GOTHIC VILLAINS IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S *THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES* AND TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*[*]

Manuela López Ramírez
I.E.S. Alto Palancia, Segorbe (Castellón)
lopez.ramirez.manuela@gmail.com

Nathaniel Hawthorne and Toni Morrison deal with the Gothic figure of the villain in their novels *The House of the Seven Gables* and *Beloved*. They delve into the two archetypes of this emblematic character of Gothic fiction: the tyrannical satanic paternal figure and the Faustian scientist-artist. The traditional character of the villain is at the core of their meditation on evil in the Puritan world and in the institution of slavery, respectively. Through the Gothic villain, both writers question the white Western capitalist order, the oppressive male-female relationship, the unethical use of science and the dysfunctional patriarchal family.

Key words: *Gothic*, *villain*, *evil*, *Faustian*, *Puritanism*, *slavery*.

Nathaniel Hawthorne y Toni Morrison recrean la figura del villano gótico en sus novelas *The House of the Seven Gables* y *Beloved*, las cuales exploran los dos arquetipos de este emblemático personaje de la ficción gótica: la figura satánica paternal y el artista-científico faústico. El villano tradicional está en el centro de la meditación sobre el mal en el mundo puritano y en la institución de la esclavitud, respectivamente. A través del personaje del villano gótico, ambos escritores cuestionan el orden capitalista occidental, la relación opresiva entre hombres y mujeres, el uso inmoral de la ciencia y la familia patriarcal disfuncional.

Palabras clave: *Gótico*, *villano*, *maldad*, *faústico*, *puritanismo*, *esclavitud*.

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> *The villain was always the most complex and interesting character in Gothic fiction [. . .]: 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.*

Great American writers have sought out Gothic themes, since, as Leslie Fiedler contends, "in the United States, certain special guilts awaited projection in the gothic form" (143). Among others, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Toni Morrison have seen in the Gothic the best literary mode to convey the darkness of the New World. In *The House of the Seven Gables,* Hawthorne deals with Puritanism in Gothic terms, while, in *Beloved*, Morrison uses Gothic images to narrate the horrors of slavery.

In fact, Morrison creates, rather than a novel with Gothic elements, "a twentieth-century Gothic vision which continues a tradition that has always addressed issues about outsiders and subverted cultural mores" (Booher: 117). She literally draws upon the slave narrative, which is very easily transferred into Gothic terms because its historical facts already embody cruelty and horror.[1] *Beloved* can be analyzed as a transgressive revision of the Gothic tradition, which unveils "the persistent symptoms of a socio-economic referent for the American gothic" (Sonser: 5):

> 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 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 (Weissberg 115-116).

Morrison interrogates the traditional gothic novel offering her

own perspective on gothic themes. She explores otherness and evil through the classic and crucial gothic figure of the villain from an ethnic point of view. Rereading the American canon from a racial perspective implies a new definition of the black experience and of the Black self. Morrison's reevaluation of the gothic questions radically the Western patriarchy's nightmare. Interpreting Morrison's novel in the light of a typical Gothic romance of Hawthorne, one of the great nineteenth-century white male writers, contributes to a reappraisal and reassessment of the Gothic, unraveling and exposing the horrors of patriarchy. To deal with the gothic villain involves the exposé and critique of the Law of the Father, displaying the terrible secrets of the foundations and history of the family, gender relationships, self and community. While Hawthorne visits the hidden mysteries of the corridors of the patriarchal order, Morrison unmasks its chambers of horrors.

The Gothic story revolves around the power of darkness, whose center is the evil villain, "the persecuting principle of damnation," as in contrast to the heroine, the innocent maiden, "the persecuted principle of salvation" (Fiedler: 128). Novelists use the character of the villain to explore heartlessness as well as guilt. The villain's crime is to sell his soul to the Devil, a Faustian pact that is the expression of his commitment to evil. The Gothic romance is a family romance, an 'oedipalised territory' ruled by a menacing father figure with Faustian drives, the villain.[2] The horrors of the Gothic story are, in great part, the consequence of his social and psychological tyrannical paternal control, expressing anxiety about basic cultural and social structures, such as the male-female relationship and the family. Both Hawthorne and Morrison delve into the villainous character as a mythic image, the embodiment of the dark principle of the universe, the archetypal Devil. Through the wicked villain, they reflect on the function of evil in the human self as well as in a capitalist patriarchal society.

