the newspaper clipping about Sethe's crime. They refuse to help him and he has to go to sleep in the cellar of the church. When Stamp Paid finds out that no one in the black community has offered him a place to stay, he is shocked and very hurt. He asks Ella, who excuses herself by saying that Paul D did not ask and that she did not know him very well. Stamp Paid tells her that a colored man should not ask for help: "Why he have to ask? Can't nobody offer? What's going on? Since when a black man come to town have to sleep in a cellar like a dog?"

⁵¹⁴ Original text quoted: Kimberly J. Devlin (1989). "See Ourselves as Others See us': Joyce's Look at the Eye of the Other". *PMLA* 104: 882-893.

⁵¹⁵ Koolish claims that "Denver's terror at the idea of losing Beloved strongly suggests that the revenant functions as a double for her: she is not only scared to lose a much loved sister, but her own physical, actual self" (2001: 187). As it is for the other characters, the revenant stands for her dissociated tortured mind.

(Beloved: 186). The truth is that, like the rest of the community, Ella does not assist him because he has lived with Sethe at 124, and that dooms him to ostracism.

4.2.3. The Isolation of the Gothic Dwelling

Hawthorne's sense of the instability of man's present condition derives [. . .] [from] his subjective commitment [. . .] to man's undying belief in a dream house [. . .] a place of solitude and yet one that is also spacious and open to the world, an area which can at once provide the proper atmosphere for the operation of the intellect and imagination and also serve as a gateway to the busy world. But the dream house is the house of the future and owes its conception to the actual houses of the past and present in which life has been lived. For this reason it must be sought through a study of the meaning of the house's situation in the world, and *The House of the Seven Gables* is an extended meditation on that problem.

EDGAR DRYDEN, "Hawthorne's Castle in the Air: Form and Theme in *The House of the Seven Gables*".

The House is the main symbol of isolation of Hawthorne's and Morrison's romances as it is usually in Gothic fiction. The old Pyncheon mansion is associated with the isolation of man. Its inhabitants are doomed to remain detached from life until the Pyncheons and the Maules redeem their sins and become one family. As in *Seven Gables*, the alienated Gothic house becomes the major emblem of isolation in Morrison's romance. 124 is the dwelling of a malicious revenant and two ghostly women, Sethe and Denver; a microcosm which stands on the borderline between the world of the living and the dead. The community has broken its bonds with the haunted house, while, like the Pyncheon mansion, it is still connected to the wild (located near a spring and near the wood). Both 124 Bluestone Road and the House of the Seven Gables are gloomy and isolated habitations in which malignant influences contaminate the life of their residents.

The aloofness of the Pyncheon mansion provides the perfect mysterious gothic setting for the story. This habitation is symbolically a haunted mind and a dungeon, in which all normal intercourse with the world is avoided, "The house is in a state of decay because its inhabitants have withdrawn from worldly business" (Alfred Levy: 460). Beebe claims that "The peculiarity of the House of the Seven Gables is that, like the House of Usher, it seems detached from the world around it. It is the emblem of the human heart, but until the individual human heart is linked to the 'comprehensive sympathy above us' [. . .] it is, like Hepzibah's heart, a dungeon" (8). Hawthorne usually links the figure of the house to a feeling of self-imprisonment.⁵¹⁶ The detached Gothic house becomes a universe in itself: a microcosm for its inhabitants, especially Hepzibah and Clifford.

⁵¹⁶ Gray associates the depiction of the house as a place of imprisonment with Hawthorne's autobiography (107). For the symbolic representation of the house as a "dungeon", see Griffith (385). The house is also compared to a "moral prison" by Hyatt H. Waggoner (1979: 77).

There is a clear division between the microcosm of the gothic dwelling and the community. As Edward C. Sampson notes, in *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne repeatedly uses the word ‘threshold’, which “though unimportant in itself, is used with more than the expected frequency, and serves as a clue to an important aspect of the story” (qtd. in Britton: 12).⁵¹⁷ This term implies a sort of psychological barrier that separates the world inside and outside both the Pyncheon mansion and 124: Hepzibah is said to have sat at the threshold; Phoebe stands at the threshold when she arrives to the ruined Pyncheon habitation; Clifford pauses at the threshold when he first sees Phoebe. The grasp that the old house has over Clifford and Hepzibah is clearly established when they try to leave the mansion to go to church: “They could not flee; their jailor had but left the door ajar, in mockery, and stood behind it, to watch them stealing out. At the threshold, they felt his pitiless gripe upon them. For, what other dungeon is so dark as one’s own heart!” (Gables: 169). Wesley Britton claims that the threshold divides the world in two: inside and outside the house and crossing it means both a change in the characters’ state and a change in the direction of the story (12). According to Britton, in *Beloved* the concept of threshold is quite similar, as we can see when Paul D arrives at 124 and stays in the porch before coming into the haunted house or when Stamp Paid knocks at 124, but cannot cross its threshold (13).

As a Gothic setting, the Pyncheon dwelling is lugubrious. Its dusky and dismal atmosphere stands for its separation from the democratic contemporary society. According to Hepzibah, the house “is but a melancholy place for a young person to be in. It lets in the wind and rain—and the snow, too, in the garret and upper chambers, in winter-time—but it never lets in the sunshine!” (Gables: 74). For Male “the darkness of the house [. . .] is more impressive than its vitality. Within its depths are shadowy emblems of the past each representing evil geniuses (we would call them ‘genes’) of the Pyncheon family” (1967: 433).⁵¹⁸ The contrast between the shadows of the inner house and the outside is highly symbolic. Its inside is the dwelling of the human soul and its guilt, whose “principal shadows are associated with moral degeneracy [. . .]. Shadow, the past, the inner house—all combine to symbolize the tragedy of human sin [. . .]” (Griffith: 386).⁵¹⁹ Holgrave and Clifford associate these old habitations with what

⁵¹⁷ For more information, see: Edward C. Sampson. “Afterword”. *The House of the Seven Gables*. New York: New American Library, 1961. Richard Gray also points out the importance of the term threshold (98-99).

⁵¹⁸ Alfred J. Levy also draws attention to the house’s darkness (460).

⁵¹⁹ Buitenhuis believes that the Pyncheon mansion “represents the body and the worldly experience of man, which the soul must leave in order to be free” (1991: 51).

Hawthorne establishes as the evils of the heart, alienation and guilt; especially the sin of the aristocratic classes.⁵²⁰

'The gloomy and desolate old house, deserted of life, and with awful Death sitting sternly in its solitude, was the emblem of many a human heart, which, nevertheless, is compelled to hear the thrill and echo of the world's gayety around it'. The House is Hawthorne's master symbol of isolation. It stands for the spiritual condition of those who by their hostility to democracy sin against what he believed to be the true moral order, and as a result become evanescent through their utter separateness from mankind. (Lawrence Hall: 383)

In *Beloved* the murder of Sethe's daughter results in 124 being shut down. The communal shelter changes from being the nexus of the community to a genuine isolated Gothic dwelling: "124 continues to resist the move of the city to integrate houses into neighbourhoods and 'stretch out'. It thrives on its isolation" (Weissberg: 110). Like the darkness and shadows of the Pyncheon house, the lack of color in Sethe's household, just two orange squares, signals how barren and lifeless 124 really is. Both the Pyncheon family mansion and 124 struggle between isolation and the community. They seem to symbolize that the individual cannot withdraw, forever, from his/her fellow men, on whom he/she depends. This is even truer for 124, since blacks need even more the solidarity of their community to survive and grow as human beings. Now Sethe's dwelling is trapped in a fixed, timeless world on the border of death: "the growing isolation of the house illustrates that the struggle is actually taking place inside Sethe, in her inner self" (Cuder: 42).

When Paul D "enters the possessed house, passing through its bloody veil of light, he disrupts its timelessness and isolation" (Jesser: online). By defeating the baby spirit that haunts the house, Paul tries to free the inhabitants of 124 from the ghosts of the past. However, even though the intruder exorcises the revenant which controls 124, he induces the uncanny to take flesh: "He shifts the ghost from occupying the house to occupying a body" (Jesser: online). As Cuder points out, with his arrival, the defeated enemy returns with renewed strength: "The house becomes the battlefield where the dispute over Sethe will have to be settled" (38). With the revenant's resurrection the haunting reaches its peak and the inhabitants' hope to escape from their isolation vanishes.

Unlike the Pyncheon dwelling, which always keeps a connection with the community through Phoebe, 124 becomes completely isolated when Sethe quits her job and remains secluded with her two daughters, a slave to her memories: "In her quasi-patriarchal possession of the house, *Beloved* even convinces the fiercely independent Sethe that her womanly place, in fact the only domain, is in the house"

⁵²⁰ John W. Shroeder thinks that *The House of the Seven Gables* symbolizes the Pyncheon heart and thus the dark mansion stands for the human heart in isolation (111).

(Askeland: 173). Sethe renounces the outside world: the three women stay in the household by themselves, isolated from society. The house becomes the only place they can live in while the haunting, incarnated in *Beloved*, consumes them, especially her mother. 124's isolation is finally interrupted by Denver's return to the community and the black females' exorcism.

4.2.4. The Community in Hawthorne's and Morrison's Romances

The quest of the black individual for an affirmative self-definition as intimately connected to a community process seems to be a constant element within Toni Morrison's philosophy of life as displayed in her literary production. In fact, the self-exploration on the part of the individual seems to be only undertaken under the "guidelines" or auspices of a loving community that holds on to certain traditional beliefs and values.

MARÍA DEL MAR GALLEGO DURÁN, "Community and Love: Understanding the Past in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*".

As though in contrast to the theme of isolation, the idea of community is strong in both Hawthorne's and Morrison's romances. In *Seven Gables*, its appearance is more a background, a chorus, to the story than an effective part, while in *Beloved* the community members, mainly black females, are true participants in Sethe's ordeal. Its intervention has two climactic moments: Baby Suggs's feast, when the black community becomes responsible for the detachment of 124's inhabitants and, later, the communal exorcism, when black females have a remarkable part in Sethe's family return to its midst.

In contrast to the isolation of the individual, Hawthorne and Morrison develop the concept of solidarity between the members of the community, which is destroyed as a result of sin. For Hawthorne, the Puritan concept of 'universal brotherhood', that "men live together in a community of the endangered" (Hansen: 21), is very important. Hawthorne, who "leaned toward the pantheistic notion that one man is the other, that one man is all men" (Borges: 52), may be influenced by the Transcendentalists. As Hansen points out, brotherhood is necessary for the frail and sinful condition of man: the individual only acquires significance as part of a unity. The burden of sin men must carry is alleviated by their participation in the chain of mankind, "Hawthorne's brotherhood is a community of the suffering, of those struck down by doom" (80).

Hawthorne, as Hansen argues, depicts the concept of "universal brotherhood" using devices such as metaphors, images and "emblems" (76). Hansen classifies them into five groups (76). First, terms of rings and chains: "the whole sympathetic chain of human nature" (Gables: 141); "this claim to stand in the ring of human sympathies" (Gables: 228). Even though these expressions are usually associated with hierarchy, according to Hansen, Hawthorne stresses equality (78). Second, vocables of kinship or friendship: "to renew the broken links of brotherhood" (Gables: 166); "in the midst of

life, in the throng of our fellow beings” (Gables: 258). These figures of speech relate the idea of cohesion to the concept of an identical descent and sameness. They express emotional relationships between human beings (78). Third, images of water: “surging stream of human sympathies” (Gables: 165). As Hansen asserts, this is one of the most suggestive. As water does not seem to be made of small units, metaphors of water bring to mind the idea of man dissolved into the brotherhood of human beings. Emerson and Nietzsche also used similar images (78). Fourth, metaphors of the heart: “the universal heart” (S. L.: 84). They stress that cohesion between individuals is achieved through emotion and feeling, which are the center of life (79). Fifth, adjectives of physical attraction: “a certain magnetic element in the artist’s nature” (Gables: 94). As Hansen claims, they refer to the fact that there is a force which draws men and women into a unity. This power can be an impulse, a spirit, electricity or magnetism (79): “one collected body of mankind with a *vast homogeneous spirit* animating it [. . .]” (Gables: 165; emphasis added).

While in *Seven Gables* Hawthorne depicts an industrialized society which is showing technological advances, such as the railway and the daguerreotype, in *Beloved*, Morrison prefers to focus on the rural Black American community. In her interviews, Morrison describes her work as “village literature.”⁵²¹ Blacks must remain united if they are to confront successfully whites’ oppression. Michele Bonnet points out the importance of the genealogical tree in *Beloved*:

It has permeable frontiers and extends beyond the individual proper, drawing substance and sustenance from the family and the community, for the genealogical tree does not represent the family in the narrow sense of the term, that generally accepted in Western culture. It should be given the much broader extension it is given in the African culture Morrison claims as her own and which is understood as the clan, the community, what the author calls ‘the village’. (online)

Morrison emphasizes that black people cannot be self-sufficient. Blacks, both slaves and ex-slaves, depend on each other for survival. According to Arlene Keizer, “Morrison does not provide her people with the option of living underground, in isolation, beyond community. Her characters achieve autonomy and a sense of identity only to the extent that they can understand and name themselves in relation to a social unit” (online).⁵²² The life of ex-slaves and their search for self-assertion are closely bound to their inclusion and participation within the community. As Suero-Elliot comments, freeing oneself from racial objectification is not only an individual process,

⁵²¹ In a conversation with Thomas LeClair, Morrison says that “I write what I have recently begun to call village literature, fiction that is really for the village, for the tribe. Peasant literature for *my* people [. . .]” (120-121). Weissberg argues that “[Morrison’s] ‘village’ is dependent on a linguistic community, and this linguistic understanding relies on references to the ancestral past, common experiences, as well as verbal action” (116).

⁵²² Morrison expresses similar views in her interview with Angels Carabí (1993: 111).

but a communal one: “rememory” as well as decolonization are collective (online). Sethe learns to value her own self, with the help of a supportive community, for those twenty-eight days she lives at 124 before Schoolteacher’s arrival. The importance of this solidarity has its roots in African communities, but acquires special characteristics under the threat of the white oppressor. Britton contends that Morrison “revises earlier conclusions of African-American authors by refusing to accept isolationism and instead upholding community” (8).

There are many examples in which Morrison highlights the powerful bond that unites the black individual with his/her community, such as the Underground Railroad, Paul D’s escape and Baby Suggs’s mission. The Underground Railroad, of which Stamp Paid and Baby Suggs are members, helps those blacks who need to cross the river. Paul D’s getaway from Alfred, Georgia, is a metaphor of how important the community is to achieve freedom and emancipation. Absolute reliance on the other is necessary to have a possibility of breaking away. In prison the chain gang is locked down in underground cells joined by hand-forged iron. Black prisoners are a community who carry out the brutal work of the quarry, while they suffer physical and mental tortures at the hands of the white guards. The forty-six slaves are bound by a chain, which is used to send messages and warnings so they can help each other: “They talked through that chain like Sam Morse and, Great God [. . .]” (Beloved: 110). They know that their lives depend on the others and “a man could risk his own life, but not his brother’s” (Beloved: 109). The shackles make them one: “For one lost, all lost. The chain that held them would save all or none, and Hi Man was the Delivery” (Beloved: 110).⁵²³ According to Cowan-Barbetti,

As a symbol for the movement and meaning of the novel, this image reveals that the experiences of suffering and slavery—the chain that binds Sethe and the community of blacks around her must be used, transformed by the imagination into meaningful story, if they are to be spiritually free. If, however, the chain becomes fragmented, its links broken, if memories are refused form in the scope of community—as Beloved’s spectral presence portends—then the vision of true freedom cannot be realized. (2)

All of the prisoners are finally rescued from the flooding as a result of their instinctive communication through the chain. During the torrential rains, Hi Man, the leader of the gang who takes responsibility for the survival of the slaves, initiates the escape. The chain that the white man uses to bind the black captives and control them finally becomes a communal system of resistance: “Escape necessitates a transformation of the mechanisms of oppression” (Jesser: online). Liberation from the

⁵²³ According to Katy Ryan, “Through a chain gang, Beloved starkly dramatizes this ethic of responsibility and the connectedness of bodies. One man’s sudden action would threaten the entire group [. . .]. The forty-six men communicate, calmly, persuasively, and no one runs—until they can do it as a group” (online).

whites' tyranny comes to the members of the community through trust. Blacks can rise from their graves and walk free. As David Lawrence argues "This 'talking' is born out of the ooze, a pre-Genesis chaos [. . .] from which the human community is delivered. Ironically, the [. . .] chain acts as a linguistic tool for forging the communal identity that enables each one of them to survive the flood", as Paul D later reflects, "Individual and community survival are thus inseparable; the trials of one body are, in some form, the trials of everybody" (95).

Morrison complicates the metaphor of Paul D's escape with the prisoners' arrival at the camp of the Sick Cherokee, who provide them with the tools to unchain themselves. She seems to hint that freeing oneself is not just the result of the blacks' solidarity, but, as Jesser points out, also implies an inter-racial collaboration, even a sort of alliance between those who have suffered the systems of enslavement and have been marked as different by white definitions (online). Paul D's emancipation journey in the direction of the blossoming trees, the Magical North, is enabled by the Cherokee, who not only help him to break his shackles, but also provide him with the necessary knowledge about the larger world. However, *Beloved's* conclusion is that, at a certain moment, everyone needs to complete the journey to emancipation and freedom on his or her own. Paul D's flight from prison shows us the connection between the individual's and the group's liberation; the complex relationship between trust and reliance among the members of the community and, on the other hand, their individual actions.

Finally, as a spiritual leader of the black community, Baby Suggs shows its members how to love themselves and thus enhances the bonds among them. The day she is liberated, after more than sixty years of slavery, the old black woman begins to notice her own heartbeat and she is very excited at the idea of possessing her own body. Then she decides to "open her great heart to those who could use it" (*Beloved*: 87), by initiating her religious meetings: "Baby Suggs in effect creates a religion, one based on humanistic and practical principles. She is as much god as any other god. Her calling, perhaps more self-induced than not, is to encourage black people to reclaim the best in themselves by erasing the trauma of slavery" (Harris-López: 144). As Krumholz points out, the old black woman receives the appellation of "holy" among the black people because of her spiritual lessons. Baby Suggs delivers her speeches, which she has created out of her own heart and imagination, outdoors in the Clearing (1999: 110).⁵²⁴ According to Krumholz, the old black woman, the "unchurched preacher", deals with the blacks' incapacity for pleasure and love as a result of their

⁵²⁴ David Lawrence highlights that "Her speech, both literally and metaphorically, comes from her 'big old heart', providing a kind of scaffolding for the reconstitution of the damaged communal body" (91).

oppression under slavery. In her self-loving exhortations she tries “to heal former slaves and enable them to seek a reconciliation with their memories, whose scars survive long (even generations) after the experience of slavery has ended” (1999: 110).

Baby Suggs preaches and instructs the blacks of her community to dance, laugh and love their bodies: “This ritual has the same effect as the antelope dance; it provides a moment of plenitude in which the people can experience themselves, remember themselves, as whole and free, in an individual and communal way” (Keizer: online). In these religious encounters in the Clearing music has a key role to create a sort of communion between blacks and nature. The purpose of the black woman’s exhortations is, as the metaphor of the “clearing” suggests, to bring “the unconscious memories into the conscious mind”, “a process of cleansing and rebirth” (Krumholz 1999: 111).⁵²⁵ Baby Suggs fosters “the selfhood which racism has denied to each of the ex-slaves” (Fitzgerald: 120). Her rituals can be understood as a “collective act of self-appreciation” (Fitzgerald: 120). Blacks have to love their bodies, especially those parts that suffered the most under slavery: their mouths, since their voices did not count and were silenced and tortured using the bits; their hearts, since they could not feel.⁵²⁶

Baby Suggs’s spiritual meetings, Krumholz argues, combine Christian symbolism and black ritual expressions, “common in the African American church” (1999: 111): “Though not African by birth, Baby Suggs creates her own syncretic folk religious practice, based on both West African and Christian spiritual traditions” (Keizer: online).⁵²⁷ However, as Krumholz has shown, her version of spirituality is, in many aspects, very different from the conventional white religion in its “disdain for rules and prohibitions to define morality” and in its rejection of stating principles (1999: 112). Her actions contrast with those of white men like Mr. Bodwin’s father, a “deeply religious man who knew what God knew and told everybody what it was” (Beloved: 260). Baby Suggs, Krumholz says, does not accept “the definitions of formal religions”, which “can be easily manipulated to justify anything”, as the history of slavery shows (1999: 112).

