

THE GOTHIC OTHER: A CRITIQUE OF RACE, GENDER, SLAVERY, AND  
SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION FOUND IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, TONI  
MORRISON, AND HANNAH CRAFTS

by

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## DEDICATION

To Charles and Jimmie...thank you for your legacy

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A special thank you to my husband and three children for grace and patience with me during this process. Thank you to Dr. Hillard for your guidance. To Dr. Hindrichs and Dr. Westover, thank you for your added lights.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines three novels all communicating ideas about race, gender, and slavery under the conventions of Gothic literature. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) shows how patriarchy oppressed and haunted women while keeping slavery at the margins. *Beloved* (1987), by Toni Morrison, fictionalizes the account of a female slave who murdered her child to assert her power and reject slavery. However, Morrison rewrites and defies aspects of the Gothic mode by bringing the ghost of the murdered child back to life, and later showing steps the community can take to heal from their collective trauma. The third novel, *The Bondwoman's Narrative*, is assumed to have been written by Hannah Crafts around the mid-late 1850s, but not published until the 21st century. Similar to Morrison, Crafts vocalizes the terrors felt as a result of systemic oppression through her Gothic storytelling techniques but focuses on ways slavery impacted both blacks and whites. Studying these three novels together shows how these two African American female authors subverted traditional approaches to the Gothic in a way Hawthorne did not. These specific female novelists recognize how the Gothic mode can be used to provide accurate accounts of history alongside race, gender, and slavery; however, they were conscious and deliberate in their choices to reappropriate and rearrange certain aspects of the Gothic mode in a more subversive way.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since their origin in eighteenth-century England, Gothic texts have critiqued class structures and systemic oppression while exposing social anxieties. Examples of these critiques range from Matthew Lewis in *The Monk* (1796), calling attention to Catholicism to Charlotte Perkins Gilman in “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892), focusing on female systemic oppression experienced in the United States. Teresa Goddu provides an additional framework to use while reading Gothic texts when she writes, “the gothic has been depicted by feminist critics as a female genre: written by, for, and about women” (94). In other words, the Gothic mode often depends on women not only to advance storylines, but also to show their oppression. When considering how female identity is impacted by patriarchy, Goddu also writes, “the gothic has served as a useful site for feminist revisions of female identity and resistance to patriarchal power” (94). However, within the discourse of gender and identity, African American women must be included because slavery was so closely tied to the system of patriarchy. Kari Winter also establishes a relationship between slave narratives and female gothic novels and insists, “both genres focus on horrifying aspects of patriarchal cultures” (53).

This thesis will discuss how Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* (1987) and Hannah Crafts’ novel *The Bondwoman’s Narrative* (mid-late 1850s) invoke Gothic conventions to narrate aspects of slavery while showing at the same time how slave women resisted systemic oppression. I also feature Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) in this thesis to show how Hawthorne’s text tells a similar Gothic story as



the others, but in this story women are not freed from their oppressive circumstances. Putting these three texts in conversation with one another in this thesis reveals ways Hawthorne uses traditional approaches to the Gothic; the African American female authors follow certain aspects of the Gothic form similar to Hawthorne, but offer their female characters a version of freedom that differs from *The House of the Seven Gables*. Studying Crafts's text alongside the two others connects traditional approaches to the Gothic and Morrison's intervention in the form.

Jerrold E. Hogle discusses ways in which the terrors and horrors within Gothic writings operate on a pendulum. Hogle writes that Gothic terror "holds characters and readers mostly in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety, and sanity kept largely out of sight or in shadows or suggestions from a hidden past" (3). According to this definition, Gothic terror plays with both the characters and the readers' emotions to keep everyone in "anxious suspense" without posing any actual threats to the characters in the texts. For example, *The House of the Seven Gables* shows how generational curses come back to haunt the present; within the novel, ideas of race and slavery are kept "out of sight" and "in shadows" despite their ability to still haunt the text. However, the horrors of Gothic can become more threatening than terrors, and Hogle asserts ways in which they confront "the principal characters with the gross violence of physical or psychological dissolution, explicitly shattering the assumed norms (including the repressions) of everyday life with wildly shocking, and even revolting, consequences" (3). By Hogle's definitions, Gothic horror will impact characters in a way that Gothic terror only threatens. Because Gothic horror has the ability of "explicitly shattering the

assumed norms,” the supernatural can enter into the text without looming in the shadows or the margins.

Therefore, the Gothic mode presents an opportunity to express concerns about race and slavery in such a way that other genres do not. Justin D. Edwards posits, “I see the American gothic as intimately tied to the history of racial conflict in the United States” (xvii). Edwards’ work supports other scholars who recognize ways in which Gothic texts often communicate racial anxieties. As Teresa Goddu insists, “the gothic’s focus on the terror of possession, the iconography of imprisonment, the fear of retribution, and the weight of sin provided a useful vocabulary and register of images by which to represent the scene of America’s greatest guilt: slavery” (133). Many nineteenth-century texts engaged either directly or indirectly with ideas of possession, imprisonment, retribution, and sin. Herman Melville’s *Benito Cereno* (1855), for example, shows the direct results of a slave revolt onboard a ship and further explores master-slave relationships. In fact, even after the Captain, Don Benito, is saved from the hands of slaves who took over his ship, he admits to still being haunted by “the negro” (79) up until his death. This Gothic text shows Melville’s direct engagement with race and slavery, but also compares to the idea of racial passing. In Melville’s text, master-slave relationships are subverted in the same way passing as white becomes a way for blacks to resist oppression. Not only do these ideas preoccupy early American writers, but they also reveal the instability of race and identity that had been so carefully constructed by America’s Founding Fathers.

Scholars such as Teresa Goddu and Jerrold Hogle cite Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection when explaining how identity is often portrayed as unfixed and fluid in Gothic

texts. Kristeva writes, “it is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules” (4). Abjection holds a terror of its own because when borders are destabilized, identity and order is disrupted. In texts preoccupied with miscegenation and concerned with the social construct of race, characters are haunted due to a lack of stable borders and the consequence of ambiguous racial identification. This idea is especially seen in the work of Morrison and Crafts through their depiction of the slave whose identity is unfixed. Crafts shows not only the result of racial mixing, but the dangers that occur when characters rearrange their identities. Morrison’s novel is similar to Crafts’s because *Beloved* also illustrates how an unstable identity can be dangerous; however, *Beloved* is more concerned with the characters fixing their broken selves, establishing independence outside of their previous definitions as slaves, and reclaiming their community in spite of their endured trauma. Hawthorne’s novel also shows how racial borders get tangled and identity becomes rearranged; as a result, miscegenation within the ancestral home becomes a possibility because of the mixed blood lines. *Beloved*, however, stands out from the other two texts in this thesis because it offers growth possibilities in spite of the women’s previous identification, while showing their refusal and resistance to being exploited in an oppressive system that forced them to reproduce.

Hawthorne seemingly stayed silent about issues of race and slavery when compared to his contemporaries and instead defined himself as a Romance writer. When establishing his style of writing and storytelling techniques he writes, “When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude” (3). Hawthorne is known for writing about his Puritan ancestors and their sins.

*The House of the Seven Gables* uncovers some of these transgressions using themes of property, ownership, and generational curses; its Gothic trappings also communicate anxieties about race, slavery, class, and gender. The latitude that Hawthorne “wishes to claim” within his novel actually reveal Gothic terrors in spite of his attempt to keep ideas of race and slavery at the margins. Justin D. Edwards asserts, “The American gothic is traditionally located within the genre of the romance” (35). Alongside Hawthorne’s definition as a Romance writer, his use of Gothic conventions allow the reader to interrogate ideas of systemic oppression and social constructs. In his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne discusses ways imaginary events overlap with history and “exposes the Romance to an inflexible and exceedingly dangerous species of criticism, by bringing his fancy-pictures almost into positive contact with the realities of the moment” (4). Certain “fancy-pictures” in the novel will show how the Pyncheon’s aristocracy is upheld by women, while the slave experience renders a different use of pictures altogether. Although Hawthorne uses pictures and portraits in what he calls “positive contact with the realities of the moment,” portraits and pictures actually remind female characters of their oppression and lack of agency. Therefore, within this thesis, pictures function as both literal and figurative markers to destabilize and further oppress female characters, but also become tools for recognition within the slave community.

Toni Morrison is one Critical Race Theorist who insists on careful readings of all authors from the nineteenth-century because they were writing during the peak of slavery, a time when the abolitionist and women’s movements were established. Kari J. Winter also writes, “many literary scholars have examined representations of slavery and race in the texts of nineteenth-century white American writers” (3). Slavery was a highly

debated issue as the abolitionist movement gained momentum, while the women's movement allied with anti-slavery voices; therefore, many believed the oppression of slaves mirrored the oppressive system found in the laws of a patriarchal social structure. Gothic writings by nineteenth-century fiction writers such as Hawthorne and Melville, then, frequently communicate anxieties about these social structures. While Gothic can be considered an unstable term, there is some academic consensus of what the Gothic mode entails: ghost stories, haunted houses, hidden secrets, and the use of women to sustain patriarchal and oppressive systems, such as slavery.

*The House of the Seven Gables*, in fact, uses a narrative structure that marginalizes slavery in a seemingly purposeful way. The novel arranges women under the thumbs of patriarchy without much hope of them ever being freed from their circumstances. Much like slavery, the women are enslaved to their surroundings and the novel comments on systemic oppression without directly confronting the issue. Considering the narrative structure in Hawthorne's novel, Jean Fagan Yellin claims his characters are located "within a social context that is inevitably oppressive" (147). This is seen in *The House of the Seven Gables*, especially in the way the novel interrogates female systemic oppression using Gothic conventions without rendering freedom from the problematic system to the women in his text.

The adaptability of the Gothic form becomes more evident when other writers from other cultures and repressed groups use the narrative techniques to speak against stories written by the dominant culture. Robert K. Martin writes, "the gothic can allow for the voice of the culturally repressed and hence act out a resistance to the dominant culture" (130). Although various "culturally repressed" groups, such as American

Indians, for example, are situated in Gothic novels, this thesis will focus on two African American female writers' use of this mode to "act out a resistance." Their retelling of stories in a framework more suitable to their lived experiences offsets narratives written by the dominant culture. Teresa Goddu insists, "the gothic mode represents slavery's unspeakable history" (132). By taking the history of slavery and using it to challenge systematic oppression resulting from race and gender, African American authors can evoke the Gothic mode to use their voices and tell their history. Martin also notices ways the Gothic serves as more than just a storytelling feature, but an opportunity to critique history. He writes, "this function is particularly striking in African-American adaptations of the genre, where the voice of the dead slave can act as a means of insisting on the presence of history" (130). Goddu and Martin both recognize ways African-American writers readapted the Gothic genre to insist on their existence in history; this adaptation of storytelling is where the "voice of the dead slave" can still be heard. Because the Gothic becomes a vehicle for his—or her—voice to no longer remain silent, the dead slave comes back to life in Gothic fashion. Similarly, *Beloved* not only gives the dead slave a voice, the slave is resurrected and history is no longer imagined but experienced, and thereby intensified instead of watered down; through Morrison's intrusion of the Gothic form, the characters within the text must confront their literal ghosts because those once buried rise again.

Therefore, African American female novelists such as Morrison and Crafts use the Gothic mode to share aspects of history while remaining committed to their responsibilities as writers from within the culture at the same time. Their work shows the sophistication African American female authors often possess when telling stories about

race, gender, and slavery, in ways comparable to Hawthorne, Melville and other nineteenth-century writers; however, they were conscious and deliberate in their choices to re-appropriate and rearrange certain aspects of the Gothic mode in a more subversive way. When explaining the overlap between African-American slave narratives and Gothic writings, Edwards asserts, “discursive patterns can be read alongside one another to analyze how similar gothic discourses are repeated, maintained, and adapted for various ends” (xxii). Although slave narratives have been likened to Gothic stories, African American writers adapted and readapted the Gothic mode “for various ends.” Some could argue this became the best mode for their stories to be written and their voices to be heard; within the Gothic framework, the true horrors of slave experiences could be expressed and packaged in such a way that prevented their narratives from collapsing into fiction or believed to be exaggerated literature fueling the abolitionist movement.

Gothic writings can critique the institution of slavery and societal behaviors while allowing disenfranchised groups—such as slave populations—to have voices. Alan Lloyd-Smith writes, “the Gothic often provides a voice for silent or repressed concerns and disenfranchised groups, its distanced parallels with reality offering implicit critiques of accepted institutions and behaviors” (135). The lived experiences of African American slaves could be used to confront characters with “gross violence, physical and psychological dissolution” through Gothic horrors. Moreover, these marginalized populations could speak back to their oppressors through a method Teresa Goddu defines as “haunting back”: “the gothic is able to dematerialize the ghosts of America’s racial history and enable African-American writers to haunt back” (132). Through this process,

African-American authors can write accounts true to their own experiences by telling another side of the same story. Instead of presenting an idealized and romanticized version of slavery seen through texts such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), novels such as *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) were valuable because they spoke from within African-American culture by an African American writer.

Although often labeled as sentimental, Harriet Jacobs' account still closely follows Gothic conventions. Justin Edwards reaffirms Jacob's literary techniques when he writes: "*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* recounts the bludgeoning, flogging, burning, selling, and confinement of slaves to suggest how actual events can produce gothic narratives" (xxii). Jacobs' writings, as well as other slave narratives at the time, succeed in showing how Gothic terror coupled with slavery. Although Jacobs' and Stowe's novels became useful anti-slavery literature, the violence and hauntings these women describe can also be termed as Gothic tales. However, because Stowe was speaking from the dominant culture, her account of slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* couldn't fully represent the African American slave experience; in contrast to Stowe's text, the value in Jacobs' autobiography resulted from her revealing slavery's horrors by way of her lived experiences.

Putting three texts by authors from different time periods in conversation with one another and analyzing how each uses the framework of Gothic literary conventions will show how they all invoke similar Gothic qualities: haunted houses, ghosts, and memories from the past, but reach different conclusions. The three novels *The House of the Seven Gables*, *Beloved*, and *The Bondwoman's Narrative* can show how they each effectively communicate terrors and horrors experienced as a result of systemic oppression that



haunts the female characters. Gothic texts don't just illustrate haunting terrors and flirt with the supernatural. As Jerrold E. Hogle writes: "From the start, . . . the oppression and 'othering' of the female seen from her point of view has been a principal Gothic subject" (10). This Gothic subject is illustrated in all three texts; however, *Beloved*, takes a different turn by bringing the ghost of a dead child back to life. Once this character returns from the dead, the women in the text are forced to confront their repressed trauma and ghosts from slavery. Therefore, Morrison employs this Gothic convention as a way to comment on America's history of race, gender, and slavery.

*The House of the Seven Gables* is an iconic nineteenth-century Gothic novel; however, Hawthorne distances race and slavery by marginalizing these issues while they still loom in the shadows. Although *Beloved* is a more contemporary novel, what begins as a ghost story eventually narrates the traumatic history of slavery, not only experienced by the main character, but by others carrying similar memories and sorrows. Finally, Hannah Crafts' manuscript addresses race and slavery in ways more similar to Morrison's later work than Hawthorne's, and further illustrates how the Gothic serves specific purposes—such as showing the impact slavery had on blacks as well as whites—besides just storytelling. Goddu comments on Morrison's and Jacobs's use of the Gothic as a mode of resistance: "By writing their own gothic tales, these authors combat the master's version of their history; by breaking the silence, they reclaim their history instead of being controlled by it" (155). The Gothic mode enabled writers such as Morrison, Jacobs, and Crafts to provide an alternative to historical accounts written by women such as Harriet Beecher Stowe who told "the master's version of their history"; Morrison, Jacobs, and Crafts instead tell their own versions of the past that include

aspects of history that have been omitted, overlooked, or simply forgotten, in order to speak about a critical time in America's history. Morrison, in fact, makes sure the story of *Beloved* is passed on because of its value and significance.

