

The House as Container: Architecture in *The House of the Seven Gables*

Dr. Nazmi AL-Shalabi*

Abstract

It is argued that the Pyncheon house in *The House of the Seven Gables* is a metaphor of the family, a container for memory and culture, a structure with a body and soul, a text with two levels of meanings, and that its architecture is a cultural expression, an index of Hawthorne's oeuvre, an external representation of the individuality of the Pyncheons, a means of reconstructing and materializing the past, and a replica of the architectural construction of characters constituting Hawthorne's remarkable building in the novel.

The analysis of architecture reveals that the house is a significant physical construct, a container within a container, a body bearing witness to the human experience, a place that embodies the past and keeps it alive, a meeting place for the past and the present whose interaction paves the way for the future, an inner world carefully related to the outer one marked by mutability, and a marker of the personality and social status of its inhabitants. It is also revealed that the seven gables of the house represent the seven deadly sins and, incidentally, Hawthorne's works, and that the house architecture provides some indication of Hawthorne's greatness as a writer, especially his masterly use of dark and light which he keeps contrasting to indirectly convey certain ideas to the audience.

* Department of English- The Hashemite University - Jordan

The discussion shows that the architecture of the house reinforces Hawthorne's theme, and helps him with materializing the past on the one hand and immortalizing the family on the other. It also demonstrates that architecture is an index of the value that can be attached to the house whose design is indicative of an optimum balance between the head and the heart crystallized not only in this architectural construct but also represented by the inhabitants whose union establishes a solid background for a better future life for the generations to come.

Hawthorne's interest in the house of the seven gables is ascribed to its being "an object of curiosity with him from boyhood, both as a specimen of the best and stateliest architecture"¹ of a past epoch, and its being "the scene of events more full of human interest, perhaps, than those of a gray feudal castle"¹ This house is the central architectural construct in *The House of the Seven Gables*. It is a rusty wooden house with seven acutely peaked gables, crumbling shingles and brick chimney, a door facing a huge tree, windows and roof portions mottled with moss, some flowers growing in a nook between two gables, and a lattice fence in ruinous condition. Attached to this desolate² old house is a shop operated by an enterprising number of the Pyncheons whose later generations resort out of shame to locking its door and barring it.³

As far as architecture is concerned, the architecture of the house is culturally determined. The house is framed of "oaken timber" whose use was not due to its abundance, but, as Kimball argues, to "the perpetuation of English custom where the need for abandoning it was lacking."⁴ Even though the availability of building materials shaped architecture, builders borrowed English house forms not because these forms responded to the climate or materiality of life, but because "they were building for inhabitants whose memories were of an anglophile culture."⁵ Despite these remarks made by Egan and Kimball, it is worth mentioning that the region was heavily forested and that carpenters were more common than stonemasons. It is ironic that the head carpenter of the Pyncheon house, Thomas Maule, was the son of Mathew Maule who had been hanged for witchcraft and "from whose dead gripe the property of the soil had been wrested."⁶

The "whole visible exterior" of the house was 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

¹Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p.23

² Christopher Egan, *Materiality & Cultural Memory*, p.4

³ Hawthorne, pp.38-39

⁴ Kimball, *Architecture in the History of the Colonies*.

⁵ Christopher Egan, *Materiality & Cultural Memory*, p.4

⁶ Hawthorne, p.33

glass, with which the woodwork of walls was overspread.⁷ The use of “quaint figures” for ornamentation hints at the absence of a local building tradition, and ornamentation itself demands building and maintenance. As for the building materials used such as lime, pebbles, and bits of glass, they are culturally determined, as culture “shapes what we build” with them.⁸ They are also durable materials, and can be easily worked out into different shapes. Plaster itself can be modeled, cast, colored, stamped, etc. However, as an integral part of the building system, plaster is subject to various problems.