⁵²⁵ For more information, see: Lawrence W. Levine (1977). *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*. New York: Oxford UP (7-10 and 102) for a discussion of the African tradition of oral expression for psychological healing.

⁵²⁶ However, according to Cowan-Barbetti, Baby Suggs fails, since she brings the blacks of her community to love themselves, but she does not create a communal sense. That is why they feel jealous of Baby’s generosity (online).

⁵²⁷ Peggy Ochoa thinks that just as early Christians separate their religious observances from those of the Jews, who refused to accept them as part of God’s beloved people; freed blacks set up their own type of worship services separated from white society and the organized white Christian church. Baby Suggs, a black woman, contrasts to the powerful men who head the larger white church (online). For a discussion of the compatibility and adaptations between the African and Christian religions, see: John W. Blassingame (1979). *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 20-48: 130-137.

She “did not tell them [the black community] to clean up their lives or to go and sin no more. She did not tell them they were the blessed of the earth, its inheriting meek or its glorybound pure. She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine” (Beloved: 88). The old black woman does not present “black and white categories of good and evil” (Krumholz 1999: 112). For her good and evil are indefinable and cannot be based on absolute knowledge; they would depend on the situation: “‘Everything depends on knowing how much,’ she said, and ‘Good is knowing when to stop’” (Beloved: 87). When Baby Suggs talks about the whites, Krumholz claims, she says that they don’t know when to stop:⁵²⁸ an absence of morality is then associated with “a lack of limitations” (1999: 113).

4.2.5. The Return to the Community

The truth is, that, once in every half-century, at longest, a family should be merged into the great, obscure mass of humanity, and forget all about its ancestors. Human blood, in order to keep its freshness, should run in hidden streams as the water of an aqueduct is conveyed in subterranean pipes.
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, *The House of the Seven Gables*.

The solution the novel offers is the act of community. Sethe must put Paul D’s story next to hers; the women must communally exorcise the ghost. Sharing the past makes its burden bearable—communal comfort offers some protection. Refusing to deny history’s horrors or the difficulty of speaking them, *Beloved* suggests how to productively face the past: everyone must collectively participate in bearing witness to its horror.
TERESA GODDU, *Gothic America*.

In both Hawthorne’s and Morrison’s romances the alienated individual must return to the community where he/she belongs. They affirm human beings’ dependence on the community and their needs to establish some sort of connection with the world. They share the gothic anxiety about the relationship between personal identity and the society: the individual must get involved in the chain of humankind to end his/her search for selfhood and fulfill his/her destiny. In *Seven Gables* the return to the community starts in the mid-eighteenth century with an “unworthy ancestor” who, as a result of his poverty, was forced to open a shop in the house (it was the custom of the time to transact business in private dwellings). The Pyncheon gentility had to be sacrificed. Later on, at the time of the story, Hepzibah has to begin business and open a cent shop in the old mansion to support her brother. She must abandon her aristocratic pretensions. By engaging in trade, the old woman “simultaneously enters the marketplace and the cultural mainstream, feeling this moment as a painful

⁵²⁸ As Parker argues, indirectly Baby Suggs names the hypocrisy of white Christian society when she tells the congregation that the whites do not love the blacks’ bodies, thus failing to obey one of the Bible’s most basic commandments: “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19: 19) (online). Parker also says that Baby Suggs speaks from a “huge flat-sided rock”, “a position which might suggest that even outside of organized religion she maintains a connection to Christ, ‘the rock of salvation’” (online).

emergence into the public gaze” (Harmon: 111). According to Lawrence Hall, the opening of the cent-shop lets the outside world fill the gloomy mansion with the healing forces of democracy, which come into contact with Pyncheons’ degenerative condition: “a kind of pulmonary connection from humanity to the almost strangled existence of the House of the Seven Gables” (380). The little shop connects the gloomy mansion with the contemporary world and its opening is the first step in the Pyncheons’ plunge into the stream of humanity.

Throughout *Seven Gables* there are different attempts on behalf of the characters, mainly Clifford, to break out from seclusion. The old bachelor does not completely accept his separation from mankind. On different occasions the old man tries to escape his imprisonment and become a part of the brotherhood of men: “The sign of Clifford’s saving grace is that he endeavours to break down the barriers that keep him isolated from men. He does not welcome his solitude as Wakefield seemed to do, nor accept his exclusion from inner reality with Gervayse Hastings’s sense of inevitability” (Bewley: 447). He perceives his isolation and struggles to overcome it, but his efforts are unsuccessful: “like her [Hepzibah] he [Clifford] is doomed to failure because he had already made his fundamental choice to live in the past. Essentially, he accepts the tyranny of the past” (Alfred Levy: 462).

The chapter “The Arched Window”, with its street scenes, strategically placed in the center of the novel, conveys key aspects of the interaction between the individual and society. Clifford as a recluse in the old mansion observes from his detached position in the window a portion of the great world’s movement: “The Gothic arched window of the house is literally the picturesque frame through which Hepzibah and Clifford view the frightening picture of the outside world” (Leo Levy: 158). The Pyncheon street is sometimes enlivened by spectacles which summon curious people. One day an Italian boy, accompanied by a monkey and some little figures in the mahogany case of his organ, comes to the town and stops below the elm.⁵²⁹ Clifford’s desolate and forsaken situation contrasts to the festive show that occurs under his window. The theme of isolation reaches its climax when Phoebe and Clifford are watching a political parade in the street below, one of the moments in which the old bachelor feels “the regenerative urge to burst from the inner prison of himself into the stream of life” (Lawrence Hall: 381).⁵³⁰ Clifford realizes his state of estrangement and

⁵²⁹ This episode is similar to the one in which Peter, in *Peter Goldthwaite’s Treasure*, looks out of the window and sees how people celebrate the first day of the January thaw. Like Clifford, Peter observes how people are happy in their social activities, whereas he is inexorably imprisoned in the ruined old house.

⁵³⁰ Karlow states that Clifford’s schizophrenic state falls into the condition of Extravagance (*Verstiegenheit*), which Ludwig Binswanger illustrates in his article: “Extravagance”, in *Being-in-the-*

“cannot resist an actual physical attempt to plunge down into the ‘surging stream of human sympathy’” (Dillingham: 456),⁵³¹ but Hepzibah and Phoebe stop him just in time. This impulse to join the crowd is instinctive, as if the old man were impelled by a “natural magnetism, tending towards the great centre of humanity” (Gables: 166). The individual’s yearning to be part of the brotherhood of mankind seems to be irrepressible. Hansen argues that this attempt to merge with the masses of human beings conveys Clifford’s “desire for participation in the historical process” (97).⁵³²

Another climactic scene, Lawrence Hall argues, shortly after this incident, is when both Clifford and Hepzibah try to join the villagers going to church on Sunday. At this moment, the old man shows a similar yearning to renew the broken links of brotherhood with his community. However, both brother and sister are unable to go through with it when they stand in the warm and sunny air of the street and finally “retreated into the gloom of the house which was the historical and material symbol of isolation of their hearts” (381). Alfred Levy emphasizes how “the house sucks them back into the vortex of the past” (462). These are fruitless attempts to reunite with the community. Clifford and Hepzibah, “relics of an outworn culture”, fail: they are “ghosts” doomed to haunt the house.

The most explicit and unequivocal attempt to establish communication with society is the train trip in the chapter “The Flight of the Two Owls”. After Judge Pyncheon’s death Hepzibah and Clifford flee the old mansion to the railway station through a storm. The train is like the contemporary world, full of vitality in its frenzy activity.⁵³³ Leaving the house produces a remarkable transformation in Clifford, “[who] is somewhat reborn to enjoyment of the world, and society, and even progress—symbolized by the railroad” (Alfred Marks 1967a: 426-427). On the journey, the old man “finds that upon entering the ‘great current of human life’ [. . .] he slips not into dementia but awakens to his silenced self” (Knadler: 302). However, the two owls have lived too long in solitude and their abortive flight finishes soon after their escape. Bewley argues that Hawthorne “has managed in his description here [Hepzibah and

World. New York: Harper & Row 1967: 342-349. Binswanger compares this pathological state to the situation experienced by a mountain climber who moves upward beyond the limits of his self and becomes stalled on a precipice, from which he cannot come down unless he is rescued (qtd. in Karlow: 119). On the other hand, Bewley claims that “Hawthorne frequently suggests that some violent act of the will, possibly involving a high degree of sacrifice, is sometimes necessary either to sustain the magnetic chain of humanity in unbroken integrity, or make it whole again. And Clifford shows himself ready for such a sacrifice” (448).

⁵³¹ Matthiessen (1967: 370) and Alfred J. Levy (462) express similar views.

⁵³² Hansen points out that, from the perspective of history, the political parade reveals that the individual does not count (97).

⁵³³ In these images, Hawthorne intends to capture the lively condition of nineteenth-century life in America, its bewildering and ceaseless fluidity, which Theodore Dreiser and H. L. Mencken considered characteristic.

Clifford standing in the cold rain on the deserted platform after their frustrated escape] to externalize very skillfully the hopelessness and emptiness that have followed this aged couple in their flight to the world” (448). Much as Hepzibah and Clifford abhor the old mansion, they “crawl back to it to await deliverance by stronger characters who live in the present” (Alfred Levy: 463). Gray states how “Even when they [Hepzibah and Clifford] do get further, in their memorable flight on the train, Clifford’s mind is still held captive by the house, and, inevitably, following a familiar pattern in Hawthorne’s writing, the escape is followed by a return” (99).

Clifford’s rebirth is symbolically expressed through a pattern of escape and return, both tragic and hopeful, which Hawthorne had successfully introduced in *The Scarlet Letter*.⁵³⁴ As R. W. B. Lewis comments, most of Hawthorne’s heroes and heroines must face a moment of crucial choice in which they have to make up their minds and accept the world they have fallen into or flee it (113). Hepzibah and Clifford Pyncheon’s abortive flight ends up in a station in the country, where they decide to come back to town and confront Judge Pyncheon’s death. The old couple’s rebirth can only take place in society, as happens with Sethe. Their return is inevitable. In a sense Clifford and Hepzibah, like the black woman, represent the need for a bond with their own community. The past cannot be forgotten: it must be accepted. It takes more courage to compromise than to escape. We know that their “evil taint” is ineradicable; however, there is some hope for them in their new life ahead. Deeper inside their souls, there is “some fulfillment of the spirit, some realization of the entire self which it was worth losing one’s self to find; only the lost, indeed, were likely to find it on their return journey, though a soul might shrivel, like young Brown’s in the process” (R. W. B. Lewis: 116).⁵³⁵

In *Beloved*, after eighteen years, Paul D’s arrival, as Phoebe’s in *Seven Gables*, raises new hopes to bring the inhabitants of the haunted house back into the midst of the black community. Paul D manages to reestablish temporarily the broken bonds when he takes Sethe and Denver out of 124 to the carnival for the first time after the murder. The other blacks treat them with some gentleness. On their way to and from

⁵³⁴ The old couple’s escape does not exactly seem to be a parallel of the pattern in his other novels, in which the characters flee from the village or city into the forest or the country: a flight from society into nature, as in *The Marble Faun*. R. W. B. Lewis contrasts the pattern of escape and return in *The Blithedale Romance* and *Seven Gables*. He comments that this last is more usual with Hawthorne, since it “is realized in a sort of tremulous parody by the abortive train ride of Hepzibah and Clifford Pyncheon [. . .] who get only a station or so along the line into the country before limping back to town to confess to a crime which has not after all been committed” (115). For more information about the pattern of escape and return in Hawthorne, see: R. W. B. Lewis (111-114).

⁵³⁵ R. W. B. Lewis considers that Hawthorne’s circular journeys exemplify and test many things, such as a recurrent proposition in American literature, “that the valid rite of initiation for the individual in the new world is not an initiation *into* society, but, given the character of society, an initiation *away from it*: something I wish it were legitimate to call ‘denitiation’” (115).

the carnival, the figures of their shadows seem to hold hands. For Sethe this is the symbol of the future that they can have as a family: “[Sethe] becomes able to imagine the solidity of the three hand-holding shadows that she sees as she, Paul D, and Denver walk home from the carnival, when Beloved appears” (Askeland: 172). However, their hopeful prospects are challenged by Beloved’s arrival. The carnival scene parallels Hepzibah’s and Clifford’s abortive attempts to break their seclusion and merge with humanity.

The hope for a united family in the midst of the black community vanishes once Beloved returns to life. Denver, who accepts her ghostly sister desperately, refuses to confirm Paul D’s story about the revenant lifting a rocking chair and her lie breaks the bond created at the carnival between her and Paul D. Then, when Beloved chokes Sethe in the Clearing, Denver feels scared and “alarmed by the harm she thought Beloved planned for Sethe, but felt helpless to thwart it, so unrestricted was her need to love another. The display she witnessed at the Clearing shamed her because the choice between Sethe and Beloved was without conflict” (Beloved: 104). For the first time, the young woman becomes aware of the threat that the revenant represents, while, like Paul D, she gets separated from the ghost and her mother, who live for each other and do not care about her.

After the winter of possession, seeing her mother defenseless and beaten down, Denver realizes that Beloved’s dominion has gone too far and decides to walk out the house and ask for help. Even though the young woman, after so many years of seclusion, is convinced that “the world beyond the edge of the porch” will swallow her up (Beloved: 243), Baby Suggs’s ghost assists her to leave the haunted dwelling. Her grandmother tells her: “You mean I never told you nothing about Carolina? About your daddy? You don’t remember nothing about how come I walk the way I do and about your mother’s feet, not to speak of her back? I never told you all that? Is that why you can’t walk down the steps?” Denver says to her “But you said there was no defense” and Baby answers her, “There ain’t [. . .]. Know it, and go on out the yard. Go on” (Beloved: 244). According to Carol Henderson, with these words, Denver is told to bear witness that the power resides in knowing when to move on with the rest of your life (100). Baby Suggs’s spirit makes her return into the world possible. Finally, the young woman manages to leave 124 to ask for help. Denver resorts to the community to save her mother from madness and the vampiric revenant. Nancy Jesser points out that “For her [Denver] 124 was the whole known world. It is also her own worst place. Until she can imagine that the future could hold no worse for her, she cannot form her plan to leave the yard” (online). Like Clifford and Hepzibah, the young woman, as Jesser

claims, has to emerge from protective custody to save her mother and grow as an individual, since she lives in “an entropic system headed toward collapse” (online).

4.3. Retribution and Redemption

His [Hawthorne’s] true subject is Man’s Fall and *subsequent growth toward redemption*—a redemption occurring ‘in a series of communions in which the bread and wine of the past vitalizes the present’. (emphasis added)
FREDERICK CREWS, *The Sins of the Fathers*.

[*Seven Gables*] begins with images from Genesis; continues through an Old Testament history in which the ‘iniquity of the father [is visited] upon the children’s; then goes on, with the introduction of a radiant figure who is ‘a Religion in herself’ [. . .] to suggest the possibility of a Christian redemption; and finally concludes with a vision that recalls ‘a new heaven a new earth’ (Rev. 21.1).

EVAN KLEIMAN, “The Wizardry of Nathaniel Hawthorne: *Seven Gables* as Fairy Tale and Parable”.

American Gothic is deeply concerned with the process of guilt and its ensuing retribution, but it is also very interested in the possibility of redemption. Both *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* depict the sinful Gothic self which, through a process of atonement, may finally achieve partial redemption. Duyckinck considers *The House of the Seven Gables* as “a tale of retribution, of expiation extending over a period of two hundred years” (353). Hawthorne himself calls it a “history of retribution for the sin of long ago” (*Gables*: 587). The past returns stronger than ever with Clifford’s release from prison and the old couple’s confrontation with their iron relative for the same reasons that started the conflict between the Pyncheons and Maules, greed. While the Pyncheons and the Maules are expiating their sins, they are on their way to redemption.⁵³⁶

At the end of *Seven Gables* Clifford and Hepzibah make their redemptive pilgrimage away from the despair and oppression of the mansion. As Robert E. Whelan points out, this allegory might be drawn from Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, which depicts the pilgrims’ peregrination toward the Celestial City: “*The House of the Seven Gables* is actually the allegorical description of the painful journey that an unregenerate soul takes from Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained” (67).⁵³⁷ The characters of

⁵³⁶ In John Gatta’s opinion, this romance is a meditation upon the problem of progress from three different ontological perspectives: first of all, the moral and spiritual progress of the individual; second, the public and social progress of the history of the United States; and finally, theological or sacred history as the drama of redemption. As I said previously, he suggests a term that links these three aspects, “Providence:” personal progress finally depends on the mysterious and benevolent designs of a hidden God (38-39). Francis J. Battaglia also believes in the spiritual progress in *Seven Gables* and in God as the agent behind important events of the story, such as the “fortunate” death of Jaffrey, which makes Clifford’s innocence plain; Hepzibah’s transformation from her incapacity to pray to the moment when she kneels and asks God for help and Phoebe’s angelic position as a sort of minister of God (587).

⁵³⁷ Robert E. Whelan explains the allegory of the pilgrims’ journey considering Judge Pyncheon the Selfish Principle, Flesh, responsible for the imprisonment and degradation of the Spirit, personified by

Hawthorne's romance lead a life full of obstacles that they have to overcome. The old couple shows some initiative on their trip towards fulfillment while Phoebe and Holgrave discover their love and get married. The power of love renovates and transforms the house. Kleiman believes that when Holgrave, Phoebe, Clifford and Hepzibah "prepare to leave behind the 'abode of their forefathers,' to be followed later by Uncle Venner, they are like Pilgrims setting out once more to rediscover America for themselves" (302).

In *Beloved* physical release from slavery is the first step towards redemption. Escaping from enslavement is necessary to have an identity that is denied to the slave. Only then can blacks try to initiate a process of psychological claim of their own selves. As Weathers writes, when the slaves flee Sweet Home, Morrison uses the biblical imagery of Eden: the rattling noise of a woman will signal the "time to leave 'the garden' and escape from the bloody side of the Ohio River to a promised land on the other side—a geographic redemption" (online).⁵³⁸ Then the free blacks must summon the ghosts of slavery to acknowledge that part of their legacy of enslavement which has been excluded and repressed and thus make their present livable. Morrison says that "There are certain things that are repressed because they are unthinkable and the only way to come free of that is to go back to them and deal with them" (Carabí 1993: 105). The traumatic past must be recovered "so as eventually to release ourselves from a history impelled by a cycle of vengeance and retribution" (Spearey: 171).⁵³⁹

Sethe must face her daughter's ghost to get free of her demon, guilt. In their process of expiation blacks' suffering becomes, ultimately, a source of potential liberation and enlightenment for them, but also for whites: "there can be no peace without atonement. Instead of peace, *Beloved* seeks retribution, not only as a daughter killed by her mother but also as a spirit whose space—whose enduring presence and tangibility—has been violated" (Holland: 54). We can see "Sethe's story as one of reconciliation and spiritual redemption" (Reyes: 79). The specter comes back for vengeance: "*Beloved* comes back to pass judgment on Sethe" (Horvitz: 63) while Sethe desperately looks for forgiveness. She tries to make *Beloved* understand that she killed her to protect her from slavery, but "she becomes locked in a cycle of impossible atonement and expiation" (Keenan: 131). Sethe attempts to convince *Beloved* that what she did was right because it came from true love, but the revenant

Clifford, Hepzibah, Phoebe and Holgrave (Will, Love and Introspective Conscience, respectively) will save Clifford from the adverse influence of Flesh (80).

⁵³⁸ Glenda B. Weathers thinks that "The mythologies of Eden and Promised Land have indeed provided a mother lode of images for writers wanting to signify their protagonists' emergence to a richer identity and a better life" (online).

⁵³⁹ Iyunolu Osagie expresses similar views (online).

denies her mother exculpation. Sethe is not ready to forgive herself. She will only be able to do it when, after the exorcism, Paul D reminds her that she is her best thing. Both Sethe and Paul D need one another to be redeemed. Only together they can start anew.