While Morrison's interrogations urge readers to recognize how African Americans have impacted the canon, Crafts now proves to be just as valuable to the time period and worth studying vis-a-vis iconic Gothic texts such as *The House of the Seven Gables* and *Beloved*. Morrison writes, "We are the subjects of our own narrative, witnesses to and participants in our own experience" (133). These lived experiences allow both Morrison and Crafts to tell stories in such a way that work alongside, and still reject, ideas of slavery and female oppression illustrated in Hawthorne's text. Crafts' use of Gothic conventions such as hybridity and identity, when examined in the context of Hawthorne's and Morrison's novels, shows how the Gothic became a tool for African American female authors to speak on behalf of a collective community and serve a more specific purpose to advocate for freedom and independence. Even though Crafts was writing at the same time as Hawthorne, his text lived and flourished while Crafts' narrative was buried. Morrison's success in fictionalizing the real life account of a slave woman not only earned Morrison a Pulitzer Prize, but necessitated Crafts' manuscript to later be unearthed because Morrison tilled the soil and proved the value of slave women's stories.

Moreover, just as Matthew Lewis criticized the excesses and hypocrisy of Catholicism in his 1796 Gothic novel *The Monk*, Morrison and Crafts also attack female oppression and refuse to keep their characters victims of slavery. As a result, within Crafts' text women are freed from slavery, and Morrison proves the value of slave

narratives needing to be kept alive. Being “witnesses to and participants” at the same time allows for the writer to speak from inside the culture and reveal more of what Hawthorne cannot. While Hawthorne’s novel keeps female characters actively engaged in a system that needs the exchange of women for the power structures to function, Morrison’s and Crafts’ novels instead release their protagonists to show how they can live outside of—and must be liberated from—oppressive institutions. Therefore, Morrison and Crafts repurpose the Gothic mode as a place to resist slavery and female oppression in a way Hawthorne does not; as a result, their literature functions as spaces where slave women have power which they exercise over their oppressors. Crafts’ novel must then be added alongside *The House of the Seven Gables* and *Beloved* because of her ability to “haunt back” to Hawthorne, while sharing intimate aspects of slavery using her own hybridity.

CHAPTER ONE: THE SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION OF WOMEN IN *THE HOUSE OF  
THE SEVEN GABLES*

Published in 1851, Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The House of the Seven Gables* deals with issues of generational curses, ownership, and female oppression. Within this haunted house inhabited by the Pyncheon family, the narrative interrogates the question of ownership, because the Pyncheon house is built on stolen Maule property which has caused a longstanding feud between the two families. In the midst of describing the rift between the Pyncheons and the Maules, at its margins the narrative also communicates ideas about race and slavery. Robert K. Martin says the following about the Pyncheon home: "Among the secrets it conceals is racial history of slavery which at least in part shifts the novel's theme away from family guilt to national guilt or uses the family as a synecdoche of the nation" (130). While the secret of the "racial history of slavery" gets entangled inside the house, the emphasis on property and ownership parallels slavery and the divide that existed in the country at the time when Hawthorne wrote the novel. Franny Nudelman writes, "The Gothic construes history, particularly family history, as repetitive, or haunted. Gothic conventions—curses, ghosts, haunted houses—make it clear that the past is never distinct from the present" (281). Nudelman is bringing attention to the fact that stories told with Gothic conventions often combine ideas between the past and the present; in the case of Hawthorne's novel, tied in the legacy of the Pyncheon ancestry lie traces of slavery and miscegenation. Through the use of "curses, ghosts and haunted houses," the history of two genealogies is rewritten and retold.

Because Hawthorne was writing during the time of slavery, the women's movement, and a burgeoning abolitionist movement, many of these ideas could not help but make their way into Hawthorne's storytelling. Alongside Hawthorne's assertions that a Romance writer can "claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material" (3), his use of Gothic conventions integrate ideas of race, class, and systemic oppression into the text within the "latitude" he asserts. Martin continues, "Hawthorne's text was written in the midst of a national—even international—debate over the right to property: the right to hold and sell slaves, and the connections between the enslavement of women and that of black Americans" (131). The feud, then, between the Pyncheons and the Maules becomes symbolic of larger ideas of oppression of women in a patriarchal system and black slaves in a peculiar institution, especially with the female characters Hepzibah, Alice Pyncheon, and Phoebe. Hawthorne uses this triad of women, each respectively representing the present, past, and future, to further illustrate oppression and the way women are impacted through patriarchy. Their oppression also shows aspects of slavery within the history of the house; alongside issues of race, the novel reveals how individuals can become implicated into a market economy, socially reconstructed, and convolute ancestry lines.

Because the novel gives so much attention to Hepzibah's character, she can be interpreted as the protagonist. However, the house itself is important because of its history, as well as its impact on the characters. When the novel begins, the narrator first says, "the venerable mansion has always affected me like a human countenance, bearing the traces not merely of outward storm and sunshine, but expressive also of the long lapse of mortal life" (5). Describing "a human countenance" not only personifies the house,

but also speaks to its ability to withstand time and generations, with an expression similar to “long lapse of mortal life.” The house here is similar to the narrator’s opening description in “The Fall of the House of Usher,” written by Edgar Allan Poe (1839). Haunted houses are integral to the Gothic storyline, and Robert K. Martin writes, “If the motif of the haunted house central to the gothic is maintained, it is now situated in the heart of commercial Salem, not in a grotesque landscape of the imagination” (130). That is, Hawthorne uses the haunted house motif much like Poe and other American writers of Gothic stories. Although earlier English Gothic writers such as Ann Radcliffe and Horace Walpole used feudal castles in their novels, Hawthorne’s mansion in Salem, Massachusetts establishes the setting for the Pyncheon family.

However, not only is the history of the Pyncheon house significant, what is planted outside of the home also speaks to the generational legacy associated with the Pyncheon progeny. The description of the property includes an “an elm-tree of wide circumference, rooted before the door” (5). This “Pyncheon-elm” (5), planted generations ago, is associated with the description of the house and connects to family trees that are important to family lineage. In subsequent chapters, I will show how trees are important to the system of slavery, and yet incorporated within the texts in a quite different manner. In fact, both Morrison and Crafts use trees as a Gothic trope, with the main difference showing how trees hold violent terrors from slavery’s legacy. Hawthorne’s Pyncheon elm, however, is harmless and instead “familiar to every town-born child by the title of the Pyncheon-elm” (5). All of the children in the town are familiar with the Pyncheon-elm, and the family tree does not threaten the characters at all.

In addition to information about the tree and the house, the narrator begins the book by describing a longstanding feud of ownership. To explain the history of the house, the narrator states, “there will be a connection with the long past—a reference to forgotten events and personages” (6). The house holds a history worth telling, much like the history in Poe’s short story. Just as the family in Poe’s text is filled with incest and mixed blood lines, similar possibilities of miscegenation also exist in the Pyncheon ancestral home. When considering how houses become portals to communicate ideas of race and slavery, Levine asks, “Just how stable is the whiteness claimed by the Revolutionary fathers and their acknowledged (and unacknowledged) descendants in light of the nation’s miscegenated past?” (278). If race is as unstable as Levine is claiming, the house upholding the prided Pyncheon ancestry can be seen as an unfixed structure that cannot contain all of the secrets inside. Just as Poe’s house crumbles to the ground, the Pyncheon home will eventually be abandoned because the ancestral secrets cannot be sustained and the oppressive system endured by female characters in the text cannot be held by the house.

In the novel, female characters become victimized by systemic oppression that was prevalent in the time in which Hawthorne was writing. Hepzibah is the first character introduced, the woman of the house who is awaiting the return of her brother, Clifford. While she is responsible for carrying on the legacy of Pyncheon tradition, she is an “old maid” (24) who is isolated, secluded, childless, and under the thumb of patriarchy because her only associations are with men, including her brother. She resides in this old Pyncheon house surrounded by walls decorated with portraits of her male ancestors that remind her of her duties, responsibilities, and position; in spite of her isolation, she is

tasked with maintaining the old house. Her social encounters are limited to an old picture of Clifford, which she studies: “continual devotedness towards the original of that miniature, have been the only substance for her heart to feed upon” (25). Hepzibah’s devotion to her brother keeps her locked in the past as she clings to this picture from his youth, awaiting his eventual return.

The fact that Hepzibah is old, unattractive, unmarried, and relegated to admiring surrounding portraits removes most of her agency. The narrator describes her as “a gaunt, sallow, rusty-jointed maiden, in a long-waisted silk-gown, and with the strange horror of a turban on her head!” (32). This description of her as old, thin, and wearing a “strange horror of a turban” removes the possibility of her being visually appealing, which serves as a form of marginalization showing her isolation and difference. As a fallen, aristocratic woman, her turban is appropriate for an old, “gaunt, sallow, rusty-jointed woman” who is aged like the house to which she has become enslaved.

As an unmarried, childless, woman, Hepzibah inhabits the Pyncheon home out of duty, responsibility, and loyalty to her ancestors. Robert K. Martin likens Hepzibah to a slave woman when he insists her turban is “an indication of her status as a slave woman, for which the turban was the accepted sign” (134). Without a husband and unable to divorce herself from her ancestry, Hepzibah is forced by her circumstances into an economic system to prevent becoming destitute, opening a cent shop from within the Pyncheon house as a means of survival. Martin also writes, “Hepzibah’s own appearance signals her place in the economies of sex and race” (134). Because she is operating out of duty and mandated to open a business because she has become destitute, she is locked in an exploitative system due to her gender and social positioning. She is not quite a



slave, but can be compared to a slave because of her fallen aristocracy and lack of agency.

Poverty, age, gender, and appearance all contribute to Hepzabah's positioning as an "other." As she prepares to engage in this enterprise, she studies the portraits of her ancestors, including the old Colonel Pyncheon. The narrator states, "she, in fact, felt a reverence for the pictured visage, of which only a far-descended and time-stricken virgin could be susceptible" (26). Her "reverence" for the old Colonel Pyncheon can only be felt by this "time-stricken virgin" because she has nothing else. With only the benevolence of her ancestors and lacking any other outlet for her affections, she remains loyal to ancestral legacy in spite of any feelings of dissatisfaction. As a "time-stricken virgin" she has no hope for marriage and must instead do what is required to keep the Pyncheon home. The narrator writes, "she at length withdrew her eyes from the dark countenance of the Colonel's portrait, heaved a sigh" (28), and, several lines later, "another sigh from Miss Hepzibah!" (28). As she prepares to enter into an economic system of exchange through the cent shop within the house, she finds courage from her ancestral line. In spite of her hesitance, she has no other financial means, and must engage in this economy against her will.

Although the Pyncheon home has provided Hepzibah with a place to live, the cost has been great. Her frequent sighs could be interpreted as a result of her age, but also as a result of her feelings of hopelessness. Although Hepzibah's position in the text can function in a number of ways, Maria O'Malley shifts responsibility back to the author's choices. She insists, "Because Hawthorne's novels address the silencing of women voices, he has been vulnerable to the charge that he also participates in this act of

exclusion” (680). Hepzibah does not talk until chapter 3, when she finally speaks to Holgrave, the Daguerreotypist and boarder in the house, and silencing Hepzibah for so long creates a narrative structure that further removes her agency. Holgrave offers her well wishes, to which she giggles hysterically and then sobs. These initial emotional responses eventually lead her to renounce opening the cent shop. She says, “I never can go through with it! Never, never, never! I wish I were dead, and in the old family-tomb, with all my forefathers! With my father, and my mother, and my sister! Yes; –and with my brother” (34). She would instead rather be dead and buried with her “forefathers” or in the prison with her brother.

As a slave to an antiquated house filled with portraits of her ancestors, Hepzibah’s situation renders little hope for her and she is reluctant to engage in a new economic system that undermines her status as a once aristocratic woman. In spite of the encouragement Holgrave tries to offer, Hepzibah is well aware of her station when she says, “You are a man—a young man—and brought up, I suppose, as almost everybody is, now-a-days, with a view to seeking your fortune. But I was born a lady, and have always lived one—no matter in what narrowness of means, always a lady” (34). Hepzibah understands Holgrave’s fate will differ from hers because of his youth and gender. As a woman, not only is she forced to live under the confines of patriarchy, she is no longer an aristocrat and must insert herself into a market economy in order to survive. Without a husband or children and tied only to her ancestry, Hepzibah has little agency. Melissa McFarland Pennell writes about Hepzibah’s positioning: “She cannot be part of that masculine world of competition and production nor can she fulfill the expectations of the cult of domesticity, for she has no family present and no social life” (194). Subsequent

chapters will explain why slave women cannot leave their houses; however, Hepzibah's situation is comparable because she is ruled by patriarchy. The oppression of slavery gets mirrored in patriarchy, but without a family of her own, Hepzibah is almost powerless.

Hepzibah can see no choice but to uphold the patriarchal demands firmly established by her ancestors. As she prepares for the new venture and faces the portrait of the old Colonel Pyncheon mounted on the wall, the narrator writes, “face to face with this picture, on entering the apartment, Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon came to a pause” (26). She cannot walk past the picture of her ancestor without pausing, because she still holds respect and admiration for the old Colonel. At the same time, she understands the responsibility she has in upholding the family name and preserving the legacy Colonel Pyncheon established. With her brother in prison, she is the only one able to keep up the Pyncheon home; although she bears the responsibility, the weight becomes heavy. The narrator states, “this born lady, after sixty years of narrowing means, is fain to step down from her pedestal of imaginary rank. Poverty, trading closely at her heels for a lifetime, has come up with her at last” (29). After all the years of maintaining a semblance of aristocracy, Hepzibah must reopen the cent shop because poverty has finally caught up with her. Just as hidden ancestry also preoccupies the text, hidden fears of losing class status are also present. With poverty “closely at her heels for a lifetime,” Hepzibah has been held in anxious suspense by terror threatening her finances. Looming in the shadows, Hepzibah’s fears of poverty are eventually realized and she is alone to face the circumstances. Pennell notices the multiple demands Hepzibah must uphold when she writes, “in addition to the burden of responsibility for preserving the family history,

Hepzibah also bears the burden of maintaining some sign of the family's status" (193). This added weight forces her into the enterprise of the cent shop as her last effort to maintain her "family's status."

Therefore, through this business, Hepzibah must insert herself into an economic system to prevent becoming destitute. The narrator states, "she must earn her own food, or starve!" (29) However, having been an aristocratic woman all of her life, working for food is unfamiliar. In fact, as the narrator observes, after the shop-bell rings "as if it were bewitched," Hepzibah "stood at a gaze, with her hands clasped, looking very much as if she had summoned up an evil spirit, and were afraid, yet resolved, to hazard the encounter" (37). Shortly thereafter "the door was thrust open, although no human form was perceptible on the other side" (37). These initial moments force Hepzibah to face her ghosts and enter into an economic structure she had been shielded from because of her wealth. Use of Gothic language in this passage reestablishes Hepzibah's position not only as a woman with little agency, but a female character operating within a Gothic framework. Alan Lloyd-Smith writes, "the advantage—perhaps even inevitability—of the Gothic form in articulating the concerns of the unvoiced 'other' has meant that the position of the female in a predominantly masculinist culture provided another strand in American Gothicism" (28). Similar to Goddu and Winter, Lloyd-Smith is noting ways that women are often necessary to the Gothic plot. Moreover, female characters must be positioned to not only show the masculine culture in which they are surrounded, but also reveal the concerns of the "unvoiced." Hepzibah's silence has been established in the opening chapters of the novel, while she also functions as an "othered" character. As a result, Hepzibah is constructed to show how patriarchy surrounds her, and she must

navigate a “predominantly masculinist culture” that keeps her victimized, oppressed, and othered.