1. An important part of the structure of the house is the brick chimney. This single chimney makes the house economical to heat, and the use of brick in it shows that there was a vast supply of clay for making bricks, and that bricklayers were available. This availability of bricklayers parallels that of craftsmen who carved the “globes of wood” that were “affixed under the jutting stories”⁹ of the house. In contrast with wood carving, stone carving was limited just to doors and windows craftsmen¹⁰. The use of wood is attributed also to its being abundant, cheap, and resistant of rot and termites. These factors further underlie the presence of wood shingles that were fashionable, domestic roofing materials.

The roof of the house is important in a number of ways. It preserves the structure of the house, imparts much of its architectural character, sheds the rain, shades from the sun, and buffers the weather. The scrutiny of these building materials reveals that the form of the house is certainly determined by culture and greatly influenced by the availability or scarcity of these materials and climate. Regarding the form of the house, culture determines the “forms we honor, those we reject, and those we wish to emulate.”¹¹ If these forms are not locally available, architects will have no choice. They find themselves obliged to borrow remembered forms, and this is where the role of cultural memory becomes obvious. This role of culture extends to determine not only the

⁷ Ibid.,p.24

⁸ Christopher Egan, *Materiality & Cultural Memory*, p.5

⁹ Hawthorne, p.24

¹⁰ Jacinto Quirarte *Art of the Americas* ,p.75

¹¹ Christopher Egan, *Materiality & Cultural Memory*, p.3

materials employed in building but also how to use those materials and what to build with them.

The description of the house shows that it is decaying and rundown.

This poor condition of the house which is in stark contrast with its former grandeur parallels the degeneration of the Pyncheon family, headed by Colonel Pyncheon, a puritan new Englander, the founder cursed by Mathew Maule, the rightful claimant to the site upon which the mansion stands. The significance of this degeneration is that it is further indicated by the birds and hens, reflecting the collapse of aristocracy. The Pyncheons who hold themselves to be aristocrats isolate themselves, refuse to take part in the human struggle, and limit themselves to looking at people in the street through the arched windows of the house. These aristocrats are represented by Hepzibah, Clifford, and Judge Pyncheon. Describing Hepzibah, Hawthorne contends that “for above quarter of a century” she “has dwelt in strict seclusion, taking no part in the business of life, and just as little in its intercourse and pleasures.”¹² Like Hepzibah, Clifford “has had but little sunshine in his life,”¹³ and, “ by leaning a little way from the arched window,[can] catch a glimpse of the trains of cars, flashing a brief transit across the extremity of the street.”¹⁴ This window provides access to the world outside and Clifford’s looking through it represents, according to Eudora Welty, “an act of recognition,” a seeing beyond observation.¹⁵

The window itself is a defining image of reality, which Welty sees not as a “single pure ray,” but as a “cluster of letter lights” like “windows of a village at night, close together but not one.”¹⁶

According to Welty’s argument, Clifford “saw.....in the mirror of his deep consciousness that he was an example and representative of that great class of people,”¹⁷ that he has been helpless to regain the social intercourse, and that his illusions of aristocracy are to blame for his

¹²Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p.41

¹³ Ibid.,p.104

¹⁴ Ibid.,p.152

¹⁵ Louis D. Rubin, *Writers of the Modern South*,p.131

¹⁶ Eudora Welty "Reality in Chekhov's Stories" *The Eye of the Story*,p.63

¹⁷ Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* ,p.142

rejecting “the idea of personal contact with the world.”¹⁸ Fed up with isolation, he determines to “plunge into the ocean of the human life”¹⁹, but Hepzibah stops him. Hepzibah, likewise, also recognizes that the world of aristocracy is falling apart, that aristocrats belong nowhere, and it is time for her and her brother to face that reality, go to church, and be “reconciled to God and man at once.”²⁰ Meaning to pacify Clifford, she claims that although they are poor and forsaken “some pew door will be opened” to them.²¹