Beloved's presence helps Denver grow out of her crippled situation. First, storytelling (the revenant asks Denver to tell her stories about her mother's past) moves the young woman progressively toward a process of self-recognition that makes her mature: "She [Denver] acknowledges her own self and requires neither the look of her mother nor Beloved to attain Subjectivity" (Holden-Kirwan: online). Ultimately, as the relationship between Beloved and Sethe becomes increasingly destructive, Denver understands that if she wants to save her mother and herself, she has to face her fears and step outside 124 to seek for assistance. Beloved pushes the young woman forward to have a life of her own. Denver embodies the new generations of blacks, who have to face their legacy of slavery to be redeemed from the wrongs of the past.

In both *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* the characters accomplish a certain degree of redemption: in Hawthorne's romance, the old couple leaves the mansion and begin a new life, while Holgrave and Phoebe's marriage expiates the guilt of the past; on the other hand, in Morrison's novel, Sethe gets partially free of her daughter's ghost and her relationship with Paul D has another chance; Paul D ends his wandering days and reconciles with his past; finally, Denver becomes an independent modern woman.

4.3.1. Memory as a Painful and Emotional Healing Process

The Gothic vision, it seems, is better at exposing the dark secrets of individuals and nations than it is at promoting an agenda for healing the wounds that come with either repressing or remembering the past. But given the critical and popular success of *Beloved*, one must agree that Morrison's Gothic novel has encouraged America's painful but necessary discourse on race, even if it has not, or cannot, heal the hurts and solve the problems.

DAVID DUDLEY, "Toni Morrison".

Unlike *Seven Gables*, *Beloved* deals with memory as the main process to come to terms with the past "remembering has a healing quality" (Carabí 1993: 106). Its whole story is a painful and emotional regenerative process rather than an analytical explanation of slavery. Healing cannot be produced without confronting the trauma of enslavement through memory. Kristin Boudreau claims that "Most readings of *Beloved* suggest that suffering can heal and humanize, provided that one can reorganize the painful events of the past and retell them in one's own language" (105).⁵⁴⁰ The free black individual must work through his/her recollections to escape the numbness and ghostly state in which ex-slaves remained after slavery. Morrison believes that "part of

⁵⁴⁰ Fuston-White expresses similar views (online).

you is dead if you don't remember" (Carabí 1993: 106).⁵⁴¹ Remembering becomes a kind of catharsis by which the injuries inflicted by the terrible past might be cured: "For healing to take place, dissociation must give way to the full reclaiming of that wounded self, the reintegration of that denied self as part of the core of one's being. Each character in *Beloved* goes through a process by which he or she gains not only an awareness of that shadow, but an introspective awareness of the psychological origins of the split-off self" (Koolish 2001: 173).

At the beginning, Sethe is a woman who lives an empty existence, unable to forget her grievous past. Her incapacity to lead a true existence alienates her from her own free-born daughter, who is not haunted by her mother's past. Paul D, on the other hand, as a consequence of his terrible past, has become a wandering man who tries not to feel. When Sethe and Paul D meet after eighteen years, he is supportive and helps her confront the dreadful memories they share from Sweet Home, but he cannot make her move on.

Beloved's return to life begins a process of atonement. As Morrison says, "she is like a catalyst. She opens up everybody's vulnerability" (Carabí 1993: 106). According to Carol Henderson, "Sethe's private pain, amplified in the flesh of *Beloved*, begins a process of recovery [. . .]. In the process, Sethe's struggle to restructure her life and that of her daughter Denver, under the burden of these memories, forms a communal bond that is both transformative and transcendent in its ability to aid this community in forming new relationships in the shadow of these legacies" (82). *Beloved* rises from the waters, from the source of life to give life: "*Beloved* ascends from her watery grave to effect a partial reconciliation and healing which would not be possible otherwise" (Ochoa: online). She is a revivifying force for all of the characters in the novel:⁵⁴²

Beloved represents the reconciliation with their past that implies the possibility of feeling whole, feeling complete, with a heart which is not scared of loving and is willing to trust and risk for that love again. In Denver's case, she also stands for a reconciliation with the unknown past of the other characters, especially an

⁵⁴¹ Many critics deal with blacks' process of rememory: Barbara Christian sees it as a ritual process related to the African culture (219); Jesser (online) and McKay (1999: 10) highlight the healing quality of facing the past; Krumholz analyzes "rememory" as the "central ritual of healing" (1999: 109); Nicholls describes the process of remembering as a release and a bondage (139); Bowers underlines that remembering reverses the 'dirtying' process of slavery (103); Linda Koolish depicts how in the process of rememorying, necessary to achieve psychic wholeness, each character begins to remember and acknowledge their alter selves as part of their core self and thus they reintegrate" (2001: 174); Karen Carmean emphasizes that those who have suffered must remember and pass on their stories so as a purging, cathartic process can take place (qtd. in Nigro: online). For more information, see: Karen Carmean (1993). *Toni Morrison's World of Fiction*. Troy, NY: Whitson.

⁵⁴² In fact, we can say that "*Beloved* is clearly a cathartic force, a 'materialization' of Sethe's memory" (Keenan: 129). Carol E. Henderson views *Beloved* as a function of Sethe's guilt "a walking wound whose 'healing' only comes from devouring the pain of others or, in some instances, inflicting pain so that those who receive it recognize their own" (91-92).

understanding of the reason that explained her mother's behaviour towards her children. (Gallego 1994: 14)

In a very different way, Phoebe is the healing agent in *Seven Gables*. She soothes Clifford's tormented mind, comforts poor Hepzibah and appeases Holgrave's radical tendencies.

Even though Sethe seems to be confident that she did the best for her children when Schoolteacher came to catch them, she has felt guilty ever since. According to J. Hillis Miller, her sorrow is "a permeating heaviness that constricts [her] doings to one single doing: trying to match the present absence with the past presence, and filling, remembering" (qtd. in Grewal 1998: 115).⁵⁴³ Sethe welcomes Beloved's return, since she thinks that she can finally make amends for her crime. She has recovered her daughter after eighteen years of being apart and she wants to be the mother she could not be before. Sethe does not seem to need Paul D any more, since she has Beloved to take care of. The revenant makes Sethe confront that past she has tried so hard to leave behind. Beloved asks the black woman to tell her stories, which she likes to hear. Sethe's storytelling has the power to heal the wounds of those terrible memories, going back to the origin of trauma and thus starting, as Dominick LaCapra describes, a process that will eventually defeat, at least partially, the ghosts of the psyche:

Words may be uttered but seem to repeat what was said then and function as speech acts wherein speech itself is possessed or haunted by the past and acts as a reenactment or an acting out. When the past becomes accessible to recall in memory, and when language functions to provide some measure of conscious control, critical distance, and perspective, one has begun the arduous process of working over and through the trauma [. . .] but which may enable processes of judgment and at least limited liability and ethically responsible agency. These processes are crucial for laying ghosts to rest, distancing oneself from haunting revenants, renewing an interest in life, and being able to engage memory in more critically tested senses. (qtd. in Spargo: online)⁵⁴⁴

Sethe finally confronts those terrible moments. She can now "break through the icy numbness within her, expressed in the novel through images of snow, cold, thaw, and melting, images associated with Denver, Beloved, and Paul D, as well as with Sethe" (Koolish 2001: 185). The revenant forces Sethe to deal with the part of her past Paul D could not help her with: her feelings of guilt at having murdered her own child. Now she has the chance to expiate her guilt. After Paul D's departure the three women in the house engage in a ritual of possession that brings their memories back. They initiate a communal process of remembering: "Beloved's presence calls forth from Sethe a boundless retribution that fills up the house and drives all three women to the

⁵⁴³ Original text quoted: J. Hillis Miller (1985). "Symposium". *Rhetoric and Form: Deconstruction at Yale*. Eds. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer. Norman: Oklahoma Press.

⁵⁴⁴ Original text quoted: Dominick LaCapra (1994). *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.

edge of sanity” (Askeland: 173). When Stamp Paid goes to visit Sethe to see if she is all right, 124 is “loud” with the indistinct voices of the dead fused with the unspeakable thoughts of 124’s females.⁵⁴⁵

On the other hand, Paul D’s traumatic past recollections have kept him a wandering man for a long time. However, as he says when he gets to 124, he has found his final destination. His walking years are over: “when I got here and sat out there on the porch, waiting for you, well I knew it wasn’t the place I was heading toward; it was you. We can make a life girl. A life” (Beloved: 55). Nevertheless, Paul D is not ready yet to settle with Sethe. His heart is a “tobacco tin”, still shut and unbreakable, symbolizing the repression of his memories and his present emotional numbness: “The past will not let him rest; the unresolved, unacknowledged pain from slavery will not allow him to form a stable relationship with Sethe” (Grewal 1998: 108). First, he needs to recover and accept his past experiences. Paul D’s arrival at 124 helps him reclaim those memories and feelings he has buried during his wandering days. Sethe assists him when they share their common recollections.

Beloved is also a healing agent for Paul D. Even though she is not connected to his past, her contact forces him to confront it. As the black man says, the revenant “reminds me of something. Something, look like, I’m supposed to remember” (Beloved: 234). Their sexual encounter sets off a curative process. When the specter meets Paul D in the cold house, she tells him “You have to touch me. On the inside part. And you have to call me my name” (Beloved: 117). As Grewal points out, metaphorically, in touching Beloved’s “inside part”, he is dealing with his past: “Going inside is like embarking on a voyage through the underworld, remembering beyond the river of forgetfulness back to life” (1998: 108). She is able to crumble his survival strategies of not feeling and not loving. Paul D starts to experience his “red heart”. On one hand, the revenant’s arrival seems to destroy his possibilities to have a life with Sethe. However, on the other hand, she makes him confront his inner self and, consequently, he can reconcile with his past and can find new strength to start anew and love.

For Paul D the definite moment to make up with his memories comes when Stamp Paid reveals to him the true story of Sethe’s murdered baby. His feelings of guilt at his sexual encounter with the ghost and this terrible news, which apparently shatters his conception of Sethe, makes him leave 124. Living outside the females’ house, Paul

⁵⁴⁵ Sally Keenan argues that these voices may also stand for the private conversation that takes place between women and their tasks when they believe they are alone and unobserved: “a subjective discourse of motherhood, daughterhood, and sisterhood, a discourse that the institution of slavery would ignore or deny” (130). Rachel Lee also thinks that “the male figure, representative of the public workplace, glances in the window of the female privatized home, and sees an alien space defined by domestic tasks and an exclusive female presence” (online).

D has time to realize how much he wants to settle with Sethe: “Wanting to live his life with a whole woman was new, and losing the feeling of it made him want to cry and think deep thoughts that struck nothing solid” (*Beloved*: 261). He can no longer run away from his recollections or feelings. He can no longer deny himself love. His tobacco tin is finally open, thus exposing his emotions and vulnerability. Now he is ready to fully share his distressing memories and his whole self with Sethe.

4.3.2. The Soothing and Healing Power of Nature

The House of the Seven Gables and *Beloved* recreate the allegorical story of the Garden of Eden, which stands for renewal and hope: Original Sin caused man’s fall from paradise and his degeneration. Man is the fallen creature that has sinned. Redemption is only possible if man recognizes that he is a sinner and expiates his wrongdoings. Peter Buitenhuis analyses Henry James’ study on Hawthorne and states that,

Hawthorne’s America had been a kind of Garden of Eden. Hawthorne himself had thus been, along with his fellow-countrymen, a kind of unfallen Adam. The nation and its citizens had remained in this state of innocence until almost the end of Hawthorne’s life when, without appreciable warning, the Civil War had broken out. This was, for James, the national original sin [. . .]. At that time the American had ‘eaten of the tree of knowledge,’ and from then on he was to be more aware of proportion and relation, more conscious of the treachery and complication of the world. (qtd. in Buitenhuis 1959: 215)⁵⁴⁶

In *Beloved*, as Weathers says, through the Promised Land/Garden of Eden image, Morrison transmits a strong symbolic meaning: “Garden images, notably the knowledge-giving trees [. . .] are powerful tools for African American writers inscribing into fiction the painful history of slavery and some psychological truths about enslavement” (online). Nature has a remarkable role in both *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*. In its Rousseanistic sense, it becomes one of the most important healing agents of those romances.

The House of the Seven Gables and 124 have some common elements in their relationship with the natural world. Sethe’s habitation is on the outskirts of the town as was the Pyncheon mansion when it was built. Like the elm-tree which makes the old and ruined house part of nature, 124 has a tree in front of it, a butternut. The stream that flows at its rear plays a very important role in the story, as does the spring that starts the conflict between the Maules and the Pyncheons. There is also a well, even though it does not have as strong a significance as Maule’s well. In 124 the land, “eighty acres of it on both sides of Bluestone, was the central thing” (*Beloved*: 259) while the old Pyncheon dwelling has Alice’s posies and its garden.

⁵⁴⁶ Buitenhuis bases his comments on Henry James’ *Hawthorne*. New York, 1879: 139-140.

All through *Beloved* 124 keeps the strong bond with nature that blacks have always had. However, in *Seven Gables*, the construction of the old mansion means a rupture with the wild, symbolized by Maule's shack, which it replaces. However, the passage of time makes the disjunction between the Houses of Man and Nature less and less important and the immemorial mansion starts to look more and more like a part of nature.⁵⁴⁷ It seems as if the forest that was there before the old house was built reclaims what belonged to it: "It was both sad and sweet to observe how Nature adopted to herself this desolate, decaying, gusty, rusty, old house of the Pyncheon family" (Gables: 28). Now it seems as if nature was taking possession of the desolate and decaying house. Alice Pyncheon was said to have thrown some seeds which had grown on the roof of the mansion after her death. Before its door, the elm tree, which bears a mystic relationship to the Pyncheons' lives, "gave beauty to the old edifice, and seemed to make it part of nature" (Gables: 27): "a connecting link with nature, bringing the house to its merciful fellowship" (Fogle 1952: 163). As Kleiman has pointed out, in contrast to the House of the Seven Gables, which is related to death, this tree is associated with life and has a healing influence: "With its roots reaching deep beneath the very foundation of the Pyncheon house, the tree has for generations continued to soak up all the poison and hatred of the past and through some mysterious process of its own transform the base and corruptible into the noble and precious" (293).

As Kleiman states, the elm, as in an alchemical process, puts forth a golden branch, transmuting a baser element into gold. This event is related to the magic of the philosophical tree of the alchemists (293).⁵⁴⁸ The major stages of alchemy, Kleiman points out, are in themselves a metaphor for the metaphysical "chemistry" of body and soul, which were often explained in relationship with the growth of this magical tree. The same chemistry can be observed in the history of the aristocratic family and causes the weakening of the Pyncheon curse (293). Kleiman also argues that the elm tree is also connected with the Old Testament parable: the Tree of Life is the Biblical counterpart of the philosophical tree of the alchemist. The recurrent imagery of gilding and refining suggests "a hidden alchemical process at work which is paralleled on the Biblical plane by a movement toward regeneration" (295).

The inhabitants of the old mansion assuage their grief and relieve their distress in its garden. It is a sort of refuge for Clifford to escape from harsh reality; the place where

⁵⁴⁷ The genteel Pyncheon mansion is a symbol of the civilizing impulse of aristocracy, the House of Man, (contrasted to Maule's shack, the House of Nature). However, as a haunted dwelling, it also becomes the embodiment of the uncivilized haunted mind and, with the passage of time, like other gothic households, it is progressively more related to nature.

⁵⁴⁸ Hawthorne's interest in alchemy is already revealed in his earlier romance, *The Scarlet Letter*, where he tells us in Chapters 4 and 9 that Chillingworth was a "potent necromancer", well-versed in alchemy.

the best moments of Holgrave, Uncle Venner, Clifford, Hepzibah and Phoebe take place. There they can converse peacefully, Phoebe can read to Clifford and they can watch the "paltry rivulet of life" (Gables: 153). The garden is where Holgrave and Phoebe meet and where the young reformer first declares his love for her. Hawthorne seems to suggest in these scenes a pastoral retreat, an Arcadian vision, which he contrasts to the characters' real lives, "It provides a refuge from their stark realities" (Male 1967: 436). In the gothic attempt to recapture history, there is a questioning of what constitutes the civilized as opposed to the primal nature of the golden age. Kehler believes that "The garden is an important addendum since [. . .] symbolizes the sentiment, if not the reality, of recapturing the old, dynamic relationship between man and nature" (149). According to Kehler, man cannot escape from nature; symbolically, from his anti-civilized urges while "Nature [. . .] seems to give its stamp of approval to the vigorous, new democratic order which, like the Pyncheon elm, ineluctably overshadows the old feudal manor house; the natural law of worth cancels the artificial law of birth" (145).

This garden had formerly been very extensive, but now wooden fences and other buildings confine it. Hawthorne suggests how civilization was advancing and nature had to retreat: "The eye of Heaven seemed to look down into it [the garden], pleasantly, and with a peculiar smile; as if glad to perceive that Nature, elsewhere overwhelmed, and driven out of the dusty town, had here been able to retain a breathing-place" (Gables: 87). In some aspects, the garden is contrasted to the mansion: sunny whereas the house is gloomy, fresh whereas the Pyncheons' dwelling is rotting. However, they are closely linked. The garden is at once 'external,' 'auxiliary' to the House and part of it (O'Connor: 223), implying that the bond between civilization and nature cannot be destroyed.

The real mistress of both the shop and the garden is Phoebe. However, Holgrave also belongs to it and, in fact, it seems as if "the garden were his own" (Gables: 93). The young woman devotes her care to the "aristocratic flowers" she is associated with, especially roses, and the fowls; whereas Holgrave looks after the "plebeian vegetables". Hawthorne deals with the garden metaphorically; as with the organ grinder's puppets, he is hinting at the moral condition of the society. When the story begins, the Pyncheon garden is in its fallen state and it takes a daily effort to keep the weeds in check: "the evil of these departed years would naturally have sprung up again, in such rank weeds (symbolic of the transmitted vices of society) as are always

prone to root themselves about human dwellings” (Gables: 86).⁵⁴⁹ It is the young couple, “determined upon the restoration of a lost Eden” (Leo Levy: 157), who become its gardeners. Holgrave, the gardener, plants scarlet bean flowers, which parallel “the purifying and enriching effect associated with Phoebe’s entrance into the Pyncheon household” (Kleiman: 295). These beans are dormant until they bloom “on the very summer of Clifford’s return” (Gables: 149), indicating a possible growth in the old bachelor’s life similar to that we later see in Phoebe, who “blossomed, like a running vine” (Gables: 221). Afterwards, as Kleiman writes, the abundance of red bean vine flowers is compared to another symbolic element, the “ascending spiral curve”, symbolically a correlation of the characters’ blooming: “what we see in the image of the ‘spiral profusion of red blossoms’ is the flowering of the characters” (301).

Hawthorne profusely develops the regenerative symbolism of the garden. The aristocratic flowers, “antique and hereditary”, are not in a very flourishing condition and there are just a few species. In their genteel condition, they also suffer the Pyncheons’ process of degeneration. However, the plebeian vegetables are “in a praiseworthy state of advancement” (Gables: 87) and there is a well-selected assortment. Democracy advances whereas aristocracy and its privileges wane. The life of the garden, in contrast to the deadly torpor of the house, is reflected in the pair of robins that have built their nest in the pear-tree and in the bees that come from miles away to do their “golden labor”. The fountain of the Pyncheon garden, which “Nature might fairly claim as her inalienable property, in spite of whatever man could do to render it his own” (Gables: 88), is another life-giving element of the romance. Kleiman argues that the garden, its roses and the fountain become an “image of an endless outpouring of life”, in which Jung had seen “‘the living power of the psyche’ and the “source of ‘living water’ mentioned in John 7:38” (294).⁵⁵⁰ As in the Biblical tale, this spring flows out of Eden, a “river [that went out] [. . .] to water the garden” (Gen. 2.10), making the spot desirable for the Maules and the Pyncheons; however, “these waters of life are soon tainted with Pyncheon greed and pride” (Kleiman: 294). Now the polluted spring is part of the enchanted garden of the Pyncheon family. In contrast to these regenerative elements, the hencoop that has its home in this garden, with its “rusty, withered

⁵⁴⁹ Gray states that Holgrave’s gardening, which involves the uprooting of ‘rank weeds’, reinforces the possibility of progress (102).