In *Seven Gables*, in a generational line of evil figures in the two rival families, the Pyncheons and the Maules, the current evil villains are Judge Pyncheon and Holgrave, respectively. Jeffrey Pyncheon, the reincarnation of his evil ancestor Colonel Pyncheon, is involved in his uncle's death, the illegal destruction of his will and a conspiracy against his cousin, Clifford. On the other hand, Holgrave, the last member of

his family, has inherited his progenitors' wicked magical abilities and their Faustian curiosity, which he compensates with honesty and respect for other people's souls. In *Beloved*, Schoolteacher is a Gothic paternal scientific villain and a cruel racist who practices the most atrocious form of slavery at the plantation, Sweet Home. Under his rule, the farm acquires its most horrifying Gothic tones.

Both Hawthorne and Morrison fully develop their villain-heroes symbolically. In a very traditional gothic-like way, Judge Pyncheon is identified with the quintessential devil figure of the Gothic romance, Satan.[3] As Stein comments, Judge Pyncheon 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).[4] Jeffrey Pyncheon is "striking as an evocation of the power of evil" (Fogle: 161). Dressed in black, except for his white neck cloth, he behaves like a gentleman, the Prince of Darkness's traditional disguise (Buitenhuis: 68).[5] The Judge, an archetypal Gothic devil-villain, is portrayed as an aged man with a benign countenance, which conceals his true evil nature. His polished appearance and his hypocritical social gestures of benevolence, in accordance with his social position, are 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).[6] However, on certain occasions, his black soul is revealed. Phoebe, his young cousin, compares him with a snake, a typical biblical representation of Lucifer, when he attempts to kiss her. 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). This scene, as Buitenhuis argues, is connected with Eve's temptation by the serpent in the Garden of Eden (68). Besides, the Gothic villain of *Seven Gables* is linked to death. He seems to kill his wives and his dissipated son, who passes away just a week after his own death.

In *Beloved*, despite the fact that Morrison's fictional universe is not dualistic (nothing is truly good or evil), Schoolteacher is unambiguously evil, as slavery is. He trespasses what can be considered as ethically or morally acceptable in both the domains of the intellect and the spirit. Morrison reverses the symbolic parallelism between black and evil that made of black people animals and beasts prone to

savagery. White men, Schoolteacher and his nephews, are the real personification of evil.[7] Morrison also depicts Schoolteacher and his nephews as gentlemen, who "had pretty manners, all of them. 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).[8] Like Judge Pyncheon, the slaveholder takes care of his appearance: he "Always wore a collar, even in the fields" (*Beloved*: 36). Baby Suggs distinguishes white men by their high-topped shoes. After the big party, the old black woman foresees something extremely wrong: "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). Schoolteacher's and his nephews' refined ways and looks contrast with their brutal methods as slavers.

Both Judge Pyncheon and Schoolteacher are ironical portraits, their gentle images contrasting with their inward evil disposition. Despite the slave owner's "pretty manners", his apparent affability and "soft" talking, he is a cruel racist. Likewise, 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). The jurist conceals his characteristic black frown to the world. When Judge Pyncheon comes to see Clifford, and his sister, Hepzibah, confronts him, the whole "show of a marble palace" is replaced by "the frown which you at once feel to be eternal" (*Gables*: 232). His hidden sternness is also associated with the east wind. When Phoebe refuses Jaffrey Pyncheon's kiss, 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).

