

“Hansel and Gretel” in Toni Morrison’s *Home*

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Another reason for *Home* is that I got very interested in the idea of when a man’s relationship with a woman is pure—unsullied, not fraught. If it’s his relationship with his mother or his girlfriend or his wife or his daughter, there’s always another layer there. The only relationship I thought that would be minus that would be a brother and a sister. It could be masculine and protective without the baggage of sexuality. So the sort of Hansel and Gretel aspect really fascinated me. And his traveling back to save her would be transportation with violence all around him.¹

As some critics have pointed out, storytelling is one of Toni Morrison’s approaches to literature, playing an essential role in her novels. African-American folklore, rituals and myths were very important in her childhood, as they were an intrinsic part of the Wofford family life. Thus, the oral quality of Morrison’s narrative has its roots in her embracement of the African-American tradition of storytelling, which served an important function in maintaining Black history,² becoming “a means of re-membering a dis-membered past, dis-membered family, and community.”³ Morrison wants that African-American history can survive, since the official culture has ignored it. Black women writers “recollect stories that were never written but were passed down orally from generation to generation, as well as [. . .] imagine stories that were too painful ever to be told.”⁴ In her work of fiction, Morrison constructs a counternarrative, which rejects dominant definitions of black individuals. 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.”⁵

In her novels, Morrison has drawn extensively upon myths, legends, but also upon fairy stories, shaping “profound new myths and fairy tales,”⁶ which allow her to deal with abiding themes. Fairy stories, often originating in the oral tradition, are usually intended for children and have, among others, one crucial aim: passing on traditional knowledge and sharing cultural views. Fairy tales rely heavily upon symbols that are used to deliver certain messages. They frequently deal with important life issues and try

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to influence infants' behaviour, educating them about how they are and what they may become when they grow up. According to Leslee Kuykendall and Brian Sturm, "The cultural norms represented in Fairy tales play a large part in the socialisation processes of the child who reads them. Contained within these cultural norms are the shared beliefs about gender roles held by the child's society. The development of a gender identity is integral to a child's self-perception."⁷ Fairy stories are structurally organised as a quest, or as a series of trials or forfeits. The characters depicted are simplified archetypes who usually represent binary oppositions: good/evil, hero/villain, strong/weak, etc. Through her use of fairytale intertexts, as Sharon Wilson claims, Morrison dramatises "nation-building and collapsing in post-colonial work: In-between beings' engagement in the process of construction identity, knowledge, and 'home' is, in itself, mythic."⁸

Before *Home*, Morrison had used fairytale intertexts in her books. *The Bluest Eye* is an anti-fairy story.⁹ Pecola, the ugly duck, never becomes a beautiful swan. Furthermore, as Wilson argues, the "'Sleeping Beauty' intertext is primary in *Beloved*": "Each of the fairy tale's major motifs—the curse and spell, the castle in the forest, the tower of isolation, spinning, the prick, sleeping, and the barrier of thorns—functions ironically in the novel."¹⁰ In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison compares Milkman's approach to the Butler house with the moment when Hansel and Gretel are drawing near the witch's cottage. In this scene, Tess Royton contends, Morrison continues her "self-conscious dialogue with the fairytale genre that she initiates when comparing Ruth's illicit nursing to the gold-spinning miller's daughter."¹¹

Like her previous works, Morrison's last book is a culturally hybrid text, which combines white and black literary traditions. In *Home*, Morrison writes from what Bhabha would call a "liminal" space: her "texts exist in the web of tradition; they are enmeshed in its intersecting lines."¹² While she chooses storytelling as a way of narrating Black history, she decides on a traditional Western tale as a frame for her novel. Thus, through hybridity, she produces fictional "constructions" of personal and national identity. Cultural liminality characterises the site of postcolonial contestation from which Morrison approaches her story. As Cheryl Wall asserts, her fiction "charts the 'dialogic of differences' that locates black women's writing in relation to the multiple literary traditions that inform it and a 'dialectic of identity' that defines black women's writing itself as a multivocal tradition."¹³

In her last novel, Morrison revisits the fairytale genre, mainly “Hansel and Gretel,” to depict African Americans’ journey of self-definition and self-acceptance, engaging in a social and cultural critique of the patriarchal postcolonial society of the time. Morrison goes much further than she did in her earlier works. She does not only use fairy stories to underpin her narrative, connecting them with many of the major motifs of the novel but also, for the first time, a fairy tale becomes the structural frame in which the characters’ identity struggle takes place.¹⁴ In fact, as Wilson writes about Atwood’s fiction, fairytale intertexts are much more than allusions in *Home*: “frame narratives echo inner narrative’s images, motifs, themes, characterisations, structures, and even plots, self-consciously reflecting, and reflecting upon, intertexts.”¹⁵ In her last book, Morrison’s success to make the American black self’s quest for identity universal can be at least partially explained by the role fairy stories play in it.

Home tells the story of two siblings, Frank and Cee, Morrison’s true Hansel and Gretel, on their journey to self-definition. Morrison deals with one of the leitmotifs of her fiction, the quest to find the way home, which is the fairytale siblings’ true quest. As W.E.B. Du Bois states, both brother and sister are born in a “world which yields [them] no true self-consciousness, but only lets [them] see [themselves] through the eyes of others.”¹⁶ Theirs is the history of the African Americans’ strife to attain self-consciousness, “to merge [their] double self into a better and truer self”¹⁷ and to overcome their paradigmatic postcolonial “unhomely” condition.¹⁸ Hence, Morrison depicts the Black Self’s struggle in a dominant white society and the striving of a black community which tries to survive in its midst. During post-colonialism, as Hortense Spillers points out:

Even though the captive flesh/body has been “liberated,” and no one need pretend that even the quotation marks do not matter, dominant symbolic activity, the ruling episteme that releases the dynamics of naming and valuation, remains grounded in the originating metaphors of captivity and mutilation so that it is as if neither time nor history, nor historiography and its topics, shows movement, as the human subject is “murdered” over and over again by the passions of a bloodless and anonymous archaism, showing itself in endless disguise.¹⁹

Nevertheless, Morrison does not reduce her narrative to what Henry L. Gates Jr. has called “a master plot of victim and victimizer.”²⁰ She deals with “the values held by the blacks themselves as agents of their own humanity rather than as resigned victims.”²¹

As in the fairy tale, Frank and Cee’s story is about two children from a poor background. Many contemporary folk scholars, such as Jack Zipes and Maria Tatar, believe that tales, such as “Hansel and Gretel,” can be traced back to the Middle Ages,

when life was really difficult for peasants and their offspring. At that time people experienced poverty, child abandonment and famine. When the story was written in 19th century Germany, these problems were still quite common. *Home* is set in the mid-20th century, after the Korean War, during the pre-civil rights era when African Americans were treated worse than dogs. Black citizens had to undergo routinely many distressful and violent situations. The Moneys, Frank and Cee's family, as well as other black households, are forced to abandon their first home in Bandera County, Texas, and move in with some relatives in Lotus, Georgia.²² Memories of their expulsion will haunt Frank all his life: "You could be inside, living in our own house for years, and still, men with or without badges but always with guns could force you, your family, your neighbors to pack up and move—with or without shoes."²³ From an early age, Frank bears upon his back, a "dead-weight of social degradation,"²⁴ which burdens him.