⁵⁵⁰ According to Carl Jung, the fountain is a very important alchemical symbol. The plan of the garden with the fountain is “developed, under the influence of early Christian architecture, into the court of the mosque with the ritual wash-house in the center [. . .]. We see much the same thing in our Western cloisters [. . .]. This is also the ‘rose garden of the philosophers,’ which we know from the treatises on alchemy and from many beautiful engravings” (qtd. in Kleiman: 304). Original text quoted: Carl Gustav Jung (1953). *Psychology and Alchemy. The Collected Works of Carl G. Jung*, Vol. 12. Eds. Herber Read, Michael Fordham, and Gerhard Adler. Trans R. F. C. Hull. Bollingen Series. New York: Pantheon Books: 69, 71, 167, 184.

aspect”, is related to death and degeneration. It contains the last descendants of these aristocratic fowls, counterparts of the present genteel members of the Pyncheon family. They are symbolically compared to the Banshee, a species of tutelary sprite, “although winged and feathered differently from most other guardian-angels” (Gables: 89), which in Irish and Scottish folklore are supposed to wail beneath the window of someone about to die.⁵⁵¹

In the penultimate chapter of *Seven Gables*, “The Flower of Eden”, when retribution has already been consummated, Phoebe becomes the true flower of the new Eden regained after Jaffrey’s death. Kleiman argues that we can see progress in the movement from Judge Pyncheon’s iron rule, whose blind tyrannical law first governs the old mansion, to the innocent young woman’s power of influence: “Thus in Hawthorne’s parable we can discern a movement leading from Old Testament wrath to Christian redemption” (292). After the Pyncheon family’s expulsion from paradise as a result of Colonel Pyncheon’s sins, the American lovers, Phoebe and Holgrave, are able to return to this Eden that they have made possible.

In *Beloved* Morrison depicts how nature has always been part of both free and enslaved blacks’ life, their closest friend. In the blacks’ bond with nature, Morrison enhances their humanity in contrast to the dehumanizing, apparently civilized world of the whites. Nature is the only space in which the black community finds liberation. There they are far from the political and cultural domain of the white people who control their destiny. Besides, nature brings them to their ancestral origins and gives them back the self-love they have lost during slavery. In Morrison’s romance the forest also has healing properties. Sixo knows about the salutary and regenerative virtues of trees and he goes “among trees at night. For dancing, he said, to keep his bloodlines open” (*Beloved*: 25). According to Louis Vincent Thomas and Rene Luneau, trees infuse him with indispensable energy: “the most salient feature of the tree is that it is identified with Life—a sign of the influence of African religion, which holds that trees concentrate within themselves the vital force that flows through and animates the universe” (qtd. in Bonnet: online).⁵⁵² Paul D and Sethe have healing memories of nature at Sweet Home. The black man remembers pleasantly the welcoming and comforting trees at the farm. While Paul D was there, he felt that he could communicate with them. Trees also mean protection and shelter for Denver: her “bower is similarly endowed with a nurturing,

⁵⁵¹ This is extracted from a footnote in Hawthorne’s *Seven Gables* (89).

⁵⁵² Original text quoted: Louis Vincent Thomas and Rene Luneau (1975). *La Terre Africaine et ses Religions*. Paris: Larousse Universite.

healing, rejuvenating power [. . .]. It provides Denver with the company she so painfully craves; it soothes and revitalizes her” (Bonnet: online).⁵⁵³

Paul D had a special tree called Brother, “old, wide and beckoning”. Brother is anthropomorphized, since its very name portrays it as a relative or a friend, which can comfort you in distressful situations. The spiritual character and nurturing role of the tree are given particular relevance in Brother. As Bonnet claims, Paul D sits under it, seeking safety and refreshment. Black slaves choose it to have their meals under it, as if suggesting that the tree itself supplies them somehow with the sustenance they need (online). Later, in prison, Paul D cultivates a small sapling, the replacement of his beloved tree at Sweet Home, which “was the only sign of life left in the wasteland of the prison camp and thus testifies to his invincible passion for life” (Bonnet: online). It helps him keep some of his humanity. However, this new tree, his little love, “has an ambivalent function, for this tiny size also provides a comment on slavery’s devastating force, confirming what the death imagery of the whole chapter points to. It is impossible for saplings to grow into real trees, for life to develop and flourish, in a world ruled by slaveholders” (Bonnet: online). Other trees have special importance in Paul D’s life. When he escapes, his path to the free North is marked by trees in blossom. Like Brother, they lead him to freedom: “[. . .] in presiding over Paul’s passage from South to North, they do not merely signal his passage from symbolic death to symbolic life; being active catalysts of his spiritual rebirth, they are shown to have a creative force of their own, the faculty of generating the life that goes with freedom” (Bonnet: online).

Sethe also dearly remembers her pleasant moments in the midst of nature at Sweet Home: hurrying across the fields, the feeling of the water on her legs, the breeze cooling her face, the wonderful sycamore trees of the farm. She can recall these trees better than her own children, Buglar and Howard: “the sycamores beat out the children every time and she could not forgive her memory for that” (Beloved: 6). However, these enjoyable recollections mix with painful ones, the hangings of slaves: “Although there was not a leaf on that farm that did not make her want to scream, it rolled itself out before her in shameless beauty [. . .]. Boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world” (Beloved: 6). Through the imagery of trees the “experience of horror and degradation” is linked to the picture of beauty, comfort and life of the natural world (Corey: 110). Weathers thinks that “Like Eden’s tree of knowledge of good and evil, Sweet Home’s trees read ambiguously, for Sethe recalls these beautiful ‘lacey groves’

⁵⁵³ Bonnet argues that “The womb-like shape of the trees, a secret place that you have to ‘crawl into’ and which forms a ring, further enhances their life-giving virtue” (online).

at the same time that she re-memories the white boys in the groves who forcefully suck the milk from her breasts” (online).⁵⁵⁴

The black community of Cincinnati look for self-knowledge and self-respect in nature, in the Clearing: “Located just outside 124, the Clearing is the African American equivalent of the sacred spiritual groves where West and Central African initiations and rituals, including sacrifice, take place” (Teresa Washington: online).⁵⁵⁵ Sethe describes it as a “blessed place”: “a wide-open place cut deep in the woods nobody knew for what at the end of a path known only to deer and whoever cleared that land in the first place” (*Beloved*: 87). Soon after she moves to Cincinnati, Baby Suggs starts preaching her gospel in the Clearing. It is no coincidence that the old woman chooses it to deliver her message of love and self-healing. According to John Mbiti: “A similar power [similar to Brother or the blossoming trees] is ascribed to the Clearing [. . .]” (qtd. in Bonnet: online).⁵⁵⁶ The Clearing is not a mere scenario of Baby Suggs’s sermons: “The people are at one with the trees, which take part in the action, both by sympathizing with them (they ‘ring’) and breathing into them an energy made palpable by the powerfully rhythmic tempo of the whole passage [of Baby Suggs’s sermon]. They are not merely a setting; they are truly active participants whose salutary role is to be measured by the miracle worked among them” (Bonnet: online). The surrounding trees inspire Baby’s words and help blacks reconstruct their fragmented selves.⁵⁵⁷ Slaves cannot have any self-esteem, since they are treated like animals and their bodies are execrated. The Clearing provides them with a place where they can “love themselves and each other in a way not sustainable in the constricted and categorized world of white Cincinnati and white America” (Jesser: online).

Sethe turns to the Clearing for comfort after the shock she suffers on learning that Halle was watching when Schoolteacher’s nephews were abusing her. She wants to pay her husband a tribute and decide what to do with her past and her new life. Sethe feels “trapped between the competing desire to be attached to *Beloved* and her

⁵⁵⁴ Glenda Weathers claims that “in *Beloved* tree images convey multiple ideas; they posit knowledge of both good and evil [. . .]”. She emphasizes their ambiguity: in contrast to Paul D’s and Sethe’s positive remembrances, Sixo was tortured and burned on a tree at Sweet Home (online) and, as Manzanias Calvo argues, some of the Sweet Home men were hung (92).

⁵⁵⁵ Teresa N. Washington adds that “Baby Suggs, holy consecrates the Clearing as the ‘Ground of all being,’ and uses the Clearing and 124 to help her community determine its destiny [. . .]. Baby Suggs uses the complementary spiritual forces of 124 and the Clearing for a two-tiered communal initiation process” (online).

⁵⁵⁶ Original text quoted: John Mbiti (1970). *Concepts of God in Africa*. New York: Praeger.

⁵⁵⁷ Arlene R. Keizer believes that “They [blacks] use many different strategies to heal and hold themselves together”, which “are drawn from philosophies and rituals of the West African past” (online). Teresa Washington thinks that Baby’s spiritual ritual “is not a religious sermon or catechism but a spiritual charge that transforms into a unified whole the few things that the Clearing participants dare lay claim—their bodies and spirits, and most fragile, their love [. . .] in order to reestablish connection with the communal Self and the ‘Ground of All Being’” (online).

misery, and her desire to be part of a living family and community” (Jesser: online). In the middle of the woods she is able to reconcile with her husband’s memory and she realizes how much she wants Paul D in her life: “By passing through the Clearing she is able to ‘figure out’ her attachments to the past, Halle, and weigh her desires for the future—a whole family, love, Paul D, and Denver” (Jesser: online). Sethe thinks that she has got through the worst and that now it is over, since the baby ghost is gone. She believes that she can deal with her tormenting recollections. As Linda Krumholz says, the Clearing is a place which “signifies the necessity for a psychological cleansing of the past, a space to encounter painful memories safely and rest from them” (1999: 110). Now she can look after her loved ones as she did when she arrived at 124, “she had milk enough for all” (*Beloved*: 100). When Sethe emerges from the grove, she has drawn new vigor from the soothing and healing greenery. She has a clear mind and determination to start a new relationship with Paul D.

Morrison also uses symbolism associated with nature to suggest healing or hope. According to Amy Denver, the white girl, Sethe’s scars, the physical inscription of the horror of slavery, resemble a chokecherry tree.⁵⁵⁸ Amy tells Sethe: “It’s a tree. See, here’s the trunk—it’s red and split wide open, full of sap, and this here’s the parting for the branches. You got a mighty lot of branches. Leaves, too, look like, and dern if these ain’t blossoms. Tiny little cherry blossoms, just as white. Your back got a whole tree on it. In bloom” (*Beloved*: 79). Re-imagining the cluster of scars as a tree indicates hope. Its likeness establishes aesthetic connotations of natural beauty, which are combined with salutary and regenerative qualities.⁵⁵⁹ These scars also stand for the need to come to terms with slavery’s legacy. Rafael Pérez-Torres thinks that “Amy gives back to Sethe her identity as a nurturing source” (1999: 187). Eighteen years later, when Paul D arrives at 124, he lovingly touches Sethe’s “sculpture” and, as Ana M^a Manzanás Calvo points out, “Los latigazos amorfos que surcaban la espalda de Sethe se convierten en presencia de Paul D en una metáfora que trasciende la imagen de un haz de nervios inertes, en un ‘árbol de la vida’” (93).

Water acquires a strong symbolic meaning as a renewal force in Hawthorne’s and Morrison’s romances. As Buitenhuis states, in *Seven Gables* the house is somehow purified and the source for this ritual cleansing is taken from Leviticus, in which the instructions on how to purify a house can be found (1991: 67). The priest

⁵⁵⁸ According to Mae G. Henderson, “the scars function as signs of ownership inscribing her as property, while the mutilation signifies her diminishment to a less-than-human status [. . .]. Like the inscription of *Beloved* and pictorial images of the past, the scars function as an archaeological site or memory trace” (86).

⁵⁵⁹ Sethe’s scars, like her mother’s, signal her as property. “Yet like Sethe (as well as Hawthorne’s Hester Prynne), her mother had transformed a mark of mutilation, a sign of diminished humanity, into a sign of recognition and identity” (Mae Henderson: 95).

must take two birds and "shall kill the one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water"; the other bird is dipped in the blood of the dead one and into running water. Then it is used to sprinkle the house seven times (Lev. 14: 49-52).⁵⁶⁰ In *Beloved*, water is also very important, specially "as a metaphor for birth and change" (Britton: 17). Sethe finds freedom after crossing the Ohio, the river of life and emancipation: "Death is also symbolic and is conveyed by a spatial metaphor, that of the dividing line between the slave and the free territories whose crossing is pictured as the passage from death to life [. . .]" (Bonnet: online). This symbolism is strengthened by the biblical association of the Ohio with the River Jordan: "The slaves are ferried across by Stamp Paid, formerly Joshua, who was named after the man who led the Hebrews from captivity into the Promised Land" (Bonnet: online). Thus the river is not just a geographical, but also a psychological frontier which separates Sethe's previous existence as a slave and her life ahead as a free human being.

As Bonnet writes, "Even more significantly she [Sethe] gives birth to a daughter in those very waters which separate the two worlds, a highly emblematic event pointing to the exact equivalence of life and freedom" (online). There is hope for a better future, since a new life starts for both mother and daughter. Sethe gives birth in a boat where there are "two bird nests", enhancing the connection between river (water) and life. In fact, symbolically, the river water joins Sethe's own when she starts her labor, "As soon as Sethe got close to the river her own water broke loose to join it" (*Beloved*: 83). In addition, after Amy leaves, Sethe walks until she finds two boys and a black man, called Stamp Paid. He offers her a fried piece of eel; however, Sethe cannot eat. Instead she asks for water and he gives her some of the Ohio. Finally, the black man helps the exhausted woman to cross the river into free land. In their arrival at 124, Baby Suggs bathes her in a sort of cleansing ritual that signals her birth as a free woman. The revenant, as a healing agent, is associated throughout the novel with water. In her first appearance, *Beloved* seems to have "walked out of the water" (*Beloved*: 50) and she cannot stop drinking water, she is terribly thirsty.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶⁰ Buitenhuis argues that Clifford and Hepzibah are often associated with birds. Clifford is related to the dead bird, whereas Hepzibah is linked to the living. He points to the fact that Clifford "had a singular propensity [. . .] to hang over Maule's Well", which is reminiscent of the bird killed over the running water as in the ritual cleansing of the house (1991: 153).

⁵⁶¹ Morrison also connects her symbols with African beliefs: water as an image is related to an African conviction about reincarnation. According to Morrison, "It is believed that, particularly, children or young people who die uneasily return in forms of members of your family and come out of the water" (Carabí 1993: 107).

4.3.3. Love Transfigures the Earth and Makes it Eden

Both Hawthorne and Morrison explore the crucial role of love in the struggle against the wrongs of the past. In *Seven Gables*, according to Horne, Matthew Maule's "possession" of Alice Pyncheon has destroyed the necessary balance between man and woman. Consequently, one of the features of the family's curse that requires expiation is the relationship between Maule-male and Pyncheon-female (465). Holgrave and Phoebe lift the curse with their love.⁵⁶² It is finally in marriage that they can find the hope for redemption:

There are finally no heroes in Hawthorne, for whom the illusion of heroism, the dream of transcending one's humanity, is the last diabolic temptation; neither man nor woman can break back into Eden, though man and woman together can momentarily restore Paradise on earth. That is to say, there are in his work no redeemed individuals, only redeemed couples, husband and wife, like the pair who, in "The Maypole of Merry Mount", accept expulsion from the Garden of irresponsible indulgence [. . .]. Similarly Holgrave and Phoebe in *The House of the Seven Gables* [. . .] by choosing marriage over passion and loneliness submit 'to earth's doom of care and sorrow, and troubled joy. (Fiedler: 443)⁵⁶³

In *Beloved* love does not fully flourish until the end of the story. Slavery cripples blacks' lives and makes it impossible for them to truly develop emotionally. Only when they have confronted the ghosts of the past can they have real chances to love.

Paul D's and Sethe's love cannot really bloom until they face their memories. The first hopeful sign is shown after Sethe and her daughters' visit to the Clearing. On *Beloved's* way back home, a scene calls her attention: two turtles come out of the water after a blood-red bird has disappeared back into the leaves. Then these two turtles make love. They may symbolize Sethe and Paul D, while the water stands for birth, the birth of their love. However, they will not be ready to love one another until they have achieved partial redemption from the sins of the past. Some time after the communal exorcism, Paul D meets Denver in the streets of Cincinnati. She shows new maturity and confidence. Her last image greeting Nelson Lord suggests her own possible romance and opens new possibilities for Paul D and Sethe's love. After their conversation, the black man decides to go back to 124. He seems to have overcome his feelings of guilt at his sexual encounter with *Beloved* and his troubles about the infanticide. Sethe is in bed, broke down, as Baby Suggs had been before her. Paul D makes her understand that she is her best thing, giving her value as a human being

⁵⁶² According to Horne, the other feature deals with the placing of the right individual in the proper building, mostly the proper placing of Judge Pyncheon. The Judge, who embodies the horror of the heart within the dominant Pyncheon male, needs to be placed in the House of the Seven Gables in order to exorcise the curse (466).

⁵⁶³ Fiedler states that when Hawthorne chooses the conventional marriage as an ending for his romance, he strips it from the tragic power he achieved in *The Scarlet Letter* (444).

and a woman.⁵⁶⁴ Paul D can now love big and, in his proposal to look after her, we can see his desire to take new control of the situation and start a true love relationship with her. Their relationship shows the “dynamics of a love story that poignantly reveals the depth of painful abandonment and the height of redemptive love” (Ochoa: online).

Love brings redemption to *Seven Gables*. Kehler thinks that “Love [. . .] can achieve what Clifford’s locomotive cannot: a new pastoral idyll, a new Eden based not on solitude, like Maule’s, but on human interaction” (152). Phoebe and Holgrave emerge as lovers in the Chapter “Phoebe’s Good-Bye”. It begins with the daguerreotypist’s refusal to exercise hypnotic power over the young woman after he has told her the story he had written. This scene is completed with a description of the moon rising which, according to Francis J. Battaglia, expresses allegorically the coming of love to the couple (581).⁵⁶⁵ Love transfigures Holgrave. He can no longer see the world in the same way.⁵⁶⁶ As Maurice Beebe has observed, the young reformer’s renunciation is decisive to his regeneration: “He ceases to be the detached observer and becomes a participator, not merely ‘using’ life but living it” (11). Dryden argues that a permanent transformation has taken place once love has cast “a magical spell which reverses the usual relationship between dream and reality” (1971: 312). Even though the artist has previously attacked the Past and considers incineration the best way to bring an end to the evil in the House, now he sees the world in a new light:

After all, what a good world we live in! How good, and beautiful! How young it is, too, with nothing really rotten or age-worn in it! This old house, for example, which sometimes has positively oppressed my breath with its smell of decaying timber! And this garden, where the black mould always clings to my spade, as if I were a sexton, delving in a graveyard! Could I keep the feeling that now possesses me, the garden [. . .] would be like a bower in Eden blossoming with the earliest roses that God ever made. (Gables: 214)

In the Chapter “The Flower of Eden” the couple declares their love: “The bliss, which makes all things true, beautiful, and holy, shone around this youth and maiden. They were conscious of nothing sad or old. They transfigured the earth, and made it Eden again, and themselves the two first dwellers in it” (Gables: 307). Fogle claims that “the ultimate union of Holgrave and Phoebe is symbolically the ideal union of head and

⁵⁶⁴ Susan Spearey says that to live in the present while creating a future blacks must “negotiate new ways of orienting themselves and of understanding their relationships to one another” (174).

⁵⁶⁵ Hyatt Waggoner gives a mythological explanation for this scene in his introduction to an older edition of *Seven Gables*. He suggests that Hawthorne is invoking moon-power, or the power of a moon-goddess, as a special force in the story. The moon has some of the faculties of Artemis, the Hellenic deity for youth and growth, the Woman-goddess of childbirth and chastity. This connection seems possible, since one of the other names of the goddess Artemis is Phoebe (1964: xviii). However, Francis J. Battaglia thinks that mythological explanations seem out of character for Hawthorne (581).

⁵⁶⁶ As many critics have pointed out, Holgrave’s metamorphosis parallels Hawthorne’s. In his *American Notebooks*, Hawthorne describes the transformation he experienced when he married Sophia (qtd. in Dryden 1971: 313). For more information, see: Randall Stewart (ed.) (1932). *The American Notebooks*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 154.

heart, centripetal and centrifugal forces in perfect balance” (1952: 158). Hawthorne seems to believe in the redemptive power of the young couple’s love. According to Buitenhuis, “This is unmistakably the doctrine of *felix culpa*, the fortunate fall, by which mankind, through knowledge of sin and death, through love and by Christ’s redemption, regains access to paradise” (1991: 118).