While Hepzibah is arranged under the confines of patriarchy, use of this narrative structure suggests that the novel is not concerned with giving women agency because her decision making is still influenced by patriarchal demands. Hepzibah’s choice to open the cent shop against her will to maintain the Pyncheon legacy can be considered heroic, and Nina Baym writes, “she does her work more or less inadvertently and on behalf of someone she loves—her brother—rather than for her own betterment” (609). However, having to enter into a market economy in order to eat at this point in her life makes her character more tragic instead of heroic; her tragedy is furthered when she gets exploited for the sake of her family’s progeny. Monika M. Elbert agrees: “In embarking upon the capitalist money plot, Hawthorne is still implicated in making dirty money—at the expense of a fallen woman” (260). Including a character who is old, unmarried, unattractive, and marginalized shows how the novel offers little hope for Hepzibah and she is continuously trafficked regardless of her age. Hepzibah’s character, then, becomes critical to the Gothic storyline in maintaining the Pyncheon aristocratic legacy while remaining bound to the haunted Pyncheon house. As a woman who has existed along the periphery of society with only portraits of her ancestors keeping her company, she is doomed to be ruled by patriarchy as she is forced into a capitalist economic system.

While Holgrave is the first person she has a verbal exchange with, her first economic exchange is with Ned Higgins, who enters the shop demanding a “Jim Crow” cookie (38). Not only is the Jim Crow cookie significant in revealing Hawthorne’s inclusion of race in the novel, but the fact that this cookie is the first transaction for

Hepzibah represents how blacks become instrumental—as well as transactional—in a system in which Hepzibah is now implicated. The scene between Ned Higgins and Hepzibah shows her initial resistance to participate in the exchange. When Ned enters the shop, he requests the Jim Crow cookie and is specific: “That one that has not a broken foot” (38). While he wants the cookie that represents the black man who was associated with minstrel shows at the time, he is clear that the cookie must be unbroken and the gingerbread body must be whole.

Although Robert K. Martin writes, “the portrayal of the black body as entertainment serves to conceal the black body as labor” (135), the fact that Ned demands the cookie that “has not a broken foot” actually speaks to the need for the black body to be intact in order to perform the necessary labor imposed. Therefore, the scene does not actually “conceal,” but instead reveals the way slavery operated alongside the market economy and forces people like Hepzibah to participate. Teresa Goddu describes Ned Higgins as one “who represents capitalism’s consumer culture” (126), which is a culture that needs black bodies in order to thrive. When Ned Higgins returns for another Jim Crow cookie, Hepzibah must then demand money from the child, “recognizing that this pertinacious customer would not quit her on any other terms, so long as she had a gingerbread figure in her shop, she partly drew back her extended hand— ‘Where is the cent?’” (39). In other words, as long as Hepzibah continues carrying the Jim Crow “gingerbread figure in her shop,” Ned Higgins would return as a “pertinacious customer.” As a result, Hepzibah must demand money for her goods.

After Hepzibah collects the money from the boy, she has entered into the system of capitalism that depended so much on slavery, and which was tied to patriarchy. The

narrator says, “It was done! The sordid stain of that copper coin could never be washed away from her palm. The little schoolboy, aided by the impish figure of the negro dancer, had wrought an irreparable ruin” (39). The “stain” from their exchange renders Hepzibah into an “irreparable ruin” which “could never be washed away from her palm.” Ned Higgins’s demands of Jim Crow cookies—whose bodies must be unbroken—force Hepzibah to participate in a market economy that mirrors the exchange of slaves. The fact that Hepzibah is forced to make this transaction with a little boy “aided by the impish figure of the negro dancer” further complicates her position as a female; not only is she unable to escape patriarchy while being haunted by her male ancestors, she is further victimized after being forced into a figurative slave exchange with a little boy. Robert K. Martin writes, “The effect of Hepzibah’s transaction is dramatic, as Hawthorne makes clear: the exchange of money gives her a ‘copper stain,’ the indelible mark of participation in the slave economy” (134). Her stain cannot be erased and she is now permanently part of the system of slavery, while further entrenched in systemic oppression.

This scene also punctuates her status as a fallen, aristocratic woman, who now cannot be washed clean. If the cent shop becomes her gateway back to aristocracy, she has stained herself in the process. Crafts also discusses the connections between slavery and aristocracy, showing the impossibility for a woman to maintain her virtue without being dirtied in the system. Martin further asserts, “The Jim Crow figure evoked here illustrates the presentation of the black body as a means of asserting white purity; it is consumed (physically, by Ned), by a white population” (135). While Ned is consuming the black bodies, Hepzibah is selling them as her last resort to reestablish her wealth and

status. Her initial hesitance to participate in this operation does not reflect her morality, but can instead be interpreted as representing the complicated views of slavery at the time. Many participated in the slave trade willfully, while others sold slaves to prevent financial ruin; Hepzibah's involvement in this system out of duty to her ancestors can compare to many Southern patriarchs who needed the enterprise of their slaves for their plantations to function. According to Alan Lloyd-Smith, "Nathaniel Hawthorne fully realized the possibilities of resonance between the Gothic tradition and the American past" (28). Although the novel uses the Gothic to explain and explore aspects of American history, the text also shows how aristocratic women cannot maintain their status without slavery.

While Hepzibah is likened to a slave and participant in the slave market, the story of Alice Pyncheon—told through Holgrave—illustrates another female character who falls victim to systemic oppression. Alice Pyncheon, the daughter of Gervaise Pyncheon, gets caught in a feud between her father and Matthew Maule over the Pyncheon house's ownership. The story of Alice Pyncheon is important because she represents the past feud between the Pyncheons and the Maules that gets underscored throughout the novel. Her story is told through narrative distancing by way of Holgrave as he narrates to Phoebe. Describing Hawthorne's storytelling technique, Kari Winter writes, "It was also a convention of Gothic literature from the eighteenth century on to use various types of narrative frames" (48). Through Holgrave, the reader learns that Alice's innocence and purity is negotiated by her own father to Matthew Maule, as "the only chance of acquiring the requisite knowledge" (143), and she later becomes like a slave. In the process of settling the argument between the men, Alice gets passed between the men



like a tool. She is called in the room to settle the argument between Matthew Maule and Mr. Pyncheon over the missing deed to the Pyncheon house, and her doom is inevitable. The narrator/Holgrave writes, “Poor Alice! By what unhappy impulse did she thus put herself at once on terms of defiance against a strength which she could not estimate?” (144). The “strength” she cannot fight is patriarchal, because her father has put her in this situation to soon be pawned off to Matthew Maule. Furthermore, through mesmerism Matthew Maule is able to put a spell on her that later results in her death. However, before the spell is cast, Holgrave also states, “So Alice put woman’s might against man’s might; a match not often equal, on the part of woman” (145). Unfortunately, the power of patriarchy is no match for a woman, and Alice proves to be powerless with her “woman’s might.”

In fact, Alice is commodified much like slaves were, and she also becomes implicated in a system against her will, similar to Hepzibah. Mr. Pyncheon does little to stop Matthew Maule when he is mesmerizing Alice. In fact, the narrator writes, “Yet it was a call for help! –his conscience never doubted it! –and, little more than a whisper to his ear, it was a dismal shriek,” (146). In spite of Alice’s protests and the protection she seeks from her father, who she assumes will help her out of this situation, he refuses to come to her rescue. He is complicit in his daughter’s destruction: “but, this time, the father did not turn” (146). Alice is bartered by Mr. Pyncheon. Teresa Goddu writes, “her story highlights the role women play as a commodity to be traded between men in the economic relations of society” (122). Similar to Hepzibah’s exploitation and commodification in order to keep the Pyncheon house, Alice is also a victim of an economic system that renders her powerless.

Even after Alice dies, her ghost still haunts the house as a result of her being mishandled once she gets traded between the two men. Because of the violence associated with Alice's death, her haunting is explained by Arthur Redding as "the return of a repressed trauma" (7). The trauma she experiences by being rejected by her father and mesmerised by Maule results in her eventual death, but it impacts her afterlife as well. While ghosts are important in Gothic novels, Alice Pyncheon's ghost also reveals the need for the past to be corrected. Ghosts hold a specific position in fiction, and Redding posits, "it personifies and expresses those peoples, events, or aspects of one's own past that have been violently disappeared or repressed" (4). Just as Morrison includes ghosts in *Beloved* to narrate the traumatic history of slavery, Alice's ghost in Hawthorne's novel also suffers from injustices similar to the slave experience because her narrative is shared with the slave, Scipio.

Alice Pyncheon's story becomes more tragic once Holgrave tells Phoebe the impact of Maule's mesmerism and uses language similar to slavery. Holgrave says, "she was Maule's slave, in a bondage more humiliating, a thousand-fold, than that which binds its chain around the body" (149). The phrase "that which binds its chain around the body" closely resembles chattel slavery and the way slaves were transported. However, her form of bondage is considered "more humiliating" because the psychological and mental enslavement suffered by slaves was far more destructive than physical violence. Hawthorne engages with slavery as a literary subject in his journals written between 1842 and 1845 and writes, "A moral philosopher to buy a slave, or otherwise get possession of a human being, and use him for the sake of experiment, by trying the operation of a certain vice on him" (146). If Hawthorne is in fact fascinated with using the nuances of

slavery as a topic, he succeeds in doing so with the story of Alice Pyncheon. Although Matthew Maule does not buy Alice with money, he gains possession of her through her father and uses her in an experimental way through mesmerism. The description of Alice under Maule's control mimics slavery when he tells her "Alice, dance!" and she would respond in a "high-paced jig," which can be likened to Jim Crow's exaggerated behavior. However, her fate becomes even more reminiscent of slaves when Holgrave states, "Thus all the dignity of life was lost. She felt herself too much abased, and longed to change natures with some worm!" (149). Maule's oppression results in her feeling "too much abased." Her feelings are akin to slaves under the control of abusive slave masters.

At the end of this narration, Matthew Maule is likened to a slave master and overseer because his efforts to humble Alice cause her death and she becomes the abject slave. After her funeral, Holgrave describes Maule as "the darkest and woofullest man that ever walked behind a corpse" (150). What began as a psychological experiment results in her death, and Holgrave says Maule "meant to humble Alice, not to kill her; – but he had taken a woman's delicate soul into his rude grip, to play with; –and she was dead!" (150). Within the Gothic framework, however, this violence against Alice is normalized because, according to Kari Winter, "male Gothic novelists reacted against the emerging female tradition by reinscribing violence against women in their texts" (23). Hawthorne's novel uses narrative distancing to show how Alice Pyncheon gets killed, which is particularly indicative of abjection. Julia Kristeva writes that abjection becomes "a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up" (4). Alice is constructed as a slave and her body becomes bartered by her father, the "debtor" who sells her off to Matthew Maule. Although Morrison's novel directly

engages with slavery to later show the ramifications of the slave who lives, Alice is likened to the slave woman who dies. Her narrative, then, not only functions as another Gothic convention that remains at a distance because it is so othered, Alice's relationship with Maule becomes comparable to a master/slave relationship and perpetuates female systemic oppression.

Alice's story is impossible to tell without including the slave, Scipio, who is also revealed inside this narrative. Once Alice is sold to Maule she is socially constructed like Scipio, who tries to defend her honor. Scipio is presented as a stereotypical nineteenth-century black slave who embodies the thoughts many people had at the time of blacks being ignorant and subservient. When Matthew Maule enters the house demanding to see Scipio's master, Scipio responds, saying, "Don't know what Massa wants...the house is a berry good house, and old Colonel Pyncheon think so too, I reckon; -else why the old man haunt it so, and frighten a poor nigger, as he does?" (133). While Scipio also gets incorporated into the feud between the Maules and the Pyncheons, his language is indicative of his lack of education and his traditional slave dialect. When Matthew Maule comments on Alice's beauty, Scipio says, "The low carpenter-man! He no business so much as to look at her a great way off!" (134). Although Scipio is a slave himself, his reference to Matthew Maule as "a low carpenter-man" shows Maule's placement in society as lower class. Scipio expresses his disapproval of Maule having "no business so much as to look at her" (134). After Mr. Pyncheon barter his daughter, she is closer socially to Scipio than her own family. Robert K. Martin notes the relationship between the traffic of slaves and women: "Gervayse Pyncheon sells his daughter as he would a slave, and her speech and conduct become the expression of her

new mesmerizing master” (137). The relationship between Alice and Maule becomes that of a master-slave relationship. Just as Scipio completes tasks in a “prodigious hurry” (137), Holgrave says, “her spirit passed from beneath her own control, and bowed itself to Maule” (149). Her oppression becomes mirrored in Scipio’s behavior and status as a slave. Furthermore, her positioning closer to Scipio serves as a form of miscegenation and reveals how the Pyncheon genealogy gets convoluted. Because Alice gets socially constructed like a slave, the purity of the Pyncheons is unstable; just as Levine questions the “whiteness claimed by the Revolutionary fathers,” the Pyncheons also fall in this line of questioning because of Alice’s status (277).

In spite of the possibilities of miscegenation and another genealogical line in the Pyncheon family, Phoebe becomes the final female character in Hawthorne’s novel who can restructure the family by marrying Holgrave and provide a happy ending for them all. Although her marriage to Holgrave can bring closure to the Maule/Pyncheon feud, the fact that Holgrave is a Maule with his own mesmerizing powers becomes problematic. As Holgrave is telling the story of Alice Pyncheon, the narrator states, “A veil was beginning to be muffled about her, in which she could behold only him, and live only in his thoughts and emotions” (150). While the “veil” is forming, she is possibly being mesmerized and succumbing to his power; because she can “behold only him” and “live only in his thoughts,” Phoebe is also oppressed by Holgrave’s powers and manufactured into another patriarchal structure. In fact, if she is living in only his thoughts, she loses her own. Although the language is unclear, the way Phoebe is constructed remains consistent with the other female characters in the text. Just as Alice is oppressed and treated like a slave, the telling of her story depends on Holgrave, and Hepzibah and

Phoebe repeat the cycle of oppression. Franny Nudelman writes, “the Gothic adamantly rejects history as linear or causal and is instead preoccupied with relations of resemblance and repetition which offers past and present as deeply intertwined if not identical” (281). The past and present are “deeply intertwined if not identical” because none of the women in the novel have improved circumstances. Just as Alice becomes a casualty of systemic oppression that mirrors slavery, Hephzibah and now Phoebe remain actively engaged in oppressive systems. Alice’s ghost, however, serves as a reminder that history must be resolved.

Although Phoebe and Holgrave later get married—offering a solution to the feud between the two families as well as a seemingly tidy, conventional, Gothic ending—the fact that Holgrave has this power over Phoebe does not at all free her from oppression. The narrator explains, “it was evident, that with one wave of his hand and a corresponding effort of his will, he could complete his mastery over Phoebe’s yet free and virgin spirit” (150), which gives more power to Holgrave and less to Phoebe. If and when Holgrave decides to “complete his mastery” she will succumb to his powers, much like Alice Pyncheon became a victim to Matthew Maule. Therefore, the cycle of female oppression does not end. Phoebe’s story repeats the family legacy that presents women as powerless figures, in many ways like slaves. Although Teresa Goddu writes, “It is only through Phoebe, who allows for a lawful union between Pyncheon and Maule, that the novel finds a suitable solution to class conflict” (123), there are still other conflicts remaining in the novel that never find a solution. The ambiguity present that is prevalent in much of Hawthorne’s writing leads readers to draw their own conclusions in terms of whether Holgrave has honorable intentions with Phoebe.