Through their authoritarian behavior, villains are connected to tyranny and oppression.[9] Like Manfred, Jaffrey Pyncheon is the representative of the decaying genteel class, exerting a despotic paternal power over the members of his family: "the figure of the tyrannical father [. . .] cruel, repressive and hard-hearted" (McPherson: 136). Treated with a mixture of awe and hatred, he is seen as an unspecified threat. Jaffrey Pyncheon is "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" (*Gables*: 123). His 'self-seeking purpose' triumphs over every other humane consideration (Harris: online). The Oedipal wish to kill the authoritarian patriarchal figure comes true with Judge Pyncheon's death, which takes a central position in the plot. Only then is retribution possible: his relatives, Clifford and Hepzibah, can escape the impotence that his menace imposes on them; Phoebe and Holgrave marry, starting a new life without his dark shadow. Hugo McPherson points out that Hawthorne's statement about the self is that individuals must supplant and re-integrate the forces of their parents. Instead of being overthrown, the father must be superseded (144).

Like Judge Pyncheon, Schoolteacher embodies the Law of the Father through the institution of slavery.[10] As a slaveholder, his patriarchal power is extreme, deciding about all matters related to his slaves. Whereas the jurist's patriarchic symbol of respectability and power is the golden cane, the slave owner's attributes are his big hat and "his ever-ready shotgun" (*Beloved*: 224), a phallic instrument of dominance. Besides, having the law on their side, slaveholders display "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" (*Beloved*: 157). Schoolteacher's god-like power over his slaves' lives is unquestionable. He starts the cycle of suffering and torture at Sweet Home for the blacks, who are put through all kinds of unspeakable abuses and who undergo a variety of corrections (physical and psychological tortures) to re-educate them. 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). In both *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*, despotic power makes the oppressor and his victim form a complex unity: "both Pyncheon and Maule are parts of a single personality" (Baym: 163). Likewise, the slave owner and his blacks are indisputably united by the tyrannical bond of proprietorship.

The Gothic novel usually portrays the dynamics of domination-subversion in male-female relationships, especially that between the Gothic villain and the innocent maiden. Persecuting/protecting men

reflect the ambivalent position that males occupy in relation to females (Vincent: 156).[11] As Juliann 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" (15-16).[12] In *Seven Gables,* several couples represent the oppressive villain exerting his control over the 'weak' female: Judge Pyncheon and Hepzibah; Mathew Maule, the carpenter, and Alice; Holgrave and Phoebe. Hawthorne also underlines the despotic relationship that the jurist had with his deceased wife, which "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' [. . .]" (Millington: 127). On the other hand, in *Beloved*, the evil villain is the white tyrannical slave owner, who disposes of the black female slave at will, since she is only his property. Schoolteacher allows his nephews to steal the milk of the innocent and pregnant maiden, Sethe, and later he batters her. Unlike Hawthorne, Morrison recreates the typical pattern of persecution of early Gothic romances and slave narratives. Radcliffe's plots depict a persecuted maiden who runs away and gets caught by the villain.[13] In *Beloved*, Schoolteacher and his nephews come after the innocent black slave, who has escaped from the former's oppressive rule. Sethe, the transgressive dark lady, defies the slave owner's power when she flees and kills his property, her baby girl, thus challenging patriarchal structures while asserting her strength and humanity.

The Gothic villain's materialism takes shape in Schoolteacher and Judge Pyncheon's grasping spirit, which symbolizes the aggressiveness of the Western patriarchal capitalist society. Greed is the force behind cruelty and racist views of slavery. Schoolteacher 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). As Paul D learns when he is captured, slaves' lives have a price. By putting a price on human life, slavery takes the materialist approach of white Western society to its ultimate consequences. In the face of the most unbelievably inhuman situations, Schoolteacher's only concern is to increase the benefits blacks may bring to Sweet Home. After killing Sixo, the slaveholder can only think of the ruin that losing some niggers is for the farm, and

how he can raise the value of the plantation. Later in the story, after seeing Sethe's infanticide, Schoolteacher is not moved by how slavery may lead blacks to commit those atrocities, he only cares about the fact that "the whole lot [Sethe and her children] was lost" (*Beloved*: 150).

