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# Trapped: Spatial Confinement as a Metaphor for Female Subjugation in Two Representative Nineteenth-Century Novels

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## ABSTRACT

### HUMANITIES

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TRAPPED: SPATIAL CONFINEMENT AS A METAPHOR FOR FEMALE  
SUBJUGATION IN TWO REPRESENTATIVE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVELS

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Dissertation dated May 2019

From early eighteenth-century literature to contemporary Gothic literature, the existence of Gothic conventions is evident. These Gothic conventions include family secrets, ruins or isolated mansions, hidden passageways, and bad weather. During an era when women were viewed as inferior and were expected to conform to the domestic expectations of their male counterparts, some female writers took it upon themselves to use their writing as a way to voice and illustrate the conditions that women endured. A thorough examination of Gothic Trappings in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Hannah Crafts' *The Bondswoman's Narrative* shows representations of various "spaces" that essentially confined women resulting in their silence. When analyzing the position of women during the nineteenth-century and the spaces that they were confined to, it becomes evident that the genre of Gothic literature serves as a device to challenge the restrictions placed on women in patriarchal society.

TRAPPED: SPATIAL CONFINEMENT AS A METAPHOR FOR FEMALE  
SUBJUGATION IN TWO REPRESENTATIVE NINETEENTH CENTURY NOVELS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

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THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

YVONNE FIELDS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The term “Gothic” can be defined in various ways based on the context in which it is used. According to Andrew Smith,

The Goths were a Germanic tribe who settled in much of Europe from the third to the fifth centuries AD. In architecture, the term refers to a revival (more accurately a cultural reconstruction) of a medieval aesthetic that was in vogue in Britain from the early eighteenth to the last nineteenth century. Such reconstructions of a somewhat fantasised version of the past (combined with a sense of ‘barbaric’ Germanic tribes) provide a context for the emergence of Gothic as a literary mode. (1)

Moreover, it would be during the eighteenth-century that the medieval, supernatural, and primitive aspects of civilization would be mirrored in the first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1764) by Horace Walpole. The novel exemplified the author’s obsession and fascination with the way in which medieval aesthetics and architecture appealed to the tastes of his time, and in turn influenced many Gothic works that soon followed this novel. This study identifies the term “Gothic” in literature as a mode of writing that has evolved from century to century.



The fact remains that as history changes, the elements of Gothic used to describe that specific history evolve; however, it is safe to argue that the purpose for which these elements are used remains the same from writer to writer--namely to reveal their own anxieties and frames of mind; thus the Gothic could be used as a political tool during their time. This study provides an example of how this is so by providing an analysis of two novels written by female writers of two different races, from different parts of the world and whose work provide two completely different historical contexts for essentially the same mode of employment as a political critique of patriarchy.

### *The Gothic Novel*

As mentioned above, from its early emergence during the late eighteenth century in Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1764) to modern day Gothic texts such as Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* (1983), the Gothic novel has created what Dani Cavallaro terms a "discourse of darkness," typified by conventions such as grotesque characters, haunted settings, secret passages and rooms, creepy sounds, supernatural manifestations, and images of alienation and lunacy. Moreover, as Dani Cavallaro states, "What the discourse of darkness requires us to address is the apparently unfathomable chain of reasons for which we feel drawn to what scares us, and thus begin to grasp the significance of our urge, however subliminal this may be to go on confronting the ubiquity of fear" (26). From this perspective, what I shall refer to as "Gothic Trappings" are the psychological elements used by an author to force readers to confront and process their fears through metaphorical representations of the source of those fears. In their respective novels, *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *The Bondswoman's*

*Narrative* (1850-60), Charlotte Brontë and Hannah Crafts use Gothic Trappings to show the psychological and physical terror experienced by women confined within a patriarchal system as result of race, class and gender.

Brontë's *Jane Eyre* explores the imprisonment of female characters Jane and Bertha Mason because of their gender and social class. Like *Jane Eyre*, Hannah Crafts' *The Bondswoman's Narrative* focuses on these same issues but also includes the stigmata of race as a factor in viewing how African-American slave women are treated. The use of Gothicism in both novels also encourages readers to interrogate their historical contexts. According to Andrew Smith, "The Gothic represents a confluence of many issues reflecting on gender, race, history, class, nation, and self" (10). Thus, while these two novels are extremely different because of their contexts, they both employ Gothic Trappings to symbolize the multifaceted oppression endured under patriarchal regimes. It is evident that these writers, although representing different geographic locations and historical contexts, share similar thematic concerns. Both illustrate, for example, the societal restraints and limitations placed on females, especially those marginalized by race and class. Taken together, Brontë and Crafts provide strong evidence of the marginalization imposed on females during the nineteenth-century.

#### *Significance of the Study*

The purpose of this research is to demonstrate Charlotte Brontë and Hannah Crafts' deft use of Gothic Trappings to explore symbolically the destructive patriarchal system that placed restrictions on them as writers. Moreover, this study will show how these Gothic Trappings were placed strategically in the novels as a way to show that the

domestic spaces that were deemed “good” places for nineteenth-century women were actually spaces of entrapment and marginalization. Before analyzing Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Hannah Crafts’ *The Bondswoman’s Narrative* as Gothic texts, a historical examination of the Gothic and its conventions is necessary for understanding the significance of Gothic Trappings as symbols. Brontë and Crafts appropriate Gothic Trappings as tools to disclose the actual conditions of women in nineteenth century society as byproducts of the patriarchal society in which they lived.