There is sense in Hepzibah’s argument about doors which reinforce the thematic dialectic of inside-outside consciousness. In *Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard sees the phenomenon of the door as a primal image that opens to the depth of being, or closes, padlocked. The door opens to the world of men or to the world of solitude.²² According to this argument, the door of *The House of the Seven Gables* separates insiders, the Pyncheons, who are secluded, from outsiders who live in the world of men and earn their living on their own. Another value that can be attached to the door of the Pyncheons’ mansion is that it is a boundary separating the past from the present. The house itself stands for the past and serves as a dual container. It houses both the Pyncheons of the present and those of the past, particularly Colonel Pyncheon, who are still present in the “living” form of portraits of the dead. In this way it can be said that the house stands for the confluence of the past and the present.

Commenting on this function of the house in an essay on the house of Willa Cather, Eudora Welty argues that “the house is the physical form, the evidence that we have lived, are alive now.”²³ Moreover, this family mansion keeps the past alive through epitomizing the memories of successive generations of the Pyncheons and preserving that time’s style of building. It also clearly shows how the past lives into the present the same way Colonel Pyncheon’s wrong-doing and Maule’s curse have lived into the successive generations, a theme that holds the reader’s

¹⁸ Ibid.,p.156

¹⁹ Ibid.,p.157

²⁰ Ibid.,p.159

²¹ Ibid.,p.159

²² Gaston Bachelard ,*Poetics of Space* ,pp.211-212

²³ Eudora Welty , "The House of Willa Cather" in *The Eye of the Story*,p.56

attention throughout the whole novel, in which Hawthorne dwells on evil and sin, demonstrating that evil breeds evil and that sin reproduces itself.

The architecture of the house is early colonial and its exterior is “ornamented with quaint figures,”²⁴ “framed of oaken timber,”²⁵ drawn or stamped in the glittering plaster, “composed of lime, pebbles, and bits of glass, with which the woodwork of the walls [is] overspread.”²⁶ It also has seven gables that point sharply towards the sky, one great chimney, and a principal entrance “covered by an open porch.” The heart of this stately mansion is represented by the hall where the founder receives eminent personages, a large dim looking glass hanging in one of the rooms and containing “within its depths all the shapes” reflected there, and “a handsomely furnished room of moderate size”²⁷ where there are “books arranged on shelves,”²⁸ a “large map on the wall,”²⁹ and a “portrait of Colonel Pyncheon,”³⁰ beneath which sits the Colonel himself “in an oaken elbow chair”³¹, “with a pen in his hand”³² and untimely dies. This death seems to be the consequence of Maule’s curse, as evidenced by the “blood on his ruff”³³ with which the colonel’s “hoary beard” is saturated.

Furthermore, the Colonel’s death represents the death of the Pyncheons god, whose sins will certainly do “many generations of his posterity”³⁴ more harm than the good the mansion erected for them on a spot of ground that is not his will do them. The problem of this spot is that it has become “exceedingly desirable in the eyes of a prominent and powerful personage,”³⁵ Colonel Pyncheon, whose power and influence not only outweigh the owner’s but also enable him to assert “plausible

²⁴ Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p.24

²⁵ Ibid., p.22

²⁶ Ibid., p.24

²⁷ Ibid., p.27

²⁸ Ibid., p.27

²⁹ Ibid., p.27

³⁰ Ibid., p.27

³¹ Ibid., p.27

³² Ibid., p.27

³³ Ibid., p.27

³⁴ Ibid., p.22

³⁵ Ibid., p.20

claims” of proprietorship, depending on the “strength of a grant from the legislature”³⁶

This argument leaves no doubt that Colonel Pyncheon doer. For one, he is proud and holds himself to be superior to Mathew Maule, the original owner of the mansion site. For another, he is envious, greedy, and lusty. These traits reflect not only the individual nature of Colonel Pyncheon and his descendants, the inhabitants of the house, and their relationship to each other and the outside world but also the nature of the house that is as evil as its inhabitants.