On the other hand, Jaffrey Pyncheon, as a representative of the privileged class, embodies past evil transmitted into the present thorough the model of usurpation,[14] Colonel Pyncheon's illicit acquisition of Maule's plot of land, the primal family crime. The Pyncheons' grasping spirit, which defines colonialism, is shown in the arbitrary and despotic power, based on the ownership of land, of the genteel white class. Power relations are perpetuated in time through the feud between the two opposed social forces that the Pyncheon and Maule families represent. The wrongs of the past, the socio-economic crimes of the privileged family associated with the legacy of colonialism, haunt them through a curse, which will lead them to annihilation. The Judge, "a lover of wealth, power" (McPherson: 137), maintains these power relations and the class struggle. As Hepzibah says, his "hard and grasping spirit has run in our blood, these two hundred years!" (*Gables*: 237). At present, the Judge exchanges his soul for new riches when he accuses Clifford of murder in order to become the only heir and when, later on, he is determined to force out of him the secret to the family's claim to vast Eastern lands. To symbolize his greediness, the Judge, who has a respectably well-off social status, is extensively related to gold, carrying a gold-headed cane and wearing gold-bowed spectacles, and his Midas-like touch transmutes one branch of the elm into gold. Hepzibah tells him that he has more than enough riches for his remaining years. Hawthorne highlights the genteel class' materialism: "Pyncheon to him was typical of a whole class of men who treasure form over substance and spend their lives in building up hoards of gold and qualities of real estate" (Buitenhuis: 103). Judge Pyncheon's materialistic pursuits will finally vanish when he dies and, ironically, his wealth will finally make his poor relatives rich and, through them, the last Maule, Holgrave.

In conclusion, both Judge Pyncheon and Schoolteacher are Satanic figures that embody the patriarchal villain's quintessential qualities and represent the Law of the Father in the Western capitalist

system. They are morally depraved creatures that cannot renounce to their greedy ambitions, their Faustian desire for wealth and power, but, on the contrary, succumb to them. There is not any possible redemption for them. These materialistic tyrants are true cold-hearted villains without a flicker of kindness in their souls to warm their sinister intentions. Without feelings or ethical values, they are exiled from the human family, since they have lost their humanity. Despite the fact that the true villain cannot be redeemed, in *Seven Gables* Judge Pyncheon, unlike Schoolteacher, is punished when he dies at the hands of his victim, Clifford, and thus some balance is restored to society. However, Schoolteacher, as the embodiment of slavery, cannot be defeated so easily.

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In Gothic fiction Faustian scientist figures, which derive from a romantic and Gothic symbol, the seeker after forbidden knowledge, frequently distance themselves from humanity because of their inquiring minds. Their extreme curiosity is "a kind of psychological symbol of the kind of behaviour that is incited by the enemy of mankind" (Stein: 39). They engage in an evil pact as a result of their thirst for knowledge, thus expressing the dangers of science and intellectual pursuits and their urge to control life, which transgresses natural, human and divine boundaries.[15] Hawthorne and Morrison show great interest in the Faustian figure through their scientist characters, Holgrave and Schoolteacher, respectively. Like other Gothic authors, they are truly concerned about the ethical purpose of science and explore various facets of the Gothic scientist's quest for truth, which becomes demonic when used against humankind:

> [. . .] 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 Frankesteinian nightmare. (Kilgour: 51)

Hawthorne's fiction, in contrast to Morrison's, is crowded with scientist-artist villains, who are distinguished by their dispassionate observation. 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: 160)