#### *Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Gothic Conventions*

Gothic fiction functions as the dark mirror image of the eighteenth-century mores and values: a reconstruction of the past as the inverted, mirror image of the present, its darkness allows the reason and virtue of the present a brighter reflection” (Botting 5). Botting’s idea is clearly that the Gothic symbolizes those aspects of human nature that do not conform with the Age of Reason’s vision of mankind as rational and virtuous. From its earliest arrival as a genre, the Gothic was employed to show the immorality that shadows morality, which is evident in the first Gothic novel, *Castle of Otranto* (1764). In his critique of Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* (1764), Victor Sage notes that it “looks back to a feudal world, in this case, medieval Italy, in which the lord of the Manor, Manfred, the first of a long line of Gothic villain/heroes, exercises seigneurial rights over the minds and bodies of his subjects (qtd.in Mulvey-Roberts 146). Sage’s notion of Gothicism supports the idea that a female’s body and mind are essentially controlled by a male who is often the villain in Gothic texts. Moreover, as Botting observes, Walpole’s novel “introduces many of the features that came to define a new

genre of fiction, like the feudal historical and architectural setting, the deposed noble heir and the ghostly, supernatural machinations (4). Additionally, Botting argues that Gothic novels serve as

[re]presentations of real life and nature which sought to encourage the reader's understanding of his/her proper place in society. In clear contrast, immoral, monstrous figures were presented as objects of disgust, warnings against the consequences of improper ideas and behavior. The novel thus serves as a useful corrective function in the private confines of domestic consumption: recognising their own deficiencies in the realistic texts they peruse, readers can act to improve themselves and assume a virtuous place in society. (9)

The purpose of the early Gothic novel was to frighten the reader by using dark Gothicism to show life as it was and to illustrate the established roles of men and women in society and its conventions; it created a warning to individuals who defy societal norms and gender expectations. In examining the purpose of such conventions, Dani Cavallaro offers several crucial insights:

Early Gothic fictions elect the castle as the setting most overtly evocative of the sins which the developing middle classes, the most avid consumers of Gothic fiction, wish to associate with the aristocracy. Castles embody their inhabitants' dark desires, most conspicuously a desire for power that invariably carries sexual connotations. This is clearly the case in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), where individual longings are rendered dark by their sexual nature and by their ideological encoding as illicit and

perverse. One of the most intriguing aspects of the *Castle of Otranto* is precisely the fact that the Castle's architecture with its battlements, closets, vaults, and trapdoors, is so alive as to suggest that the dwelling is Walpole's actual protagonist and controlling force. (29)

Through his use of supernatural and fantastical Gothic conventions combined with realism, Walpole contests Enlightenment ideals with messages from the collective unconscious specific to the time at which he wrote *Castle of Otranto*. Cavallaro notes that it is both castles and mansions that serve as receptacles of mystery and evil; both are usually contrasted with the outside world as the daylight domain of rationality and order (31).

Soon after Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* was published, many writers followed his footsteps by incorporating the Gothic into their work. Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1778) is identified as the first to follow and mirror *The Castle of Otranto*. In her preface to the novel, Reeve states,

This story is the literary offspring of the *Castle of Otranto*, written upon the same plan, with a design to unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient Romance and modern novel; at the same time, it assumes a character and manner of its own, that differs from both; it is distinguished by the appellation of a Gothic Story, being a picture of Gothic times and manners. Fictitious stories have been the delight of all times and all countries, by oral tradition in barbarous, by writing in more civilized ones; and altho' some persons of wit and learning

have condemned them indiscriminately, I would venture to affirm, that even those who so much affect to despise them under one form, will receive and embrace them under another. (2)

Although Clara Reeve mimics Walpole's Gothicism in her work in order to continue his success in connecting ancient Romance with the modern novel, *The Old English*

*Baron* has original elements of its own. Donna Heiland, for example, notes that

Reeves takes care to distinguish her work from Walpole's, though in the end Walpole's supernatural and Reeve's dreams and other irrational events serve very similar purposes. Like Walpole, Reeve uses these supernatural events to establish the proper shape of patriarchy, reconstructing and ensuring the continuance of the system almost entirely without the help of women. (17)

Thus, Walpole and Reeve's novels paved the way for other Gothic writers to dig deeper into the system of patriarchy, thereby validating this study's hypothesis that female characters of this genre are more times than not seen as victims within Gothic spaces used to both ostracize and silence them.

Many other writers, male and female, would soon adopt some aspects of Walpole's Gothic aesthetics. Some of these writers include Ann Radcliffe whose Gothic novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), is famous for the supernatural events that occur at the haunted castle of Udolpho, and whose plot features a distressed heroine and of course, an evil male with his own motives. Many Gothic texts that were produced in the late eighteenth-century soon after Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* adopted much the

same plan that he had for his story; the only minor changes made were the location of the setting, the setting itself and the time at which the story took place. However, it was during the nineteenth century when some major additions were added to the Gothic genre. Mary Shelley would be one of the first Gothic writers to step outside of Walpole's shadow, and in *Frankenstein* (1818) she presented a vision of the supernatural featuring a monster that terrorizes society with its grotesque appearance. Andrew Smith suggests that the metaphysical status of Shelley's creature indicates how she challenges Romantic conceptions of nature. The creature is both natural—i.e., made up of human parts, and possessing a recognizably human inner life: and unnatural because he has been stitched together from dead bodies (43). And like most of the devices of Gothic fiction created in Gothic texts, their purpose is larger than what it seems. Although the dead body parts that Frankenstein's body is made of give him the ability to function as a human, he remains essentially a monstrous animated cadaver who paradoxically claims the reader's sympathy. Shelley's unconventional use of monstrosity, thus forced readers to question the basis of their and others' very own normalcy or possible abnormality.

Edgar Allan Poe's most critically acclaimed popular fiction is also Gothic. Some of his Gothic works include "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), "The Masque of the Red Death" (1842), "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), "The Black Cat" (1843), and "The Premature Burial" (1844) which are all short stories that portray dark settings, morbid imagery, insane characters, live burials, torture, and decay as horrific Gothic conventions. Most, if not all, of Poe's Gothic conventions point to humans' worst fears, such as confinement, the unknown, loneliness, death, and rejection to name a few of the fears that

Gothic literature exploits. Similarly, Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) and *Bleak House* (1853) are both Gothic works that introduce grotesquely disfigured characters, mysterious fog, gruesome deaths, decay, and family secrets disclose the corruption that lurks behind the façade of a world that tries to practice morality.