This relationship between the house, an architectural construct , and its inhabitants is significant in many ways. It is true that the house is a physical construct offering its inhabitants a protective retreat, a sanctuary from the exterior world, and an opportunity to venture forth into the world, yet it has its own soul. In *Poetics of Space*, Bachelard holds that the house constitutes a body of images which give mankind proofs or illusions of stability. To distinguish these images, he develops a psychology of the house as a vertical and cocentric being.³⁷ The house , in other words, becomes structure and soul and this is the essence of the Pyncheon house which Pyncheon Street has protected and encased. The soul of the house is its unchanging sameness which has marked it over the years. The family sameness is apparent.

Despite “possessing very distinctive traits of their own”³⁸, the Pyncheons [take] the general characteristics of the little community in which they [dwell]; “a town noted for its frugal, discreet, well-ordered, and home-loving inhabitants, as well as for the somewhat confined scope of its sympathies.”³⁹ This sameness is further shown by Hawthorne’s contentions that Judge Pyncheon “was much the same as the Colonel, ” and that “[in] almost every generation... there happened to be some one descendant of the family gifted with a portion of the hard, keen sense, and practical energy that had so remarkably distinguished the original

³⁶ Ibid.,p.20

³⁷ Bachelard ,*Poetics of Space* ,pp.136-139

³⁸ Hawthorne , *The House of the Seven Gables* ,p.33

³⁹ Ibid.,p.33

founder”⁴⁰. In addition to this physical sameness certain characteristics such as pride are passed on from the old to the young.

The collective sameness of the Pyncheons attempts to lock out and ignore the intrusion of the “real” world, for the doors which the family open reveal only another part of their interior world of self--- the mansion in Pyncheon Street. But beyond the door of the house of the seven gables lies the world of mutability against which the family is protected by means of portraits, especially that of Colonel Pyncheon, the map of the Pyncheon territory, and memories. These relics of the past change the house into a living museum that maintains the immortality of the family and keeps it immutable.

In spite of the efforts of the Pyncheons to fight against mutability to maintain their sameness, Hawthorne brings fragments of the outer world into the mansion. For instance, he shows the change becoming of Maule’s well that has become brackish as well as that becoming of the hens which seem to be en route to extinction. This change of hens suggests the one becoming of the Pyncheons who, oblivious of the impact of time and blinded to reality, resort to locking out the mansion door to prevent the intrusion of the “real” world. This behavior is manifest in Hepzibah’s planning not to let Phoebe in the moment the former saw the latter standing at the threshold. To do that, Hepzibah felt that “the door ought to be shoved back, and the rusty key turned in the reluctant lock.”⁴¹ After Hepzibah had wondered about Phoebe’s identity, she decided to allow her a “night lodging.” By arranging for Phoebe to be let in, Hawthorne brings an agent of change into the house where there are, at least, three change- reflecting elements projected on a background of sameness, of immutability. Thus, the house becomes a multicontainer. It is a container for the past and the present that are confluent, mutability and immutability that are juxtaposed, mortality and immortality that are put together, good and evil that are contrasted, and sameness and difference that are combined. These paradoxes testify to the patterns of human experience which is at the centre of Hawthorne’s attention that was drawn to the house whose aspect was expressive “of the long lapse of

⁴⁰ Ibid.,p.31

⁴¹ Ibid.,p.75

mortal life, and accompanying vicissitudes that have passed within”⁴² Thus, the house becomes a metaphor of the human life and of the Pyncheon’s family whose soul is Phoebe.