In *Home*, Morrison focuses on the family as one of the main sources of identity fragmentation. She highlights how the "dysfunctional" postcolonial family cannot provide the caring and nurturing atmosphere that the infant's vulnerable psyche needs to develop. Frank and Cee are not abandoned as Hansel and Gretel, but they are left to the care of their grandparents, who neglect them. Like the passive father figure in the fairy tale, their parents, Luther and Ida, do not take proper care of the children and fail to protect them. In fact, they really love them, but their harsh lives prevent them from performing their parental duties. Besides, Luther and Ida do not seem to know how their grandmother abuses the siblings, physically and psychologically. There are a few moments in the story when they show their true concern for their wellbeing. When the Money family escapes, Ida is pregnant. They leave everything behind, since "the baby she carried was more important than kettles, canning jars, and bedding."²⁵ Cee's mother chooses for her baby girl the sweetest name she had ever heard, Ycidra. Frank thinks that "it was nice, how she thought about the name, treasured it."²⁶ Luther and Ida cannot provide the nurturing and care that the siblings need. After the long working hours, their affection is "like a razor—sharp, short, and thin."²⁷ Frank and Cee raise on their own, as "some forgotten Hansel and Gretel, locked hands they navigated the silence and tried to imagine a future."²⁸

In "Hansel and Gretel" food plays a remarkable part. The eating theme is present all throughout the tale. As in the tale, in *Home*, the importance of food is greatly connected with the Moneys' poor status, the ultimate source of their problems. The family name, as Frank points out, is ironic: "The crazy part is our last name. Money. Of

which we had none.”²⁹ In addition, food and eating take symbolic relevance in some memorable moments in the novel, emphasizing women’s sexual victimisation, as well as the disruption of motherhood and lack of maternal care in a postcolonial society. When Sarah and Cee are eating melons, these metaphorically represent the dismemberment of Cee’s womb. Thus, food is connected to the disruption of the ethnic woman’s motherhood, which was terrible during slavery, but which, in its aftermath, continues to be objectified by patriarchal medical experimentation. Another example is when the Korean scavenging girl, who resembles Frank’s sister, is searching for food among the garbage and says “Yum-yum,” suggesting her willingness to perform oral sex on him. Out of shame for his acts, Frank shoots her and she dies clutching a rotting orange in her hand. His guilt and embarrassment at his paedophilic actions have incestuous connotations. These terrible recollections have haunted Frank ever since. In this scene, Morrison deals with the appalling consequences of war for women’s lives and their sexuality: the fellatio act becomes a sign of the sexual domination of the victimiser (a victim himself) over the female victim (especially dramatic when they are girls), a situation that black women had suffered in their enslavement. Food also plays an essential role when Cee, almost recovered from her wounds, is ready to eat blackberry jam, “the first non-medicinal food she was allowed to eat and the first taste of sugar”; she can now taste Ethel’s “demanding love [. . .], which soothed and strengthened her the most,”³⁰ a “maternal” love, of which she had been deprived as a child. Morrison had already used sugar in association with the lack of maternal love in *Beloved*’s crave for sugar in *Beloved*, deprivation that was not only habitual for black individuals during slavery, but also in the post-colonial society. Sugar has other connotations that are linked to the slave trade, since it was its engine. It is also really important in “Hansel and Gretel,” because the witch’s cottage is made of candy, which entices the children to approach it and then come into it.

Morrison likens her novel to the fairy tale when she describes Frank and Cee’s grandmother, Lenore, who, as the traditional “wicked witch,” epitomises evil.³¹ According to Kakutani, the siblings’ “monstrous grandmother Lenore verges on fairy-tale caricature.”³² She is one of Morrison’s true villainous characters, a rich widow who flees from Alabama and marries a Lotus widower called Salem out of fear of living alone and who, unwillingly, lets her husband’s ragged and homeless relatives settle with them. Morrison fuses in Lenore the fairytale stepmother and the wicked witch of the forest. Many commentators have seen that when, in “Hansel and Gretel,” the siblings

kill the witch, the stepmother or mother (in the first version) dies. They suggest that both characters are metaphorically the same woman. The stepmother “often ill-treated the children.” She “was forever nagging the woodcutter” and complaining about food scarcity. She asks her husband to “get rid of the two brats,” suggesting Hansel and Gretel’s bad behaviour so as to justify her actions. Her devious plan to make the siblings go away turns her into a witch.

Lenore exemplifies the collapse of African Americans’ traditional moral values, focusing on one of the main themes of fairy tales, child abuse. Through her, Morrison hints at white oppression and violence as the ultimate root cause for the erosion of black citizens’ ethical principles, since “Racism corrodes love between black men and women, fractures families, and destroys mothers’ dreams for their children.”³³ Lenore is a selfish person, who believes herself superior to the rest of the people in Lotus, using everyone for her own benefit.³⁴ As in the conventional fairy tale, she is also a spiteful and cruel step-grandmother, who neglects and abuses her step-grandchildren in many different ways, such as giving them water instead of milk for breakfast. As Frank says, “a mean grandmother is one of the worst things a girl could have. Mamas are supposed to spank and rule you so you grow up knowing right from wrong. Grandmothers, even when they’ve been hard on their own children, are forgiving and generous to the grandchildren.”³⁵ As in the fairytale archetype, Lenore is nagging and deceitful, since she hides her cruelties from the siblings’ parents. She unburdens all her resentment and displeasure at having to accept the discomfort of a crowded house on the children but, especially, on the girl, a howling baby at the time. Lenore believes that her birth in the street was an omen, a “prelude to a sinful, worthless life,”³⁶ and she continuously undervalues and berates the little girl, calling her “gutter child” at every mistake. As in “Hansel and Gretel,” the siblings live the horrors of the witch’s house.

Like their parents, Salem is a passive agent in Frank and Cee’s lives, failing at protecting them. Even though he seems to be displeased with his wife’s behaviour towards them, his conniving attitude resembles that of the spineless father in “Hansel and Gretel.” In front of Lenore’s cruelty, he keeps silent: “he was mute about everything except his meals,”³⁷ allowing her to neglect and abuse the infants. As in the fairy tale, she seems to have total control over the “weak” man, whom Frank believes is scared that Lenore, “a serious catch”—like the rich witch in the story—, may leave him. When Hansel and Gretel get rid of the witch, they discover a vase full of treasure and precious stones. Lenore is a despotic and overpowering devil figure, the true villainess

of the narrative. In the Money males' nerveless "parenting" roles, Morrison might suggest that black women were, and had often been, the sole supporters of their families. As in the tale, black men are characterised by their non-involvement and invisibility in family life, elements that Morrison has emphasised in her novels, such as *Beloved*.