Over time, many Gothic conventions have evolved according to the historical context in which they were created. For example, instead of a Gothic setting being a castle, it may have morphed into a house or an abandoned building. In any case, all Gothic texts and their conventions, whether medieval or modern urban, serve the purpose of presenting good and bad, order and disorder, and morality and immorality in the world. For example, Stephen King, famous for his phenomenal works of horror, suspense, and science fiction, provokes his reader's fear and terror by using horror to draw attention to what happens when humans are psychologically and physically abused as an everyday aspect of their life. King's first novel *Carrie* (1974) is based on the telekinetic powers possessed by a high school student named Carrie White who is often bullied and ostracized by both her classmates and mother because of her "otherness." Through the use of her telekinetic powers, Carrie seeks revenge for the abuse, torment, and embarrassment that she has endured. As a result, many people are killed and eventually the town itself is destroyed. Even though a grotesque exaggeration, this is a good way to get society's attention to what could possibly happen if a person is pushed to the limit when being constantly bullied and tormented. Moreover, despite the supernatural elements, King's works are so realistic that they could very well represent



reality, and this is where the true terror and horror for his readers and audiences originates.

### *Gothic Trappings*

The Gothic conventions used in *Jane Eyre* and *The Bondswoman's Narrative* are identified in this study as "Gothic Trappings"-- a word choice that contains a deliberate pun. Gothic Trappings are associated with dark spaces that essentially trapped their victims in claustrophobic places filled with horrifying secrets and/or terrifying events. Charlotte Brontë's and Hannah Crafts' use of Gothic "Trappings" illustrates graphically the oppressive position held by women in their societies. For example, Brontë's use of Gothic Trappings metaphorically represents the suppression of women due to factors such as their gender, mental disposition, and social class. Further, she shows how women are incarcerated in domestic spaces that were supposed to protect them. On the other hand, Crafts exposes the brutality and the horrors which typified legal slavery through her own use of Gothic Trappings.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar are well recognized for their work on the role and position of women during the nineteenth century. A look at their classic feminist work *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) as supportive evidence for this study seems appropriate. Gilbert and Gubar interrogate the position of women authors of the nineteenth century as well as female characters such as Bertha Mason and Jane in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Gilbert and Gubar make much of the fact that together with her sisters Emily and Anne, Charlotte Brontë was virtually "imprisoned" in her home under her father's strict mandates. Later, when she moved into her own home as a wife and

mother, she was again treated as a commodity (83-85). Thus, there is no surprise that most of Charlotte Brontë's writing, specifically *Jane Eyre*, explores the notions of entrapment and confinement. Essentially, Gilbert and Gubar believe that nineteenth century feminine literature consists of "dramatizations of imprisonment and escape" (85). Thus, their classic study is a major component of the framework for this study as it illuminates the significance of nineteenth-century writers as "voices" whose deepest purpose is to articulate the subjugation of women.

#### *African American Gothicism*

Undoubtedly, the Gothic tradition was used by English writers such as Brontë to exhibit tropes of female oppression; however, through the very same structure of conventions, this genre also served a comparable purpose for African American writers. Adebayo Williams, a Nigerian scholar, journalist and novelist, speaks well for the general function and purpose of slave narrative, which was "to the Black slaves what the early novel was to the ascendant bourgeois class: a vehicle for channeling group aspirations, hopes, fears, and insecurities, and at the same time, an offensive weapon for mounting spectacular assaults on their tormentors" (138). But within this general framework, many slave narratives also are Gothic for the very good reason that slavery itself typified Gothicism. As Maisha Wester in *African American Gothic: Screams from Shadowed Places* states,

The very life of a slave is also inevitably a Gothic existence. The murders/suicides, rapes, entrapment and escape cycles, torture (brutal whippings),

and familial secrets (illegitimate births) that make up numerous Gothic plots constitute real, daily existence under slavery. (35)

The institution of slavery was also a patriarchal system, as Deborah White argues, within this system:

[...] to be of color was a mark of degradation, so much so that in the most Southern states one's dark complexion was prima facie evidence that one was a slave. Black in a White society, slave in a free society, and woman in a society ruled by men, female slaves had the least formal power and were perhaps the most vulnerable group of Antebellum Americans. (15)

The primary difference between the social systems exhibited in works such as *Jane Eyre* and *The Bondswoman's Narrative* is that early British Gothic works demonstrated males' domination over females; African American Gothic works demonstrated a comparable White male domination over Blacks of either gender, but especially women. African American literature was developed, generally speaking, to celebrate the lives of African-Americans while sharing their experiences. However, African American Gothic was used to dramatize the darkest secrets of the slave system. According to Maisha Wester,

Slave narratives occupy themselves with presenting the bodily and social horrors of the institution, and make no amends for frequent, detailed descriptions of abuse, as well as the masters' pleasure at dispensing it. Rather, narratives use of women's bodies point to the unspoken question of Black being and slavery's destruction of identity. (45)

Because Gothicism aims to expose the hypocrisy of a world that values reason and morality, the slave narrative is ideal for that purpose. The slave narrative functions in a manner that shows that the institution of chattel slavery was a monstrous Gothic economy precisely because "it made the slave owner, a producer of property, profits, and pleasure bound by no other strictures than supply and demand and lust" (Bryant 148). Chattel slavery was quite simply a barbaric system that treated its victims as property that could be sold or traded at any moment, and moreover a system riddled with dark secrets and haunted by the ghosts of its victims. For this reason, the slave narrative is a perfect platform for the Gothic.