In his design of *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne reflects both the body and spirit of the Pyncheons. Through this detailed structure, he has provided the Pyncheons with security and enclosure at the same time, permitting them access to the exterior world of change and mortality. This dialectic of containing and enveloping, protecting and restricting threatened by the outside world is represented by the map of Pyncheon territory, in which the territory stands for the property or estate owned by Colonel Pyncheon whose strength is symbolized by the lion and who uses the evil powers of the world, represented by the wild beasts in the map, to appropriate it from its original owners shown as Indians. This territory marking the boundary between the Pyncheons’ estate and the external world provides the Pyncheons with security and protection yet its ownership, being uncertain due to its being illegally appropriated, may bring about harm and destruction. This analogy to the house/world tension of the house of the seven gables does not only summarize the comprehensive human drama inherent in Hawthorne’s architecture but also points to a figure of achieved wholeness, Phoebe, whose architectural construction completes Hawthorne’s remarkable building in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Phoebe is representative of the body and spirit of the family. She provides them with love, and gives them life, while at the same time moves into the outside world of mutability and death. She alone offers hope for the continuation of the Pyncheon past and she is unthreatened by their present. This wholeness of self allows Phoebe to accept her family and their heritage without being entrapped by them.

The container that is Phoebe is represented by the geometric design of a circle, a psychological symbol of the self; the circle also represents the most vital aspect of life, an ultimate wholeness. The Pyncheon house itself is static, but the outside world is not. Every thing about the life of the family is circular, from the grand reception planned by Colonel Pyncheon on the occasion of the opening of the mansion to the Colonel’s

⁴² Ibid.,p.19

death with which his life comes to a full circle, to successive generations of Pyncheons, to Phoebe's journey to the country and return to the house, to the Sunday afternoon gatherings of Phoebe, Clifford, Hepzibah, Holgrave, and uncle Venner, to Hepzibah and Clifford's outward journey and the journey back home, and to the appearance of the full moon while Phoebe is arguing against being mesmerized by Holgrave. At the center of this circle is Phoebe whom Holgrave, Hepzibah, and Clifford view to be a sacred space, a magic circle around and through which they live. As Richard H. Fogle argues, Clifford and Hepzibah are powerless without Phoebe.⁴³ To Clifford, Phoebe was "the interpretation of all that he had lacked on earth brought warmly home to his conception."⁴⁴

Phoebe's role is emphasized by her being associated with sunlight that stands for a new life in the house. Looked at the sun from another perspective, it can be said that it is symbolic of "the most vital aspect of life": an ultimate wholeness."⁴⁵ Being sun-like, Phoebe empowers Clifford, Hepzibah, and Holgrave. Thus, Phoebe's connection with the sun is meant to reflect her role in the family mansion as a catalyst for change. In addition to being connected with the sun, Phoebe seems to be door-like. She is a door that opens both ways: to the inside and the outside. By living in the house, she exercises a positive influence upon its inhabitants, the hens, and the flowers. Phoebe's kind treatment of Clifford, Hepzibah, and Holgrave fills all of them with hope. To Clifford whom she gives an "affectionate regard," Phoebe is indispensable. When she is absent for long periods, he becomes peevish and nervously restless, and paces about his room. Similarly, the impact of Phoebe's presence on Hepzibah cannot be overlooked. It should be argued that Phoebe's generosity of love allows her not just to see Clifford clearly but also to clearly see Hepzibah, Holgrave, and judge Pyncheon, and to love them all as they are. Phoebe's life is a celebration of that love. She is the flame that gives new life and destroys the old life. She is the flame of life, the heart of the Pyncheon house, the center of its world, and the container that houses its spirit. Therefore, Phoebe, as a door, offers Clifford and Hepzibah an entrance to a new life, a great opportunity for change that

⁴³ Richard Fogle, "Introduction" to *The House of the Seven Gables*, p.8

⁴⁴ Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p.136

⁴⁵ Aniela Jaffe, "Symbolism in Visual Arts," in *Man and His Symbols*, p.266

sweeps them despite insulating themselves against time and uncertainty by keeping the past alive.