Holgrave's identity revelation as a descendant of Matthew Maule is significant because identity masking is yet another Gothic trope. As another resident in the old Pyncheon home, Holgrave has posed as a Daguerreotypist when all the while he's been a descendent of the Maule family. Withholding a true identification throughout a narrative is a technique often used in Gothic storylines. In fact, Holgrave's character succeeds in penetrating the proud, aristocratic ancestry that the Pyncheon family tried for so long to protect while hiding his true identity as a Maule. Serving as a resident in the Pyncheon home while no one knew his identity reinforces Robert Levine's assertion that many antebellum writings of the 1850s take on the trope of hidden blackness posing a threat to whiteness; as a result, much of this anxiety is communicated through a haunted house. He writes, "what unifies all of these 'white' houses is that they are both physical structures and genealogical houses that are revealed to have 'blackness' within" (277). In other words, many of the stories written during the time of Hawthorne that mention "genealogical houses" are discussing miscegenation and the white bloodlines that have been tainted with black blood. Crafts further advances this preoccupation with exposing hidden blackness in ancestral houses; however, her novel attempts to reconcile the idea of racial purity, which will be further discussed in upcoming chapters.

When Matthew Maule comes to demand the deed to the house all those years ago, his exchange with Scipio reveals the possibility of Maule's own blackness. The narrator writes, "'What's that you mutter to yourself, Matthew Maule?' asked Scipio. 'And what for do you look so black at me?'" in which Maule responds: "'No matter, darkey!' said the carpenter. 'Do you think nobody is to look black but yourself?'" (134). This exchange between the two characters, one black slave and a carpenter, shows how they,

too, are socially constructed closely to one another; Maule's response of "nobody is to look black but yourself" suggests that Maule can look black like Scipio and there is a similarity in color between the two men. Robert Levine writes, "there are two genealogical lines—in this case the white masters and black slaves—that have become entangled" (283). The Maules have become "entangled" with the black slaves because Matthew Maule is able to "look black" like Scipio; therefore, Holgrave's identity revelation acknowledges that he, too, is a part of this genealogy in which the blood lines have been mixed. Just as Alice Pyncheon is aligned with Scipio, Matthew Maule is also a part of this entanglement and the genealogical lines get further conflated.

Therefore, the proud, pure Pyncheon heritage is now even more tainted and their purity becomes more difficult to sustain because the two genealogies are now braided together. Although the marriage between Phoebe and Holgrave allows Hepzibah to close the cent shop as well as the Pyncheon house doors to start life anew with Phoebe and Holgrave, she remains connected to Clifford and dependent on his financial inheritance. In spite of what appears to be a tidy ending, the female characters do not experience any freedom for themselves. Teresa Goddu posits, "Hawthorne depends on the symbolic economy of women to resolve the social problems of the novel, bringing it to a 'prosperous close'" (125). In spite of the value they hold, women remain disempowered subjects in the text. They are instead forced to operate within systems of oppression, opposed to experiencing any freedom or agency.

As a result, the novel's ending keeps them entrapped within their systems as they move forward in their lives: Hepzibah is bound to Clifford and the family money, while Phoebe gets married to Holgrave who holds power to one day mesmerize her, if he has



not already. Therefore, there is no escape from systemic oppression. Although Maria O'Malley acknowledges Hawthorne's tendency to place women in the margins and still give them power, the space from which they operate is limited, which makes them powerless. She writes, "while women are consigned to society's periphery, where they observe and assess but cannot exert authority, they are not without power" (680).

However, the women in the text do not show resistance and have little agency, which becomes more evident when compared to female characters in Morrison's and Crafts' novels. In fact, the decisions they make are perpetuated by patriarchy and their positions within social structures in which they are stuck. Therefore, Hawthorne's text does not at all free his female characters from systemic oppression, but only continues to keep them part of a system that exploits them, much like slavery.

## CHAPTER TWO: INFANTICIDE, TRAUMA, AND COMMUNITY IN *BELOVED*

Although the Gothic is helpful in conveying the horrors of slavery, it also holds the potential to rhetorically undermine true lived experiences by taking real events and packaging them into a conventional Gothic plot. As a result, scholars such as Teresa Goddu discuss the double bind that former slaves faced when chronicling their accounts of slavery; in the process of sharing their narratives, some readers questioned the veracity of their autobiographies because they so closely follow Gothic story lines, and some believed them to be literature used to fuel the Abolitionist movement. Goddu writes, “The gothic might offer useful metaphors for depicting the historical event of slavery, but its narrative construction could also empty slavery of history by turning it into a gothic trope” (135). Because many slave narratives written during the nineteenth-century were recognized as employing Gothic conventions, their accounts could be read as fiction. Frederick Douglass’s narrative, published in 1845, as well as Harriet Jacobs’ *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) both read like Gothic novels due to their use of violence, terror, and oppressive structures. A century later, Toni Morrison employs some of these same Gothic conventions used in earlier slave narratives in *Beloved* (1987) through her fictionalized account of the slave Margaret Garner; Morrison, however, rewrites aspects of the Gothic while depicting the history of slavery by focusing on trauma, memory, and infanticide.

The true story of Margaret Garner is one of a run-away slave woman who escaped from Kentucky to Cincinnati, Ohio, and when slave catchers arrived to return her and her

family back to slavery in 1856 she elected to slit the throat of her two-year-old and attempt to murder her other three children. Slave women had no rights, and this daring attempt to prevent further enslavement becomes the source that Morrison uses to interrogate the right her character, Sethe, has to murder her child. Although the real life Margaret Garner died a slave, Sethe lives as a free woman who is psychologically haunted by the memories of slavery, while her house, 124, is physically haunted by the ghost of the child, Beloved. Through the novel, Morrison takes the ghost story used in many Gothic storylines to further explore ideas of resistance to slavery, infanticide, trauma, and community. Jason Haslam writes about the different ways slavery can function within Gothic storylines: “there remains a distinction between the (metaphorical) use of slavery to further a text’s gothic elements, and a text’s use of the gothic to address slavery as an institution” (45). This distinction Haslam describes is one way in which Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* differs from Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables*. While Hawthorne constructs characters who are metaphorically enslaved, Morrison directly addresses “slavery as an institution” in addition to the impact the institution has on a community left trying to pick up the pieces of their lives after experiencing trauma.

As the previous chapter illustrates, Hawthorne uses slavery at the margins of his novel in a mostly metaphorical way to advance his novel’s Gothic tropes. Although he hints at aspects of slavery through possibilities of miscegenation, Morrison confronts the topic of slavery in her novel and redefines the Gothic to address and problematize the system. Her characters Sethe, Paul D, Baby Suggs, Stamp Paid, and other women in the community have all been impacted by slavery, and, through them, Morrison shows the psychological impact the institution of slavery has on a community of people. Haslam

further explains how slavery becomes a Gothic subject: “slavery as a concept can be used as a gothic device: employed as a metaphor for a character’s powerlessness in the face of larger, insurmountable forces (be they psychological or social)” (45). This use is apparent in Morrison’s characters as they wrestle with their pasts and “insurmountable forces” that take the shape of patriarchy, systematic oppression, and memory. However, Morrison utilizes her characters in such a way to question whether they are in fact powerless against slavery; by devoting more attention to their interior lives, she takes power away from the oppressor to focus more on the oppressed, in spite of them being haunted by their pasts. In addition to the living characters Morrison uses, *Beloved*’s ghost (who eventually returns in the flesh) also claims power as well. Arthur Redding insists, “ghosts are endowed with agency, are paradoxically powerful figures of powerlessness” (3), which challenges Haslam’s notions of a character’s complete sense of powerlessness when employed as a Gothic device; *Beloved* as a ghost has agency, but *Beloved* in the flesh arrives with so many demands that her return from the dead exerts her complete power over Sethe. Julia Kristeva describes such a takeover and writes, “the abject simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject” (5). *Beloved* in the flesh differs significantly from Alice Pyncheon’s ghost, because once *Beloved* arrives as the dead abject slave killed by her mother, she “beseeches and pulverizes” Sethe. Alice’s ghost, however, has little agency and depends on Holgrave to not only tell her story, but marry Phoebe in order to be released from the Pyncheon home.

Therefore, Morrison’s approach to the Gothic operates as an intrusion into the form by the way she focuses on her characters. While *Beloved* has returned from the dead, the living characters are former slaves, currently being haunted by the traumas from

slavery. Navigating between the living and the dead, with each having its own specific needs and demands, becomes one way Morrison repurposes the Gothic form. When considering the potential that writing slave narratives using Gothic conventions has to lessen the impact of slavery, Goddu writes, “Gothic conventions might usefully reproduce the scene of slavery, but they also might dematerialize it” (139). The Gothic is a convenient space to hold these narratives, but if they are read for consumption like traditional Gothic novels written by those of the dominant culture, the impact of slavery gets emptied out into the pages of fiction. Deborah Guth insists on Morrison’s goal: “not simply to ‘repeat’ the past, but to actually transform the chaos of history into a fable of love and bereavement” (590). Packaged in Gothic trappings lies a “chaos of history” that must be transformed into a lesson that will enable the characters and community to move forward. Instead of becoming a story for entertainment, Morrison captures her character’s narratives by sharing history; their memories, trauma, and forms of resistance cannot be read for entertainment because their stories are not ones to “pass on” (323), and neither are they ones to repeat. Therefore, Morrison uses the Gothic as a place for redemption.

While using slavery as a subject becomes a Gothic device in the nineteenth-century, the haunted house trope also gets repeated in Morrison’s novel. The house located at 124 Bluestone Road is described as “spiteful” and “full of a baby’s venom” (3), followed by examples of how the dead baby’s hauntings run Sethe’s two sons off after each experiences enough to make him leave for good. When Sethe suggests moving to another house, her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, doesn’t see the point and says, “Not a house in the country ain’t packed to its rafters with some dead Negro’s grief. We lucky

this ghost is a baby” (6). Baby Suggs understands the landscape; slavery impacts the living as well as the dead, and the dead cannot rest in peace. Morrison also understands the importance of a ghost within her novel, writing in *Beloved*’s introduction: “In trying to make the slave experience intimate, I hoped the sense of things being both under control and out of control would be persuasive throughout; that the order and quietude of everyday life would be violently disrupted by the chaos of the needy dead” (xvii-xix). One of Morrison’s goals in this novel is to capture the repugnance of slavery and articulate the atrocities suffered by enslaved African Americans. Although Sethe thinks her life is under control when the novel begins and she wants to believe she’s found some semblance of normalcy, the ghost punctuates the chaos in her life. When Paul D (another former slave from the Sweet Home plantation) arrives, he unearths past hurts that Sethe had attempted to bury and disrupts the order she sought in her everyday life. However, “the needy dead” does not just refer to the ghost of *Beloved* as needy; the emotions Sethe has tried to bury also make their own demands.

Therefore, moving out of the house would not at all free them from their ghosts, because everyone in the community is haunted. The supernatural is not an unusual phenomenon in the novel, and when Paul D walks through the door he asks, “What kind of evil you got in here?” (10). Sethe’s response, “It’s not evil, just sad” (10), attempts to situate the ghost and also explain the nature of the spirit as not violent, but instead, “just sad.” After Paul D further enters the house, the narrator states that he “looked at the spot where the grief had soaked him. The red was gone but a kind of weeping clung to the air where it had been” (11). The house is filled with grief not only from the baby’s ghost, but Baby Suggs’s and Sethe’s sadness also hang in the air. Sethe is no longer living as a

slave at the Sweet Home plantation where she was a slave, but the years she has spent at 124 have not freed her from trauma endured from systemic oppression. When remembering Sweet Home, she says, “But it’s where we were...All together. Comes back whether we want it to or not” (16). The trauma Sethe experienced at Sweet Home holds a power of its own, and the memories return any time they choose. Arthur Redding insists that trauma narratives are transformative as they produce “memory and meaning” (5). Sethe’s traumatic memories resurface against her will, but when she engages with them the novel will later show the potential for her healing to occur. Although Sethe lives with the ghost of the baby she murdered, other memories from her past also haunt her present. Not only is she still enslaved to her past, but the ghosts in her house also further remind her of slavery and have isolated her from the community.

However, Sethe has grown accustomed to her environment and the burdens she carries. Even after Paul D suggests Sethe move from 124, she gets defensive and responds by saying: “I got a tree on my back and a haint in my house, and nothing in between but the daughter I am holding in my arms. No more running—from nothing. I will never run from another thing on this earth. I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul D Garner: it cost too much! Do you hear me? It cost too much” (18). Sethe has physical reminders from her years as a slave that have formed a scar on her back in the shape of a chokecherry tree. While Hawthorne’s Pyncheon house has an elm tree rooted outside, Sethe’s tree arrives from a beating she endures by her overseer’s sons. However, Sethe acknowledges the tree and the “haint” in her house as her own lot to bear and she respects that she has no interest in moving away from 124. Use of the word “haint” is worth noting because Morrison often uses this word

in her novels. The word is a version of the word “haunt” that derives from Southern dialect, and Redding offers one definition: “Haints are also ghosts of potential: We are haunted not just by horrifying events that have happened in our lives or communal histories, but by histories that have never been accorded the opportunity to take place” (7). According to Redding, Sethe’s ghost is one whose history gets stripped because she died so young. The ghost continues to haunt the house because Sethe ended Beloved’s life because Sethe felt she was protecting her daughter from being enslaved. Sethe says “no more running,” feeling that she has already paid the price for running from slavery; the cost of her “one journey” resulted in her having to murder her baby to prevent their return to bondage, and she is firm in her decision to not run again. Sethe, however, is not singular in paying the high cost for her freedom; all of the slave characters in the novel share the exorbitant price of their tickets. In fact, Trudier Harris writes, “all of the characters who have escaped or been freed from slavery have given more than their weight in gold to that system” (332). While Hepzibah is forced into a system of exchange in the latter part of her life, Sethe has already been trafficked and is still repaying the debt for that exchange. Whereas Hepzibah is a reluctant participant, Sethe has no choice, and she loses her husband, family, and friends in the process. All she has remaining is her last daughter, Denver, along with the memories inside of 124.

Hepzibah is left with a “sordid stain” from a copper coin never to be washed away from her palm, while Sethe is haunted by the baby she murdered along with the physical scars and emotional trauma from slavery. Harris also writes, “In exchange for her share of human misery, Sethe has given up her back to be marked with a tree and suffered the death of her daughter, the loss of her sons, and the insanity of her husband” (332).



Slavery has forced Sethe, and other characters in the novel, into a system of exchange offering little joy in return. Hepzibah's fall from aristocracy serves as a minor inconvenience when compared to Sethe's systemic oppression. Although Hepzibah is forced to exchange Jim Crow cookies whose bodies are fully intact, the narratives in *Beloved* show how the slaves' actual bodies get broken and what they look like after being broken down. Furthermore, Sethe's chokecherry tree is an example of how slavery collapses the possibilities of a family lineage in which Hawthorne's novel places so much pride.