Phoebe and Holgrave’s espousal means the end of the Pyncheons and Maules’ long process of atonement: “This marriage represents progress not only in contrast with Matthew’s treatment of Alice Pyncheon but also in terms of its overall symbolic function of resolving the feud between the Maules and the Pyncheons” (Michael Bell: 217-218). Their matrimony finally surpasses the colonial division of classes, aristocrats and plebeians, and the old social guilt is atoned: the blood of the plebeians and the Pyncheons will join as a sign of equality. As Fiedler claims, Hawthorne seems to state that the remedy for the ills of our society is marriage and the traditional family: “Hawthorne comes to feel the fall of man a fortunate calamity not because it leads to the coming of Christ, but because it prepares the ground for marriage and the bourgeois family” (444). Holgrave and Phoebe’s union is the last and definite step in the Pyncheons and Maules’ path to redemption.

4.3.4. Redemption in the Midst of the Community

[. . .] there can be little doubt that the essential shape of this book is progressive and optimistic. Not only does the marital union between Pyncheon and Maule end a cycle of persecution and retribution that has prolonged itself through a century and a half of New England history, but the spiritual forces of good—in particular, the frankness and rejuvenating sunshine of Phoebe—score in the end a clear if less than total triumph over the forces of evil, represented in the villainy and false smiles of Jaffrey Pyncheon.

JOHN GATTA, “Progress and Providence in *The House of the Seven Gables*”.

In both Hawthorne’s and Morrison’s romances the community is essential in both processes of retribution and redemption. *Seven Gables* has been considered as a tale of atonement, but also as a tale of redemption. At the end of the story the curse seems to be lifted and expiation is fulfilled. Clifford has been relieved from his long suffering; his torturer has died. His ordeal has proved to be redemptive for the Pyncheons and, also, for the Maules: “The ending of generations of wrongdoing depends on redemptive suffering and the rediscovery of hope” (Buitenhuis 1991: 71). The old couple’s flight from the old mansion is their emancipating pilgrimage, their Gothic quest for self-affirmation. When the “two owls”⁵⁶⁷ leave the house in the middle of a great storm, the metaphor is clear: fallen man lives in a stormy world. However, their railway trip is a delusion, since man can only find redemption in a communal confrontation with the guilt of the past: “There is and will be no celestial rail-road so long as man’s essential

⁵⁶⁷ McPherson reminds us that owls were sacred animals to Minerva (139).

condition remains unchanged” (Waggoner 1967: 408). The railway journey has regenerative and spiritual qualities. Kleiman asserts that “this story [. . .] deals not only with the genesis of a family and of a nation but also with the genesis of Man himself” (292). Clifford and Hepzibah’s return from their train trip states the need for redemption in the midst of the community. In contrast to Clifford and Hepzibah, Holgrave and Phoebe are the true Adam and Eve, who are finally able to start a new communal life and set an old evil at rest.

After the Judge’s death, Holgrave is the first person to enter the old house. The image of his dead body strikes the reformer, who becomes conscious of the reality of guilt and retribution which has filled his life: the presence of the dead man made “the universe [. . .] a scene of guilt, and of retribution more dreadful than the guilt” (Gables: 306). Phoebe’s return changes the situation. Now Holgrave experiences hope and joy, “the black moment became at once a blissful one” (Gables: 306). The young couple together are going to penetrate the mystery of eternal rest. A branch of the elm turns to “bright gold” following the storms, announcing that the two lovers are going to visit the underworld, the “golden branch that gained Aeneas and the Sibyl admittance into Hades” (Gables: 285).⁵⁶⁸ As Buitenhuis points out, Phoebe, like Sybil, will lead the reformer, Aeneas (a wanderer like Holgrave), into the Pyncheon family (1991: 83-84). The ‘magical’ transmutation of the elm is an important sign that the romance is moving towards redemption.

The knowledge of Jaffrey Pyncheon’s death binds Holgrave and Phoebe together and makes their love possible, “From the ground of despair and death springs love” (Dryden 1971: 312): “all the circumstances of their [Holgrave and Phoebe’s] situation seemed to draw them together; they were like two children who go hand in hand, pressing closely to one another’s side, through a shadow-haunted passage. The image of awful Death, which filled the house, held them united by his stiffened grasp” (Gables: 305). Just when the young couple is about to announce Judge Pyncheon’s death, they hear footsteps in the passage. Clifford and Hepzibah return from their railway journey and find themselves with the comforting presence of the young couple. Immediately the old man realizes what has happened between Holgrave and Phoebe and exclaims, “It is our little Phoebe!—Ah! and Holgrave is with her [. . .]. ‘I thought of you both, as we came down the street and beheld Alice’s Posies in full bloom. And so the flower of Eden has bloomed, likewise, in this old, darksome house, to-day!’” (Gables: 308). Like the elm, Alice’s posies also announce a happy ending. These flowers blossom the day

⁵⁶⁸ In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the hero Aeneas, accompanied by a prophetess, uses a golden bough as his passport to be admitted into the underworld of death. This information is taken from a footnote in Hawthorne’s *Seven Gables* (285).

after the storm, "flaunting in rich beauty and full bloom [. . .] as it were, a mystic expression that something within the house was consummated" (Gables: 286). Their bloom is the revelation of a regained paradise, signaling the development of love between the young girl and the daguerreotypist.

At the end of the romance the Pyncheons' greed and its insubstantial foundations must be exposed. After the Judge's death the mystery of the map to the eastern territories is finally solved. Holgrave discloses a recess in the wall just behind Colonel Pyncheon's picture and the folded sheet of parchment hidden inside is revealed. The young reformer, as a Maule, has known the secret all along, the only inheritance that his ancestors have handed down to him. The son of the executed wizard, Matthew Maule the carpenter, constructed that cavity while building the house so that he could hide the document. Thus the Maules traded their plot of land for the Pyncheons' eastern territory. Judge Pyncheon was right when he thought that his cousin, Clifford, knew about the secret recess. The old bachelor had discovered it when he was a child. However, the treasure no longer has real value; other claims and settlement have superseded these titles: "The hard realist Jaffrey Pyncheon had been pursuing a worthless dream all along" (Buitenhuis 1991: 86).

The definite change of fortune comes to Hepzibah and Clifford when the Judge's son dies and the old couple inherits the Pyncheon wealth. Together with Phoebe and Holgrave, they move to a new residence where they can finally start a new life in the midst of the community.⁵⁶⁹ Maule's well apparently prophesizes their coming fortunes. Happiness seems to prevail from now on. The aristocratic Chanticleer and his family, which have already moved to Judge Pyncheon's elegant country house, begin an "indefatigable orgy of egg laying", possibly conscious that "their illustrious breed" is going to be "under better auspices than for a century past" (Gables: 314). Helten claims that "Since they are so well, the Pyncheon-Maules may be well, too. They are a sign of hope" (online). Finally, Uncle Venner seems to hear a strain of music, and he imagines that Alice Pyncheon, watching her kin's happiness, has given a farewell touch to her harpsichord as she floats to heaven. Her farewell melody seems to signal the dissipation of the curse. Old ghosts can finally rest: Alice's spirit has been released. With the Judge's death, which reproduces Colonel Pyncheon's, the circle is fulfilled. In Hawthorne's spiral, as a symbol of regeneration, the new cycle represented by the two "last" members of the Pyncheons and the Maules, Phoebe and Holgrave, connects to the past but advances further into a hopeful future.

⁵⁶⁹ Jan Helten claims that the fact that Uncle Venner accompanies the reunited Pyncheons and Maules to the country estate is a hopeful sign, since he is the only figure in the gothic romance who is not a Pyncheon or a Maule and, consequently, is not tainted with their past misdeeds (online).

Unlike *Seven Gables*, the community in *Beloved* has a more active role in 124's inhabitants' retribution and redemption (Britton: 20). The black women's intervention saves them from annihilation. When the community sees the difficulties Denver is going through, they aid her: "she [Denver] sets into motion a process that brings sustenance to 124, and begins to re-integrate Denver into the larger community through a network of generosity. Denver's ventures out of the yard re-link 124 to the black community [. . .]. Denver has taken over the writing of her future and crossed out of a yard that hemmed her in, creating space in which to make connections" (Jesser: online). The young woman starts to create new links to the community which had ostracized her and her mother since the infanticide and, like Phoebe, becomes the provider of her family. Thus she "represents the tenuous coming together of the community inside 124 and the community outside" (Holland: 49).

Even though, during all those years since the tragedy, the black community has not accepted Sethe or her family, they come to help her once they understand her terrible situation. As Morrison says, "when she [Sethe] is beaten down enough, they [the community] don't kick her out; by and large they support her" (Carabí 1993: 111). Thus, in contrast to the pattern of escape and return that Hawthorne uses in *Seven Gables*; in *Beloved*, it is the community that comes back to the haunted house to aid Sethe. These communities represent caring relationships in which people refuse to abandon those who need help. Ella, who had criticized Sethe so severely during the bloody events, convinces the other women that Sethe's rescue was necessary: it is "Ella [who] ultimately lead[s] the rest of the community in a movement of reconciliation that continues to the end of the novel" (Askeland: 174). From Ella's point of view, a ghost should not take control of one's life: "As long as the ghost showed out from its ghostly place—shaking stuff, crying, smashing and such—Ella respected it. But if it took flesh and came in her world, well, the shoe was on the other foot. She didn't mind a little communication between the two worlds, but this was an invasion" (*Beloved*: 257).⁵⁷⁰ A communal exorcism is necessary to ease the revenant's hold on 124: "the tormented spirit of the past comes to possess the principal characters [. . .] and the only genuine exorcism is a collective hearing" (Grewal 1998: 105). The community must also redeem their sin toward Sethe and her family: "The community members must not only face their guilt over the death of the baby but also work out their terms for forgiveness—for themselves and for Sethe" (Denard 1997: 44).

Thirty women make up the company that walks slowly toward 124. They are determined to exorcise the ghost and bring forgiveness to Sethe. When they get to the

⁵⁷⁰ Clifton Spargo thinks that Ella may not see the ghost as the allegory for history that Morrison has made of it and thus she reduces the ghost to a traditionally conceived Gothic antagonist (online).

house, some of the black females drop on their knees and pray. Ella recalls the little hairy white thing she conceived from the whites who raped her and hollers at the idea of her “pup” coming back to life to punish her. Kneelers and standers recognize the primitive sound, a sort of pre-linguistic noise, which breaks “the back of the words”:⁵⁷¹ “In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like” (*Beloved*: 259). Morrison is paraphrasing a passage from the bible: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1.1). Mary J. Suero-Elliott points out that “The use of a communal voice [. . .] link her [Sethe] once again to the community and to the potential to develop her subjectivity” (online). The female community’s exorcism moves *Beloved*, the embodied spirit, out of 124. The thirty women outside 124 rescue Sethe from *Beloved*’s haunting, thus showing their healing mission.

The women’s recitations defy the white man’s symbolic realm and confront its master’s discourse. As Parker points out, “this sound evokes the semiotic within the symbolic, an eruption that has the power to disrupt the symbolic structures of white, male oppression” (online). Morrison contrasts language, which belongs to the dominant culture, to sound, which stands outside its control. The women of the community “deal with her [the revenant] in an unspeakable realm beyond words because *Beloved* is their ghost, too” (Booher: 126). In this scene Morrison’s Female Gothic narrative shows us a group of women who can finally find the primitive sound to confront the patriarchal system. According to Mae Henderson,

In its revision this “key”, this “code”, this “sound that broke the back of words” challenges the dominant white male constitution of black womanhood. Sethe is [. . .] “born again” in her reclamation by the community (“[The voices] broke over Sethe and she trembled like baptized in its wash”) as much as by the community’s exorcism of *Beloved*. The communal voice of black women, then possesses the power not only to destroy but also to create. In fact, Sethe’s “re-birth” is predicated upon the rupture of the master(s) discourse. Thus, not only is Sethe “delivered” from the “errors” of her past, but her discourse is “delivered” from the constraints of the master(s) discourse. (99)⁵⁷²

⁵⁷¹ Holland and Awkward comment that “This sound [. . .] moves beyond experience of this new world [. . .] to connect with and revoice African discursive practices and cosmological states” (55). The females’ chants, which resemble African rituals, recall the “witch doctor” of ancient times who used them to command some evil spirits plaguing the living. As David Lawrence says, this “scene shows how a culture may find it necessary in a moment of crisis to exorcise its own demons in order to reaffirm its identity” (88).

⁵⁷² Parker believes that the noise made by the women outside 124 can be compared to hysterical noises. During hysterical attacks some patients speak a sort of cacophony of different languages or a gibberish babble, which Parker considers as a “disruption of the symbolic through the disorganization of speech and linguistic discord is a way of rejecting patriarchal authority and prescribed cultural identity” (online). Suero-Elliott reminds us that it is through sound and not language that Sethe starts her process of liberation (online). Carol Henderson believes that “This sound allows these women to blend the essence of their painful experiences with that of their ancestors, forming” and finding with their voices “the key that would allow them to recover and lay to rest the disembodied spirits of 124” (93).

The collaborative exorcism breaks Beloved's spell and links Sethe's life again to the community. It has "the power of cleansing waters", "bringing Sethe back to the Clearing and to Baby Suggs's rituals" (Krumholz 1999: 118). The sound of the women of the community "has a creative capacity that symbolizes and ritualizes Sethe's cycle from spiritual death to rebirth" (Krumholz 1999: 118). Their chants act a sort of baptism that allows the black woman to start anew (Bonnet: online).⁵⁷³ As Cowan-Barbetti says,

This sound [. . .] destroys the cycle of darkness and shame in which Sethe is entrapped [. . .]. Archetypally counteracting the possessive force of Beloved, the sound breaks the bars of enslaving language, and provides new ground upon which to build a meaningful language, a story. Sethe is left with the broad expanse of the deep waters of her psyche sounded and open to her. She now must make sense of her thoughts and memories, give them a rhythm and tide, so that she may be whole again—not empty. (online)

Among others, Anna Sonser interprets the communal exorcism as a metaphorical birth: "Conjuring images of both the supernatural and rebirth, the text's exorcism scene [. . .] doubles as a scene of birth [. . .]. In effect, it is Beloved's 'pregnancy' that signifies the 'dead coming back to life' [. . .] a continuation of the vampiric theme that marks the text" (101). This last scene contrasts with Sethe's encounter with the slave catcher, which resulted in a child's murder. As Sonser shows, the women gathered to exorcise the ghost are the midwives who attend to a birth that they can claim as theirs: "Ironically, the 'undead' is required to give life, that is, to seduce, consume, and, ultimately, begin the reintegration necessary for the lost African self" (102).

When Beloved and her mother hear the women's voices, they come out to the porch. Sethe feels again the little hummingbirds that announced Schoolteacher's arrival, beating their wings and sticking their needle beaks into her hair. She flies with an ice pick in her hand to kill the man without skin, Mr. Bodwin, but the community prevents her from doing it: "Sethe figuratively returns to the murder of Beloved and erases from her life some of the overwhelming impact of that action, giving herself a chance to reintegrate her profoundly fractured psyche" (Koolish 2001: 186). Sethe mistakes Mr. Bodwin—"the good-intentioned whiteman who still carries in him the ghosts of the patriarchal institution" (Askeland: 174)—for Schoolteacher and attacks him, thus reenacting her infanticide.⁵⁷⁴ However, now the target of Sethe's violence is

⁵⁷³ Bonnet thinks that, in the communal exorcism, the group of women bring the Clearing with them to exorcise the spirit of the dead daughter: "It is the sacred grove that is the agent of the spiritual rebirth connoted by the image of baptism" (online). Linda Krumholz expresses similar views (1999: 118).

⁵⁷⁴ Mark Edmundson notes that the black community begins to heal when Sethe tries to strike Mr. Bodwin, whom she mistakes for Schoolteacher. Fighting the whites, who are ultimately responsible for slavery, brings the possibility of healing (qtd. in Dudley: 300). For more information, see: Edmundson (1997). *Nightmare on Main Street: Angles, Sodomasochism, and the Culture of Gothic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 177. Gloria Anzaldúa asserts that the heroine "can be jarred out of ambivalence by an intense [. . .] emotional event which inverts [. . .] the ambivalence" (qtd. in Suero-Eliott: online). Original text quoted: Gloria Anzaldúa. *Bordelands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.

the oppressor, the symbol of slavery, instead of her own kin: “the more permanent possessor/ghost has returned to his domain, and her possession simply does not match up. She does not own the walls of 124. When Sethe directly attacks him—the ‘real’ ghost of patriarchal ownership—the ghostly embodiment of her enslavement can disappear” (Askeland: 174). Gurleen Grewal points out how the plot of *Beloved* is built on the Gothic principle of the return of the repressed, reenacting the fatal event that took place eighteen years before (1998: 115). This assault puts an end to the violence in which the community has been immersed.⁵⁷⁵ According to D. Scot Hinson:

This ritual reexperiencing of trauma, witnessed by the entire community, indeed, sanctioned by the community, constitutes the violence to end all violence, the ritual sacrifice that can restore harmony within the community and difference within the narrative. This reenactment of the original trauma allows Sethe to escape from the pattern of repetition and to reclaim her life from Beloved, who instantly and miraculously vanishes. From this point the novel can continue in the present, pushing toward an imagined future. (161)⁵⁷⁶

As Emma Parker states, “Cure comes through the reproduction of the primal scene of trauma” (online). When Sethe attacks the true source of her oppression, “Her act is cathartic; it finally frees both Sethe and her daughter” (Suero-Elliott: online). Sethe, the demonic woman, is healed by the black females’ chants and by re-living the trauma of infanticide.

Only by a communal exorcism can the individual face and finally reconcile with the legacy of slavery. Morrison emphasizes the importance of a community for the liberation of blacks, especially females: “the position of the community of women reflects the unique position of black women vis a vis a colonialist system. Their role in Sethe’s liberation is part of the text’s gendered revisioning of history. Significantly, the disruptive discourse is defined by specifically racial and gendered voices” (Suero-Elliott: online). Sethe has paid for her sins and thus she attains at least partial redemption:⁵⁷⁷ “Sethe has learned to banish the spirit not from its place in the outside world but rather her interior, from her brain [. . .] it ceases to be Sethe’s burden or responsibility and henceforth recedes from her consciousness” (Holland: 55). At the

⁵⁷⁵ Rene Girard argues that, as the crisis escalates, the cycles of violence can only have an end through an act of pure savagery, which he calls “sacrifice”, the return to the origin of trauma and its re-experience: “the ‘prior event’ that all ritual killings rationalize and represent in various ‘substitutions’ is a collective murder, an act of mob violence” (qtd. in Hinson: 152). Original text quoted: Rene Girard (1987). *The Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, Rene Girard and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*. Ed. Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly. Stanford: Stanford UP.

⁵⁷⁶ Peter Brooks says that “the repetition of traumatic experiences in the dreams of the neurotics can be seen to have the function of seeking retrospectively to master the flood of stimuli [. . .] through developing that anxiety which earlier was lacking [. . .]” (qtd in Hinson: 160). Original text quoted: Peter Brooks (1985). *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. New York: Random House.

⁵⁷⁷ According to Mae G. Henderson, “Sethe achieves redemption through possession by the spirit as well as exorcism of the spirit. Significantly, for Morrison, it is not through the law [. . .] but the spirit (its reclamation and relinquishment) that the individual achieves ‘deliverance’ from the ‘sins’ of the past” (100-101).

end of the story, there is some hope that, once the past has been at least partially defeated, Sethe and Denver will be able to live as a family in the midst of the community: “On the whole, *Beloved*’s return in the flesh is therapeutic [. . .]. *Beloved* will become the link that will bring her [Sethe] into the community again. *Beloved* [. . .] banishes Sethe’s pathogenic link with her murdered child” (Osagie: online). Not just Sethe, but also the other members of the African American community atone for their sins: the black females by offering their help and exorcising the revenant; Paul D by coming back to comfort Sethe. Confronting the ghosts of slavery, African Americans create a future in which they “can respect and honor themselves and their ancestors—be beloved” (Bowers: 106). Suero-Elliott believes that,

By the end of the novel [. . .] the characters are no longer trapped in a static, redundant pattern of existence. Sethe now can work towards an empowered subjectivity because she has broken through limitations imposed by slavery, by communal ostracism, and by severed or thwarted familial relationships. Although the interrelationships between Sethe, her community, and her daughter have been damaged by a colonized past, it is through these familial and communal bonds that Sethe disrupts the ideologies of a commodifying culture, and, with her community, restructures a definitive communal discourse. (online)

Finally, through *Beloved*, all characters have acquired what they each long needed: forgiveness for Sethe, ability to feel for Paul D and acceptance and friendship for Denver. Each character has faced his/her own fears and repressions, thus advancing in the reconstruction of their fragmented identities. *Beloved* as a life-giving force has completed her mission and must go back to the water from which she came. However, as Parker says, the traumatic impact of slavery can never be fully effaced: “the pain of slavery her [*Beloved*’s] story represents will never pass on or away—that is, will never die. For Morrison’s characters, there is no complete recovery from hysteria, only a potential for healing, something that involves learning to confront grief without being governed by it, to possess the past without becoming possessed” (online).