A quick look at Phoebe's role evinces that she is more than a door or a window. She is in fact the sturdy structure of the family. Undoubtedly, this structure houses what is best. In her ability to see the family and to be seen by Clifford and Hepzibah, Phoebe provides a clear window through which they can see beyond the windows of the mansion and at the same time allows her to stand back from their world and to see them as they are: to love them and to know about their weaknesses. In recognizing the weaknesses of Clifford and Hepzibah, as well as her own, Phoebe is the eye and the soul, which sees them from the inside. In her willingness to live with them and help them, Phoebe becomes their sacrificial lamb, their goddess of love and light, and the container of the family spirit.

In addition to the soul, the house has its roof, windows, and balcony which provide access to the world outside. This access is also provided by the Elm tree which is a part of nature and of the house at the same time. Similar to the house that serves as a container are the books on the shelves in the "handsomely furnished room". These books constitute a special space which serves as a dual container housing both the words and the people of the past who are still present.

Just as Bachelard holds the house to be vertical and concentric being, so does Andrea Palladio, a renowned architect, regard the house as the symbolic body and spirit of man. He compares the house to the human body: the "noble and beautiful parts" exposed, the "ignoble but essential parts" hidden.⁴⁶ He views the Italian villa as a compact organism, with each work designed "as if members were joined symmetrically to a central spine."⁴⁷ Following Palladio's steps, Lewis Mumford, an architectural historian, claims that the human dwelling is like the human personality: it consists of both body and spirit. He adds that human dwellings have their roots in the "practical offices of life,"

⁴⁶James S. Ackerman, *Palladio*, pp.54,57

⁴⁷*Ibid.*,p.57

yet they only partly fulfill their task unless they “also bear the imprint of mind and spirit.”⁴⁸

Whereas Palladio and Mumford personalize the house by infusing spirit, self into it, Carl Gustav Jung holds his house to be the epitome of himself, his life, his world, and his whole reality. Examining his own house as an individualization process, Carl Jung calls his by the water confession of faith in stone.⁴⁹ Building his house not only to meet the “concrete needs of the moment” but also “in a kind of a dream”, he creates a physical as well as a spiritual container.⁵⁰ Dreaming of his childhood house, he realizes that his dream centers on cellars and subcellars, which he interprets as elements of his unconscious: “My dream [means] myself, my life and my world, my whole reality.”⁵¹ Unlike Jung, Mumford, and Palladio, Charles Moore looks at houses from a different perspective. In *The Place of Houses*, Moore suggests that “the image of ‘house’ holds great power over the human mind,” and that it “should seem the most important place in the world” to those who dwell there.”⁵² Moore adds that houses are special places within places, separate, “the center of the world for their inhabitants, yet carefully related to the larger place in which they belong.”⁵³ Moore indicates that houses are related to their inhabitants and to the external world as well. These houses are special places for their inhabitants; they are the holders of memories and the storehouses which have magical power to attract families. In spite of this importance, some inhabitants do not hold their houses to be the most important places in the world.

Rejecting this attitude, Moore urges people to attach a great value to their houses which he describes as being “special places within places” yet related to the outer world. According to Moore’s argument, houses stand for privacy, for the private life led by their inhabitants. They shield these inhabitants from the eyes of the public, yet they provide access to the outside world through their windows and doors. Therefore, the

⁴⁸ Lewis Mumford, *The South in Architecture: The Dancy Lectures*, pp.112-113

⁴⁹ Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p.223

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.225

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 44

⁵² Charles Moore, *The Place of Houses*, p.51

⁵³ Ibid., p.50

inhabitants of a house feel connected to others whose lives they can easily view from the safety of their homes. This situation is best exemplified by Clifford who looks through the arched window at people in the street, a behavior reflecting his struggle for being included in the human life he badly needs to survive isolation confining his freedom and reinforcing his separateness.