Slaves were not privileged with portraits hanging on the walls of their ancestral homes, such as the Pyncheon family, and were instead marked and beaten. Sethe's mother is branded with a circle and a cross located beneath her breast. She shows Sethe the scar so Sethe has a way to recognize her, functioning like a picture. Sethe's mother tells her daughter, "'This is your ma'am. This,' and she pointed. 'I am the only one got this mark now. The rest dead. If something happen to me and you can't tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark.'" (72). As a young child, Sethe does not know how to react to this explanation by her mother and asks to be marked too, not at all realizing what she is asking. Her mother responds with a slap across young Sethe's cheek. Sethe's mother is unable to care for her child because of her duties as a slave working from early in the mornings until late in the evenings. Recognizing the slave woman's inability to care for her children, Donna Aza Weir-Soley writes, "the black woman's ability to nurture life within her body is used against her as a mechanism for fueling the slave machinery" (111). Although slave women could reproduce, they usually could not parent because they had no rights. Sethe's mother shows the branding on her body as a way for

Sethe to one day recognize her slave body when she dies. This memory—this picture that Sethe has in her mind—of her mother leads to another hidden thought that she has repressed. The narrator states, “she was remembering something she had forgotten she knew. Something privately shameful that had seeped into a slit in her mind right behind the slap on her face and the circled cross” (73). In the time when she is reflecting on her own mother and the legacy her mother left behind, Sethe conjures another “privately shameful” detail that destabilizes her.

Throughout the novel, Sethe is haunted by memories that seem to decide when they want to resurface. Sethe remembers the “privately shameful” memory later in her own life after she is a mother herself, which makes what she thought she had tucked away more impactful. The narrator states, “What Nan had told her she had forgotten, along with the language she told it in. The same language her ma’am spoke, and which would never come back” (74). While Sethe is engaging with the lost memory, she hears the lost language that her mother once spoke. Morrison is referencing an African dialect spoken by Sethe’s mother when she was forced onto slave ships. This language gets lost over time and “would never come back” because Sethe has long forgotten her mother’s tongue. However, her memory continues:

She told Sethe that her mother and Nan were together from the sea. Both were taken up many times by the crew. ‘She threw them all away but you. The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The others from more whites she also threw away. Without names, she threw them. You she gave the name of the black man. She put her arms around him. The

others she did not put her arms around. Never. Never. (74)

Nan is telling young Sethe about her mother's discarding of infants after being raped by crew members and white men. She "threw away" the babies without naming them, but the one baby she has by a black man is Sethe, and this is the only baby she allows to live.

Infanticide was part of slavery's milieu, but also considered unspeakable. Many were aware of this action by slave women, including Hawthorne, who read his wife's account of slavery when she lived in Cuba. While living on a sugar plantation, Hawthorne's wife Sophia Peabody and her sister Mary wrote their observations of slavery in the "Cuba Journals." Jean Fagan Yellin notes they not only discussed the sexual exploitation of slave women in their journals, but also mention "the slaves' desperate resort to infanticide, noting that the deaths of twenty or thirty infants on the plantation where they were staying had resulted in a brutal punishment for the slave mothers whose babies had died" (142). Hawthorne is privy to this information, but as a literary topic he chooses not to engage even though Yellin writes he "was confronted with information as shocking as the exposes appearing each week in Garrison's *Liberator*" (142). Through his wife and sister-in-law's accounts of slavery, he learned more atrocities included in the system and yet *The House of the Seven Gables* marginalizes slavery and infanticide is never mentioned.

Morrison, on the other hand, confronts this subject because she understands the importance of sharing history and speaking that which had otherwise remained unspoken. The Gothic storyline can house these atrocities because through this mode the unspeakable acts of slavery are communicated. Teresa Goddu asserts, "the gothic mode represents slavery's unspeakable history" (132), to insist there is no better literary vehicle

to express such horrific acts. Haslam writes, “slavery and its individual and social effects become an always already present yet repressed, haunting gothic figure, at once spoken and unspoken” (49) as he explains how slavery as a Gothic subject also functions as an ever-present haunting shadow. Moreover, Kristeva establishes that with this form of literature, “there takes place a crossing over of the dichotomous categories of Pure and Impure, Prohibition and Sin, Morality and Immorality” (16). *Beloved* approaches the topic of infanticide to show how boundaries are crossed between “prohibition and sin” as well as “morality and immorality.” Infanticide was—and still is—considered a crime, but including this topic in a Gothic storyline allows Morrison to show how slave mothers exerted resistance when they had babies resulting from their slave masters’ immoral and sinful natures. Although Sophie Peabody describes the slave women being severely punished for their actions, Morrison shows her readers how this crime occurs in the first place to prove how these slave mothers are made “impure” in spite of their motives being pure. Furthermore, despite men’s ability to deem the mothers’s actions as “impure,” Morrison urges her readers to see how the men are complicit and the oppressive system of slavery elicits certain choices by women.

This memory of infanticide comes back to Sethe later in life after she has committed her own similar crime. In some regards, Sethe follows in her mother’s footsteps and this repressed memory connects Sethe to her mother much like a brand and scars. In fact, this repeated offense can be read as a version of the conventional Gothic curse of the sins from the parent being passed down to the offspring. However, Sethe’s mother has also passed down her trauma to Sethe, because trauma not only impacts individuals, but also victim-survivor populations. As J. Brooks Bousoon establishes, “the

effects of trauma can be transmitted intergenerationally” (8). Slavery passed down a much different legacy than the legacy of the proud Pyncheon aristocracy. Sethe inherits the trauma Sethe’s mother endured of repeated rape and killing her babies, and Sethe is powerless to this pain transmitted onto her. As a result, these women are forced to resist the system by any means possible, including infanticide.

Although this memory evokes overwhelming emotions Sethe had repressed, this mental picture of her mother reminds Sethe that she is not alone in her suffering; both Sethe’s mother and Nan experience atrocities specific to women through such an oppressive system. According to Weir-Soley, “the black woman’s body becomes the site upon which all the horrors and trauma of slavery are inscribed” (111). Not only is Sethe’s mother’s body physically maimed and scarred by slavery, but the babies she reproduces become victims of the “horrors and trauma of slavery” as well. As a result, the legacy that gets passed on to Sethe by her mother is one rendered by oppression, and also resistance. In an essay Morrison wrote about the process of writing *Beloved*, she asks, “Suppose having children, being called a mother, was the supreme act of freedom—not its opposite?” (282). Through infanticide, the choice Sethe’s mother exerts in regards to which babies she keeps versus discards shows her own resistance to rape and enslavement.

The information Nan shares, however, not only shows the disconnect between mother and daughter, but also a narrative distancing as the story is told by way of a lost, repressed memory conjured by the presence of the dead ghost in the flesh. Moreover, Sethe remembers the story being spoken in a lost language by Sethe’s Nan, or nanny. This memory is almost like a dream, one Sethe must choose whether or not to trust. Julia

Kristeva's theory of abjection offers one way of understanding this sudden experience: "fear having been bracketed, discourse will seem tenable only if it ceaselessly confront that otherness, a burden both repellent and repelled, a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate: the abject" (6). Sethe's only way of defending herself against the impact of these memories is to confront that which she has expelled; the knowledge she has of her mother's own acts of infanticide is a memory both "unapproachable and intimate" that Sethe must confront. The conditions these memories are operating under as "repellent and repelled" have no choice but to resurface because they can no longer remain repressed.

Beloved's arrival as the ghost in the flesh at the age she would have been had she lived forces Sethe to reckon with her past, but also shows how Morrison packages infanticide, trauma, repressed memories, as well as slavery all into a Gothic form. Although the history of slavery is often retold using Gothic conventions, once Beloved's ghost comes to life Morrison's novel takes a turn away from traditional expectations of the genre. Ghosts can often be used in literature in various ways, especially when there is unfinished business: a past that needs to be faced and healing that must occur. However, Arthur Redding suggests the following: "ghosts return because it is we who want something of them; in this regard it is not so much the dead that haunt the living, but the living that obsessively haunt the dead" (170). Sethe wants Beloved's forgiveness and has been haunted not only by the dead baby she killed, but also by the guilt of her decision to murder her child. Including Beloved as a character in the flesh allows Morrison to appropriate the Gothic to not just address slavery, but how slavery as a system significantly impacted women, mothers, and a woman's ability—as well as choice—to be a

mother. When further interrogating Sethe's decision to kill her child, Winter argues, "for Sethe, the ultimate act of resistance against oppression is to choose death over powerlessness" (116). Sethe's only way of resisting slavery was through death intended for her and her children; unfortunately, Beloved is the only one impacted by this daring decision because Sethe's plan is thwarted by Stamp Paid (the neighbor and aid in Sethe's own escape from slavery) and the slave catchers.

Paul D's judgement towards Sethe for killing her baby shows how black slave women could still be oppressed by individuals within their culture in addition to those outside of their culture. The newspaper article that Stamp Paid shows Paul D includes a picture of Sethe that reveals the story of her past. Sethe had never told Paul D what happened to her baby and why the baby was haunting 124. Learning the truth only renders his judgement of Sethe, and he tells her, "What you did was wrong, Sethe" (194). He is convinced she had other alternatives and further reminds her, "You got two feet, Sethe, not four" (194). These statements quickly divide them, and the narrator states, "right then a forest sprang up between them; trackless and quiet" (194). Once he learns these details of her history, what starts off as a chokecherry tree on Sethe's back grows into a forest of trees that separates her and Paul D.

This division between them shows their differences in gender because Sethe's decision making in that moment is motivated by her choice as a mother who is exerting her limited power and control. When she tells Paul D, "They ain't at Sweet Home. Schoolteacher ain't got em" (194), she is saying that even if she doesn't know where her boys have run off and her daughter is dead, at least she knows they are not on a plantation living as slaves. Kari Winter writes that "male and female slaves understood that they

shared a common enemy: the white supremacist patriarchal system of slavery” (43). But even so, the forest that grows between Sethe and Paul D shows how their “common enemy” can still divide those within the culture and renders quite separate experiences for women and men. They have both being victimized by slavery and haunted by their individual traumas, yet the narrator states, “how fast he had moved from his shame to hers” (194). Paul D is able to separate himself from Sethe and cast judgements similar to what others in the community have already done to Sethe. In fact, focusing on her “too-thick love” (194) distances him from his own shame and trauma from slavery. Therefore, what began as a unifying experience as they shared their memories of Sweet Home becomes a gendered situation, and this turn in the novel leaves the rest of the story open for Morrison to comment on the black female experience. In fact, after Paul D leaves Sethe, 124 becomes a feminine space that even the dog “Hereboy” cannot penetrate.

Although Sethe thinks she is exerting power over her oppressor by killing her child to prevent her and her children being taken back to the Sweet Home slave plantation, her actions do not subvert the system in the way she may have imagined. After Sethe slits Beloved’s throat, her baby does not die as a martyr to change the system; instead, Sethe is simply further objectified and dehumanized with the power structures still very much intact. Winter continues to complicate Sethe’s choice: “female Gothic novelists and slave narrators understood, however, that the deaths of subjugated peoples rarely change the power structure” (116). In fact, Schoolteacher looks at what Sethe does and decides, “something was wrong with her” (176), and further concludes, “you just can’t mishandle creatures and expect success” (176) after comparing her to a beaten horse or abused dog. To her oppressors, she is likened to a crazed animal, and her actions



are comparable to one who has been beaten beyond return. Ironically, because “something was wrong with her” she won’t work within the system anymore because the power structure has no space for such a defective creature. Just as Alice Pyncheon gets mishandled and dies as a result, Sethe almost gets ruined.

Therefore, what is supposed to be empowering and freeing for Sethe places her closer to an animal in the eyes of others. Cedric Gael Bryant writes, “the murder of [Sethe’s] own child collapses the either/or binary between animal and human into the both/and of monstrous motherhood” (547). Unlike her own mother, who received no judgement for throwing away babies fathered by white men, Sethe murders a baby to prevent her from being ruined by slavery, and the boundaries between human and animal are conflated. The narrator describes the white slave holders having the power to “not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn’t like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn’t think it up” (295). Although Sethe’s actions render judgment from most of the community, as abject slaves they have all been dirtied by the system. The system not only exploits slaves for their labor, but the process of dirtying is also psychologically damaging, emotionally destructive, and it often resulted in infanticide when slave women refused the system. Kristeva discusses this type of psychological damage when she writes, “the clean and proper...becomes filthy, the sought-after turns into the banished, fascination into shame” (8). Sethe gets dirtied—or filthy—to the point where she loses her sense of self. Because her identity is “banished,” or lost, what remains is a fractured woman filled with shame and self-loathing.

Beloved's physical presence disrupts what little order remained in the home, and she forces Sethe to further engage with her repressed trauma and memories, confront her decision to kill Beloved, and eventually reemerge into society with others. Operating in the flesh, Beloved carries an insatiable appetite and overpowers Sethe. While Beloved is arguably a victim of such a peculiar institution, once she returns from the dead she is not oppressed or powerless herself. Her ability to feed off of Sethe leads to Sethe's detriment and she needs help outside of 124 from her community. Laura Doyle explains the complexity of the relationship between Beloved and Sethe: "The mother and daughter transgress boundaries, penetrate boundaries, sabotaging their prescribed cultural function to create and reproduce boundaries" (221). The roles of mother and daughter get conflated, and even Denver cannot tell the difference between one and the other. The narrator writes, "Then it seemed to Denver the thing was done: Beloved bending over Sethe looked the mother, Sethe the teething child, for other than those times when Beloved needed her, Sethe confined herself to a corner chair" (296). This blurring of boundaries also evokes Kristeva's abjection and is part of the complication with Sethe's character. Although the mother gives life, Sethe's love found "safety with a handsaw" (193), and according to Paul D, "Sethe didn't know where the world stopped and she began" (193). Without boundaries, Sethe cannot parent Beloved and Beloved's taking from Sethe knows no end. Cedric Gael Bryant also speaks to the indistinct boundaries, writing, "This destabilizing act at the very least compels both the characters in the novel and Morrison's readers to review and perhaps revise normative ideas of what it means to be animal, human, white, black, mother, and/or monster" (547). Just as Kristeva describes the abject as "what does not respect borders, positions, rules" (4), Bryant is also

noticing the ways ideas get blended together. Because Sethe has let go of borders, forgetting “where the world stopped and she began,” she gets lost in this situation with Beloved. While the role of motherhood is problematized in the novel, Morrison is effective in forcing her readers to consider ideas of black womanhood, slavery, power, and resistance while at the same time realizing the dangers that occur when boundaries collapse.

Although Sethe’s resistance to slavery leads her to find solace with a handsaw, she loses herself in guilt and struggles to explain her actions to Beloved. As Denver watches her mother get smaller and smaller, the narrator discusses Sethe’s difficulties: “trying to persuade Beloved, the one and only person she felt she had to convince, that what she had done was right because it came from true love” (296). Trying to “convince” Beloved—a ghost in the flesh who has her own demands—that what she did was right only exhausts Sethe and leaves her confined to a chair in the corner. Sethe thinks that her actions are pure and she is protecting her “best thing” (296) from abuse, but Beloved only further oppresses her mother: “uncomprehending everything except that Sethe was the woman who took her face away, leaving her crouching in a dark, dark place, forgetting to smile” (296). She constantly reminds Sethe of how her actions left her dead daughter in a “dark, dark place,” and Beloved refuses to forgive Sethe.