At the end of the book, Sethe is still haunted by her “complicity” with whites. She collaborated with Schoolteacher’s pseudo-scientific racial project even without knowing it and that makes her feel self-contempt: “Morrison makes it clear that as heroic as her characters are, they are not innocent of implication in the histories which they regard with such horror” (Spearey: 174). When Paul D comes to visit her, she remembers making the ink used by Schoolteacher to write down her “animal” characteristics:⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁸ David Lawrence associates bodily and linguistic disempowerment. Sethe makes the ink, a tool for communication, which is turned against her when Schoolteacher uses it to write the “animal characteristics” (89). Anne E. Goldman points out the conflation between reproduction and literary production in Schoolteacher’s use of Sethe’s ink to record the taking of her milk by his nephews: his “gaze collapses Sethe’s milky maternal product into the inky literary one [. . .]” (324).

“This is Sethe’s secret shame, her innocent complicity with the violence of schoolteacher’s letter, his assumption of the power to name and to brutalize with that naming” (Keenan: 126). Sethe feels guilty of her implication in Schoolteacher’s scientific experimentation and needs Paul D to remind her that she is her best thing. In this scene Morrison shows us how her characters will never be completely free from the ghosts of the past.

When Morrison wrote *Beloved* she wanted to pay homage to her black ancestors, but also to address contemporary African Americans readers who, like the characters of the book, need to confront the legacy of slavery:⁵⁷⁹

What *Beloved* suggests is that tomorrow is made possible by the knowledge of yesterday, a knowledge that for contemporary African Americans can be gained from imagining what it was like to walk in the flesh of their slave ancestors [. . .]. By giving its readers the inside view of slaves’ lives [. . .] the novel enables its African American readers to live the experience of slavery in their minds and to join in the healing primal sound of the women who come to Sethe’s yard. By speaking horror, Morrison assumes and helps to create the community that can hear it and transform it. (Bowers: 106)

In *Seven Gables* colonialism and class struggle are the source of the Pyncheons and Maules’ conflict, which has as a result the primal sin of this tale. Only the union of both families will put an end to aristocratic pretensions and make possible a democratic future. On the other hand, in *Beloved*, slavery had deteriorated the community values that had once helped to unite the people and create caring and committed relationships between its members. Through the communal exorcism, Morrison’s characters come to terms with both their personal and ancestral past, thus healing the wounds that have destroyed their African American traditional principles. In both romances redemption from past wrongs can only be fulfilled when the characters are absorbed in the communal fabric.

4.3.5. Happy Ending?

The Gothic brings up the past, questions the present. Often this does not mean a brighter future. While *The Italian*, for instance, ends in marriage, death overshadows the union; *Otranto* ends similarly. In this way, Gothic literature is perhaps the most realistic of all art; instead of a happy ending, these writings lean toward ambivalence.

MICHELLE BOOHER, “‘It’s Not the House’: *Beloved* as Gothic Novel”.

I don’t want them [the novels] to be unsatisfying, and some people do find it wholly unsatisfying, but I think that’s the habit, the literary habit, of having certain kinds of endings. Although we don’t expect a poem to end that way, you know, or even music doesn’t end that way, certain kinds of music. There’s always something tasty in your mouth when you hear blues, there’s always something left over with jazz, because it’s on edge, and you’re never satisfied, you’re always a little hungry.

⁵⁷⁹ Susan Corey claims that “*Beloved* confronts readers with the shocking ‘otherness’ of the slave experience, with their complicity in this tragedy, and with the consequences of attempting to set aside or forget this aspect of our national history” (107).

KAY BONETTI, "Interview with Toni Morrison".⁵⁸⁰

The endings of Hawthorne's and Morrison's romances generate multiple ambiguities that are never easily resolved, which is characteristic of the Gothic. Both authors want to open their stories to the widest possible range of interpretations. As far as Hawthorne's novel is concerned, there has been a great controversy in relation to the optimistic nature of its outcome. Despite the apparent sunniness of its ending, an impending doom seems to pervade it. Some critics have defended its optimism while others have advocated its blackness. There are also those who believe that there is no definite answer, "It is left up to the individual reader to make a democratic decision. Depending on background, beliefs and preferences, there is an ending for everybody [. . .]" (Helten: online).

Some critics think that the sunniness of *Seven Gables* is related to the fact that the writer forced the resolution of his story to content his readers' preferences for a happy ending, including his wife Sophia, who struggled against the gloominess in her husband's work.⁵⁸¹ At that time, not just readers, but also critics demanded that darkness should be mitigated with cheerfulness. Rudolph Von Abele comments that it was Hawthorne's "wish to produce something that [would] please many people by its 'sunniness' and 'optimism'" (1955: 69).⁵⁸² However, some other critics such as Frank Battaglia argue that Hawthorne believed he was writing a finer novel, more fitting to his disposition. As Battaglia writes, in a letter to Fields on January 27, 1851, the author himself claims that he was writing the book he wanted to and he also says that he liked the new novel better than his previous one, "[the book] has met with extraordinary success from that portion of the public to whose judgement it has been submitted, viz. from my wife. I likewise prefer it to *The Scarlet Letter*" (32-328) (1970: 469).⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ These words were quoted in (Cheryl Hall: online). Original text quoted: Kay Bonetti (1983). "Interview with Toni Morrison". Columbia, MO: American Audio Prose Library.

⁵⁸¹ His wife certainly liked it this way, as she wrote to a friend on 27 January 1851. She says about the ending: "There is an 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. How you will enjoy the book,—its depth of wisdom, its high tone, the flowers of Paradise scattered over all the dark places" (Julian Hawthorne: 383).

⁵⁸² Goddu (116) and Michael T. Gilmore (184) argue that the reason for Hawthorne's sentimental endings was economical. Gilmore believes that Hawthorne was dissatisfied with this happy ending: "At one point he writes that the house continued to diffuse a gloom 'which no brightness of the sunshine could dispel' [. . .] he compares his story to 'an owl, bewildered in the daylight' [. . .]" (184). According to Klinkowitz, Hawthorne tried to infuse *Seven Gables* with more cheerfulness, since critics and public had considered his previous novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, too gloomy (397).

⁵⁸³ Frank Battaglia asserts that *Seven Gables* is not meretricious (468). He mentions various letters in which Hawthorne states his conviction that his new romance is a better book, but he did not expect it to be more successful. In a letter to his sister on March 11, Hawthorne says, "The book, I think, has more merit than *The Scarlet Letter*; but it will hardly make so much noise as that" (qtd. Frank Battaglia: 472). In a letter to Horatio Bridge on March 15, 1851, Hawthorne says: "*The House of the Seven Gables*, in my opinion, is better than *The Scarlet Letter*" (qtd. in Frank Battaglia: 69-70). See: Horatio Bridge (1893). *Personal Recollections of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. New York: 125. See other letters quoted in Frank

Whether Hawthorne forced the conclusion of his romance or not, the ending of *Seven Gables* has pleased very few.⁵⁸⁴ Roy Male thinks that the conclusion of *Seven Gables* “degenerate[s] into flimsy farce [. . .]. The feeble ending is, perhaps, as E. M. Forster has suggested, a defect inherent in the novel form, and Hawthorne’s failure here does not seriously lessen his solid achievement in the book” (1967: 440-441). For some critics the sunniness of the story is just apparent. Matthiessen says, “Although Phoebe’s marriage with Holgrave [. . .] is meant finally to transcend the old brutal separation of classes that has hardened the poor family against its oppressors, the reconciliation is somewhat too lightly made” (1967: 374). Kehler also believes that, despite its optimism, “[. . .] there is a new serpent in the new Eden. For, as Hawthorne’s tragic sense told him love, in an imperfect creature, is bound to prove imperfect itself” (152).

Hawthorne’s propensity for “the blackness of darkness” seems to be behind the gloomy and dismal aspect that *Seven Gables* acquires despite his efforts to instill sunniness in it. For Melville, who was Hawthorne’s friend and reader, his world of kindness and sunniness “was really a thin skin over the endemic devilry of man and nature” (qtd. in Buitenhuis 1991: 59-60). He emphasizes the cloudiness of his novel: “You may be witched by his sunlight,—transported by the bright gildings in the skies he builds over you,—but there is the blackness of darkness beyond; and even his bright gildings but fringe and play upon the edges of thunder clouds” (qtd. in Buitenhuis 1991: 60). The letter that Melville wrote to Hawthorne after reading *Seven Gables* shows us the darkness that he saw in the novel: “There is a certain tragic phase of humanity which, in our opinion, was never more powerfully embodied than by Hawthorne. We mean the tragedies of human thought in its own unbiased, native, and profounder workings” (qtd. in Julian Hawthorne: 387-388). In spite of its apparent mild aspect, the problem of this gothic romance, as in *The Scarlet Letter*, is how evil dominates human life through generations. As Melville had written in an earlier review of *Mosses from An Old Manse*, “[. . .] this great power of blackness in him [Hawthorne] derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. For, in certain moods, no man can weigh this world, without throwing in

Battaglia (470-471): a letter to Fields; a letter written in late April to Evert Duyckinck; a letter to Horatio Bridge on July 22, 1851; a letter to Fields on May 23, 1851. George Parson Lathrop also states on two occasions that Hawthorne preferred *The House of the Seven Gables* to *The Scarlet Letter*. Lathrop (1876). *Study of Hawthorne*. Boston and New York: 228.

⁵⁸⁴ Many other critics such as Henry James, George Woodberry, Herbert Gorman, Mark Van Doren and Hyatt Waggoner have made objections to the resolution of Hawthorne’s romance. For a list of critics objecting to the novel’s conclusion, see: Lawrence Buell (1986). *New England Literary Culture: From Revolution through Renaissance*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 446-447.

something, somehow like Original Sin, to strike the uneven balance" (qtd. in Buitenhuis 1991: 59-60).

Hawthorne's story at least apparently presents a paradox between the sunny ending that makes us believe in progress and hope and the moral of the romance ("the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief" (Gables: 29) that makes us despair of any escape from the sinful past, as the curse also states.⁵⁸⁵ Michael Bell argues that Hawthorne's conclusion "ignores the tragic implications" of the author's statement about "the perpetuity of evil" and his insistence on the "cyclical nature of history" (220-221): "It is a truth [. . .] that no great mistake, whether acted or endured, in our mortal sphere, is ever really set right" (Gables: 313). Hansen points out that the "sudden destruction of a curse" so "powerful for generations" is not credible, and finds neither Holgrave or Phoebe "convincing enough" as heroes to defeat sin: "Circumscribed by the moral unreliability of man and God's lack of interest in the state of earthly things, this world has no room for a savior or a saving device. Without such a savior, however, the gap between sin and history and between historical change cannot be bridged and a novel trying to achieve exactly this, must inevitably lack thematic unity" (99).

Another reason given by critics is that the love scenes lack love: they are very underdeveloped and economically treated.⁵⁸⁶ Nevertheless, this deficiency does not change the meaning of the conclusion. As Helten states, the young couple's espousal follows the logic of the narrative, "That marriage links them with their families' past and lets them take their place in the line. This gives hope for the future" (online). Critics such as Waggoner, Corrente and Helten, have considered Phoebe and Holgrave's love and marriage as forced in the novel and without any sort of preparation. However, it is also true that the signs of love have been underestimated. Consequently, these critics find it difficult to believe in the redemptive power of love and in the validity of the hope that the ending predicts. Another argument that has been used to invalidate the sunny ending of *Seven Gables* is that Phoebe is an idealized character, too good to be true. In fact, some critics, such as Alfred J. Levy, think that Hawthorne fell into occasional sentimentality in the treatment of the young woman; however, he also believes that this

⁵⁸⁵ Francis Battaglia does not think this is a story of the inevitable consequences of sin, but a story of retribution (587). Battaglia mentions some references where Hawthorne implies that the heritage of evil will expire and thus provides us with the possibility of atonement (587): Holgrave says to Phoebe in Chapter XIV that it is his conviction that "the end draws nigh". He also uses the word "consummation" to refer to the retribution reaching its highest peak.

⁵⁸⁶ Waggoner suggests that the author's devotion for his wife may have made him consider it unnecessary to elaborate love scenes in greater depth (1967: 413). Linda Corrente agrees with him (qtd. in Helten: online). See: Linda Corrente (1985). Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*. Woodbury NY: Barron's Educational Series, Inc..

is not sufficient reason to discredit her role in the romance. Even though her unrealism (the other characters are more human) might seem objectionable, this approach can be partly justified by the parallelism between Hawthorne's wife and Phoebe. According to Levy, Phoebe is an ideal character as well as a real one; she exists on both levels (466).

Some critics find it difficult or impossible to accept Holgrave's conversion from his earlier radical position to his present conservatism, a transformation that "comes much too neatly, and is scarcely prepared for in the body of the book" (Abele 1967: 395). They do not believe that the reformer's radical humanitarianism changes as a consequence of Judge Pyncheon's death or "the couple's love and its mollifying effect on Holgrave is not a *deus ex machina*, an artificial close gratuitously provided by the author" (Francis Battaglia: 584). They think that he becomes a conservative through the influence of the fortune he will acquire when he marries Phoebe, thus invalidating the hopeful ending. However, other critics, such as Alfred J. Levy (465-466) and Beebe (11-13), consider that Holgrave's repudiation of his early radical position is justified. They believe that there is a consistent line of development and maturation in the daguerreotypist.⁵⁸⁷ Another reason argued is that Holgrave and Phoebe's union cannot bring redemption to both aristocratic and plebeian families. Neither do their love and marriage "guarantee everlasting immunity from the pitfalls inherent in the human condition. Rather, what the Biblical metaphor of Eden portrays is the essentially frail and fallible nature of the human condition itself" (Kleiman: 301). This new life does not exclude new sins. Griffith points out that the sunny conclusion of *The Seven Gables* threatens to rob the moral drama of its significance and sacrifices the moral depths of his best tales and novels: "If we are to presume that a kind of blanket amnesty is obtained through the marriage of Phoebe and Holgrave (Pyncheon and Maule), then our belief in the regenerative capacities of sin and, most especially, in a personal struggle for atonement is instantly negated" (393).⁵⁸⁸

Another line of criticism has considered the ending of *Seven Gables* essentially negative because the money Clifford and Hepzibah inherit is still ill-gotten. At the end of the romance the entire company leaves the old mansion to live in a house that Jaffrey had built with his tainted wealth. As Hawthorne stated in his notebooks, "to

⁵⁸⁷ For Brook Thomas, Phoebe, a modern-day Eve, entralls Holgrave and makes him abandon his ahistorical vision of reform, the only real possibility of change: the abandonment of the American belief in innocence. Holgrave led by Phoebe initiates a new life within history and community (209). Other critics analyze Holgrave's "early" change: Darrel Abel (1953). "Hawthorne's House of Tradition". *SAQ*, LII: 576-577; Clark Griffith (392-393).

⁵⁸⁸ However, Michael Bell argues that the "the romance's conventional marriage plot asserts that the future can be free of the past [. . .] that progress is possible—that the influence of the past can be left behind" (1971: 220).

inherit a great fortune. To inherit a great misfortune” (qtd. in Dillingham: 459).⁵⁸⁹ Rudolph Von Abele considers that when the reformer receives the Judge’s wealth, he becomes debased and dishonest: “Holgrave’s capitulation to Jaffrey’s money is, however, nonetheless abrupt, surprising, dishonorable, for all that [. . .] in a democratic society not only the aristocratic but the artistic tempers must become corrupted by the power of economics [. . .]” (1967: 400).⁵⁹⁰ By receiving Judge Pyncheon’s fortune, the young reformer and Phoebe commit their ancestors’ mistake. His wealth can only bring them misfortunes:

For the three chief characters of the novel, the ending is anything but happy, in spite of appearances. The Judge dies isolated from man and God because of his greed. Hepzibah will again be a “lady”, isolated from the “united struggle”, and Clifford will no longer be forced to see life as it is; he can now view only the Beautiful. (Dillingham: 459)

Some critics have wondered if the curse has really lifted since the house does not collapse, or even whether things are going to be different in the new house: “But why should not the fine new house in the suburbs generate the same evils the old house did? There is, after all, even a new fortune to go with it—or rather, an old, tainted one, newly acquired. Must we then read the ending as ironic? Or should we simply say that it is unconvincing?” (Alfred Marks 1967a: 411).⁵⁹¹ As they see it, the departure from the House of the Seven Gables is not a break. As Emerson said about the mania for travel, “I carry my giant with me wherever I go”.⁵⁹² Kehler also believes that the closing lines intimate that there is no guarantee for the future (152). Even though Alice Pyncheon’s harpsichord gives a farewell as she floats to heaven, it is just to the “present joy” of the departing lovers. Maule’s kaleidoscopic pictures show the course of the future and the Pyncheon elm whispers prophecies, however “no one is around to view the pictures, and the whispers are ‘unintelligible’” (152).

As we can see, there is a strong ambiguity in the ending of this romance, due mainly to the curse and moral of the story. Despite its many hopeful elements, it seems that Hawthorne did not believe that one could start anew. Our present life incorporates

⁵⁸⁹ Abele also thinks that when Holgrave and Phoebe inherit the Pyncheon’s fortune, they inherit the troubles that have pestered their family for centuries. Their departure is only “a symbolic shift of scene, a break with the past of which the house has been the chiefest emblem, is in fact no such thing” (1967: 396). On the other hand, in Matthiessen’s opinion, the implications of the young couple’s inheritance go beyond Hawthorne’s experience and imagination. The evil influence of wealth would continue in this democratic society as it had in the previous aristocratic era of Colonel Pyncheon: “Hawthorne overlooked the fact that he was sowing all over again the same seed of evil” (1967: 375).

⁵⁹⁰ Francis J. Battaglia claims that Abele suggests that Holgrave marries Phoebe for her money (59, 65, 66). However, when we learn of the death of Jaffrey’s son, the young couple is already betrothed and Phoebe is not wealthy yet (589).

⁵⁹¹ Edgar A. Dryden expresses dissatisfaction with the ending of *Seven Gables*, since “Holgrave and Phoebe, after all, do not build their dream house. They move from one constructed by Colonel Pyncheon into one built by his descendant, the Judge, in effect trading in an old ghost for a new one” (1977: 89).

⁵⁹² Emerson writes about traveling in his *Essays*, “Self-Reliance” (1841).

the evil of our past errors and that is why the house is not destroyed: the past cannot be forgotten. As far as Clifford and Hepzibah are concerned, life will never be the same. They will never recover their youth or lost time. Past wrongs have left their mark on them. In fact, and despite its sunny ending, *Seven Gables* is as a whole a black gothic romance, as *The Scarlet Letter* is. Along with Knadler, I think that “despite the accommodating ending of *The House of Seven Gables* [. . .] he [Hawthorne] failed to radiate a very sunny temperament within his plot” (285).⁵⁹³ In my view, Hawthorne had a gloomy and shadowy disposition throughout his life that he transmits to his novels and cannot avoid. That is why, in *Seven Gables*, he makes efforts to lighten and provide a happy ending to his romance; however, he does not completely succeed.⁵⁹⁴ Evil shadows this gothic novel and eclipses its sunshine: “What is there so ponderous in evil, that a thumb's bigness of it should outweigh the mass of things not evil, which were heaped into the other scale” (Gables: 231).