As Wilson contends, feminist postcolonial writers use some tactics to deconstruct fairytale intertexts, "displacing the 'truth' of traditional texts."³⁸ In "Hansel and Gretel," adult female characters, the evil witch and the stepmother, are denigrated in their wicked roles. However, as Bruno Bettelheim points out, "Gretel's importance in the children's deliverance reassures the child that a female can be a rescuer as well as a destroyer."³⁹ In *Home*, Morrison counteracts her evil witch with nurturing maternal figures, Ethel and the other women of the community. Morrison's matriarchs are life forces who show nurturing qualities and ancestral healing properties. They have the tar quality that Morrison associates with African-American females' ability to nourish family and community.⁴⁰ Through these women, Morrison claims the lost connection with black ancestors as well as asserts "matrilineage." Ethel stands as Lenore's counterpart, the matriarch that has her ancestors' wisdom and knows her position in the community. She becomes, eventually, Cee's surrogate mother. Her feminine natural healing practices, rooted in Black traditions, are contrasted to the Western patriarchal medicine techniques.

Ethel, especially, but also the other females in the community, give life lessons to the young woman, who has never received maternal counsels. When Ethel wisely advises Cee, she compares the wicked witch's life with the story "The Goose That Laid the Golden Eggs," a famous Aesop's fable. As the greedy farmer who kills the goose, Lenore puts her wealth above everything.⁴¹ However, Ethel explains to Cee that gold is not important. The farmer should have ploughed his land and grow something to eat.⁴² The old female uses the fable to make Cee understand what should be considered valuable and meaningful. Like the farmer, Lenore pays a high price for being greedy. In contrast, Miss Ethel is the kind of woman who "blocked or destroyed enemies and nurtured plants" and her "garden was not Eden, it was so much more than that. For her the whole predatory world threatened her garden, competing with its nourishment, its beauty, its benefits, and its demands. And she loved it."⁴³ Morrison believes, as Suero-Elliott states, that attempts at self-liberation will only succeed within a community that supports the individual, emphasizing the collective quality of the process of

“decolonization.”⁴⁴ Cooperation among African Americans is necessary to change their neocolonialist present.⁴⁵ According to Bhabha, the “in-between’ spaces,” produced in the articulation of cultural differences, “provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself.”⁴⁶

In the fairy tale, Hansel shows, on different occasions, his bravery, cunning and his shielding attitude towards his sister. When at night the siblings overhear their parents’ plan, he comforts her and comes up with a scheme to save them by filling his pocket with little white pebbles. Later, when they are in the forest waiting for their father, the woodcutter, Gretel begins sobbing and Hansel consoles her and takes her home safely, holding her hand fatherly. The second time the children are abandoned, despite his fears, he tries to encourage and comfort her again: “Don’t be afraid. I’m here to look after you!” Like Hansel, in front of his step-grandmother’s abuse, Frank stands up to defend his sister, even though he is only 4. As Cee explains, “He would, as always, protect her from a bad situation.”⁴⁷ His name is her first word, “Fwank,” and he keeps her baby teeth with his little childhood treasures.

Like Hansel, Frank tends Cee tenderly as her parents never did, displaying a vigilant and soothing attitude towards her: “the four-year-old brother was clearly the real mother to the infant.”⁴⁸ She accompanies him and his friends everywhere, “The four of them were tight, the way family ought to be.”⁴⁹ Frank gives Cee advice about everything, such as how to recognise poisonous berries (when Hansel and Gretel get lost in the forest, they subsist by eating berries). He is a healing influence for her. After the episode of the man who tries to abuse Cee, Frank puts his hand on top of her head, the other at her nape and she feels his fingers “like balm.”⁵⁰ Notwithstanding, he overprotects his sister and fails to warn her about people like Prince. Frank has become a surrogate father, who makes Cee feel safe but, at the same time, annihilates her scarce self-reliance and impairs her self-growth. Even though, Cee, like Gretel, is better off for having her brother in her life, their relationship is dysfunctional, since he can never be her parents’ substitute. Neither Cee nor Frank can lead a normal life because, in the postcolonial era, they lack the nurturing family life they need as infants.

At a very early age, when we really gain our core impressions of the world, Cee lacks parental care and is constantly rebuked and ill-treated by those who should love and look after her, the prime shapers of children’s psyches, their family, “a historically constituted social site where individual subjectivity is constructed.”⁵¹ Consequently, she

cannot view herself as worthy and her self-esteem is really low. In addition, African Americans face “so vast a prejudice [which] could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals which accompany repression and breed in an atmosphere of contempt and hate.”⁵² As it is in “Hansel and Gretel,” parents’ absence is an important aspect of princesses’ relationships in fairy tales. They do not have a maternal figure, which can nurture and counsel them. Instead they are in the “care” of evil stepmothers. As Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario claims, “the conflict between the princess and her mature adversary is often read in terms of daughter-mother relationships with the mature adversary acting as a wicked maternal substitute, simultaneously erasing the mother and replacing her with a negative image.”⁵³ Furthermore, the paternal presence in Cee’s life is not the role model or protective figure she needs. Without nurturing parenting and with an over-sheltering brother, the young woman is unprepared to cope with the trials she has to confront in life.

In *Home*, Morrison deals again with failed marriage. When Frank enlists, his sister’s sorrow and panic are uncontrollable. Without his overzealous protection, Cee takes some irrational decisions, as when she runs off with a good-looking man from Atlanta, whose name is Principal, but who calls himself Prince. He marries her for an automobile and then abandons her. Principal is a false prince charming, who turns out to be a Frog, as Thelma, Cee’s friend, points out, but whom Cee contemptuously calls “rat.” Morrison parodies and subverts the fairy tale, by reversing the transformation and final outcome of the love story: it is the Prince who becomes a frog and Cee, the princess, remains alone and vulnerable after his departure.⁵⁴ Morrison may be hinting at the detrimental effects these princess stories can have on girls, since they present an idealistic and unreal world. They depict beautiful, flawless and unattainable princesses, who are always rescued by handsome princes, thus creating fallacious expectations for real man-woman relationships. Conversely, feminist fairy tales,

Challenge conventional views of gender, socialization [sic], and sex roles [. . .]. Created out of dissatisfaction with the dominant male discourse of traditional fairy tales and with those social values and institutions which have provided the framework for sexist prescriptions, the feminist fairy tale conceives a different view of the world and speaks in a voice that has been customarily silenced.⁵⁵

Morrison uses this fairytale intertext to question the conventional gender and cultural roles that trap women by reversing the traditional figure of the charming prince as a rescuer. As Wilson argues, “we cannot rely on a prince to rescue us but must rescue ourselves.”⁵⁶ Cee learns this lesson the hard way. Even though she blames her

impulsive actions on her ignorance, her naïve character is the result of the lack of family nourishment and maternal counsels, as well as her brother's overprotection. While Frank is in Lotus, she is off-limits, incapable of any kind of flirtation, and when he leaves, she feels "adrift in the space where her brother had been, she had no defense."⁵⁷ So, searching for love, Cee falls for the first man that does not look like a peasant. Until Frank's departure, the young woman, like Gretel at the beginning of the fairy tale, expects that her brother will save her. In his absence, she truly misses his healing hands and comforting words. Cee feels that she is a part of him, as when she writes him a note months after he is discharged and ends it with the capitalised words, "Yours truly Your sister."⁵⁸ She feels alone and "broken. Not broken up but broken down, down into her separate parts."⁵⁹