As Beloved only rejects Sethe’s constant explanations, Denver fortunately reaches out to other women in the community, which results in a collective rescue. Sethe has been alienated for her past deeds, but once the women realize what is happening to Sethe, they know to step in and help. Whereas Hawthorne often negatively portrayed communities, Morrison (and later Crafts) both show the necessity of community in order

to heal from slavery's trauma and degradation. Stamp Paid and Paul D are also members who will eventually be helpful again, but the women are the only ones able to save Sethe because many share her specific pain and can connect to her experiences. The narrator states, "they fell into three groups: those that believed the worst; those that believed none of it; and those, like Ella, who thought it through" (301). This woman, Ella, in her process of listening and thinking it through, has a memory of slavery that she describes as "the lowest yet" (301). Ella's time as a slave yielded an experience that also resulted in infanticide. After continuous rape by her slave master and her slave master's son, one of her two abusers eventually fathered a child she gave birth to, but refused to nurse. The child died after five days. Therefore, Ella can connect to Sethe's situation; the narrator insists, "she understood Sethe's rage in the shed twenty years ago, but not her reaction to it, which Ella thought was prideful, misdirected, and Sethe herself too complicated" (302). Ella's trauma as a slave allows her to fully relate to Sethe; but similar to Paul D who sees Sethe's act as animalistic, Ella does not agree with Sethe's reaction either. Just as Paul D insisted there had to be another alternative, Ella feels Sethe should have redirected her efforts. According to Ella, Sethe is "too complicated" and Paul D calls Sethe's love "too thick" (193). For everyone in the community, Sethe reminds them too much of the dirtiness of slavery. The narrator further describes when Sethe returned from jail and "made no gesture toward anybody, and lived as though she were alone, Ella junked her and wouldn't give her the time of day" (302). This further illustrates the isolation Sethe lives under and the reaction others have to her decision to seclude herself. Sethe's refusal to engage with anyone insults the injured community, which is why some of the women are hesitant to help.

However, Sethe's distance from her community prevents her from thriving and only subjects her to further oppression by 124 and its ghosts. Although isolation might fit some Gothic storylines, in *Beloved* seclusion cannot be sustained. Winter writes, "protagonists in slave narratives flee into nature to escape from oppression, but in time nature proves inhospitable and the protagonists must find a human community in order to survive" (134). Sethe's decision to live "as though she were alone" only infuriates others, but she needs a "human community" to save her from *Beloved*. Sethe thinks she can lock the door of 124 and remain inside with *Beloved*, "free at last to be what they liked, see whatever they saw and say whatever was on their minds" (235); but she becomes enslaved to the house and needs the other women's intervention.

While Hawthorne writes Hepzibah as financially dependent and enslaved to the Pyncheon house, as a victim of slavery Sethe is trapped by her experiences, memories, and mistakes. As Ella learns more of Sethe's circumstance, she continues to reason: "Whatever Sethe had done, Ella didn't like the idea of past errors taking possession of the present. Sethe's crime was staggering and her pride outstripped even that; but she could not countenance the possibility of sin moving on in the house" (302). In spite of the baggage Ella carries from slavery with "the lowest yet," she recognizes the need for human connection. She feels angered after learning that Sethe's past mistake encroaches into the present and forces Sethe to keep paying a price when the debt was already paid. As a foil to Sethe, Ella respects boundaries and knows the dead have a place of their own: "As long as the ghost showed out from its ghostly place—shaking stuff, crying, smashing and such—Ella respected it. But if it took flesh and came in her world, well, the shoe was on the other foot. She didn't mind a little communication between the two worlds, but

this was an invasion” (302). Similar to Baby Suggs, who knew 124 Bluestone Road wasn’t unusual, “suspended between the nastiness of life and the meanness of the dead” (4), Ella could tolerate a ghost remaining in “its ghostly place” and doing what ghosts often do to agitate the living, but once “it took flesh and came in her world,” it was crossing boundaries and no longer welcome. Ella, like so many others within the African American community, is all too familiar with the likelihood of the dead communicating with the living, but she also knows the dead cannot become a living thing. While Ella insists, “nobody needed a grown up evil sitting at the table with a grudge” (302), Sethe cannot recognize Beloved as a “grown up evil,” nor can she acknowledge Beloved’s “grudge.” Ella understands the dangers this “invasion” truly holds and is able to galvanize the other women willing to unite on Sethe’s behalf.

Morrison effectively captures the dynamics of Sethe’s community, particularly one filled with African American former slaves who may be unwilling to confront their own ghosts. Although there are some women who keep their distance, or refuse to believe and “hated the ignorance of those who did” (303), the thirty women understanding Sethe’s need for rescuing show what a liberated group of women can accomplish. When they arrive at 124, some start to pray; but Ella, again, stands out from the group. The narrator expounds on more of Ella’s narrative, stating, “Ella had been beaten every way but down. She remembered the bottom teeth she had lost to the brake and the scars from the belt were thick as rope around her waist” (305). Like Sethe and Sethe’s mother, Ella, too, has been marked by slavery and has physical reminders. Just as Paul D endured the bit, Ella lost teeth to the device, and her scars from being whipped remain like Sethe’s chokecherry tree and Sethe’s mother’s circle and cross. Ella next

remembers the baby she birthed from the lowest yet: “it lived five days never making a sound. The idea of that pup coming back to whip her too set her jaw working, and then Ella hollered” (305). The system of slavery exploited the black female body to reproduce more bodies, but women such as Ella, Sethe, and Sethe’s mother reject that aspect of the system, especially when men were forced upon them. Although they were expected to have children, they exercised resistance by discarding their children and refused to engage. Ella’s fury, then, at the possibility of the dead “pup” returning the way Beloved comes back to Sethe makes her holler.

Once the women come together, they are empowered and able to redefine themselves outside of the dirt and filth of slavery; in fact, they need each other in order to reclaim their identities because the process is impossible to do alone. The rest of the women join Ella when she cries out, and through their collective sound they are able to exorcise Beloved’s ghost. The narrator states, “Instantly the kneelers and the standers joined her. They stopped praying and took a step back to the beginning. In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like” (305). As a group, they come together to rescue Sethe because just as Ella carries her trauma, the other women have their own. When Sethe sees them outside, the narrator describes her experience: “the voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words. Building voice upon voice until they found it, and when they did it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock the pods off chesnut trees. It broke over Sethe and she trembled like the baptized in its wash” (308). Once the women are together, their combined voices break “the back of words.” They produce a sound that has so much

power and force that Sethe trembles “like the baptized.” In some religions, baptisms are important because they signify a person’s transformation to a new self.

Sethe’s baptism becomes an opportunity for her to rejoin her community, let go of her past, and release herself from her sins because she is made clean and whole. Kristeva writes: “The abject shatters the wall of repression and its judgments. It takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away—it assigns it a source in the non-ego, drive, and death. Abjection is the resurrection that has gone through death” (15). Sethe is baptized, and as the abject slave she gets resurrected because of the metaphorical death she has already experienced; therefore, the baptism offers her a new beginning. As a collective group, the women are able to shatter the walls of “repression and its judgments” by their oppressors. Their “right combination” takes them back to the beginning—or “back to its source”—to their original existence prior to slavery. The death of their egos is the process Sethe describes as being dirtied, and when they became abject slaves, a death of self had to occur. However, once they are together again, they are resurrected and made new.

Their traumatic experiences from slavery have dismembered them as a population, but coming together for Sethe’s sake allows a healing to occur for everyone because they begin the process of reclaiming themselves and taking back what slavery had erased. Differing significantly from the women in Hawthorne’s text, these women’s voices must unite in order to subvert the power structure. Their voices are necessary and vital to Sethe’s survival, as well as their own. Their collective voices create a sound that predates language, claiming an identity of its own. This collective identity formed by the women also rejects borders because their blended sound “shatters the wall of repression”



after searching for “the right combination” and shows how Morrison, again, re-appropriates the Gothic. What had been unspeakable from slavery can now be spoken because the women build their voices together and find the sound that breaks “the backs of words.” They reject their identification from slavery that had once dirtied them and forced them to perform unspeakable acts and they are able to resurrect with Sethe. As a result, *Beloved* can no longer exist because the women begin the process of remembering their community and refusing their identities as slave women.

While Hawthorne uses marriage to end his novel, Morrison focuses on Sethe’s healing and moving the community out of their collective trauma. Sethe must first love herself again and find the grace to let go of the past. Teresa Goddu posits, “The solution the novel offers is the act of the community. Sethe must put Paul D’s story next to hers” (155). This is true, but the women had to first come together before Paul D could reenter. After the dirtying of slavery, Sethe needs to be rejoined with her sisters and made new. Being a part of a sisterhood once more with women whose stories and hurts mirror her own can offer a solution. Paul D’s reminder, “You your best thing, Sethe. You are” (322), gives Sethe permission to start repairing in spite of her guilt, shame, and self-loathing. This ending differs from *The House of the Seven Gables* in the way hope is extended to Sethe to forgive herself and reclaim her identity prior to the dirtying of slavery. While Hepzibah and Phoebe are still tied to patriarchy, Sethe has a way out of systemic oppression that has haunted her for so many years. Cedric Gael Bryant states, “it succeeds in speaking the unspeakable about the haunting effects of slavery on the human psyche and the desperate attempts that dehumanized persons make” (550).

Through *Beloved*, Morrison uses the Gothic as a vehicle to speak the “unspeakable” acts of infanticide and trauma while offering a way for the community to unite and heal.

Although Morrison could have chosen to capture Margaret Garner’s story in any literary genre, using Gothic aspects such as ghosts both physical and literal forces the characters to confront the past. In a 1988 interview with Mavis Nicholson, Morrison stated, “The ghost in *Beloved* is not only because the people believed in ghosts, and not because Sethe needs the ghost, but structurally a way to say memory can come in and sit down next to you at the table...it’s always there. It’s always with you” (21:05-21:25). She is articulating that for this community, there is a legacy and tradition that is spiritually grounded and believes in the supernatural; but Morrison is also acknowledging how the ghost structurally allows her story to work. Just as Teresa Goddu discusses the structural affinity between slave discourse and Gothic storylines, Morrison further explains why the Gothic works for African American culture: ghosts have always been around, in the form of haunting memory.

Despite ghosts being a Gothic trope, Morrison’s ghosts also serve a greater purpose. Juda Bennett argues they are a disruption to dominant discourses and narratives: “the ghosts become a mode through which ethnic women’s literature can effectively challenge dominant discourses that tend to want to neutralize language and narrative that speaks from a place of marginality” (3). In other words, as an ethnic writer, Morrison can challenge the ideals set in place by the dominant culture that keep women entrapped and enslaved. Although ghosts are a Gothic convention, the way Morrison utilizes the ghost to call attention to trauma, infanticide, and community rebuilding shows how her literature functions for various gains. Winter writes, “by introducing Sethe’s dead

daughter into the text, Morrison pulls together the representational power of the female Gothic and African American literary traditions” (116). Therefore, Morrison uses the Gothic by employing conventional techniques but also extends her reach to show the steps towards repairing trauma experienced by systematic oppression.

As an African American writer, Morrison speaks effectively as a member of a community that needs representation while giving voices to those who have not traditionally been heard. She defines herself as “a writer in the last quarter of the twentieth century, not much more than a hundred years after Emancipation, a writer who is black and a woman” (168) who will naturally give freedom and liberty to her black, female, oppressed characters. She further explains her responsibilities as a writer: “My job becomes how to rip that veil drawn over ‘proceedings too terrible to relate.’ The exercise is critical for any person who is black, or who belongs to any marginalized category, for historically, we were seldom invited to participate in the discourse even when we were its topic” (168). Not only is Morrison committed to giving the unheard and silenced their voices back, the stakes are too high for her to keep her female characters entrapped within a system of oppression and violence. She must offer a version of freedom because releasing them allows something greater to work, which starts in the repairing of their community. Her insistence to participate in discourse shows her commitment to keeping history alive opposed to those who would otherwise water down slavery, like Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Writing from within the culture, Morrison empowers her characters and enlightens her audience so they, too, can understand more of the past alongside the African American culture and its people. Making the people the focus of her novel

means exposing their trauma, telling their secrets, and speaking that which had been unspoken. Hawthorne's novel, on the other hand, although effective in writing a Gothic story, does not yield the same results because *The House of the Seven Gables* does not free its female characters from their oppressive environments. Although the Gothic is a convenient vehicle for retelling slave narratives, Morrison's version of the Gothic gives authority back to the slave. She does not perpetuate a system that keeps her female characters entrapped and trafficked; while women are not entirely freed from haunting memories and traumatic nightmares, at least their narratives are no longer oppressed because the novel insists Beloved's story—inspired by Margaret Garner's true experience—“is not one to pass on” (324). The final lines in *Beloved* remind readers they must engage in a crucial time in America's history because “sixty million and more” stories are intertwined in Beloved's story and have not been told. Therefore, in *Beloved*, women are cleansed from their dirtied pasts in spite of the difficult process and extended grace to move forward.

CHAPTER THREE: HYBRIDITY AND RACIAL PASSING IN *THE BONDWOMAN'S*  
*NARRATIVE*

Not much is known definitely about Hannah Crafts, the presumed author of *The Bondwoman's Narrative*, which is assumed to be written in the mid-late 1850s. She is believed to have lived either as a slave or during the time of slavery because so much of what she writes in her manuscript reveals her intimate knowledge of slavery. Although her identity has not been authenticated, she is presumed to be African American because she describes nuances of slavery as someone who clearly understands the complications of the system. Written as a Gothic novel and assumed fictional, *The Bondwoman's Narrative*, when read alongside Hawthorne's and Morrison's texts, serves as a link between them and shows how Crafts vacillates between the black and white communities through her protagonist, Hannah, who is a racial mixture. Although Crafts acknowledges her narrative goals in exposing the impact of slavery, the novel also problematizes slavery to show how blacks and whites get dirtied and ruined by the system; furthermore, she shows how race and gender can be manipulated and understands that race is socially constructed. While Morrison focuses on the healing potential of a fractured community traumatized by slavery, Crafts introduces a new population of slaves: the mulattos. Mulattos created a unique set of problems, and Crafts uses Gothic conventions to show how fearful whites became when blacks posed as whites. While *Beloved* is preoccupied with infanticide and shows black women's resistance to having babies by white men, Crafts imagines how those babies grew up and could resist slavery. Crafts, therefore,

gives a multicultural perspective of the 1800s and shows how identity can be rearranged because of its instability.

Although Jason Haslam makes the distinction between ways that texts can use Gothic elements to address slavery (as seen in Hawthorne) and how they can use slavery to advance Gothic conventions (as done by Morrison), Crafts does both. In certain instances, she conflates the two principles in order to haunt back against narratives that overlook details from slavery by including ways white women were impacted by the system, showing how families were often destroyed, and proving hybridity as a valuable mode of resistance.

Instead of repeating the haunted house motif seen in both Hawthorne and Morrison, Crafts describes the haunting power of the Linden tree planted outside of Hannah's master's house. She invokes Gothic language when she describes the Linden: "the shadows of the linden falling broader and deeper wrapped all in gloom" (17) and "the linden creaked and swayed its branches to the fitful gusts" (18). Crafts' language is consistent with other Gothic texts by calling attention to the Linden's "gloom" and ways it "creaked" and "swayed" to take on a haunting personality also seen in 124 and the Pyncheon house. Although Morrison uses Sethe's chokecherry tree to discuss the lasting impact of slavery on ancestry, the Linden tree holds a tragic narrative from the history of slavery as well. In fact, Hannah states, "the linden was chosen as the scene where the tortures and punishments were inflicted" (21). Through this tree, the horrors of slavery are played out, and the slaves on the plantation know this tree as the site for "tortures and punishments" because "slaves had been tied to its trunk to be whipped or sometimes gibbeted on his branches" (21). Just as trees have been a Gothic motif present in both

*The House of the Seven Gables* and *Beloved*, Crafts uses the Linden not to symbolize family legacy but instead to carry history, tragedy, and violence for the slave.