Openness is at the core of *Beloved*. At least in part, this is due to the oral quality of Morrison's narrative, her embracement of the African American tradition of storytelling. In an interview with Christina Davis the writer states: “You don't end a story in the oral tradition—you can have the little message at the end, your little moral, but the ambiguity is deliberate because it doesn't end, it's an ongoing thing and the reader or the listener is in it and you have to THINK” (232). Morrison seems to understand storytelling as a never-ending process. Cutter claims about *Jazz*:

Reading becomes an infinite process—not a stone dropped into a pond, but an ever-expanding series of circles radiating out from a center, a text, an interpretation, a reader. And this process is continued in Morrison's next novel, *Paradise* (1998), which also contains intertextual references to the story of *Beloved/Wild*—hints that expand the fictional universe Morrison is crafting while simultaneously encouraging us to read and reread, create and recreate, this universe. (online)

Her novels, Morrison says, have the “quality of hunger and disturbance [of spirituals and jazz] that never ends [. . .]. Jazz always keeps you on the edge [. . .]. There is no final chord [. . .] a long chord, but no final chord” (McKay 1983: 429). It is this affinity between her writing and black music that defines her fiction. It seems that emotional closure is not compatible with black artistic sensibility. Morrison argues that she is,

⁵⁹³ Knadler comments that Catharine Sedgwick, in her review of the novel, compared it to a morbid tour through the Worcester asylum: “The book is an affliction. It affects one like a passage through the wards of an insane asylum” (285).

⁵⁹⁴ Klinkowitz believes that Hawthorne regrets his blackness, as his comment on *The Dolliver Romance* proves: “I wish God had given me the faculty of writing a sunshiny book” (400). Hawthorne expressed similar ideas in a letter he wrote to Fields from England (qtd. in Klinkowitz: 399). In a reply to Duyckinck's review, Hawthorne seemed conscious that he did not accomplish his aims to write a cheerful romance, because, while writing it, “the gloom of the past threw its shadow along the reader's pathway” (qtd. in Buitenhuis 1991: 58).

[. . .] simply trying to recreate something of an old art form in [my] books—the something that defines what makes a book ‘black’. And that has nothing to do with whether the people in the book are black or not. The open-ended quality that is sometimes problematic in the novel form reminds [me] of the uses to which stories are put in the black community. The stories are constantly being retold, constantly being imagined within a framework. (McKay 1983: 427)

Morrison takes *Beloved's* openness to the extreme when she continues with the character of the revenant in her following novel, *Jazz*.⁵⁹⁵ However, this time her presence can be rationally explained. In *Jazz*, a woman named Wild gives birth to a child, Joe, in 1873, the same year *Beloved* vanishes. When he asks about his own parents, he is told: “O honey, they disappeared without a trace” (*Jazz*: 124). Joe believes that “Trace” is his last name: “Joe’s name is the trace of *Beloved* in *Jazz*, the reminder of a presence that could not be contained” (Cutter: online). There are other details that suggest that *Beloved* and Joe Trace’s mother may be the same person.⁵⁹⁶ *Beloved's* presence in *Jazz* makes the reader reread and reinterpret her. However, as Cutter points out, “you will never know [if *Beloved* is a ghost or a real woman], because closure and certainty is death for *Beloved*, for reading itself. The openness of *Beloved* is therefore enhanced by the way Morrison puts meaning back into play in *Jazz*” (online).

There is a strong ambiguity in the ending of *Beloved*. As Cutter points out, Morrison creates “a work that is, in both its lexical and aural features, infinite, plural, and open” (online). On one hand, despite the fact that Sethe is broken spiritually and physically at the conclusion of the novel, we may assume a happy ending because of Paul D’s return. We may think that, because of his blessedness, he will be able to continue a healing process, which will produce a promising future. However, Carden believes that the ending may be interpreted as a return to the patriarchal order: we are left with a strong man bending over the bed of a weakened woman, promising redemption in a space safe for domesticity (online).⁵⁹⁷ She points out that “*Beloved*

⁵⁹⁵ Cutter says that “Morrison brings back the character of *Beloved* as a human being—or seems to—in *Jazz*, forcing readers to reexamine the previous novel and the previous novel’s conclusion [. . .]. The interplay between *Jazz* and *Beloved* rips open the sutures a reader may have imposed over the ending of *Beloved*” (online).

⁵⁹⁶ When Joe Trace’s mother, who is simply called “Wild”, is first seen, she is depicted as “a naked berry-black woman [. . .] covered with mud and leaves [. . .] in her hair. Her eyes are large and terrible” (*Jazz*: 144). The pregnancy, the color of her skin, her nakedness and her haunting eyes all connect Wild with *Beloved*. She is also extremely scared of people and her language skills are minimum. Besides, in her conversation with Gloria Naylor, Morrison describes how she “extend[s] her [*Beloved's*] life, you know, her search, her quest, all the way through as long as I care to go, into the twenties where it switches to this other girl. Therefore [in *Jazz*] I have a New York uptown-Harlem milieu in which to put his love story, but *Beloved* will be there also” (208).

⁵⁹⁷ Lori Askeland states that Paul D wishes to be the “head” of the family, and Sethe “the woman he wanted to protect” (*Beloved*: 132, 127): “That is the domestic ideal, the patriarchal ideal that has always haunted the house” (175). However, John Duvall argues that the “cry of the community of women” may not end patriarchal oppression, but it serves to rethink the categories of patriarchy (qtd. in Booher: 123).

ends twice: first with the construction of new domestic arrangements at 124 Bluestone Road, then with the deconstruction of *Beloved*. That these two endings with their contradictory movements—coming together and flying apart—sit so separately together indicates the novel's ambivalent investment in the heterosexual couple as the site where history assumes its shape and meaning" (online). Carden sees incompatibility between the dynamics of romance we can see in Paul D's return, which promises a possible family and thus a potential for final and complete redemption, and the untold story of Beloved and her unborn child. Morrison does not do anything to reconcile both endings but put them side by side drawing the readers' attention to the dilemmas of American history for blacks (online). She also thinks that it is not at all clear that Sethe can claim and value herself as her best thing (online).⁵⁹⁸

The past which comes back in the shape of a revenant seems to go away with its disappearance, hinting at a partial redemption. However, Carden argues that, on a realistic level, the ending cannot be that hopeful. The banishment of a pregnant, naked and solitary black girl, in the southern Ohio of the 1870, recalls Sethe's escape to freedom and delivery of Denver, but, unlike Sethe, Beloved has no help and no family to meet. Her fate seems at least uncertain: "Beloved's pregnancy signals not new domestic beginnings but rather a continuation of past-ness; the loss of another mother and child represents the excess of recovery in unremitting namelessness and homelessness. History is pregnant, but will deliver a futurity without a sense of hope" (online). Emily M. Budick claims that the gaps left by a tragic past are not easily filled: "recovering the missing [child] [. . .] reconstituting in the present what was lost in the past, will not, this book insists, restore order and logic to lives that have been interrupted by such loss" (qtd. in Kimberly Davis: online).⁵⁹⁹

Finally, and one of the most hopeful elements of *Beloved*, Denver has started a new life: she is the embodiment of the blacks' future. Peter A. Muckley believes that:

Sethe's [life] offers some hopes for the future—founded on the transracial love and endurance of women. While the unforgiving past must always haunt us—as Beloved haunts 124, as slavery haunts the ghettos of the U.S.A. today—the

Original text quoted: John Duvall (1991). "Authentic Ghost Stories: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, and *Beloved*". *Faulkner Journal* IV (Fall): 96.

⁵⁹⁸ Kimberly Davis argues that after her attempt to kill Mr. Bodwin, Sethe is hardly healed, but, on the contrary, she "has resigned herself to die rather than live" (online). Pérez-Torres thinks that "despite her attempts to assert agency by becoming a speaking subject, Sethe finds herself subject to the tyranny of history" (1999: 135).

⁵⁹⁹ Original text quoted: Emily M. Budick (1992). "Absence, Loss, and the Space of History in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*". *American Quarterly* 48, 2 (Summer): 117-138. In a more optimistic approach, Trudier Harris suggests that Beloved's disappearance might also be due to the fact that she has finally understood what Sethe had tried, unsuccessfully, to explain with words: that her actions were the result of her love and the consequence of her impulse to protect her children from the pains of slavery (1991: 163).

combined efforts of poor whites and poor blacks may deliver the beautiful future hope that is a Denver.(online)⁶⁰⁰

On the other hand, it seems difficult to believe that the haunting of slavery, symbolized by 124's ghost, will completely stop. Occasionally, the rustle of Beloved's skirt hushes and her footprints come and go behind 124. As Carden asserts: "Beloved's simultaneous presence and absence figures the ache of the concealed wound of the past throbbing at the edge of awareness and articulation, a wound that, if 'touched,' would overwhelm the present and dismantle possibilities for the future" (online).⁶⁰¹ At the end of the story, the narrator repeats insistently, "they forgot her", maybe signaling that memories can never be "disremembered and unaccounted for" (Beloved: 275). In fact, until then the community has failed "to realize that forgetting, not communal memory, is the condition of traumatic return" (Barnett: 85). In the end, the only thing left is the 'weather': "The rest is weather. Not the breath of the disremembered and unaccounted for, but wind in the leaves [. . .]. Just weather" (Beloved: 175). Goldner suggests that the ghost's breath is associated with the weather and, this way, "traces of slavery enter the very air we must breathe" (online).

Like Hawthorne, Morrison ends her novel with the word of the title, "Beloved": "The last word of the text merges with the title of the novel. Together they form an inscription and create a sense of finality and hope for renewal even a tombstone could not provide: Beloved" (Pérez-Torres 1999: 198). As the novel closes with the revenant's name, it seems that Morrison does not want the tragedy of slavery to be completely forgotten. The consequences and effects of such an unfair and cruel system cannot be easily mended: "Her diffuse, multilayered, and unresolvable 'story' cannot be deployed to demonstrate national progress or to display African American recovery. Instead, she continues to haunt all locales of normalcy" (Carden: online).

We are told several times by the end of the narrative that Beloved's "is not a story to pass on" (Beloved: 274-275). Many have seen the paradoxical nature of these words. According to Morrison, it is "like a warning to Black people". This is not a story to deliver to the next generation, but neither is it a story to pass by (Carabí 1993: 111). If you live in the past, you cannot go on with your life. But, at the same time, the past

⁶⁰⁰ Other elements have been argued to state the sunniness of *Beloved's* ending. First, Sethe, despite being beaten and exhausted, is able to give birth to her daughter Denver, the embodiment of hope for 124's women; Sixo's woman, who is pregnant, can escape. Cuder thinks that "Finally, it is likely that Sethe's turning her violence against a white man, who stands as the ultimate cause of slavery, has somehow put events right" (43). See: <http://www.luminarium.org/contemporay/tonimorrison/muckley.htm> (consulted 17.04.2007).

⁶⁰¹ Osagie (online) and Booher (129) state how Beloved's disappearance does not completely exorcise the past. Corey states that "Beloved remains in the background as a haunting presence who reminds the community of those 'Sixty million and more,' untold stories of slavery and the Middle Passage" (qtd. in Bloom: 47).

must be confronted to move on. Pérez-Torres argues that “‘Pass on’ signifies both rejection and acceptance. *Beloved’s* story cannot be allowed to occur again, but neither can it be forgotten, rejected or ‘passed’ on” (1999:181).⁶⁰² Linda Hutcheon’s description of the postmodern historiographic novel coincides with *Beloved’s* ending: “the past is not something to be escaped, avoided, or controlled [. . .] the past is something with which we must come to terms and such a confrontation involves an acknowledgment of limitation as well as power” (qtd. in Kimberly Davis: online).⁶⁰³ The ending of *Beloved* oscillates between the wish to forget and the need to remember.⁶⁰⁴ Redemption cannot be complete for the blacks. As Ochoa argues, Sethe’s healing from her sins and African Americans’ reconciliation with the ghosts of slavery are necessarily imperfect (online). Neither can the past be completely erased in *Seven Gables*, where the mansion stands as a warning of the wrongs of colonialism. Both Gothic narratives suggest redemption, while they insinuate, in their ambiguous endings, the impossibility of completely getting rid of the guilt of the colonial past.

⁶⁰² Other authors interpret Morrison’s words in different ways. According to Hinson, these words refer to the fact that the oppressors’ violence cannot be passed on (162). However, Reyes believes that Morrison recreates Garner’s story “as one to pass on, to give and bury” (78).

⁶⁰³ Original text quoted: Linda Hutcheon (1989). *The Politics of Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge: 58. Dudley expresses similar views (299-300).

⁶⁰⁴ Many critics have emphasized the need to forget and remember in *Beloved*. Among others are: Carol H. Henderson (91), Rushdy (1998: 142) and Grewal (1998: 116-117).

CONCLUSION

Throughout this study I have tried to show that, despite their very different circumstances, Hawthorne and Morrison share the essential characteristics of the Gothic. The differences between their Gothic visions lie in three important aspects: gender, race and time; this last inextricably united to the two previous traits. Inevitably, as Morrison claims, "there is culture and both gender and 'race' inform and are informed by it" (Morrison 1992: 4). On one hand, Hawthorne does not completely fit into the male tradition. Neither can his approach be considered as feminine. Despite that, women are quite important in his whole fiction and he deals with some relevant facets of the Female Gothic, such as the nineteenth-century spinster's social and psychological status or the happy ending and the conventional marriage of Western comedy, which was typical of the early feminine formula of the Gothic. On the other hand, unlike *Seven Gables*, *Beloved* can be characterized as a Female Gothic narrative. When writing her romance, Morrison had two important objectives in mind: "the exploration of the black woman's sense of self and the imaginative recovery of black women's history" (Mae Henderson: 83). Bernard Bell points out:

The metaphors of personal and communal wholeness in the text heighten the psychological realism of its womanist themes of black kinship, motherhood, sisterhood, and love. Besides the structural analogue to a woman's natural reproductive cycle the text frequently and dramatically highlights metaphors and metonyms of the agony and ecstasy, despair and hope, of loving, birthing, nurturing, and bonding. Heart, breasts, milk, butter, water, and trees [. . .]. (56)

Morrison's whole novel is presented from a feminine perspective, a "fantasy space in which to explore women's roles and the feminine" (Weissberg: 106).⁶⁰⁵ She delves into

⁶⁰⁵ According to Mae Henderson, "The images of interiority that she [Morrison] privileges are specifically female, associated with the interior rather than the exterior life, with the persona rather than the public representation of experience. Ultimately, such a metaphor suggests that the object of our understanding is inside rather than outside and can be reached only by what Morrison describes as 'literary archeology'" (94). For more information about notions of interiority and exteriority, see Kaja Silverman (1988). *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

the conflict and quest of the female black self in the patriarchal culture, emphasizing females' creativity and subversion. Through her women she gives an alternative version of American identity and history.

Morrison creates “[. . .] a Looking-Glass World where ancient assumptions about the ‘male’ and the ‘female’, the ‘Line of Good’ and the ‘Line of Evil’, are suspended or so transformed as to reveal an entirely different world, exposing the perils lurking in the father’s corridors of power” (Anne Williams: 107). Unlike Hawthorne, she enhances sisterhood, a typical feminine Gothic theme, in the face of the injustices of the patriarchal system. Her story shows solidarity between black women, but also among females from different races: “Denver is named after Amy Denver of Boston, she is thus a link of love and solidarity between the white and the black worlds, the common sisterhood of the marginalized” (Muckley: online).⁶⁰⁶ Morrison is also highly concerned with motherhood, central in the Female Gothic tradition as well as in the Male Gothic tradition: “Maternity becomes a means to acknowledge femininity and humanity” (Patton: 150). *Beloved* shows how while slavery sought to eradicate the black maternal role, it engendered, instead, a matrilineal ancestry, in which the woman takes precedence in the domestic sphere. Morrison deals extensively with the severed pattern of the Demeter-Persephone myth, characteristic of the Female Gothic, a daughter who is separated from her mother and her consequent painful feeling of abandonment. She depicts a consuming maternal presence and expresses anxiety and ambiguity towards motherhood, which takes on Gothic tones in Sethe’s bond with her daughter-ghost. Maternity threatens to annihilate the mother’s self. Mae Henderson considers that,

In a radical reconception of history and culture, her ritual of birthing figures motherhood as a primary metaphor of history and culture. The postdiluvian connotation of “breaking of the water” historicizes the event and, at the same time, signifies a maternal delivery that becomes a means of ‘deliverance’ from the dominant conception of history as a white/paternal metaphor [. . .]. By shifting the dominant metaphor from white to black and from paternity (embodied in the slave-master) to maternity (embodied in the black female slave), Morrison has shifted meaning and value. (94-95)

Morrison shows how, in slavery, the concept of the black woman is different from that of the white woman. The black female cannot be pure or virtuous, as Phoebe is. In contrast to the white woman’s concealed or hinted sexual drives, Morrison makes no attempt to deny or hide her female characters’ sexual desires, since the black woman does not have to address the standards of the nineteenth-century white cult of womanhood. Neither does the black female play the spiritual role of the white one. As a

⁶⁰⁶ As Lucille Fultz says: “[*Beloved*] lays out the racial and class dynamics between Amy and Sethe and allows us to interpret these dynamics as momentary hurdles, soon diminished by the conjunction of gender and need, played out in a sphere where both race and class lose their significance” (32).

result of her racial status, the black woman's relationship with institutionalized forms of love—matrimony, family, kinships—is different from the traditional Female Gothic. In contrast to women's anxieties over patriarchal social arrangements, especially marriage, Morrison deals with the black female's desire to ritualize the couple's union so as to differentiate it from animal mating. In spite of their strong differences, Hawthorne's and Morrison's heroines share some traits. Their lives are told as narratives of education: the heroines' plight leads to the development of their consciousness and their growth toward self-confidence. They take their places in the household, while they also work outside it. Among their main tasks are those traditionally assigned to women: nurturing and nesting.

While Hawthorne deals with the events of his story from a typically protestant and Puritan point of view, Morrison, besides her definite feminine approach, chooses a genuine black American perspective. As Britton claims "She deals with blackness on several levels that many critics believe are beyond the nineteenth-century symbolic and allegorical perspectives of Hawthorne" (9). Morrison wanted "to write literature that was irrevocably Black, not because its characters were, or because I was, but because it took as its creative task and sought as its credentials those recognized and verifiable principles of Black art" (Morrison 1992: 6). She attempts to find ways to create the "presence and voice through which to articulate blacks' experience and history. The subversion of the monarchical rule of Enlightenment thought which discredits alternatives, multiplicitous representations, or varying knowledges appears essential for African American intellectuals who would empower themselves to create a 'radical black subjectivity' and identity outside of hegemonic prescriptions" (Fuston-White: online). Thus Morrison fights against what Cornel West calls the "fundamental condition of black culture—that of [. . .] invisibility and namelessness" (qtd. in Fuston-White: online) in contrast to the dominant white western culture. The Gothic genre allows her to disrupt the hegemony of the dominant western culture and dissolve its foundations, creating a specific African American subjectivity.

I have tried to show that despite their essentially contrasted perspectives, Hawthorne and Morrison merge in many and very significant elements of the Gothic narrative. Both writers keep certain key elements of the Gothic tradition, even though they have their own very personal and unique approach to the genre. According to Wesley Britton, there is a similar symbolic imagery between Morrison's romance and those writers who worked within the traditional canon, such as Hawthorne: "[. . .] the 'Black Gothic' motifs in *Beloved* reveal a continuing literary mapping of the 'symbolic geography' begun by nineteenth-century white Romantics" (7). While, as Buitenhuis says: "Hawthorne works brilliantly with chiaroscuro in *The House of the Seven Gables*.

The dark old house and the darkened characters are contrasted with light [. . .]” (1991: 9); in *Beloved*, Morrison follows in his footsteps exploring the twilight effects of slavery and its aftermath. We cannot talk about black literature as forming a new and separate literary tradition. Quoting Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Britton says: “Virtually no one, it seems clear, believes [. . .] black authors cohere into a tradition because authors share innate characteristics but rather because these authors ‘read and revise one another, address similar themes, and repeat the cultural and linguistic codes of a common symbolic geometry’” (8). As Anna Sonser claims, in *Beloved*, Morrison plays with canonical texts, “the result of which is a repositioning, or at least a reevaluation, both of traditional and contemporary gothic novels” (10). Her rewriting is transgressive, since her “novels reveal the gothic landscape of subjectivity as defined by socio-economic and political imperatives” (Sonser: 8).