#### *Nineteenth Century Gothic Feminism*

No matter what was their nationality, geographic location, or historical context during the nineteenth-century, female writers such as Brontë and Crafts incorporated the Gothic in an effort to present the harsh reality of life for women at that time. Crafts and Brontë, although from different countries and ethnic groups, suffered under essentially the same kind of patriarchal system; however, the dynamics that contributed to the injustice that each suffered were different. For example, during the nineteenth century, an Englishwoman such as Charlotte Brontë lived in a world where women were legally subordinate to men without question and in which marriage was the usual option for a woman. Whether she was wealthy before marriage or not, everything that she owned became legally her husband's. While an Englishwoman might experience oppression in a domestic space created for her by a patriarchal society, an African American slave woman had to endure a much worse fate. If she worked in the field, she was required to

pick cotton, whereas, if she worked in her master's home, she was required to care for the house, including cooking meals and being a personal servant to the master, the mistress, and the children. Whether a domestic servant or field worker, a slave woman endured long hours of work from sunrise to sunset. Ultimately, both positions carried oppression and abuse. If for any reason a slave woman disobeyed or refused to do what she was told, she would face severe punishment such as whippings, solitary confinement, or even mutilation. In *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, Crafts illustrates several such experiences that many slave women experienced at the hands of a master or mistress.

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) explores the theme of female subordination among women of the nineteenth century as a result of a social system. Mary Wollstonecraft, a famous eighteenth-century feminist, was the first to openly champion equal rights for women, especially equal education. Her major work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in 1792, is the first text written by a woman that attacks the patriarchal system. Although Wollstonecraft's writing in the late eighteenth century focused on the need for women to obtain independency through education, her ideas remained germane throughout the nineteenth century as well. Although, nineteenth-century women were granted a few privileges that women in the eighteenth century were not, a woman was still subjected to the responsibilities of the domestic sphere whether she was a wife, a servant, or a governess. According to Kathryn Hughes,

The governess was one of the most familiar figures in mid-Victorian life and literature. The 1851 Census revealed that 25,000 women earned their living teaching and caring for other women's children. Most governesses lived with their

employers and were paid a small salary on top of their board and lodging.

From the 1840s novelists started to put governesses into their fiction, usually as heroines but sometimes as villains. (1)

This social institution drives the plot of *Jane Eyre*. Brontë's protagonist Jane, after she is placed in the Lowood orphanage for girls, receives an education that prepares her to earn a position as a school teacher or as a governess. And, like many female fictional characters and actual women of the nineteenth-century, she never truly escapes the domestic spaces that imprison her. Susan Meyers argues that in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë

Responds to the seemingly inevitable analogy in nineteenth-century British texts that compares White women with Blacks in order to degrade both groups and assert the need for White male control. (251)

In other words, Brontë shows shared oppression between the two groups. Brontë creates Bertha Mason, a female character of African descent, who is introduced as the insane wife of Edward Rochester, but is viewed also as the racial "other" to Jane, suggesting that Brontë intended to illustrate Black and White female oppression as essentially the same.

The second novel covered in this study, Crafts' *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, depicts the life of the slave woman Hannah and her mistress who face the cruelty of slavery as they attempt to flee from a harsh patriarchal figure, Mr. Trappe whose name is obviously symbolic and very appropriate. Under slavery, Hannah's mistress experiences physical and psychological trauma as a result of the need to protect her image as a White woman--also, since the novel purports to be a real-life slave narrative, the reason why the author never reveals her name. Because Mr. Trappe is familiar with her secret of

“passing,” he lurks and haunts her life for her refusal to stick to their arrangement that she must pay him in order to stay silent about her secret. Because Mr. Trappe knew Hannah's mistress' secret would destroy her, he used it against her and acted as her slave master even though she was pretending to be Hannah's authentic mistress.

The common attribute that the Gothic works of Brontë and Craigs share is their use of various Gothic conventions to expose the flaws of patriarchy. As Donna Heiland states,

Gothic novels are all about patriarchies, about how they function, what threatens them, what keeps them going. And what becomes ever clearer as one reads these novels is that patriarchy is not only the subject of Gothic novels, but is itself a Gothic structure. Patriarchy inevitably celebrates a male creative power that demands the suppression- and sometimes the outright sacrifice- of women. (11)

Therefore, it is necessary to not only view patriarchy as the main target of Gothic texts written by women, but to realize that it functions as a Gothic structure that contains many components that are in turn symbolized by the Gothic Trappings.

### *Biographical Background*

Charlotte Brontë had quite an interesting life. One of the three popular literary Brontë sisters, Charlotte's life changed forever after the death of her mother. It could be argued that it was her mother's death that essentially motivated her and her siblings to write. From an early age, the Brontë children wrote about places that they imagined in order to escape the harsh realities of their world which consisted of norms that made it impossible for them to flourish other than by becoming either someone's wife, governess,

or a teacher—roles which actually could be compared to slavery, given the comparably structured dichotomies of male/master as subject and female/slave as object defined by the subject's control.

Charlotte Brontë's life provides the basis for her works, especially the popular novel *Jane Eyre*, where the life of the female protagonist mirrors her own life. Additional events in Brontë's life parallel events in *Jane Eyre*'s life. For example, Brontë's mother passes away, leaving Brontë and her sisters in the care of her aunt, Elizabeth Branwell. Similarly, Jane is forced to move in with her aunt, Mrs. Reed, after her parents succumbed to typhus fever. As in *Jane Eyre*, tuberculosis eventually takes the lives of those Brontë loves, her sisters, Maria, Elizabeth, Anne, and Emily Brontë. Brontë's older sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, die of tuberculosis because of the poor conditions of the school that their father sends them to after the passing of their mother, Maria Brontë. This event provides the basis for the deaths of other girls at Lowood institution in *Jane Eyre* because of the very same poor conditions and malnourishment. There are other instances in *Jane Eyre* that are similar to Brontë's life and therefore evidence of her personal psychological connection with her heroine.