Recognizing how this tree enjoins slavery's horrors with genealogy, Robert Levine writes, "a politics of black community does inform the key story of the bloody linden tree central to the novel's representation of genealogical haunting" (292). While the tree is used to pass on stories and history, there is ancestry interlaced within its narratives.

Use of the Linden is one way Crafts uses Gothic elements to address slavery while at the same time using slavery to advance Gothic conventions. Showing the apathy Sir Clifford De Vincent (the founder of the plantation estate) feels towards the slaves' tortures, Hannah says: "On such occasions, Sir Clifford sitting at the windows of his drawing room, within the full sight and hearing of their agonies would drink wine, or coolly discuss the politics of the day with some acquaintance, pausing perhaps in the midst of a sentence to give directions to the executioner, or order some mitigation of the torture only to prolong it" (21). Not only does this description illustrate how normal the "agonies" of the slaves being punished at the tree have become, it also shows patriarchy ruling over the estate enabling Sir Clifford to "drink wine" and "discuss the politics of the day," only pausing long enough to give directions for prolonging the slave's torture. Crafts uses Gothic elements to describe the functions of the Linden tree, but also shows how slavery advances Gothic conventions by attaching the horrors experienced by slaves to this tree. Over time, the Linden's creaks and swaying connect to the haunting memories of slavery, systemic oppression, and abuse because of the frequency of its roots being "manured with human blood" (21). When the ancestral house is later sold off, the tree is also chopped down.

The protagonist and narrator, Hannah, shares the same name as the author, and her position is significant because she is by definition a mulatto. Hannah explains, “my complexion was almost white, and the obnoxious descent could not be readily traced” (6). Although she looks white with “a wave and curl to her hair” (6), she cannot trace her lineage to identify her father. However, her mixed ancestry and white features give her an identification that differs from both Hepzibah and Sethe. She spends much of her time in the house with white mistresses, which gives her insight and perspective she otherwise would not have as a field slave. She is aware of her station as a slave woman and the limitations imposed on her by slaveholding society. One of Crafts’ said goals as the author is to expose how slavery impacts both whites and blacks, which differs from both Hawthorne’s and Morrison’s novels. She writes in her preface, “Have I succeeded in showing how it blights the happiness of the white as well as the black race?” (4). In her novel, she describes how white women as well as black women become victimized; however, she also provides another glimpse into a population like herself that exists in between white and black races. Levine notices tensions that exist in her narrative because of her commitment to showing both aspects of slavery due to her own identity. He problematizes her novel, stating, “we can only note the critical tensions of an interracial novel that alternately suggests sympathetic knowledge of (and seeming identification with) black and white perspectives” (292). Giving Crafts’ book the title of “an interracial novel” shows how it engages with the experiences of blacks, whites, and mulattos, and no one is truly exempt from the process of being stained or ruined by slavery.



The feelings of fear and terror behind miscegenation lie at the core of Crafts' novel. While *Beloved* comments on ways slavery continues to haunt the past and present and *The House of the Seven Gables* reveals the oppression of women by aristocracy and patriarchy, *The Bondwoman's Narrative* shows the results of slavery interrupting pure blood lines and genealogy. When considering this idea, Justin Edwards posits, "the policing of miscegenation arose from a terror of hybridity" (7). The existence of hybrids, or those with mixed blood lines, evoked terror because of their ability to pose within the population and hide their true identity. Edwards also writes, "the gothic discourses of death, impurity, and genetic contamination were complicated by anxieties about racial passing. Racist theories, then, depended on a binarized racial division, implying that whites could read the racial difference inscribed on black bodies" (7). In other words, when the lines were blurred and blacks could pose as whites, this brought about a sense of terror for whites because now there was no way to see the racial difference. Julia Kristeva asks, "How can I be without border?" (4) to express anxiety that a lack of borders creates. Crafts answers this question by showing a population able to exist in between borders. Darker skin signified race for whites in their need to demarcate the two races.

However, when hybrids proved racial binaries were more fluid than fixed, they subverted power structures. This reality inspired Gothic discourse in the nineteenth-century, as seen in Herman Melville's novella *Benito Cereno*. When slaves revolt and take over the slave ship, the lines between slave and master collapse causing confusion, chaos, and disrupted order. Kristeva insists that "what disrupts identity, system, order" (4) is abject, and this form of terror is also evidenced in Melville's writing. However, just

as *Benito Cereno* shows the possibilities of the master-slave relationships being subverted through Gothic storytelling techniques, passing also becomes “a vehicle for social and political empowerment,” according to Marjorie Garber, and serves as a “tool that does, in fact, help to dismantle the master’s house” (xxix). The master’s house was never socially constructed for slaves or black bodies to inhabit, but once they penetrate these barriers and disrupt identity, the power shifts from the master to the slave. The ability to pass as white, then, becomes a technique that shows how slaves could resist their oppressors because of the power to rearrange their identities and cross racial borders.

The strategy of passing was not one that came without costs or dangers. If, or when, the truth was discovered, individuals were rendered no option other than being sold immediately into slavery. However, if the truth remained hidden, the slave could live as white for as long as he/she desired. Kari Winter writes, “Gothic novels and slave narratives show that some protagonists subverted the system by taking identification to its logical extreme: women presented themselves to the world as men and blacks assumed the appearance of whites” (123). This example of gender reversal is illustrated later in Crafts’ novel when Hannah escapes by posing as a white man and undermines boundaries set in place by race and gender to prove them as equally unstable. While passing as a form of resistance differs significantly from Morrison’s portrayal of resistance through infanticide, Crafts uses several characters to show how assuming “the appearance of whites” became a way to subvert the system and urges readers to rethink the social structure that was meant to enslave blacks. Hannah’s Mistress is the first example of someone with a hidden identity: Hannah describes her as having “a profusion of wavy curly hair,” followed by “lips which were too large, full, and red” (27). Although

Hannah recognizes physical hints of her Mistress's mixed ancestry marked by lips too full, the emotional and psychological behavior she illustrates makes her identity even more clear to Hannah. In fact, Hannah concludes, "I fancied then that she was haunted by a shadow or phantom apparent only to herself, and perhaps even the more dreadful for that" (27). The shadow that haunts "Mistress" is by way of the character Mr. Trappe, whose main design is to find people with black blood who are passing as white and expose the truth. Trappe understands that blacks were often successful in changing their appearance to escape slavery, and he does everything in his power to uncover the truth. True to his name, he wants to entrap anyone posing as white back into systematic oppression; but in doing so, he dismantles many aristocratic homes because miscegenation is often hidden, as illustrated in *The House of the Seven Gables*.

Just as Trappe is a character who traps, he functions the same way Schoolteacher did to Sethe and Matthew Maule to Alice. Karen Sanchez-Eppler writes, "The gothic gives form to whatever haunts, threatening that the wrongs of the past will return" (264). This is what allows slavery to haunt the characters in *Beloved* and *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, and the wrongdoings of the Pyncheons and the Maules to resurface in *The House of the Seven Gables*. However, Trappe is not singular in his ability to haunt the present. When Hannah studies the ancestral portraits in her master's house, she feels haunted by her own ancestry, including the fact that "the African blood in my veins would forever exclude me from the higher walks of life" (6). Although she shares the complexion as Sir Clifford and the rest of his ancestors mounted on the wall, she is unable to fit all the way in their world because of her African blood. She does, however, understand the role she has played in building a legacy for her master to enjoy his

luxuries. Hannah observes: “We thought our master must be a very great man to have so much wealth at his command, but it never occurred to us to inquire whose sweat and blood and unpaid labor had contributed to produce it” (14). His greatness has been built from the “sweat and blood” of slaves, and their “unpaid labor” has created his present situation. Just as Hepzibah evaluates her ancestral portraits displayed on the walls of the Pyncheon home, Hannah also examines the family portraits anchored on the walls “in due order of age and ancestral dignity” (15). If the possibilities of miscegenation have impacted the genealogy within the Pyncheon house, Hannah understands the same possibilities in her own Master’s ancestry as she views the portraits so carefully. Engaging with the history of her slave master’s family, she says, “I seemed suddenly to have grown old, to have entered a new world of thoughts, and feelings and sentiments. I was not a slave with these pictured memorials of the past” (17). Being in this space surrounded by so much history ushers Hannah into an awareness that she is integral to their history as well. Sir Clifford’s ancestral home stands as a result of sweat and blood black slaves never sanctioned, but she is not a slave in this space because she feels free from the curse “attached to my race” (6) able to think for herself.

Hannah’s recognition as being part of the milieu allows her to re-identify herself as well as her ancestry. Although she admits to being cursed from slavery, as a hybrid she has white blood that demands acceptance and acknowledgment. She continues saying, “They could not enforce drudgery, or condemn me on account of my color to a life of servitude. As their companion I could think and speculate. In their presence my mind seemed to run riotous and exult in its freedom as a rational being,” (17). Hannah is able to see how she fits into these pictures as one who is capable of thinking just as the

men in the portraits; her current status as a slave makes her oppressed, but she is a “rational being” also able to read and write. Furthermore, her miscegenation places her in a social position where she is forced into slavery in spite of her white features. Augusta Rohrbach interrogates this scene and states, “Hannah’s view of the portraits prefigures the ideological divide between black and white” (6), crediting Hannah for being able to see race as a social construct. Hannah looks at these ancestral portraits and sees the conflict from slavery, especially when the blood lines are crossed.

When Hepzibah studies the portraits of her ancestors, although she feels pressure from patriarchy and is inconvenienced to open the cent shop, she does not question her belonging or identification. She understands where she fits in the family as well as her duties to uphold the Pyncheon legacy. Hepzibah views her side of history as a free, aristocratic woman, while Hannah is not only haunted by systematic oppression, but also miscegenation that has constructed her in a way that makes her a slave in spite of her white features. Rohrbach recognizes Hannah’s gaze as “a slave’s perspective, one seen from the ‘other side’ of history, reveals a wholly different view” (6). Kari Winter concurs with this framework: “the protagonists of Gothic novels and slave narratives try to imagine a time before patriarchal ideology colonized their bodies and minds” (135). In this scene, Hannah shows her understanding of her station. There was a time when she had control over her body before slaves were robbed of their ancestors and prescribed a life of oppression and servitude. Critical Race Theory will later use the phrase “double consciousness” coined by W.E.B. Du Bois to further describe Hannah’s awareness of having a divided self, one who is able to exist in both black and white worlds.

In spite of Hannah being a hybrid character aware of both her past and present, she still remains bound to slavery because of her African blood that forces her into a life of servitude, even though she can pass as white. When considering the role, the ancestral portraits play in the novel, Sanchez-Eppler supposes, “Hannah’s feeling of freedom in the portrait gallery derives from a double act of ‘recomposition.’ If young Hannah sees in these pictures ‘companions’ rather than owners, she does so through a complex process of interpretation and denial” (257). In other words, Hannah interprets how she fits into the portraits and repels the oppression imposed upon her; she chooses to instead engage with her freedom to think and exist outside of slavery’s system. Because Hannah’s interpretation of these portraits is evoked by her own hybridity, by the time she meets her Mistress she anticipates her Mistress’s fate if the truth of her identity gets revealed. Recognizing the power of hybrid characters to mute certain aspects of their identity and transform themselves, Justin Edwards argues “the racial identities of hybrids always remain muted and transformative” (16). The hybrids’ power to demarcate black and white binaries complicates the system of slavery because characters such as Hannah’s mistress can pose one way and exist outside of how they are supposed to be socially constructed; although they are enslaved, they are not without agency because if/when they decide to run away they can pose as white and rearrange their identities to subvert the system.

Trappe’s character, then, becomes necessary to a nationhood concerned with unmasking that which is being hidden in order to construct race and continue to enslave a class of people based on their racial status. The problem, however, is that the unveiling occurs at the expense of not only blacks but whites, too, and Crafts shows how this

preoccupation becomes dangerous for everyone. Levine argues, “Crafts ultimately presents him as a figure of terror, as someone who threatens to reveal to white culture that which it already knows about itself and strives to suppress” (282). The Pyncheon home is not the only house dealing with possibilities of miscegenation and mixed bloodlines. Because of the Gothic’s ability to unearth fears and terrors, using slavery as a landscape shows how easily race becomes unhinged; that which was assumed to be stable really is not at all. Lawrence Buell emphasizes this point when he writes about *The Bondwoman’s Narrative’s* plot motif having “the reiterated portrayal of characters, both black and white, dragged in various ways across the freedom line into slave territory, to their horror and dismay” (26). Both blacks and whites were stained by slavery and dirtied in a system that implicated everyone. Morrison makes a similar point when she writes in *Beloved*:

The more colored people spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside...And it grew. It spread. In, through and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who had made it. Touched them every one. Changed and altered them. (234)

As the most contemporary writer of the three in this thesis, Morrison is able to look back on slavery and see the lasting impacts of violence and oppression. Morrison uses the interior lives of her characters to reveal the “tangled” emotions resulting from repressed memories and trauma experienced on plantations. *Beloved’s* narrator discusses

the “jungle” that gets planted inside blacks by whites that eventually spreads and invades “the whites who made it” because a jungle is not fixed by boundaries. Although Morrison makes clear that slavery impacts whites as well as blacks, she is more concerned with slavery’s trauma and impact on communities; Crafts, however, utilizes the narratives of other white women to show how corrupt and haunting the system became in spite of attempted class and racial divides. Using an aristocratic white woman much like Hepzibah, Hannah proves how the system of slavery implicates white women where they, too, are compromised.

In fact, the story that another slave from the Linden plantation, Lizzy, shares with Hannah when the two women bump into each other years after Hannah has left focuses on Lizzy’s mistress, Mrs. Cosgrove, to show how slavery as a system disrupts aristocracy, undermines marriage, and continues to perpetuate mixed bloodlines. The story-within-a-story framework is a Gothic convention, used also in *The House of the Seven Gables* when Holgrave tells Phoebe the tale of Alice Pyncheon; however, Lizzy’s story is fraught with slavery’s horrors experienced by both slaves and slave owners. Lizzy’s story begins with the description of her new master’s issues: he has a beautiful wife, but is also preoccupied with his beautiful female slaves. Lizzy next describes Mrs. Cosgrove as “an English woman of aristocratic family and connections, and very high” (177). She is like Hepzibah of long ago: regal, upstanding, and dignified. In fact, Lizzy further states, “had we been the most loathsome and degraded reptiles she could not have treated us with greater hauteur and contempt” (178), showing how low the slaves are positioned through the eyes of Mrs. Cosgrove. However, Gothic narratives often use houses to hold secrets, and this house is no different. Lizzy says, “the mansion, you



know, was large and irregular in its dimensions, besides being built in a kind of rambling style, that precluded the occupant of one part from knowing anything of the other” (178). The house is able to physically sustain secrets, especially after the slaves are given direct orders to never mention the women or children associated with the master, otherwise receiving “the penalty of the severest punishment” (178). However, when Mrs. Cosgrove observes several beautiful, well dressed women holding young children, she soon realizes they are children fathered by her husband. After she confronts him she says, “I have heard that in this detestable country such things are common” (180). In spite of her anger, Lizzy reports, “the lady did not foam at the mouth; she was too well bred for that” (180), and continues with, “to think she had been rivaled by slaves. She, with English and aristocrat blood in her veins. It was too much to be endured” (180). The “such things” she is referencing is miscegenation between slave masters and slave women, producing hybrid children with mixed blood. Similar to Hepzibah being left with the “sordid stain,” Mrs. Cosgrove is also implicated into a system that renders her powerless in spite of her aristocracy.