Cee's journey to self-definition takes her to Dr. Beau who, despite his gentleman's manners, turns out to be a Dr. Frankenstein—even if his wife claims he is not—, another intertextual element in the novel that underlines dismemberment.⁶⁰ Like Schoolteacher in *Beloved*, he is a Faustian scientist who stands for the unethical pursuits of science, which may transgress natural, human and divine boundaries. Dr. Beau, connected with the school of eugenics, conducts abominable experiments on people. Hence, he symbolises the unspeakable abuses and violations on the black body by the Western patriarchal medical system.⁶¹ Cee, who is ill-prepared to defend herself, succumbs to his predatory and monstrous practices. The doctor, as a Faustian scientist, can be compared with the witch, Cee's step-grandmother. Like Lenore, the "evil physician" is a fairytale caricature. He only cares about himself and his experiments, and he does not mind sacrificing the girl to his scientific endeavours. Like Gretel in the witch's house, Cee is the mad doctor's "assistant" in his intellectual schemes. Nevertheless, instead of Hansel, Gretel is the one who will be sacrificed. Alluding to the fairy tale (in "Hansel and Gretel," the wicked witch wants to fatten Hansel before eating him), the good-willed Sarah, who also collaborates with Dr. Beau, tells the young woman: "I'll fatten you up in no time if you stay here long enough."⁶²

Deception and trickery are common themes in fairy tales.⁶³ In "Hansel and Gretel," the siblings are deluded by the appealing appearance of the witch's cottage and her warm welcome. Upon their arrival, she offers them a good meal and nice beds to sleep in. They think that "they are in heaven," but she is a devouring witch who lures kids so that she can later eat them. Likewise, Dr. Beau deceives Cee into believing that she is only going to be his assistant. Cee, on the other hand, is deluded once more by

appearances. Despite the suspicious questions of the doctor's first interview, about having children or her sexual relationships, she thinks that he is trying to help other people and does not mistrust him. Cee loves the new clean, "safe" and beautiful world that, finally, surrounds her. Metaphorically and physically, Cee is truly becoming parts. When Sarah and Cee are eating melons and talking about how the sweetest ones are female, Sarah cuts one in two parts, a premonition of what the young woman is going to experience at the hands of Dr. Beau. As Wilson claims about Margaret Atwood, Morrison uses fairy tales to "portray literal and symbolic dismemberment."⁶⁴

The dismemberment and amputation of Cee's body is the ultimate expression of the fractured Black Self and the disruption of motherhood by the white dominant system. The wicked villain-scientist epitomises the white male that objectifies and dissects the ethnic woman, the female body's appropriation and colonisation by patriarchy. In her vulnerability, Cee colludes in her own dehumanisation and bodily violation. Ironically, Dr. Beau, as a Frankensteinian doctor, "steals" Cee's ability to create life. His surgical procedures also hint at sexual politics, the dominance-submission relationship between the paternal figure and the maiden, the young woman's patriarchal rape. Laurie Vickroy thinks that Morrison wants the reader to "share the victim's experience from the victim's point of view [. . .], whether our guilt take the form of direct responsibility or complicity."⁶⁵

On the other hand, Frank leaves Lotus, his hometown, "the worst place in the world, worse than any battlefield,"⁶⁶ which was suffocating and killing him. Like his friends, he sees the army as his only way out. Back from the Korean War, Frank has to confront the terrible recollections that haunt him, the atrocities he has witnessed, such as his two best friends' deaths. His ordeal in Korea has "changed" him and he suffers from shell shock. In his inner hell, he starts wandering and roaming the streets in a deranged state of mind. Like the fairytale siblings, Frank feels lost in his personal forest, the city. His life is filled with episodes of insanity, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, as for instance, his gruesome hallucinations or colour-blindness: just after being discharged, "the world became a black-and-white movie screen."⁶⁷ The fairytale theme of dismemberment appears again in Frank's war nightmares, since, in a patriarchal colonist society, both male and female bodies are defiled. Among the horrors he endures are "the hallucinations of body parts which plague Frank."⁶⁸ As Spillers writes, "That order [of the New World], with its human sequence written in blood, represents for its

African and indigenous peoples a scene of actual mutilation, dismemberment, and exile.”⁶⁹

In *Home*, the fairytale hero is on a quest. As it happens to Paul D in *Beloved*, Frank’s healing journey, after his traumatic war hardships, goes through different women, who give him the warmth and love he needs not to succumb to complete insanity. They are the “little stones” that lead him back home. In these encounters, we can find another reference to “Hansel and Gretel.” Hansel tricks the witch into believing that he is too thin to be eaten by showing her a thin bone that the near-sighted witch mistakes for his finger. When Frank talks about the women in his life, he says that he likes the breakable thing inside them, comparing it to “a bird’s breastbone, shaped and chosen to wish on.”⁷⁰ As in “Hansel and Gretel,” in *Home*, birds play a symbolic role, as for example, when Cee is thinking and grieving about her absent brother, she sees that the swallows are back outside her window.⁷¹

As in the fairy tale, the little wishbones of Frank’s females, their inner soft tenderness, save him from madness. With his third woman, Lily, “the little wishbone V took up residence in my own chest and made itself at home. It was her forefinger that kept me on edge.”⁷² Lily changes Frank and makes him “want to be good enough for her.”⁷³ She has a healing influence on him: “his attachment to her was medicinal, like swallowing aspirin [. . .]. Lily displaced his disorder, his rage and his shame.”⁷⁴ However, Lily’s pursuits are material, as the scene with the coins exemplifies, while the fairytale hero is on a spiritual quest. He realises that love is not enough, so does she. At this point of the story, Frank still has no goals or hopes. When Lily asks Frank what he wants to do in the future, he answers her, “Stay alive.”⁷⁵ On occasions, his appalling recollections take possession of him. When both attend a church convention, Frank sees a little girl with slanted eyes, who makes him bolt and run away madly.

Frank’s identity journey is not over yet. To regain the sense of purpose he has lost, like Hansel, he has to rescue his little sister again. When Frank receives the letter about his sister saying “She be dead,” he believes he could not stand one more death: “No more people I didn’t save. No more watching people close to me die. No more. And not my sister. No way.”⁷⁶ Frank has to get back home and rescue Cee. He is convinced that his life might have been preserved because his sister is the best part of him: “Down deep inside her lived my secret picture of myself—a strong good me.”⁷⁷ Frank and Cee’s destinies, like the fairytale siblings’, are interconnected. Saving Cee is to save himself. As David Ulin writes, his sister is “the one person about whom he

cares, the beacon that pulls him onward, the lodestar for the journey, both interior and exterior.”⁷⁸ Frank, reluctantly, sets out on a trip back to Georgia.

On Frank’s journey across the country, the backdrop Morrison shows us is a mid-20th-century America filled with racial prejudice and violence, as when a black man is beaten at a coffeehouse for daring to order coffee. African Americans, at that time, could not feel safe, since the law did not protect them. Frank experiences the cultural displacement and social discrimination that characterise the postcolonial American society.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, some good Samaritans, “remnants of an underground railroad of kindness,”⁸⁰ generously, help and offer him hospitality. Frank has to confront his traumatic childhood memories, terrible war recollections and survivor guilt. He must tackle the most despicable feeling that has haunted him ever since he returned from the war. Frank feels shame at having been aroused by an Asian girl, whom he killed so as to conceal it. He has been denying the guilt and abashment, deceiving himself and disguising it as honourable grief upon the death of his friends. As a victimiser, Frank parallels Dr. Beau. The black man has destroyed another human being’s dignity and life, which is even more revolting due to the Asian girl’s resemblance to his own sister. Frank, who had been her sister’s fierce protector, loses his humanity in these abominable war acts. The shattering of the black self’s identity is even more traumatic in its role as a victimiser.