In *Seven Gables,* Holgrave represents a scientist-artist villain with an ambiguous, but benign, approach to science and technology. He is characterized by his cold observation of humankind, which "borders on the unsympathetic search for sin" (Hansen: 46). In his relations with the inhabitants of the mansion, Clifford and Hepzibah, Holgrave seems to be in search of mental food and not heart-substance (Junkins: 198). Phoebe accuses him of being a dispassionate observer of the Pyncheons' plight.[16] Holgrave himself says that his intention regarding the old couple, is not "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" (*Gables*: 216), both the Pyncheons and the Maules have gone through. When scientists and artists turn their empirical analysis to the human heart, they commit the 'Unpardonable Sin', "the great sin of the Enlightenment—the idea of knowledge as an end in itself" (Marx: 436).[17] Holgrave is only watching the Pyncheons' drama and his detachment from the object of his study makes it impossible for him to understand the complexity of life. However, in the last chapters, his propensity for cool observation and isolation changes progressively, mainly as result of his love for Phoebe, who aids him "in restraining his tendency to be an 'all–observant' [. . .] peeper" (Crews: 191). He finally becomes involved when the Judge dies. His genuine concern for Clifford and Hepzibah's ordeal, when they flee from the house after their cousin'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, "the character who most resembles Hawthorne-as-artist" (Crews: 173). 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 [. . .]. 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 [. . .]. (159)

Holgrave is a daguerreotypist by profession, using his cameras to observe those around him, "motivated by an intellectual curiosity of which his daguerreotypes are emblems" (Male: 436).[18] In addition, he shows his artistic and intellectual inclinations through the mesmeric powers he inherits from his family. According to Fogle, 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" (157). Unlike Schoolteacher, Holgrave, as a mesmerist, becomes a sort of wizard, a Faustian magician, who is especially interested in pseudo-sciences:

> At times, this person [Holgrave] 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. (Kleiman: 297)

Both Holgrave's and Schoolteacher's Faustian intellectual pursuits are associated with female enslavement, since both the hypnotist and the slaveholder subject the spellbound person to their will. In the chapter "Alice Pyncheon", when Holgrave is telling Phoebe a story he has written about their common ancestors, he

induces in her a hypnotic state, which makes her a slave to his will. Despite Phoebe's vulnerability, the young wizard does not take advantage of the situation, resisting "the temptation to place the will of another Pyncheon in bondage to him" (Marks: 345). Holgrave almost commits the greatest of all Hawthornian Gothic sins, the profanation of the sacred human heart. However, unlike Schoolteacher, he refuses to treat people as property. He is not like other mesmerists of Hawthorne's fiction, such as Westervelt, who, like the slaveholder, forces his will upon other human beings.[19] The young wizard "had never sought to impose his will arbitrarily upon another, 'had never violated the innermost man, but had carried his conscience along with him'" (Levy: 464). Setting Phoebe free symbolizes his rejection of the past, forecasting retribution: "With this [. . .] the first round of the circling spiral curve is completed, and a new cycle started" (Beebe: 11).

In Holgrave's tale, Hawthorne makes a clear association between sex and art, a 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 wizard seduces Phoebe and casts a spell on her through art. This scene parallels the typical rape of the innocent maiden, even if it is thwarted, by the Gothic villain. However, Holgrave is only a potential villain. Baym thinks that,

> [. . .] 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. (161)

In *Beloved*, the slaveholder represents the Faustian villain's scientific pursuits. Schoolteacher 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. As Morrison's embodiment of the scientific project,

the slave owner exposes one of the most questionable aspects of Western culture: the use of reason and empirical observation to defend the institution of slavery. Schoolteacher is the Faustian figure who uses science to justify his racial views, "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). In his pseudo-scientific methodology, which apparently follows empirical rules, the slaveholder "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 (Henderson: 88).[20]

In the figure of her Faustian scientist, Morrison parodies the 'objective' scientist, who appropriates "Manichean oppositions" (Krumholz: 112). Schoolteacher's Western scientific project should be essentially rational and empirical. However, in fact, it prevents objectivity because its arguments are constructed around the pre-determined racist qualities that blacks are assigned before any empirical research, denying those traits that do not fit in with them.[21] As Linda Krumholz contends, Schoolteacher presents an example of the kind of 'scholarly' and 'scientific' discourse whose conclusions "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'" (112-113). The racist Western scientific discourse has the power to justify whites' disdain and their sense of superiority, as well as to degrade black individuals, inculcating in them a sense of self-contempt and disgust at their "inferiority" (Bouson: 96).[22] The slave owner's 'scientific' method and pro-slavery thought go hand in hand, providing the objective grounds to justify both his racist ideas and the lucrative slave trade.[23]