During the Victorian era, as pointed out earlier, women maintained the roles of rearing children and running their households. Following eighteenth-century feminist Mary Wollstonecraft's example, Brontë was one of the first female writers of the nineteenth century to speak out on women's rights. She believed that women should be able to set their own standards and be independent if they chose to be. Of course, by "acting out" with this type of effrontery during the nineteenth-century, Brontë would gain



quite a few critics such as reviewers for *Quarterly Review* and *Westminster Review*. Sonja Mayer asserts that, “Weighed against contemporary norms and expectations concerning governesses, *Jane Eyre*’s narrative made a strong statement about society itself. Perhaps the novel, with its strong point of view coming from a governess, was so harshly criticized by some because it represented a very real threat to the order of things regarding gender and class.” (1) Further, Mayer points out that

Giving a governess — even a fictitious one — such a strong voice ran against common views of the proper role of such a woman. Indeed, Brontë’s narrative strategy could have been seen as having ramifications for society at large by changing people’s ways of thinking about gender and class. No doubt, such currents of thought would have shocked many in Victorian England. (par.1)

By presenting a fictional governess with such a strong presence during a time that encouraged gender inequality and gender roles, Brontë brilliantly caught the attention of her society and by doing so, caused many people to think about the issues of gender and class whether they wanted to or not. For example, she caught the attention of the famous writer Matthew Arnold who had some extremely harsh words for her. Mayer quotes Betty Krasne, who mentions that Matthew Arnold argues that

Miss Brontë has written a hideous, undelightful, convulsed, constricted novel . . . one of the most utterly disagreeable books I’ve ever read . . . [because] the writer’s mind contains nothing but hunger, rebellion and rage and therefore that is all she can, in fact, put in her book. (par.2)

Unfortunately, Arnold's statement on Brontë's work only illustrates the harsh reality that feminist writers like Brontë endured during the nineteenth-century. Given the kind of antifeminist biases she had to cope with, Brontë needed a safer way to voice the reality of the world around her without being completely ostracized, and thus she adopted the masculine pen name Currer Bell. Writing under this assumed name allowed Brontë the freedom to write about female characters who challenged the norms of their society and served as a voice for women silenced by a patriarchal system that believed in female inferiority.

Much the same was also the case for her sisters Emily and Anne Brontë, who wrote under the pen names Ellis and Acton Bell. It was very important for the Brontë sisters to write using pseudonyms because they knew that their work did not meet the expectations of "feminine" work expected from female writers of their time. In a preface to her sister Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1850), published after Emily's death, Charlotte clearly explains the rationale:

Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because--without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what was called "Feminine"--we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice, we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their

chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise. (ix)

Notwithstanding the structured disparities of power and status embedded in the very idea of authorial women who wrote under pseudonyms did not allow such restraints to deter them from examining the status and role of women during the nineteenth century.

However, for the sake of their own self-interest, they needed to be cautious and careful.

Charlotte Brontë and her sisters' charge as writers was to reach as many women as they could by revamping the Gothic and transforming it into what Diane Long Hoeveler refers to as "Gothic Feminism" addressed to a broad new class of readers:

The Brontës rewrote Gothic Feminism for a newly emerging bourgeois class of women: governesses and wives and mothers responsible for the education as well as the care of their charges. The Brontës, by necessity more practical than Ann Radcliffe or Austen, saw that social, political, and economic changes for women could occur only when the visions of Wollstonecraft and her followers were widespread, well known, and accepted throughout the reading population. Brontë novels are filled with scenes of instruction, vignettes of reading, appeals to the power of logos, the word, to shape both character and destiny. The final manifestation of the Gothic feminist is a schoolmarm leading her charges in the subversive activity of imagining a new world in which women are equal to men, and not because they victims or posing as victims. (189)

Thus, when the Brontë sisters wrote their literary works, they created them knowing that they would be reaching an enthusiastic audience of women. In their literary works, they

incorporate Gothic Feminism as a way to symbolize to their female audience what was their position as women in a male-dominated society. Through the plot structures of Gothic Feminism, the Brontë sisters created fictional worlds in which women could claim equality with their male counterparts, as we see so clearly demonstrated in *Jane Eyre*.

Charlotte Brontë's courage and bravery as a female writer during an era in which women could not reach their full potential as human agents in society inspired other English female writers such as George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. Brontë's ability to symbolize the female's position by using Gothic Trappings encouraged other female writers on the other side of the Atlantic to explore their world by appropriating the symbolism of Gothic Trappings to lay bare the evils of patriarchy and other oppressive forces in society. According to Julie Bosman of *The New York Times*, citing research gathered from Gregg Hecimovic, *The Bondswoman's Narrative* is "believed to be semi-autobiographical: how a slave with limited access to education and books was heavily influenced by the great literature of her time, like *Bleak House* and *Jane Eyre*"(par. 4). This helps to explain the parallel between *Jane Eyre* and *The Bondswoman's Narrative*. Also, research on the connection between *Jane Eyre* and *The Bondswoman's Narrative* has been explored by Catherine Keyser, who suggests that Crafts' novel echoes some of *Jane Eyre's* locations and events. Also, Keyser argues that Hannah and Jane mirror one another and can be viewed as 'sisters' in their quest for liberty, rationality, and even romantic fulfillment (102). My research will substantiate Keyser's argument that such a connection exists between the two novels. A thorough examination of the use and significance of similar Gothic Trappings in the two novels will unravel the strategies of

Gothicism that were used by nineteenth century authors to capture symbolically as well as inscribe the restrictions placed on women during this era.

Hannah Crafts, whose true identity was Hannah Bonds, used a pen name in order to disguise who she truly was during a time that did not permit Blacks, whether male or female, to write or be educated. However, Hannah Bonds was said to be a maid to the mistress of the plantation where she was enslaved; thus she had access to the books that her master and mistress owned, which included *Jane Eyre*. Greg Hecimovich proposes that in order for Crafts' [Bond's] novel to somehow be connected to the life of a real family named the Wheelers, she may have had access to their library in order to have writing materials, and borrowed passages from Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and other novelists' work (1). Also, John Stauffer suggests that Hannah Crafts was, until the publication of *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, an invisible woman. Despite having no formal education, she became one of the most literate and literary African-Americans of her day. She refuted Southern laws and the beliefs of most Whites that kept Blacks from learning to read and write (53). In the case of *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, Crafts used Gothicism in her fictionalized autobiography in order to symbolize the terrifying conditions under which slaves lived.