On his fairytale quest to get back home, Frank begins his healing reconciliation with the past and leaves behind his crippling apathy, recovering his sense of mission and hopes for a better future. He has finally met his destiny in resuming his traditional gender role as her sister’s protector. As Hansel in the fairy tale, Frank’s fate is to save Cee. Eventually, he realises that his harrowing recollections “did not crush him anymore or throw him into paralyzing despair”⁸¹ and becomes aware that he may have lots of sad memories, “but no ghosts of nightmares for two days.”⁸² To rescue Cee, Frank, the fairytale prince-hero confronts the evil forces, the dominant white system, embodied by the villain-wizard to rescue the princess, thus retrieving the best of him, his manhood and dignity. He has to descend to Dr. Beau’s office, and beyond it, it is his “Frankensteinian laboratory,” the lower world, which may symbolise the siblings’ unconscious. The locked door to the forbidden chamber, “a bomb shelter, fully stocked,”⁸³ which hides horrifying experiments, is a very important fairytale motif. However, unlike in the conventional fairy story, Frank does not kill the doctor. Actually, his actions are non-violent. Frank feels really proud, “somehow superior,”⁸⁴ of

not having used violence in releasing his sister. In return, like Gretel, Cee frees her brother from his cage of insanity.

Morrison breaks with the Western stereotype of the black man as a barbaric beast, “treacherous stereotypes of primitivism and degeneracy.”⁸⁵ The moment Frank walks in the door, the doctor, who feels “threatened,” exclaims: “There’s nothing to steal here!”⁸⁶ The villain-wizard’s cowardly behaviour contrasts with prince-hero’s serene, humane and manly one. The wicked physician epitomises the deep Western cultural fear of the black male, questioning the so-called white supremacy and civility. In Frank’s confrontation with Dr. Beau, Morrison suggests a non-violent way of coping with stereotyping and discrimination. In *Lotus*, Frank can finally cry when he learns that his sister cannot have a baby, which he had not done since he was a toddler, not even when his friend Mike died in his arms. Morrison associates the ability to cry with the capacity for mending psychic wounds. For the first time in the story, Frank can acknowledge pain, while his feelings are hopeful: “there were worthwhile things that needed doing.”⁸⁷

Lenore, the devious witch, is not defeated by Cee as she is in “Hansel and Gretel.” The world does not get rid of evil in a fight between maiden and witch, good and evil. Nonetheless, as in the fairy tale, Lenore is punished for her selfishness, abuse and bullying or belittling other people. Final retribution takes place when the old woman, who is only pleased by her wealth and assets, is almost completely lonely, and a minor stroke leaves her entirely dependent on the charitable people she has always despised, “the Lord Works in Mysterious Ways His Wonders to Perform.”⁸⁸ Her husband takes advantage of her impairment to have the freedom he did not have before his wife’s disability. Now Salem does what he wants, pretending not to understand Lenore’s slurred speech, but, most importantly, he controls her most precious treasure, her money. On the other hand, like the fairytale siblings, Frank and Cee, who were spiritually lost, return home and reintegrate within their community. And yet, they do not go back to their parents because they are already dead. As in the conventional fairy story, most of the characters who do not have an “acceptable” behaviour die, the siblings’ parents and grandmother, only their grandfather is alive, as Hansel and Gretel’s father is.

Frank and Cee “must choose between the suffocating but sustaining ethos of small-town life and the temptations and pitfalls of the wider world”⁸⁹ and, finally, like Hansel and Gretel, come back to their true community, to those who “do not want to

degrade or destroy you”;⁹⁰ to those who, despite their flaws, can provide these exiled “orphans” with a real home. Both brother and sister are examples of what Bhabha calls the “ethics of self-construction”: they are in a constant process of reconstruction and reinvention of the self.⁹¹ Like “Hansel and Gretel,” *Home* shows us the siblings’ personal growth from alienation to a sense of belonging to a community, whose “seen-it-all eyes” women take “responsibility for their lives, and for whatever, whoever else needed them,”⁹² healing Cee with root medicine and nursing her to life. At first, they protect the young female from Frank’s maleness, and do not let him come near her. Like Gretel, she is separated from her brother so as to complete her passage into womanhood. In their ancestral wisdom, these matriarchs know that she has to be cured, not just physically, but also psychologically: she needs to become a truly self-reliant woman.

During her recovery, Cee realises that she fell in the evil doctor’s hands as a result of her low self-esteem, which left her vulnerable and defenceless against him. It is also the lack of proper parental care what makes the fairytale siblings fall victim to the witch. Cee pays attention to these females’ sense of community and ancient knowledge: how they share and care for its members. Above all, these women give Cee an exigent love and their self-assuring counsels, encouraging her to struggle for self-definition:

Look to yourself. You free. Nothing and nobody is obliged to save you but you. See your own land. You young and a woman and there’s serious limitation in both, but you a person too. Don’t let Lenore or some trifling boyfriend and certainly no devil doctor decide who you are. That’s slavery. Somewhere inside you is that free person I’m talking about. Locate her and let her do some good in the world.⁹³

Cee learns how to become self-sufficient and cease using her brother as a shield, so that “she would never again need his hand over her eyes or his arms to stop her murmuring bones.”⁹⁴ Morrison highlights these women’s rebellion against the dominant patriarchal order, as well as provides a counternarrative of female empowerment in their communal solidarity and their role as healing agents.

As in Gretel’s transformation at the witch’s cottage, during her curative process, Cee gains self-assurance and self-reliance. She is no longer the powerless girl she used to be. She experiences an epiphany. Cee eventually understands that she was wrong to blame her vulnerability on the lack of schooling or her dumbness, since the strong and wise women who cure her are completely illiterate. As she finally comes to see, Lenore had “Branded [her] early as an unlovable, barely tolerated ‘gutter child’” and “she had agreed with the label and believed herself worthless.”⁹⁵ Furthermore, her brother’s

devotion had sheltered her from the hardships of life, undermining her confidence. But now, Cee, like Gretel, wants “to be the one who rescued her own self.”⁹⁶ When she confesses that she cannot have babies, Frank tries to assuage her grief, but she pushes his hand away. Cee “neither missed nor wanted his fingers at the nape of her neck telling her not to cry, that everything would be all right.”⁹⁷ For the first time, she lets herself cry, embracing her suffering. In a movement from object to subject typical of fairy tales’ deconstruction, Cee, who is cured from her physical scars, starts her emotional and psychological healing. She commences quilting. As in *Beloved*, patchwork stands for the conciliation with womanhood as well as for the act of figuring out how to mend a shattered identity.⁹⁸ The image of patchwork also connects with Dr. Frankenstein and his experiments: Cee can now begin to reassemble the dismembered pieces of herself.