As far as the relationship between houses and their inhabitants is concerned, houses, in my judgment, are markers of personality and social status. Personality can be added to a house by choosing a certain site, a certain color for the walls and bedrooms, and planting flowers and plants. While fresh flowers add life to the house, silk plants don't; they just add color. Personality can be also infused into the house by having certain elements, placing the furniture in a certain way, using certain accessories in the rooms, choosing certain fabrics, textures, and colors, and selecting certain building materials, design elements, and decorating themes. Besides marking personality, houses are indicators of the social status. A quick look at the description of the Pyncheon house reveals that it marks its founder's personality as well as Judge Pyncheon's. Both men suffer from excessive pride, regarding themselves to be superior to others; they are also avaricious and envious of others as evidenced by Colonel Pyncheon's envy of Mathew Maule. Moreover, both men are marked by wrath, impatience with the faults of others, lust for power, and sloth. These sins of the Pyncheons seem to be symbolized by the seven gables of the house that is founded on sin and that has been inhabited by sinners whose sins are intolerable and far-reaching. In a sense, the house houses the sins and bears witness not only to the sins of the past but also of the present. In addition to housing those sins, the house has two ornamented articles of furniture, Colonel Pyncheon's portrait and a map of the Pyncheon's territory which reanimate the past, blurring its relationship with the present.

The past and present become blurred because the projections exist side by side with the actual elements of the apartment. For example, Hephzibah is shown as regarding Colonel Pyncheon's painting "with a

strange contortion of the brow,⁵⁴ which is an indication of her “reverence for the pictured visage.” Despite this likely-to-be-misinterpreted scowl,

Hepzibah’s heart is “naturally tender, sensitive, and full of little tremors and palpitations.”⁵⁵ This image of Hepzibah that reflects her weaknesses is contrasted firstly with the projected image of Colonel Pyncheon which emphasizes his stern features, and secondly with that of the lion and the other wild beasts in the map of the Pyncheon territory. While Colonel Pyncheon's portrait reflects his severity and power symbolized by the hand-up lifted “iron sword hilt,” Hepzibah’s image hints at her being powerless, and forced “to step down from her pedestal of imaginary rank,” and “earn her own food, or starve.”⁵⁶ Whereas the map of the Pyncheon territory underlines the vast tracts of land owned by Colonel Pyncheon, the Pyncheons of the present of whom Hepzibah is one are no longer able to own any tract of land. Crushed by poverty, they have to earn their living, limiting themselves to the house that is becoming prison-like. These contrasts featuring the projections of the map of the Pyncheon territory and Colonel Pyncheon’s portrait on the walls of the room where Hepzibah lives demonstrate how the past and the present become blurred, how memory is stored in architecture, and how the house becomes the arena in which memory resides. Arguing for this relationship between memory and the house, Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space*, claims that houses themselves hold many memories, and if the house is a bit elaborate, if it has a cellar, a garret, nooks and corridors, our memories have refuges that are all the more clearly delineated... Memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of the home.⁵⁷ Van Alphen, likewise, regards the house not only as a site upon which personal memories are inscribed but also a site in which cultural memory can be embedded.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Hawthorne ,The House of the Seven Gables ,p.44

⁵⁵ Hawthorne ,*The House of the Seven Gables* ,p.44

⁵⁶ Ibid.,p.44

⁵⁷ Bachelard , *The Poetics of Space*,p.48

⁵⁸ Van Alphen, *Caught By History :Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art,Literature,and Theory*,p.49

This argument provides us with a revealing perspective from which we can view the house of the seven gables. Just as the house is a container for the personal memory of the Pyncheons so is it a container for the cultural memory. For instance, the map of the Pyncheon territory projected on the wall sums up the whole relationship between whites and Indians. It shows Indians and wild beasts in the wilderness before the encroachment of civilization. Those Indians are natives of whom many have been slaughtered by whites under the pretext of civilization, while very few have survived to tell us about their sorrows. The map, being in stark contrast with reality, also demonstrates the collapse of aristocracy.