Charlotte Brontë and Hannah Crafts are extremely different as people because of their race and the different historical contexts in which they lived; however, what marks their work as similar are the common themes of institutional patriarchy, entrapment, and abuse experienced by all women by the same archetypal abuser: a White male authoritative figure.

*Organization of the Study*

The literary research that is presented in this study evolved from the author's interest in female writers who produced literary works that incorporated Gothic elements in their romance novels and slave narratives. I had a desire to study the relevance of Gothicism to female authors, more specifically nineteenth-century female authors. Many questions came to mind when beginning this research, such as why did nineteenth-century female writers convey racism, sexism, and poverty through the prism of Gothicism? Why did they use Gothic tropes? How does postmodern feminist theory apply to such works? Such questions are what guided the research as I attempted to uncover the mystery behind the intentions of female authors who used this genre in their work. Also, it was important for me to better celebrate the lives of such inspiring and courageous women who used this genre and its tropes in order to reveal the true conditions of women of all races and social classes at the time.

In the chapters to follow, the significance of Gothic Trappings to the female protagonists and other female characters is explored. The present chapter has laid the foundation for how this research is important to the study of Gothic Feminism. The second will explore the theoretical perspectives that guide the study. The third chapter focuses on the life of female protagonist Jane and her doppelgänger Bertha Mason. Further, this chapter shows how and why Charlotte Brontë used Gothic Trappings to create spaces of entrapment serving as a reminder to women of the nineteenth century that they could only do so much in the marginal cultural spaces allocated to them during their time. The fourth chapter will address the unique plight of the slave woman's life as

she experiences and encounters the many horrors of slavery. Further, the chapter identifies the purpose that the Gothic spaces and tropes serve in the slave narratives authored by women. Finally, the last chapter concludes the study by refocusing on the idea of patriarchy and its connection to the thematic usage of Gothic Trappings. Through the use of Gothicism, both Charlotte Brontë and Hannah Crafts captured the subjugation of the female characters in their literature as a way to initiate and sustain the conversation on inequality, oppression, and restrictions universally experienced by women around the world which constrained their futures and the fortunes.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The female Gothic novel tradition provided a coded system by which women authors discreetly communicated with each other about their experiences as women through their Gothic literary works. In order to better understand how female Gothic novels function, this study adopts the literary theory of Diane Hoeveler's "Gothic Feminism," created in response to "Victim Feminism." Victim Feminism is a term used by more mainstream feminists who believe that this form of Feminism which is preached and practiced by radical feminists, encourages victimhood for women. Victim Feminism is thus an "antifeminist notion that women earn their superior social and moral rights in society by positioning themselves as innocent victims of a corrupt tyrant and an oppressive patriarchal society" (Hoeveler 2). Speaking the way that women have defined themselves as solely victims, Diane Hoeveler argues that Naomi Wolf claims that Victim Feminism is "'anti-sexual,' and that it depends on influence or persuasion rather than seeking clout in a straightforward way, that it projects aggression, competitiveness, and violence onto men of the patriarchy while its devotees are blind to those qualities in themselves" (xi)"



Victim Feminism does in fact place women at the center as victims to the patriarchy identified within the Gothic genre, an idea central to Hoeveler's viewpoint. She argues that Wolf fails to recognize that "these strategies originated and were codified in the female Gothic novel tradition close to two hundred years ago" (Hoeveler xi). Essentially, Hoeveler is arguing that Victim Feminism cannot function without its origin which is the female Gothic genre. Thus, to challenge Wolf's criticism of Victim Feminism, Diane Hoeveler theorizes the genre of "Gothic Feminism" by starting with questions such as the following:

How did female authors represent both male and female characters in that peculiarly feminocentric discourse system, the female Gothic novel? And why did their representations of both men and women move beyond the purely psychosexual into the distinctly social and political realms of female-created economies, the ideological reconstruction of the body, the family, and society at large? (xii)

The questions above are critical when seeking to understand why women writers of the Gothic would create their female and male characters in the manner that they did, as well as why they depicted such representations in the realms of public and private discourse. Overall, what Hoeveler will uncover as the result of the questions that frame her literary ideology is simple: the female and male characters are displayed in the manner that they are in the Gothic because the female characters in this genre are oppressed and victimized as a result of hierarchal, social, economic, and political spaces.

Further, Hoeveler's theory of Gothic Feminism will allow the reader of this study to better identify the codified and institutionalized spaces identified as Gothic tropes intended to entrap patriarchy's female victims for the sole purpose of keeping them in an inferior position within its boundaries.

However, Gothic Feminism focuses only on free women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which excludes those women who were by law not free citizens during this time. Consequently, her theory does not apply without modification to Black or minority women since it fails to address the unique plight of such women. Therefore, it is necessary to devise a separate theory that speaks more directly to the experiences of Black women as they are fictionally represented within the Gothic genre.

#### *Gothic Black Feminism*

This study creates and introduces a new literary theory-- Gothic Black Feminism-- which incorporates some of the principles and ideology of Black Feminism, a theory created to speak to the intersectionality of oppression and discrimination that all Black women face, no matter where they reside in the world. Additionally, with Gothic Black Feminism incorporated as a unique perspective within the overall theory of Gothicism, scholars will explore African American texts that embed the Gothic by using a lens that focuses on the true experiences of this culture's people. With Gothic Black Feminism as a theoretical lens, we can examine the marginalization of Black women in relation to the White patriarchal and matriarchal characters and their Black male counterparts who view them as invisible or subordinate. Additionally, this theory allows readers to challenge the traditional norms that have placed Black women in the remote cultural background

defined in terms of their subordinate status. This theory's primary objectives are therefore as follows: to expose the barbarous conditions and marginalization of Black women within the institution of patriarchy, to affirm the equality and visibility of Black women within the literary world, and to examine how the very existence of Black women under slavery can be considered Gothic. Furthermore, Gothic Black Feminism attempts to redefine language in terms of gender as well as redefine Gothic literary concepts as these concepts shift historically, based on the evolving experiences of the Black woman.