On their return home, Hansel and Gretel have to cross a “large body of water,” which they did not find on their way into the forest. Crossing it symbolises a sort of baptism, a transition into adulthood. When the siblings first get into the woods, Hansel is leading the way. Notwithstanding, now it is Gretel who asks a white duck to help them cross the water. Hansel sits himself on its back and invites his sister, who denies the invitation to join him. Gretel knows that they have to cross over separately, signalling that they both are on their path to individuation. The girl has undergone a complete metamorphosis from an insecure and vulnerable child into a mature young woman, who first saves her brother and then leads their way back home. Both siblings are now ready to confront life and can support their family with the treasure they have acquired.

Likewise, in her revisitation of “Hansel and Gretel,” Morrison exposes and criticises colonialist and patriarchal constructions of identity and gender. In her social and culture critique through fairytale intertexts, she questions gender as a social construct and shows the full humanity of her characters, both males and females. Cee, like Gretel, has had a traditional passive female role for most part of the story, while Frank, like Hansel, has been the strong, dominant and more active character, pointing at a patriarchal view of society. And yet, at the end of the novel, the patriarchal order of the story is reversed. Cee is no longer the powerless woman, the conventional conformist victimised female who needs protection. She has turned into a confident self-sufficing woman. Thus, both stories are about how these girls learn to overcome their unhealthy dependency on their brothers and, eventually, overthrow the patriarchal

system that rules their lives. Like the fairytale siblings, the treasure Frank but, especially, Cee have obtained is their “new-won independence in thought and action, a new self-reliance which is the opposite of the passive dependence which characterized them when they were deserted in the woods.”⁹⁹ Nevertheless, in “Hansel and Gretel,” the children’s return to their father’s home may be seen as a reinforcement of the Oedipus complex and the Law of the Father. Furthermore, their “incestuous” relationship, which reaches its peak during their time in the forest, ends up when they come back home, symbolizing their acceptance of the socially sanctioned patriarchal rules. In Morrison’s novel, the siblings’ relationship also acquires “incestuous” overtones (emphasised by the Korean girl’s episode): Cee’s worship of her brother, Frank’s continuous affectionate and protective gestures, his efforts to prevent other possible “rivals” from coming near her, etc. In fairy tales (Grimm’s collection): “sex and violence [. . .] frequently take the perverse form of incest and child abuse, for the nuclear family furnishes the fairy tale’s main cast of characters just as family conflict constitutes its most common subject.”¹⁰⁰

To the ending of the conventional fairy tale, in which heterosexual love triumphs, Morrison contrasts the failed man-woman relations, Frank with Lily and Cee with Prince. Hence, Morrison deconstructs the gendered white, heterosexual, middle-class romantic myth of the traditional fairy tale. In *Home*, the brother-sister relationship culminates in the marriage-like family they create at the end of the story and the patriarchal system is questioned in their plans for sharing a common life on equal terms. Thus, instead of heterosexual romance and offspring (Cee is sterile), female solidarity and man-woman “friendship” become the most meaningful personal relations. Finally, these two dysfunctional siblings, who have been engaged in constructing personal identity, succeed at creating a family, community and a true home, on their own terms.

Morrison’s anti-fairy tale focuses on the process of individuation of those politically and culturally disempowered. She uses a fairytale frame to narrate their journey from trauma to empowerment. Wilson’s major contention is that “metafairy tales [. . .] generally convey characters’ transformation from alienation and symbolic amputation to greater consciousness, community, and wholeness.”¹⁰¹ Morrison states how the black self cannot achieve self-definition without coming to terms with their traumatic memories. As her other novels, Frank and Cee’s story is one of reconciliation with the history of racial prejudice and oppression. African Americans must confront the ghosts of the past through the healing powers of memory. The siblings have to face

an appalling episode of their childhood, which traumatised them. They stole into a field near their house to watch the horses and witnessed, terrified, a burial. It is not until the siblings are truly mending their psyche wounds that they wonder what happened back then. They learn from their grandfather Salem that whites organised “men-treated-like-dog fights”¹⁰² to the death between black individuals. The corpse buried belonged to a man killed by his son, Jerome, so as to save his own life. Both brother and sister, as when they were children holding hands on one of their escapades, celebrate a ritual for the “unknown” dead black male. However, the new self-reliant Cee reluctantly accepts to obey Frank’s instructions.

In the burial ceremony, Frank digs up Jerome’s father’s bones and arranges them into Cee’s quilt, and puts the remains under a sweet bay tree with a wooden marker, which reads “Here Stand A Man.”¹⁰³ Trees have a strong symbolism both in myths and fairy tales. They are connected to ancestry, and also with life and death. Moreover, bay trees are associated with honour, glory and great men. Thus, Morrison might be suggesting the need to pay homage to ancestors so as to move on. On the other hand, “Man,” written with a capital letter, stands for the fact that Frank and Cee have bestowed the stolen dignity and humanity on that anonymous black man. So do both siblings regain theirs. In this cyclic return to the beginning, Morrison hints at the connection between traumatic memories and the present in the postcolonial period, as well as suggests the need to lay the haunting ghosts of the past to rest before you can build a hopeful future. As in nearly all fairy tales, Morrison encodes a very important spiritual and moral lesson: “The best defense against the destructiveness of racism [. . .] is the formation of a cultural identity derived from an understanding of history,”¹⁰⁴ but also the reconciliation with the ominous past. That is why Cee’s quilt, which symbolises her newly reconstructed identity, is used as the burial shroud.

In *Home*, Morrison’s metafiction embeds and sometimes reverses or subverts the plot, structure, themes, characterisation, motifs and images of its fairytale intertexts, mainly “Hansel and Gretel.” By deconstructing fairy stories, she engages in a racial and cultural critique of the postcolonial society, creating a transgressive female narrative.¹⁰⁵ As in fairy tales, there are many “morals” within Morrison’s novel, which offers real-world lessons. She depicts how the postcolonial “home” was not safe for the family members. In fact, “The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history’s most intricate invasions.”¹⁰⁶ However, black identity and culture are not only denied in the

domestic sphere, but also in a larger cultural and social milieu imposed by the white-dominated society.

As in many fairy stories, Morrison represents the dysfunctional family and child abuse, “the assault on African-American families by slavery and colonization,” and the rejection of “the ideal of the Western nuclear family.”¹⁰⁷ Children who are not nourished or taken care of properly are vulnerable and cannot cope with life’s ordeals. They may end up failing utterly as human beings. Like Hansel and Gretel, Frank and Cee exemplify the importance of a bonding of selfless loyalty and how inner strength and self-acceptance are key to attain success in an unjust society. Brother and sister, hand in hand, can overcome the obstacles they encounter: “‘Hansel and Gretel’ is one of many fairy tales where two siblings cooperate in rescuing each other and succeed because of their combined efforts.”¹⁰⁸ Morrison also highlights the crucial role of sisterhood in the black community through Cee’s female friends, Thelma and Sarah, as she did with Amy in *Beloved*. At the end of the story, the witch receives her punishment for her selfishness and greed and those who fail to protect brother and sister are morally condemned, while good and kindness triumph.