However, the slaveholder's racist 'scientific' discourse cannot explain blacks' behavior, since the qualities ascribed to Africans fit in with their role as property, but they cannot account for their humanity.[24] That is why Schoolteacher and his nephews cannot understand them. When they go to catch Sethe and her children, they

fail to make sense of the blacks' acts. Neither Schoolteacher nor his nephews can recognize the blacks' feelings, so they think they are insane. The slave owner blames Sethe's wildness on his nephews' mishandling. Paul Gilroy believes that the master's discourse does not allow them [the whites] to understand these terrible experiences because, at least in part, they cannot be expressed through it (qtd. in Goldner: online). The Faustian villain's cruel 'scientific' methods are deprived of any human feelings or morality.

As a Faustian scientist, the slave owner not only arrogates to himself the power of reasoning, but also control over language, while his blacks, like animals, are denied a voice. As Woidat argues, "Schoolteacher asserts his authority by controlling language [. . .] 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 [. . .] silencing their voices with an iron bit" (538). Any kind of argument that black slaves may offer could be considered as an offence, since only whites can define: they are the "definers" and blacks are the "defined".[25] Through Sixo Morrison exemplifies whites' appropriation of reasoning. When he seizes and eats a baby pig, Schoolteacher accuses him of stealing, but Sixo denies it, claiming that he is improving his owner's property: "in his explanation of the shoat [. . .]. Sixo out-masters the master in this game of language and logic" (Fuston-White: online). Although Schoolteacher regards Sixo's as a clever argument, he beats him anyway "to show him that definitions belonged to the definers¾not the defined" (*Beloved*: 190). The white slave owner keeps his tyrannical socio-political hegemony by not allowing blacks to have their own ideas.

To sum up, Morrison and Hawthorne research that "dusky region" of the inner world of their characters, using a structural device, a mythical image –the figure of the villain— to convey evil (Stein: 7). The villain is a myth in himself and embodies the darkness of human existence, the oppressive social, economic and political power relationships of patriarchy. Both writers rewrite in their novels, *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*, the two traditional archetypes of the villain, the threatening and wicked paternal figure and the Faustian scientist-artist. In fact, Morrison blends them in his villainous character, the slave owner.

Morrison's and Hawthorne's scientists, Holgrave and Schoolteacher, share their detached and 'objective' approach to life. However, in the daguerreotypist's renunciation of his powers to dominate and control other people, he exemplifies how the individual can undergo the ordeal of sin and still preserve the integrity of his soul. In the Hawthornian world, the tragic dignity of man's fate is shown through Holgrave's conquest of evil. On the other hand, through Schoolteacher, Morrison delegitimizes the dominant Western culture's claim that the scientific project provides us with an objective perspective, while she discloses the lucrative business of the slave trade at the roots of the economical and political expansionist policies of the European countries[26] along with a black world which manifests itself as a denial or inversion of the whites' racist views. Through their villainous paternal figures, Morrison and Hawthorne make a critique of the structure of Western white patriarchy, the dynamics of domination-subversion between man and woman and the dysfunctional patriarchal family. Their meditation on evil in Western patriarchy, in *Seven Gables* and *Beloved*, has at its core the mythical Gothic image of the villain.

To conclude, I must say that Morrison's rewriting of the American Gothic brings to the surface, with extreme pungency, those cultural, social and economic aspects that had lurked, as a subtext of horror and violence, in classical gothic works. Her reevaluation of canonical texts unveils the savagery and inhumanity of the patriarchal institution of slavery. Thus her novel renders a radical revision of the Gothic genre. Morrison's ghosts are those unleashed by the horrors of patriarchy and associated with the abominable acts committed under the Law of the Father. Hers are not the subtle or even metaphorical specters of conventional gothic, but rather those linked to a cultural and socio-economic reality. In *Beloved*, Morrison's meditation on the American experience disrupts and unsettles national identity, while she defines it through racial and colonial constructs. Her examination of personal and national identity through the conventional Gothic archetype of the satanic Faustian villain paves the way to new interpretations of other gothic novels and to an unveiling of the unspeakable in American literature.