Mrs. Cosgrove fails to realize that she is a victim of systemic oppression almost as damaging to her as to the slave women. Unfortunately for female slaves, they became prey to their master’s sexual fantasies. Similar to the rape Sethe’s mother and Ella endure by white men, these slave women are also subjected to assault because of the belief that black women were promiscuous and hypersexual. Donna Aza Weir-Soley explains how this ideology impacted discourse of black inferiority during the time period and provided “the continued justification for subjugation and sexual domination of black women under slavery” (15). Slave masters could justify continuing to rape or sexually

coerce their slaves, which most often resulted in fathering children. The children became property of the slave master and added to the labor force on the plantation, although Morrison focuses on ways slave women resisted this aspect of the system. Mrs. Cosgrove becomes aware of her husband's behavior, a common characteristic of many slave masters, and threatens to leave. He responds, "you are at perfect liberty to go" (181). After the two go back and forth, Mr. Cosgrove finally acquiesces and calls in a slave trader to remove his women and children.

At this point in the novel, Crafts shows how infanticide also becomes a solution for slave mothers similar to Morrison. Once the woman realizes she is being sold off, Crafts writes,

Her eyes had a wild frenzied look, and with a motion so sudden that no one could prevent it, she snatched a sharp knife which a servant had carelessly left after cutting butcher's meat, and stabbing the infant threw it with one toss into the arms of its father. Before he had time to recover from his astonishment she had run the knife into her own body, and fell at his feet bathing them in her blood. (183)

The woman kills her baby and then herself, in an act so quick no one has an opportunity to stop her. The language that Crafts uses is similar to Morrison's when she writes about Sethe. The narrator in *Beloved* says, "two were lying open-eyed in sawdust; a third pumped blood down the dress of the main one" (176), and then, "but now she'd gone wild" (176). What is perceived as "wild" actually is an attempt by the slave woman to claim her power and decide the fate of her children. Unfortunately, death seems the only solution for these women. Therefore, Crafts and Morrison both show the repugnance of a

system that forced women to die in order to resist systemic oppression. The Gothic discourse evident in both of these passages illustrates how the horrors of slavery can be strategically packaged. Jason Haslam writes, “certain elements of gothic discourse—horror, the grotesque, extreme violence, and so on—are said to paint the scene of slavery in a particular way, to generate specific effects for the reader” (47). The grotesque and extreme violence captured in both scenes of infanticide show the choices slave women take in moments of desperation. Rather than continue participating in a system that perpetuates violence and oppression, for some women—as both of these texts show—death is a seemingly better alternative.

Crafts punctuates this scene with commentary of her own to remind the reader how problematic slavery is for all those involved. Hannah comments on the death of this slave woman but addresses men who remain nonplussed by their radical actions. She talks to the “President of this Republic,” “grave senators, ministers of religion,” and anyone else able to “wink at, or approve of laws that occasion such scenes as this” (183). Her acknowledgment of these men communicates the problems contained within the system of slavery; however, she also rebukes the patriarchal structure that makes men such as senators, ministers, and other law makers complicit in a system that causes women to murder their infants and kill themselves. Just as Morrison understood a slave woman’s inability to parent her children due to the oppressive system in which they were operating under, Crafts also speaks to the helplessness and desperation of mothers.

Mrs. Cosgrove’s obsession with discovering her husband’s infidelity mirrors Trappe’s constant need to uncover a slave’s true identity, and she gets not just dirtied, but ruined by the system. Even though Mr. Cosgrove sells the women and children, his wife

still assumes there are more secrets he is hiding and she becomes desperate to find the truth. Just as Hepzibah is described as a fallen, aristocratic woman, Mrs. Cosgrove also falls as a result of slavery. Her refinement soon changes to jealousy, anger, and humiliation once she combs through the house and discovers another slave woman with twin babies fathered by her husband. Lizzy tells Hannah, “All her well-bred politeness and courteous bearing vanished in a moment, and she more resembled a Fury of Orestes than a Christian woman” (186). Like so many other mistresses who cannot control their husband’s sexual appetites, Mrs. Cosgrove is no different. The fact that she is being rivaled by slave women only adds to her fury, but their ability to produce children while she, herself, has none drags her into a system that uncovers her own deficiencies. The measures Mr. Cosgrove takes to protect his secret family only adds to Mrs. Cosgrove’s humiliation and degradation. He reminds her, “you have no right to make away with my property, or conduct yourself contrary to my interests” (190). Mrs. Cosgrove is powerless against the system of patriarchy as well as slavery. Mr. Cosgrove is clear with his desires to protect his “property” and “interests.” Rohrbach writes about the impact this narrative has on the novel: “depicting Mrs. Cosgrove as a frustrated—and infertile—woman, her childlessness is understood primarily in relation to the slave woman whom she sees as her de facto rival” (8). Discovering not one, but two infant sons hidden in a secret apartment in their house infuriates Mrs. Cosgrove, showing how slavery impacts even those who think of themselves as the highest bred.

By the time Lizzy’s story-within-a-story ends, Mrs. Cosgrove is a victim of her own jealousy and punished for obsessing over her husband’s indiscretions. After finding the twin babies and their mother, Lizzy says, “Mrs Cosgrove had released her hold of the

mother, and now sate [sat] in a chair the very picture of contending passions” (187). Although Lizzy is commenting on the conflicting emotions Mrs. Cosgrove feels after being betrayed again, she is “the very picture” of Hepzibah, another victim of systemic oppression. When describing Hepzibah’s age and stage in life, Hawthorne’s narrator states, “her heart never frowned. It was naturally tender, sensitive, and full of little tremors and palpitations; all of which weaknesses it retained while her visage was growing so perversely stern” (27). In spite of her old womanly appearance, Hepzibah’s heart still feels emotions often interpreted as a woman’s weakness. Lizzy says something similar about Mrs. Cosgrove: “that she had made up her mind to some stern resolve was evident, though the nature of this it might be difficult to determine. She was a woman after all, and the heart of the proudest and sternest woman has a touch of weakness” (187). The language from the two texts is similar in showing how two aristocratic, proud, women are at the same time vulnerable and weak. Hepzibah’s heart is “naturally tender” and sensitive to feelings in spite of her old age; Mrs. Cosgrove’s heart is also proud and “stern,” but has a “touch of weakness” that allows her to show a version of mercy towards her husband’s slave girl and their children. These two women are similarly constructed by their narrators, both barren and childless with the main difference being their ages.

Another technique that Crafts employs that is similar to Hawthorne is the narrative distancing through Lizzy’s story. Lizzy’s story is important not only because it uncovers infanticide, but because it also discusses miscegenation, adultery, infertility, and what eventually becomes the end of a geneological house because the system of slavery cannot sustain the home. After Mrs. Cosgrove dies from falling off her horse on an

adventure looking again for her husband's secret family, Mr. Cosgrove "had never seemed like himself" (199) again and is changed as a result. The Linden tree gets chopped down and the servants sold. Most importantly, Lizzy says, "above all that Sir Clifford's portrait and its companions of both sexes, had been publicly exposed in the market and knocked down by the highest bidder" (199). The portraits from the house end up like slaves in a market being bought and sold. Mr. Cosgrove does not have any legitimate heirs to pass on his legacy, and so the house and family ends. Noting the impact this story has on the novel, Rohrbach writes, "Lizzy's tale is important, in part, because it emphasizes the legacy of slavery for whites" (9). Mr. Cosgrove's obsession with his slave women and fathering of children is not at all unusual. However, having a barren wife with no children to pass on his legacy is a reminder of what Rohrbach describes as, "far from being a symbol of white superiority and a boon to white economic power, slavery is responsible for the downward spiral of the heirs of Lindendale" (9). Lizzy's story shows the destabilization of a white, aristocratic family as a result of slavery. Mrs. Cosgrove started out regal and refined, but is lowered and humiliated. Mr. Cosgrove realizes the error of his ways after his wife's death, and chooses to chop down the Linden, then walk away from his house. Through Lizzy's story, the readers learn how slavery in fact causes the "downward spiral" of a family constructed to remain superior, similar to the Pyncheons with an ancestor also named Clifford. Slavery causes the dirtying of the family to the point where their portraits are reconciled to an exchange market much like slavery. Through the use of this narrative Crafts is able to show the true horrors of slavery and ways systemic oppression impacts not only black slave

women but white women as well. Moreover, in this narrative, Crafts shows how white women get implicated in the system against their wills and ruined by slavery.

Once Hannah runs away for the second time, she succeeds because she is aware of her own hybridity and camouflages herself in a way that not only subverts black-white racial binaries, but also pushes gender boundaries as well. After being directed to the slave huts and no longer serving her mistress in the house, Hannah faces a moment of crisis when she is next told to marry a field slave. Her solution is to run away and pose as a white man after discovering a man's suit and cutting her hair. Although it is dangerous, Hannah is successful in her performance as a white male. When showing how protagonists in Gothic novels and slave narratives hold the ability to undermine gender and race, Kari Winter writes, "their success highlights the inherent artificiality of gender and racial constructs" (123). When they succeed, they further reveal that race is a social construct and gender is often unstable. Hannah's strategy to change her identity and look like a white man in order to run away must be carefully done so she can later resume life as a black woman again. Some blacks who possessed strong enough white features posed as whites indefinitely and never reclaimed their original heritage. This population subscribed to the notion that living as white would be easier and/or more favorable. But Karen Sanchez-Eppler further explains the relationship between passing and whiteness as "using their light complexions as a tool for achieving a freedom in which they can reassert their black identities and their ties to their darker-skinned husbands and mothers" (267). Hannah knows her performance as a white male cannot permanently be sustained, but she is able to remain in her role as long as necessary.

When Hannah arrives at a house for refuge, the woman of the house shows Hannah her own picture as a fugitive slave, wanted for running away. Hannah describes, “she held up a paper on which was delineated my exact size and figure, in female apparel” (219). Hannah cannot betray her disguise and remains true to her performance, but proves neither race nor gender is a stable or fixed state. Gothic conventions allow for gender and identity to fluctuate because neither is secure and Hannah can cross boundaries at times that are most convenient. Just as she is able to pass through whiteness, she is also able to pass through gender. Therefore, the picture of her as a woman prevents Hannah from becoming unhinged because the male clothes “wonderfully facilitated my transformation of myself” (216), and she has enjoined the possibility of being a white male for the sake of her freedom. Although Lawrence Buell asserts that “it makes good novelistic sense that the escape ideal entails a temporary erasure of identity” (22), her identity is not erased, but instead reconstructed for her own gain. This plot device is seen in many other Gothic novels, performed most famously in *The Monk* (1796), which uses the character of Rosario/Matilda to also show gender fluidity in the process of attacking the Catholic Church. However, Crafts uses this technique to show how slaves could resist and subvert a system in spite of how others constructed them.

When Crafts reaches freedom, she is able to continue to make choices for herself and resume life as a black woman. Crafts attempts to tidy her ending in a way similar to Hawthorne, and Hannah gets married as a free woman without worrying about being impacted by slavery. She also reconnects with her mother, who Hannah describes: “she never forgot me nor certain marks on my body, by which I might be identified in after



years” (244). While meant as a tender reunion between mother and daughter, the “certain marks” are similar to what Morrison’s narrator describes between Sethe and her mother. Slaves resorted to scars, brands, or other visual markings as a way of remembering their loved ones; because of blacks’ position as oppressed and enslaved, they did not have the luxury of literal pictures and relied on pictures on the body for recognition. However, Crafts romanticizes their reunion and chooses not to focus on the violence associated with these marks. Robert Levine also recognizes this problem in the narrative and criticizes the concluding chapter’s uplifting and celebratory ending that reads more like “a white abolitionist fantasy than an affirmation of black community” (292). This ending takes Crafts’s novel in a different direction than *Beloved*. While Morrison recognizes the difficulties the community will face as they attempt to heal, Crafts glazes over the trauma her characters have experienced in slavery to produce an idealized, romanticized, happily ever after ending. Although there is assumed psychological residue, Crafts’s novel does not engage in this reality and she crafts an ending more closely resembling *The House of the Seven Gables*. While her characters are freed from systemic oppression, the presence of “white abolitionist fantasy” cannot be ignored.

In reading Crafts’s novel alongside *Beloved* and *The House of the Seven Gables*, her engagement with race and slavery can be seen as more multicultural in its willingness to show how blacks and whites are dirtied from the system. Her use of a hybrid character such as Hannah is a form of resistance because of Hannah’s ability to perform across the lines of race and gender in order to subvert the system. Kari Winter describes how female Gothic novels and slave narratives often use the multiple forms of resistance that can be seen in the novels of both Crafts and Morrison. She writes, “they suggest that

oppressed people must affirm themselves in opposition to the dominant ideology. Second, they explore how women can benefit from cross-dressing and ‘passing’ (as male, white, and/or wealthy)” (115). Hannah’s ability to affirm herself offers more hope than Sethe’s process, due in part to Hannah’s double consciousness and ended struggles with her identification. Because she is no longer a slave, she can live happily ever after as a wife, daughter, and teacher. Although she benefited from cross-dressing and passing, her identity no longer requires rearranging because she has found her place in society as a free woman no longer bound to slavery. Morrison’s ending differs significantly because of her commitment to show how individuals as well as communities are impacted by the trauma from slavery. In addition to Sethe’s need for affirmation, the entire community must align and re-member together in order to properly heal. While Hawthorne’s text engages with many of the same Gothic tropes, it does not illustrate these forms of resistance through its female characters, and his characters instead continue to remain entrapped in systemic oppression.

When Morrison concludes *Beloved*, she wants the story passed on because the narratives from slavery are important to American history and must not be overlooked or forgotten. Morrison removes the veil to show slavery’s abhorrent truths, while Crafts stays committed to her authorial intentions of showing how slavery “blights the happiness of the white as well as the black race” (4). Morrison would agree that slavery dirtied both whites and blacks, but that’s not *Beloved*’s focus. Although Crafts frees her protagonist from systemic oppression with an ending happier than Morrison’s, the journey Hannah takes proves how hybridity works in her favor to show that mulattos can also subvert slavery in spite of miscegenation. Therefore, the endings of all three texts in this thesis

suggest acceptance or rejection of the systems in which the protagonists have been forced to engage. Although certain characters within Hawthorne's novel may resist systemic oppression, the novel itself does not suggest resistance, but instead shows how women are dominated within a patriarchal institution and cannot find complete freedom from this system. Morrison and Crafts, on the other hand, both refuse to end their novels with their protagonists further victimized as slaves and, therefore, offer a form of freedom through their own Gothic endings.

These three novels meet in their ability to use the Gothic as a form of expression, exposing females entrapped by systemic oppression and patriarchal structures while engaging with the idea of the abject slave; however, slave women were able to resist slavery and oppression through infanticide and identity rearrangement while Alice Pyncheon is mishandled and eventually ruined without much possibility of resisting her oppressor. Although their actions are considered unspeakable or invoke terror, Morrison and Crafts both show the possibilities of undermining the system. Hilary Mantel affirms this notion and writes, "the Gothic is an apt form in which to express the feelings of the powerless" (427), and as *The House of The Seven Gables*, *Beloved*, and *The Bondswoman's Narrative* show, in this mode the voices of the powerless can be heard. Therefore, the readers must listen to these voices and not pass on the stories that have impacted history.

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