Morrison uses fairytale motifs to depict Frank and Cee’s archetypal quests of self-definition in a patriarchal postcolonial society full of social and economic hardships for those suffering racial discrimination and oppression. Despite these and thanks to some kind people and a welcoming community, the fairytale hero and heroine undergo a complete transformation in their passage to adulthood, from awakening to individuation, and final integration into the community. They epitomise

the youth with dawning self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect. In those forests of [their] striving [their] own soul rose before [them], and [they] saw [themselves],—darkly as through a veil; and yet [they] saw in [themselves] some faint revelation of [their] power, of [their] mission. [They] began to have a dim feeling that, to attain [their] place in the world, [they] must be [themselves], and not another.¹⁰⁹

The siblings redeem themselves and begin their psychological and emotional healing, moving from fragmentation to wholeness, while the new Cee does no longer conform to traditional female notions. Through her, Morrison unveils the codified dominant male discourse hidden in the conventional fairy tale and discloses the stereotyping of gender and race. She creates “an alternate text of black womanhood.”¹¹⁰ Both brother and sister acquire a positive outlook on life and improve their self-esteem, which will allow them to confront all the challenges that life can present. After their trials, Frank and Cee come back to their home mentally and spiritually “enriched.”

They, unlike their step-grandmother, can finally find true happiness in their immaterial treasure, selfhood and self-confidence, and in a nurturing and caring community, a true Home. Morrison offers a hopeful anti-fairy tale of strife and survival with a positive message of human betterment. Feminist and postcolonial anti-fairy tales, especially about “Hansel and Gretel,” emphasise the fact that African Americans must rescue themselves with the help of the community. Nonetheless, and in spite of the auspicious ending, the marriage-like family Frank and Cee create is a barren one, a metaphorical expression of a present crippled as a consequence of the appalling past.

Feminist writers, such as Morrison, use meta-fairy stories to deal with timeless themes which are critical in a postcolonial society, such as for instance, the construction of reality, struggle for survival, power, body, racial and sexual politics, dehumanisation, postcolonialism, self-esteem, the quest for identity, home and a better society. As Wilson contends, through her fairytale intertexts, Morrison “powerfully critiques U.S. colonialism of both past and present, the system of patriarchal racism, sexism and classism that has not only denied the freedom, self-determination, and even humanity of African Americans.”¹¹¹ Anti-fairy tales are potentially healing in their search of society’s transformation. In *Home*, Morrison’s reinterpretation of one of the most universal Western stories, “Hansel and Gretel,” allows her to create her own mythified tale of the African-American Self’s struggle for self-realisation.

¹ These are Morrison's words in her interview with Christopher Bollen. Christopher Bollen. "Toni Morrison." *Interview Magazine*. Accessed April 15, 2013.

<http://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/toni-morrison>

² Morrison wants her "fiction to urge the reader into active participation in the non-narrative, nonliterary experience of the text," by incorporating into her novels "the major characteristics of Black art," among which is "the ability to be both print and oral literature." Toni Morrison, "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation." In *Black Women Writers (1950-1980); A Critical Evaluation*, edited by Mari Evans, 339-345. New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1984.

³ Mae G. Henderson, "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Re-Membering the Body as Historical Text." In *Beloved, A Casebook*, edited by William L. Andrews & Nellie Y. McKay, 79-107. (New York & Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 90.

⁴ Cheryl A. Wall, *Worrying the Line: Black Women Writers, Lineage, and Literary Tradition*. (Chapel Hill: North Carolina U.P., 2005), 15.

⁵ Qtd. in Jeanna Fuston-White, "'From the Seen to the Told': The Construction of Subjectivity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *African American Review*, 36.3, Fall 2002. Accessed July 22, 2007. <http://www.geocities.com/tarbaby2007/beloved6.html> Original text quoted: Cornel West. "Black Strivings in a Twilight Civilization." *The Future of the Race*. New York: Random (1996): 53-113.

⁶ Sharon R. Wilson, *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction: From Atwood to Morrison*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 69.

⁷ Leslee Kuykendall and Brian Sturm, "We Said Feminist Fairy Tales, Not Fractured Fairy Tales!" *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children* 5.3 (2007): 38-41, 1.

⁸ Despite the fact that Wilson is talking here about mythic intertexts, she says the same about fairytale intertexts. Wilson. *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, 2.

⁹ Susan L. Blake, "Toni Morrison." In *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Afro American Fiction Writers After 1955*, edited by Thadious M. Davis and Trudier Harris. Vol. 33, 187-199. (Detroit, MI: Gale, 1984), 197.

¹⁰ Wilson. *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, 82, 10.

¹¹ Tess Roynon. *The Cambridge Introduction to Toni Morrison*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 34.

¹² Wall, *Worrying the Line*, 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁴ Kakutani thinks that "Whereas *Beloved* mythologized its characters' stories, lending their experiences the resonance of a symphony or an opera, *Home* is a lower-key chamber piece, pitched somewhere between straight-up naturalism and the world of fable." Michiko Kakutani, "Soldier Is Defeated by War Abroad, Then Welcomed Back by Racism: *Home*, a Novel by Toni Morrison," *New York Times*, May 7, 2012.

¹⁵ Sharon R. Wilson, *Margaret Atwood's Fairy-Tale Sexual Politics*. (Jackson: Mississippi UP, 1993), 3-4.

¹⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings." In *The Souls of Black Folks*. (New York, Avenel, NJ: Gramercy Books, 1994), 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*.

¹⁸ Homi Bhabha calls Morrison's fiction "unhomely," "the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations," a condition that characterises the colonial and post-colonial times. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 13.

¹⁹ Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics*, Vol. 17. *Culture and Counteremory: The American Connection* (Summer 1987): 64-81, 68.

²⁰ Qtd. in Ashraf Rushdy, "'Rememory': Primal Scenes and Constructions in Toni Morrison's Novels." *Contemporary Literature* XXXI Vol 31. 3 (Fall 1990): 300-323, 38. Original text quoted: Henry L. Gates, "Introduction." *Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Henry L. Jr. Gates, 1-17. New York: Penguin Meridian, 1990.

²¹ Carolyn C. Denard. "Beyond the Bitterness of History: Teaching *Beloved*." In *Approaches to Teaching the Novels of Toni Morrison*, edited by Nellie Y. McKay and Kathryn Earle, 40-47. (New York, NY: MLA, 1997), 42.

²² As Morrison claims about black citizens' exile: "It was a regular thing. I have an interesting book that looked at the counties that were 'cleansed.' A lot were in Texas. It was like the Palestinians. They'd just say, 'Go,' and if you didn't, you'd get killed. There was a migration—a forced migration." Bollen. "Toni Morrison." Race-based discrimination was highly widespread during postcolonialism. Some major events of the racist history of the moment are: Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Little Rock Crisis of 1957 in Arkansas, Greensboro, North Carolina sit-in, Freedom Riders, Selma-to-Montgomery Freedom March, etc.