NOTES

[1]. Teresa Goddu says that the Gothic focuses "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).

[2]. Jodey Castricano claims that, in the Gothic, "psycho/socio/sexual relations appear to be modelled upon the family, legitimized by the (word of the) father" (206).

[3]. William Stein claims "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" (Stein: 50).

[4]. Nathaniel Hawthorne. *The House of the Seven Gables*. New York & London: Norton, 1967 (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).

[5]. As Hyatt Waggoner points out, despite his appearance, Jeffrey Pyncheon is "really a creature of darkness" (405).

[6]. The most powerful metaphor of Judge Pyncheon's inner corruption and hypocrisy is the image of the "tall and stately edifice", whose gorgeous appearance is deceptive on the whole, since "'beneath the show of a marble place [. . .] is this man's miserable soul!'" (Dillingham: 457). In the Bible, Buitenhuis argues, 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) (65).

[7]. According to Caroline Woidat, Morrison changes "the narrative perspective so that white males become racial others, men 'without skin'" (540).

[8]. Toni Morrison. *Beloved*. New York: Plume, 1987 (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).

[9]. As Punter contends, Manfred, *Otranto*'s villain, combines the qualities of the feudal baron and the figure of antisocial power: a menace that comes "out of the memory of previous social and psychological orders, [. . .] from the atrophying aristocracy" (47).

[10]. The plantation is also a dysfunctional "family" upon which the paternal figure, the slave owner, rules.

[11]. James Twitchell points out that the early Gothic tells of a specific family romance, in which the villain figure has a paternal dominance over the young maiden (qtd. in Louis Gross: 53).

[12]. 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).

[13]. The motif of persecution is very important in Gothic fiction, as we can see in some of its classics, such as *Melmoth the Wanderer*, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* or *Caleb William*.

[14]. The model of usurpation has been central to Gothic novels since *The Castle of Otranto*, generally regarded as the first gothic novel.

[15]. McPherson believes that the power of the villain is intellectual (221) and Stein states that the scientist-villain often looks for those kinds of knowledge that will make men gods (19).

[16]. Richard Fogle argues that "The spiritual peril of Holgrave resides in his intellect. He is daringly speculative, prone to wander far from the safe center of things" (157).

[17]. Mc Pherson contends that "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 [. . .]" (221-222).

[18]. Richard Millington thinks that "Holgrave's connection with the 'eye'" is linked to his tendencies to be "a consumer of the

experience of others rather than a sharer of emotional 'sustenance'. [. . .] [which] threatens to reproduce the appropriating relation to others that Jaffrey embodies" (132). However, Holgrave also becomes an agent of light, since the daguerreotype is a truth detector.

[19]. According to Frederick Crews, Holgrave is a model of self-restraint "from the morbid 'experimentation' upon womankind that is so tempting for Hawthornian males generally" (187).

[20]. Mae Henderson writes that "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", his literal inscription of Sethe's back with his whip (pen) (90). For Arlene Keizer, the metaphor of dismemberment expresses the effects of slavery on blacks, as in Baby Suggs: "slave life had 'busted her legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb and tongue' (*Beloved*: 87)" (online).

[21]. As Nancy Jesser claims, "Property is property because of its assigned properties" (online).

[22]. As Henderson writes, the slaves' "savagery" reinforces whites' "civilization" and "humanity" (88-89).

[23]. According to Krumholz, "Through schoolteacher Morrison demonstrates that discourse, definitions, and historical methods are neither arbitrary nor objective; they are tools in a system of power relations" (113).

[24]. The blacks at Sweet Home show their humanity when the fact that they are treated like animals is, for them, even worse than physical torture: what tore Sixo up was not the beatings, but Schoolteacher' questions.

[25]. 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).

[26]. Ellen 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", which does not value the "distanced and 'objective' view of science", but "the personal, morally-committed, and even passionate testimony that derives from [. . .] lived experience" (online).

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