Morrison’s and Hawthorne’s Gothic novels address American history and its power to haunt: “[. . .] the entire tradition of American Gothic can be conceptualized as the attempt to invoke ‘the face of the tenant’—the specter of Otherness that haunts the house of national narrative—in a tropics that locates the traumatic return of the historical preterite in an allegorical preterited mode” (Savoy: 13-14). Their cultural emphasis lies in its recapture of history, which helps to explain present situations: “how the past continues to shape the psychic realities of the present” (Clemens: 4). As Anne Williams writes, “all these tales about the power of the past (especially the deeds of one’s ancestors) to affect the present symbolically foreshadow (and express within the Symbolic) the basic psychoanalytic principle that the present self is shaped within the structures of the past” (90). Their Gothic fictions “allow one to come to terms with the real world through stories about the past—about the origins and history of self and community” (Anne Williams: 89). Through their Gothic stories they establish a unique relationship with the past both in individual, familial and historical terms. Neither Hawthorne nor Morrison can understand America as a “New World” or the life of the American as that of the new Adam. They cannot consider life and history as just beginning. Morrison could not accept the forgetfulness of the American society, which refuses to remember the legacy of slavery. They both perceived the power of our ancestors’ misdeeds to haunt the present.

Seven Gables and *Beloved* depict the nightmares of American history. Their stories are deeply imbued with historical concerns, whether it is Morrison’s depiction of the Middle Passage, slavery and its aftermath or Hawthorne’s picture of a New England which is leaving behind its colonial legacy. As Britton says: “Like Hawthorne exploring the human condition and individuals ‘as they are framed by and developed through particular social and historical contexts’ Morrison and other black authors

merge psychological and historical contexts to investigate continuing truth” (8).⁶⁰⁷ These two romances, “Instead of fleeing reality” register “its culture’s contradictions, presenting a distorted, not a disengaged, version of reality” (Goddu: 3). Both Hawthorne and Morrison are not only concerned about history, but also about the exploration of the nature of time. Past events recur through a circular experience of time, a circularity which subverts a linear account of history. The Freudian principle of “the return of the repressed” is at the center of that recurrence. The circular plots of *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* depict the timelessness of the Gothic world, which becomes an expression of the subconscious.

Hawthorne’s and Morrison’s Gothic romances explore the social conflicts of nineteenth-century America, being the Gothic, as Cohen-Safir has argued, a genre which has frequently pointed to “social evils” (100). Hawthorne’s narrative, like white American Gothic in general, is impregnated by the hauntings of the Negro, even though class struggle takes central stage. The colonial system, inherited by the Pyncheon family, forms the roots of the class struggle which originates the primal sin. In *Seven Gables* the presence of African American aspects is very moderate. Hawthorne deals, through gothic elements, with distress over race: the anxiety that blacks inspired as the Other and their disturbing maleness. As Toni Morrison comments about the Africanist presence in American literature, Hawthorne symbolically associates the conflict and distinctions of classes with race: “As a disabling virus within literary discourse, Africanism has become, in the Eurocentric tradition [. . .] both a way of talking about and a way of policing matters of class, sexual license, and repression, formations and exercises of power, and meditations on ethics and accountability” (1992: 7).

On the other hand, unlike Hawthorne, Morrison focuses on ethnic issues, as is characteristic of postcolonial gothic literature. *Beloved* is a gothic representation of the history of slavery, the most abhorrent consequence of colonialism, and its aftermath. David Dudley writes that, through her novel, Morrison “uses and refashions Gothic materials to uncover buried truths of the African-American experience” (299). She gives a complex vision of slavery, which includes indentured white servants, who, like the blacks, were oppressed by the unfair dominant white patriarchal system. Morrison centers on the psychological marks of enslavement on ex-slaves and free blacks, who still live in a situation of semi-colonialism. As Britton says, “Hawthorne’s tradition of examining guilt and the haunting presence of evil [. . .] serves as an important fountainhead of allegory and literary patterns from which *Beloved* draws in very clear ways, paralleling and supporting the Africanist themes central to the novel” (11).

⁶⁰⁷ Again, Britton is quoting John Engell (1991). “Hawthorne and the Politics of Slavery.” *Studies in the Novel* 40: 46.

Both Hawthorne and Morrison are highly concerned with the interest of nineteenth-century colonial society in science. The two of them share anxieties about Western rationality and present in gothic overtones the threat of science, questioning the scientists' ethical purpose. As Ellen Goldner says, "*Beloved* (re)works gothic conventions into a full, alternative discourse which finds the scientized master discourse that presides over slavery to be Other" (online). In *Beloved* Morrison deals with the scientist's Faustian curiosity as Hawthorne had already done before in some of his best tales, "The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter". Her scientist, Schoolteacher, is an example of how science was allied with the economic and political system in his use of pseudo-scientific methods, which justified slavery. Hawthorne's Faustian figure, Holgrave, differs from the slaveholder. It is his cold observation that distances himself from humankind and makes it impossible for him to understand life. On the other hand, Morrison focuses, as Pérez-Torres claims, on elements of rural and pre-industrial life in black America (1999: 183), while Hawthorne shows a decayed colonial society in transition, a rural America, which is undergoing swift changes due to the technological developments of the time. He conveys the pastoral myth as menaced by progress, expressing ambiguity toward two emblematic inventions of the industrialized era: the daguerreotype and the railroad. Hawthorne suggests some hope in progress and industrialization; however, Morrison ferociously attacks the racist use of science and its endorsement of the slave trade.

In *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* the supernatural becomes the expression of the past haunting the living, the expression of the legacy of colonialism, and the projection of the characters' concealed guilt: "American society is haunted by its own past crimes, from which its victims rise up as ghosts" (Clemens: 191). Ghosts come from the past: "The Ghosts—whether real or imaginary—derive from the past passions, past deeds, past crimes of the family identified with this structure [the haunted house]" (Anne Williams: 45). Ghostly visitations are central to African communities and even though they have been a marginal part of Western culture, especially male culture, they are at the core of white popular beliefs and the Gothic genre. In fact, women's ghost stories in America have traditionally dealt with the blurring between natural and supernatural domains. Specters come back from the dead to deal with their unfinished business. Their return has a somehow therapeutic and cathartic function, "the play of gothic healing".⁶⁰⁸ "gothic's nature is the psychosocial function of nurture, of healing and transforming" (Veeder: 21).

⁶⁰⁸ William Veeder (33).

Hawthorne's discrete way of dealing with supernatural phenomena contrasts with Morrison's radical approach. In fact, Morrison, as Goldner argues, makes "every dimension of Sethe's experience reverberate[s] with the claims of the ghost she has taken into her house and into herself" (online). Her version of reality challenges the limits of normalcy established by the white male dominant cultural system. In *Seven Gables* the ghosts, such as the Pyncheons' parade or Alice Pyncheon, are ethereal and harmless visitations, insubstantial energies which remain and endure in the environment as a result of the impact of traumatic experiences. On the other hand, Morrison's paranormal phenomena moves from the baby ghost's haunting of the beginning of the story, a poltergeist, which dynamically affects the physical world, frequently spiteful, to her "reincarnation" after Paul D's exorcism. *Beloved*, the embodiment of those unaccounted and disremembered ghosts of slavery, comes back to take revenge for her violent and traumatic death. Morrison creates in *Beloved* a very complex and powerful symbol. As Britton argues, it is through "her 'social context'", as also happens in *Seven Gables*, that *Beloved* "reflects 'higher' or 'eternal' truths" 'because the imaginative elements of the text are part of the social history' shaped by and explored in the text" (8).⁶⁰⁹ As Mathew Maule is for the Pyncheons, *Beloved* symbolizes the return of the repressed which defies the patriarchal order. Morrison envisions "the empowerment of the powerless by death" (Carpenter and Kolmar: 18). After the communal exorcism, as in *Seven Gables*, *Beloved* becomes a vestigial energy trapped in the environment forever, symbolizing that slavery cannot be erased from memory and will always haunt its survivors and their posterity. Both authors develop the world of the unconscious through their paranormal phenomena, using the Gothic to express the "unspeakable" about the legacy of colonialism: "the unspeakable—the overriding theme of every Gothic novel. Past crimes, patriarchal culture, cruel motives [. . .] the unspeakable drives the plot forward" (Booher: 125).

The haunted houses at the core of Hawthorne's and Morrison's narratives are not only symbolic spaces, but the framework for all the gothic images used in these novels. The metaphorical implications of the haunted dwelling are numerous. As Valdine Clemens says of the castle of early gothic romances, it "is a multivalent symbol; it may be associated with the maternal or sexual body, the human psyche, or the patriarchal order" (7). First, psychologically, both the Pyncheon mansion and 124 are the embodiment of the mind haunted by the guilt of the past. They stand for the return of the repressed, which is terrible in *Beloved*, where ghost and house become identified until the specter's resurrection. Unlike *Seven Gables*, in Morrison's novel the dwelling

⁶⁰⁹ In these words, Britton quotes John Engell (1991). "Hawthorne and the Politics of Slavery." *Studies in the Novel* 40: 44.

is a gothic female space with strong maternal resonances. In the ritual of possession Sethe's house appears, more than ever, as an equivalent of the female unconscious. As the embodiment of the Female Other, 124 exercises a strong resistance to the patriarchal order, exemplified in its rejection of men. Both the Pyncheons' and Sethe's gothic habitations keep secrets: The House of the Seven Gables conceals the deed to the land in Maine, representing the family's crimes, and the "inner sanctum", which stands for the feelings of guilt in the Pyncheon psyche; in *Beloved*, Sethe's terrible crime permeates the whole structure of the building, a reflection of the atrocities perpetrated during slavery, which the infanticide represents.

Second, socially, both houses stand for the patriarchal family and society of western civilization, an example of the domestic ideology of the time. *Beloved* and *Seven Gables* are romances, which through their haunted houses focus on "the family structure [. . .] [which] incarnates the laws fundamental to our culture and our selves: laws that also govern our thinking about property, morality, social behavior and even metaphysics" (Anne Williams: 12). As domestic enclosures, these two haunted dwellings symbolize the perversion of the ideal home that the cult of domesticity claimed for the nuclear family, since Hawthorne and Morrison portray a place of imprisonment and torture for their inhabitants, mostly women, who are tyrannized by the paternal law. As Cohen-Safir reminds us, the Gothic "offers a convenient representation of domestic entrapment in marriage as well as in the home" (100). Besides, as in early Gothic romances, the house is defenseless against the assault of the wicked villain, the patriarch, thus asserting the Father rule. Finally, Hawthorne's and Morrison's gothic family romances are reflections on American national history through the metaphor of the haunted house: "the house allegorizes historical consciousness itself" (Savoy: 17). In *Seven Gables*, the ruined mansion is associated with the Pyncheon family line and, consequently, the transformation from aristocracy to democracy, representing the history of America from its birth. In *Beloved*, Sethe's haunted dwelling stands for the history of slavery, symbolizing the transition from slavery to emancipation and, consequently, the birth of the free American black self.

Both novels revolve around the patriarchal family, which, as Anne Williams claims, provides the cognitive model through which to explore our culture and identity: "Patriarchy's rules of the family, of marriage, of the proper relation of male and female, of legitimate succession, and so on, are also the ruling principles of the human activities we think of as 'historical': politics and economics" (29). Both Hawthorne and Morrison analyze the violence, madness and evil that the nuclear patriarchal family generates, a nightmarish image. They depict, as Louis Gross writes, the "subversive view of the cataclysmic potential of family pathology as it reflects cultural pathology"

(82). However, the dysfunctional family finds its most atrocious representation in Black Gothic. *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* explore the family as an oedipalized domain and the source of identity. Repression under the rule of the Father figure goes together with feelings of guilt and gives rise to the endemic conflicts of man: violence and abnormal sexuality. Hawthorne's and Morrison's narratives portray the tyranny of the gothic villain, the father figure, and its consequences. The exploration of the family unit has psychological, social and political dimensions. As Anne Williams argues, the dynamics of the family may be manifest as politics, since "the family structure is congruent with other organizing principles of patriarchal culture" (46). Morrison and Hawthorne portray desires of patricide associated with feelings of shame and guilt, as represented in Judge Pyncheon's death and Sethe's attempt to kill Mr. Bodwin. To end the tyranny of the Father means symbolically the destruction of the family as a repressive unit, which, in *Beloved*, is equated to the institution of slavery.

The Gothic romance delves into the identity of the individual in familial and societal terms. Morrison and Hawthorne are deeply concerned with death and suffering, portraying distressful situations in which the characters experience hallucinations, irrational impulses, destructive obsessions and even madness. The shattering of the Gothic self is manifested in split individuals and in altered states of consciousness. As Louis Gross says, the Gothic romance reflects "the slow disintegration of the socially constructed persona and a gradual metamorphosis into monstrosity" (14). In the Gothic romance coherent identity is questioned, since relationships are based on violence, which is, on the other hand, inextricably linked to sexuality and identity, as in Paul D's sexual encounter with Beloved or Hepzibah and Clifford's "incest". As Louis Gross argues, "From Horace Walpole to Anne Rice, the power of sexual desire is a constant in Gothic narrative and a vehicle for the inescapable transformation that overcomes the quester" (53).

Especially the male-female relationship, which frequently follows a domination-submission pattern, reflects violent sexual tension. Morrison and Hawthorne are concerned with the subjection of women and emphasize the traumatic threat to their identity through the roles of the Gothic villain, the embodiment of the parental authority, and the innocent maiden, the object of his menaces. In the male domination-female submission erotic dynamics of western sexuality, women become property without self: the wizard's "rape" of the fair lady or the slaveholder's sexual abuses of his female black slaves. Anne Williams claims that the institution of family "holds the disparate and unequal 'male' and 'female' forces in tension, in a balance that may be disturbed, in a distribution of powers that may be defied, and perhaps even invite defiance" (22). The gothic frequently trespasses the borders of sexual distinctions and blurs the characters'

sexual identity, as a consequence of sexual oppression in the family and society. While Hawthorne suggests that the ambiguous sexual male self may be a reflection of the loss of manliness in the capitalist western society, Morrison shows the black male's feminized body because of sexual violation.

Hawthorne's and Morrison's characters symbolize the struggle of the human spirit to grow and achieve freedom. Hawthorne's characters adapt easily to gothic conventions, they are mostly types. Yet Morrison's characterization is more complex. Both writers create diverse Gothic portraits, which share some aspects. In both novels there are heartless tyrants who embody the Law of the Father and represent the materialism of the capitalist system; artist-scientist figures, inheritors of the romantic symbol of the seeker after forbidden knowledge, who stand for the dangers of the scientific research; the heroines' protecting males and lovers and different versions of the myth of the wanderer; Christ figures, who have undergone terrible ordeals as a consequence of the patriarchal system; newcomers and healing agents.

Both gothic romances convey the heroine's struggle to escape from the Father's Law in her subversive quest for true identity. Quoting Kari Winter, Anne Williams says: "Gothic heroines [. . .] search for ways to preserve their dignity while also finding sexual and emotional fulfillment [. . .]" (136).⁶¹⁰ Hawthorne and Morrison deal with the gothic stereotypes of the Fair Maiden and the Dark Lady, even if they give their own very personal version. They are more self-confident and independent than those of early gothic fiction. Denver and Phoebe are young females on their passage to adulthood, who stand for the future of their families in a moment of historical transition. They incarnate ideals of womanhood and become their kin's surrogate mothers and providers. There is no demonic woman in *Seven Gables*. However, Morrison's *femme fatale*, Sethe, has some important correlations with the heroine of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne. According to Sonser, Morrison conjures "the specter of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, traditionally considered the earliest fictional representation of the subject in American society" (16). Both Hester and Sethe are independent and passionate females who do not comply with community rules and transgress the morality of their societies, thus defying the patriarchal system. Finally, in contrast to Hawthorne's nineteenth-century figure of the spinster, Hepzibah, Morrison's matriarchs show nurturing qualities and ancestral properties.

Hawthorne and Morrison are especially successful in the exploration of the sinful human condition. They deal with the presence of evil in American life, whose ultimate roots are in the unfair colonial system. In both gothic novels evil and sin are associated

⁶¹⁰ Original text quoted: Kari J. Winter (1992). *Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change: Women and Power in Gothic Novels and Slave Narratives, 1790-1865*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

with a crime against kin. The ensuing guilt plagues both the sinner and his offspring, bringing about terrible consequences. Both Hawthorne and Morrison refuse to accept the individual's victimized position: their characters are equally accountable for their crimes. In their vision of sin they incorporate an intrinsic optimistic aspect given by the idea of the Fortunate Fall: guilt has a humanizing power and produces growth. While in *Seven Gables* the curse, as in early gothic novels, is surrounded by mystery and magic, in *Beloved*, the terrible legacy of slavery is the malediction that haunts blacks. Both Hawthorne and Morrison delve into the dusky region of the inner world, at the center of which is guilt.

Hawthorne and Morrison explore alienation and the myth of the wanderer. The theme of isolation, essential in Gothic fiction, transmits many different meanings and accomplishes significant purposes, which *Seven Gables* and *Beloved* share. It helps create a mysterious and dismal setting, enhances the sense of deprivation and vulnerability in a hostile world and focuses on a home-centered system of values. Estrangement is, at least in part, the consequence of the characters' crimes and the ensuing retribution: Hawthorne's aristocratic sin against the plebeian classes and Morrison's disintegrated black community, consequence of the legacy of slavery. As Hansen says, "the consequence of his [the sinner's] evil-doing, the isolation and feeling of estrangement, will follow in any case" (30). However, detachment is also due to the characters' pride, which destroys their ties to the community and make them renounce their involvement in it. As Britton states:

For Hawthorne and Morrison this pride results from clinging to a past the community wishes to forget, and unnatural clutch upon the powerful evil of the past that "threatens the harmonized set of inherited codes by which the community defines itself" [. . .]. Such pride is one of the seeds of the hereditary sin that determines the futures of both Hawthorne's and Morrison's characters, who must ultimately be reclaimed by the community in order to be exorcised of their respective hauntings. (19)

As in *Seven Gables*, where Hawthorne deals with the individual who is alienated from his/her community, in *Beloved* Morrison reflects "the multivalent experiences of African Americans as marginalized individuals in American society in general and within the African American community in particular [. . .]" (Fultz: 1). In their gothic stories both authors suggest that the individual cannot live and develop the concept of communal solidarity in isolation. Hawthorne's and Morrison's alienated guilt-burdened Gothic characters will finally be redeemed in the midst of their fellow men.

Both romances are tales of retribution and redemption, whose characters are on a journey of expiation: they are still paying for the old crimes. As Angelita Reyes points out, "*Beloved* is a twentieth-century creation of the imagination that [. . .] valorizes and remembers the tragedy as spiritual redemption" (78). In *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*

the characters must confront the patriarchal force and atone for their sins. Judge Pyncheon and the surrogate Schoolteacher, Mr. Bodwin, the true sources of oppression must be defeated. Characters must come to terms with the past: "Morrison's envisioning of truth and hope in *Beloved* is based on reconciliation" (Reyes: 80). Hawthorne and Morrison point out nature as a beneficial and soothing element, while in *Beloved* memory is a painful and regenerative process which makes the characters face the ghosts of the past. In contrast to the patriarchal figures, there are healing agents, who, with their revivifying properties, bring sunshine and renewal to the haunted houses and their doomed inhabitants. Hawthorne's and Morrison's Gothic individual accomplishes a certain degree of redemption. However, both romances suggest, in their ambiguous endings, the impossibility of completely bury the past: "the ending suggests partial healing, the spectre of the past remains, waiting to resurface" (Davis: online). The ills of the past can never be fully mended. Neither can individuals completely escape the guilt their ancestors or themselves have incurred.

In their works of fiction, both Hawthorne and Morrison successfully represent a haunted world, invoking the power of Otherness. They call on "the cheapjack machinery of the gothic novel [. . .] to represent the hidden blackness of the human soul and human society" (Fiedler: 27). Morrison summons up the specters of Hawthorne's more conventional gothic narrative. In her "appropriation of traditional, discursive processes [she] opens the door to new readings of other gothic texts, to invocations of other ghosts still in the machine" (Sonser: 26).

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APPENDIX



The House of the Seven Gables

Salem, Massachusetts



Maule's Well at The House of the Seven Gables



The Cent Shop at The House of the Seven Gables



The Parlor at The House of the Seven Gables



Clifford's Room at The House of the Seven Gables



Phoebe's Room at The House of the Seven Gables