- ²³ Toni Morrison, *Home*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 2012), 9.
- ²⁴ Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," 11.
- ²⁵ Morrison, *Home*, 39.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 53. In her works of fiction, Morrison often resorts, with different meanings, to the witch figure, such as Sula, Pilate, Circe or Thérèse.
- ³² Kakutani, "Soldier Is Defeated by War Abroad, Then Welcomed Back by Racism."
- ³³ Wall, *Worrying the Line*, 6.
- ³⁴ Jackie, the girl Lenore hires to help her around the house when she starts to feel dizzy, resembles Gretel when she becomes the witch's maid.
- ³⁵ Morrison, *Home*, 43.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 52-53.
- ³⁸ Wilson, *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, 7.
- ³⁹ Bruno Bettelheim, "Hansel and Gretel." In *The Classic Fairy Tales*, edited by M. Tatar, 157-161. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1999.
- ⁴⁰ Morrison's fiction has an extensive list of matriarchs, most of the time grandmothers, such as Baby Suggs, Eva Peace or Pilate, who devote their lives to the community.
- ⁴¹ Morrison, *Home*, 125. Avianus and Caxton tell different stories of a goose that lays a golden egg, where other versions have a hen, as in Townsend: "A cottager and his wife had a Hen that laid a golden egg every day. They supposed that the Goose must contain a great lump of gold in its inside, and in order to get the gold they killed it. Having done so, they found to their surprise that the Goose differed in no respect from their other hens. The foolish pair, thus hoping to become rich all at once, deprived themselves of the gain of which they were assured day by day." Mythfolklore.net. Retrieved 2011-10-17. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Goose_That_Laid_the_Golden_Eggs
- ⁴² *Ibid.*.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 130.
- ⁴⁴ Satya P. Mohanty terms "decolonization" the process by which the individual resists the colonial perception of self as commodified inferior. Qtd. in Mary J. Suero-Elliott, "Postcolonial Experience in a Domestic Context: Commodified Subjectivity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," *Melus* 25 3/4 (Fall-Winter), 2000. Accessed September 10, 2007. <http://www.geocities.com/tarbaby2007/beloved4.html>
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*.
- ⁴⁶ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2.
- ⁴⁷ Morrison, *Home*, 51.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.
- ⁵¹ Henderson, "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," 93.
- ⁵² Du Bois. "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," 11.
- ⁵³ Rebecca-Anne C Do Rozario, "The Princess and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond Nostalgia, the Function of the Disney Princess," *Women's Studies in Communication* 27.1 (2004): 34-59, 41.
- ⁵⁴ *The Frog Prince* or *Iron Henry* is a fairy tale, best known through the Brothers Grimm's version. In the story, a spoiled princess reluctantly befriends a frog, which magically transforms into a handsome prince. Besides, in 2009, Walt Disney Animation Studios produced an American animated musical fantasy comedy film called *The Princess and the Frog*, loosely based on the novel *The Frog Princess* by E. D. Baker, which is in turn based on the Brothers Grimm fairy tale. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Princess_and_the_Frog
- ⁵⁵ Jack Zipes, *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. (New York: Bethuen, 1986), xi.
- ⁵⁶ Wilson, *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, 86.
- ⁵⁷ Morrison, *Home*, 48.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.
- ⁶⁰ Dismemberment is a metaphor that Morrison has used very often, as in *Beloved*, to describe both physical and psychological effects of slavery upon slaves.

⁶¹ As Morrison says in her interview with Christopher Bollen, at that time, “there was a lot coming to the surface about medical experimentation.” William Goodell writes: “Assortments of diseased, *damaged*, and disabled Negroes, deemed incurable and otherwise worthless are *bought up*, it seems [. . .] by medical institutions, to be experimented and operated upon, for purposes of ‘medical education’ and the interest of medical science.” *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice Shown By Its Statutes, Judicial Decisions, and Illustrative Facts*; 3rd ed. (New York: American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1853), 86-87.

⁶² Morrison, *Home*, 62.

⁶³ Fairy tales are peopled with deception, lies and manipulation, as in the “Seven Little Goats,” “The Goose Girl,” “Cinderella,” etc.

⁶⁴ Wilson, *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women’s Fiction*, 14.

⁶⁵ Laurie Vickroy, “The Politics of Abuse: the Traumatized Child in Toni Morrison and Marguerite Duras,” *Mosaic* 29.2 (1996): 91-110, 107.

⁶⁶ Morrison, *Home*, 83.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁸ Janice Barnes Daniel, “Function or Frill: The Quilt as Storyteller in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*,” *The Midwest Quarterly* 41.3 (2000). Accessed July 22, 2007. <http://www.geocities.com/tarbaby2007/beloved17.html>

⁶⁹ Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 67.

⁷⁰ Morrison, *Home*, 68.

⁷¹ Swallows stand for those who died during childbirth, a totem bird for mothers in sorrow. Hope B. Werness & Others, *The Continuum Encyclopaedia of Animal Symbolism in World Art*. New York; London: Continuum (2004): 394-5. The symbology of birds in Morrison’s fiction is extensive, as Susana Vega González has argued in “Broken Wings of Freedom: Bird Imagery in Toni Morrison’s Novels,” *Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos* 7 (2000): 75-84.

⁷² Morrison, *Home*, 68.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁷⁸ David L. Ulin, “Review: *Home* by Toni Morrison Feels Distant,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 2012. Accessed May 13, 2013. <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/may/06/entertainment/la-ca-toni-morrison-20120506>

⁷⁹ In *Home*, Morrison, using Bhabha’s words, represents “freak social and cultural displacement in her “unhomely” fiction. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 17. In fact, in the postcolonial America, discrimination and segregation permeated all aspects of life and the law sanctioned privileges and rights for white people in matters of education, immigration, voting rights, citizenship, land acquisition, criminal procedure, etc. During the post-reconstruction era, a time referred as the nadir of American race relations, racism, segregation, racial discrimination and the idea of white supremacy increased, especially in the South.

⁸⁰ Ron Charles, “Book Review: Toni Morrison’s *Home*, a Restrained but Powerful Novel,” *The Washington Post*, April 30, 2012.

⁸¹ Morrison, *Home*, 100.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 106.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁸⁵ Bhabha refers here to the colonial condition. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 60.

⁸⁶ Morrison, *Home*, 110.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁸⁹ Kakutani, “Soldier Is Defeated by War Abroad, Then Welcomed Back by Racism.”

⁹⁰ Morrison, *Home*, 118.

⁹¹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 344.

⁹² Morrison, *Home*, 123.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁹⁸ Elaine 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. Qtd. in Daniel, "Function or Frill: The Quilt as Storyteller in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." Original text quoted: Elaine Showalter. "Piecing and Writing." In *The Poetics of Gender*, edited by Nancy K. Miller, 222-247. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

⁹⁹ Bettelheim, "Hansel and Gretel."

¹⁰⁰ Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003), 10.

¹⁰¹ Wilson, *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, 1.

¹⁰² Morrison, *Home*, 138.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁰⁴ Wall, *Worrying the Line*, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Wilson claims that feminist, postcolonial writers give "voice to the silenced metafictional tales [. . .]," which "may shift the point of view from traditional, privileged, reliable, third-person narration to unreliable third-person" and often change "the intertext's resolution so that marriage or heterosexual relationship does not complete the woman's story." *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, 162.

¹⁰⁶ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 13.

¹⁰⁷ Wall, *Worrying the Line*, 25.

¹⁰⁸ Bettelheim, "Hansel and Gretel."

¹⁰⁹ Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," 11.

¹¹⁰ Henderson, "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," 95.

¹¹¹ Wilson, *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, 77.

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