Furthermore, the map itself acts as a metaphor for the dangers of forgetting history, reminding Americans of the present of their sins against Indians. Hawthorne may have meant it to be projected on the wall to shed more light on his main thesis, sin. Like the painting of Colonel Pyncheon, this map may function as a language through which memory is sorted. In his book, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Jacques Derrida claims that “the archive is a reworking and an impression of previous memory, yet it is that by which memory is lived; censoring, repressing, and also directing and sorting lived memory”⁵⁹ In line with this contention, the painting of Colonel Pyncheon and the map of the Pyncheon territory projected onto the walls of the Pyncheon house both demonstrate how memory lives into the present. Thus Colonel Pyncheon and the Indians in the map become reinscribed onto the house where they no longer live. Hawthorne uses this painting of Colonel Pyncheon and the map of the Pyncheon territory to comment on what had been, to reanimate the memory of specific individuals and places that no longer exist, and to make the past palpable through Colonel Pyncheon’s and the Indians’ combined absence and presence.

Relevant to this use of the map and the painting as a language to activate the past is the house architecture that also functions as a language. When we liken the house architecture to a language, we use the analogy of language to show how this architecture works. The primary purpose of any language is to facilitate communication for its speakers. According to Webster's dictionary, to communicate is "to convey

⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, p.50

knowledge or information of; to make known."⁶⁰ Similarly, the primary purpose of the house architecture is to provide shelter; but, besides providing shelter, the house architecture seems also to communicate certain information about its function and internal structure. Whereas the function of the house is to be a residence for the Pyncheons, the internal structure gives us clues not only to the personal memories of the Pyncheons but also to the cultural memory.

Besides storing memories, the house of the seven gables can be read as being a text, a view also advocated by Forty and Roth,⁶¹ with two meanings: the literal meaning and the symbolic meaning. While the literal meaning focuses on the function of the house as a building that provides its inhabitants with shelter, the symbolic meaning lies in the house's being a locus of the past and the present, a microcosm of the outer world, a metaphor of the family, a physical construct with a sturdy structure and deep foundations paralleling those of the family. These deep foundations are also likely to be viewed as standing for the dark landscape of the mind, the power of blackness, and Hawthorne's concern with the past in his works.

Hawthorne's works are significant. They represent the author, issue forth from the same source, and are rooted in the house architecture. As Rebmarsmit claims, "[*The House of the Seven Gables*] makes an intriguing representation of Hawthorne."⁶² Commenting on the background of this book as well as Hawthorne's other works, Malcolm Cowley maintains that "[the] plots of [Hawthorne's] stories [come] from the same background."⁶³ In line with these contentions, Hawthorne's works seem to be shaped out of the power of blackness, or the dark landscape of the mind.

In short, these works project Hawthorne's views of the world and of the human experience the same way the projecting gables overlook the surroundings. Moreover, these works are likely to be represented by

⁶⁰ Philip B. Gove, Webster's 3rd *New International Dictionary*, p.61

⁶¹ Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings*, 2000. Leland M. Roth, *Understanding Architecture*, 1993.

⁶² Rebmarsmit, "Symbolism in *The House of the Seven Gables* , p.6

⁶³ Malcolm Cowley, *The Portable Hawthorne* , p.12

the seven gables of the house that point sharply towards the sky, an act that seems to hint at Hawthorne's expectations of success and recognition. This success is manifest in *The House of the Seven Gables* in which Hawthorne does a great job by striking a balance between the architecture of the house and that of the Pyncheons. Whereas the architecture of the house is an amalgamation of "pragmatism on the one hand and reassuring architecture allusions on the other,"⁶⁴ and achieves "maximum performance" and "perfect attunement to the landscape"⁶⁵ that are at the root of American architecture, the architecture of the Pyncheons hinges on Phoebe whom Hawthorne probably intends to be the embodiment of all that is good and perfect in life.

⁶⁴ Leland Roth, "A New Architecture, Yet Old," p.166

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.175

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Received 7/1/2007.