### *Psychoanalytic Criticism*

This study's theory of Gothic Black Feminism is a combination of both psychoanalytic and political feminist criticism, both of which are pertinent to understanding why Brontë and Crafts' female characters resist the patriarchal social norms of the time as well as challenge strict traditional social class structures. Because feminist criticism concerns itself with a male-dominated society that generates psychological as well as other forms of oppression for women, it is appropriate to identify not only the patriarchal social constructs that were used to silence and marginalize women, but also to examine the psychological Gothic spaces that these women were subjected to under patriarchy.

Sigmund Freud is best known for his work in psychoanalysis, a technique that he invented in order to treat disorders classified as psychological and emotional. When working with his patients, Freud encouraged them to talk about their lives, more specifically their childhood experiences. Freud concluded that these patients were victims of "hysterics" of one kind or another. Freud also concluded that his patients'

psychological problems had their origins in suppressed desires that they had unconsciously refused to confront (Bressler 125). For this reason, he created models of the human psyche which became the foundation for his theory. The model that is pertinent to this study is Freud's dynamic model which asserts that

Humans' minds are a dichotomy consisting of the conscious (the rational) and the unconscious (the irrational). The conscious, Freud argued, perceives and records external reality and is the reasoning part of the mind. Unaware of the presence of the unconscious, we operate consciously, believing that our reasoning and analytic skills are solely responsible for our behavior. Freud is one of the first to suggest that it is unconscious, not the conscious, that governs a large part of our actions. For Freud, the unconscious is also the storehouse of disguised truths and desires that are to be revealed in and through the conscious. Freud believes we bring to our conscious minds our unconscious wishes and intentions. It is especially in our dreams, our art, our literature, and our play that these parapraxes reveal our true intentions or desires. (125-126)

Also, Freud was interested in the dreams that his patients had because he believed that

Every human has stored painful memories of repressed sexual desires, anger, rage, and guilt in his or her unconscious. Because the conscious and the unconscious are part of the same psyche, the unconscious with its hidden desires and repressed wishes continues to affect the conscious in the form of inferiority feelings, guilt, irrational thoughts, and feelings, and dreams and nightmares. (129)

The desires and feelings that are suppressed into the unconscious mind thus shape the feelings of guilt and rage which disturb the conscious psyche. However, the unconscious also has the ability to turn right back around and manifest these painful emotions in the form of images and symbols in dreams, and for literary authors, in their writing as well. (129).

Therefore, psychoanalytic criticism validates this study's assumption that *Jane Eyre* and *The Bondswoman's Narrative* reveal their authors' conscious and unconscious psyche in symbolic form, thus suggesting further that authors Brontë and Crafts have used their heroines as projections of their own psyches. Additionally, the theory of psychoanalytic criticism is relevant to reading between the lines of why and what message authors Brontë and Crafts transmit in their work by appropriating the genre of Gothic and its conventions. In support of this assertion, Charles Bressler's abstract of what Freud believed is highly relevant to this study:

Freud maintains that an author's chief motivation for writing is to gratify some secret desire, some forbidden wish that probably developed during the author's infancy and was immediately suppressed and dumped in the unconscious. The outward manifestation of this suppressed wish becomes the literary work itself. Freud declares that the literary work is indeed the author's dream or fantasy (137).

Foremost, Psychoanalytic criticism thus makes it possible for this study to reveal the true meaning and interpretation of what the Gothic Trappings signify for the female characters

of *Jane Eyre* and *The Bondswoman's Narrative* but more specifically Jane and her doppelganger Bertha Mason, and Hannah and her mistress.

### *Feminist Criticism*

Feminist criticism concerns itself with the injustices that women face around the world. Feminist theory identifies several modes of oppression such as patriarchy, sexual objectification, and sexual marginalization. Of the three waves in history of Feminism, the most appropriate wave for this study is the first-wave Feminism which focused on White women's suffrage and demanded that these women have the right to an education, independence, ownership of property, and divorce, but before going further, we need to look at the subsequent waves also. According to Martha Rampton,

Whereas the first wave of Feminism was generally propelled by middle class, Western, cisgender, White women, the second phase drew in women of color and developing nations, seeking sisterhood and solidarity, claiming “Women’s struggle is class.” Feminists spoke of women as a social class and coined phrases such as “the personal is political” and “identity politics” in an effort to demonstrate that race, class, and gender oppression are all related. One of the strains of this complex and diverse “wave” was the development of women-only spaces and the notion that women working together create a special dynamic that is not possible in mixed-groups, which would ultimately work for the betterment of the entire planet. (4)

By including women of color who were excluded from the first wave, the second wave sought to create unity and mutual support between women of all races in order to

demonstrate that the oppression experienced as a result of race, class, and gender is universal. This wave encouraged all women to join as a collaborative force to push for full equality; however, because not all of second wave's intentions were met the third wave emerged.

The third wave of Feminism was created to continue the work of the second wave and create a space for new issues involving women, more specifically the generation of women that came of age during this wave. According to Krista Jacobs, the third wave can be defined as a Feminism that

provides a forum for illuminating the multifaceted experiences of young women - a group that is consistently misrepresented by older generations, the mainstream media, and other avenues. Using young women's personal testimonies and autobiographical accounts, we reveal young women struggling to incorporate the lessons from the women's movement of the 60's and 70's (second wave Feminism) into their own unique, lived experiences. (par.3)

The third wave of Feminism sought to continue the work of the second wave of Feminism and improve it by providing a new space for the evolving generation of women that followed. Further, this wave of Feminism redefined the stereotypical images placed on women by encouraging women to own their sexuality and be assertive. Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), is considered to be the godmother of Feminism because her work squarely addresses women's rights and the need for an education. What makes Wollstonecraft's work relevant to this study is the way in which she sheds light on women's subaltern status in a society that excludes

them from the rights that would make them full citizens. Some of the issues that Wollstonecraft touches on include the need for women to be independent enough to gain the skills necessary to support themselves, no matter the situation. Most importantly, she insists that women must stand up for themselves and take charge of all aspects of their lives. Charles Bressler neatly encapsulates Mary Wollstonecraft's work thusly:

Women, she maintains, must define for themselves what it means to be a woman. Women themselves must take the lead and articulate who they are and what role they will play in society by rejecting the patriarchal assumption that women are inferior to men. (148)

All affairs that concern women should be dealt with by women simply because it is their right to determine who they truly are and what their role will be in society. In order for this outcome to be achieved, Wollstonecraft argues that women must reject all of the patriarchal societal norms that subject them to masculine authority. Since Wollstonecraft's argument anticipates prophetically the similar ideas that would follow centuries later concerning the injustices of women, it is important to identify her work as a theoretical basis for not only Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, but modern Feminist theory as well, considering that she is the first major spokesperson to condemn the patriarchal subjugation that women endured during the eighteenth century.

### *Black Feminism*

Because Feminism consisted of an agenda that marginalized Black women, Black Feminism in response surfaced in order to provide a space for women of color to raise awareness of the issues that they faced as a result of White supremacy. bell hooks,



African American activist, educator and writer is undeniably one of the greatest and most successful Black feminists to contribute to the field of Black Feminism, especially in her first work, *Ain't I a Woman* (1981) -- a work that challenges three main systems of oppression (race, class, and sex) while exploring how the victims of this system are affected. Similarly, the noted social theorist Patricia Hill Collins a noted social theorist whose most notable works include *Black Feminist Thought* (1981), "Learning from the Outsider Within" (1986) and *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (1998), explores the different aspects of what it means to be a Black woman as well as those forms of oppression that influence her condition in the first place. Also, Black Feminism is a safe space that allows Black women to feel liberated through the scholarship and knowledge that they produce, for not just themselves but for the world of scholarship in regard to their historically marginalized position. Black Feminism necessarily concerns itself with how Black women have been and still are the victims of economic exploitation, racism, and sexism. As mentioned before, this form of Feminism recognizes the disadvantages that Black women have to contend with, not only because of their race but also their gender.

### *Intersectionality*

Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of Intersectionality asserts that in order to understand the experiences of Black women, one must understand that it is impossible to not look at how systems of oppression such as racism and sexism interact and sustain each other— i.e. , the way in which they “intersect” as determinants. Without taking Intersectionality into account, the full manner in which these women are victims to an institution that

marginalizes and enslaves them cannot be fully appreciated.

Crenshaw's "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" explores the race and gender dimensions of violence against women of color (357). As Crenshaw asserts, "Because women of color experience racism in ways not always the same as those experienced by men of color and sexism in ways not always parallel to experiences of White women, antiracism and Feminism are limited, even on their own terms" (360). Unfortunately, this proves the notion that Black women are an isolated group whose oppression becomes second to both White women and Black men. Crenshaw's theory of Intersectionality thus befits this study, considering the multiple forms of oppression experienced by Black slave women in Hannah Crafts' *The Bondswoman's Narrative*. Moreover, Crenshaw believes that these multiple forms of oppression are not suffered separately but as a single experience, fused from the various layers of oppression that Black women endure. When exploring both *Jane Eyre* and *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, we can fully employ Crenshaw's Intersectionality when examining the conditions of the Black women in these novels.

There are scholars who have combined the psychoanalytic and feminist theories to examine either *Jane Eyre* or *The Bondswoman's Narrative*. It is necessary to examine the works of those who have employed the same theories that this study uses, but through a different lens. In their classic study *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar identify two issues that connect psychoanalytic theory to nineteenth-century literary work such as *Jane Eyre*:

[F]irst, the social position in which nineteenth-century women writers found themselves, and, second the reading that they themselves did. Both in life and in art, we saw, the artists we studied were literally and figuratively confined. Enclosed in the architecture of an overwhelmingly male-dominated society, these literary women were also, inevitably, trapped in the specifically literary constructs of what Gertrude Stein was to call “patriarchal poetry.” For not only did a nineteenth-century woman writer have to inhabit ancestral mansions (or cottages) owned and built by men, she was also constricted and restricted by the Palaces of Art and Houses of Fiction male writers authored. (xi)

Women writers like Charlotte Brontë were also victims themselves in a male-dominated society that placed limits on them, not only in the domestic sphere, but also in their role as writers.

Moreover, Gilbert and Gubar argue that Charlotte Brontë herself was a victim of imprisonment. While growing up in her father’s home and also later when she moved into her own home as a wife and mother; in both cases, the confinement was due respectively to her father’s and husband's belief that it was the place of a woman to be confined in the home. Gilbert and Gubar indicate “Almost all nineteenth-century women were in some sense imprisoned in men’s homes” (83). Further, they claim that dramatizations of imprisonment and escape are so all-pervasive in nineteenth-century literature by women that they seem to represent a uniquely female tradition in this period. Interestingly, though works in this tradition generally begin by using houses as primary

symbols of female imprisonment, they also use much of the other paraphernalia of “woman’s place” to enact their central symbolic drama of enclosure and escape.

Significantly, too, the explosive violence of these “moments of escape” that women writers continually imagine for themselves returns us to the phenomenon of the “mad double” like Brontë’s Bertha Mason that so many of these women have projected into their work. For it is, after all, “through the violence of the double that the female author enacts her own raging desire to escape male houses and male texts, while at the same time it is through the double’s violence that this anxious author articulates for herself the costly destructiveness of anger repressed until it can no longer be contained” (85). This means that Brontë covertly used Bertha Mason’s character and the violence that she creates as a way to project that way of her very own psyche which challenges the system of patriarchy and its behavioral influence on men and women whose gender, race, and economic standing gives them the upper hand over those persons viewed as inferior to them.

Additionally, Gilbert and Gubar explain that in “examining the psychosocial implications of a haunted ancestral mansion, such a tale explores the tension between parlor and attic, the psychic split between the lady who submits to male dicta and the lunatic who rebels” (86). Here, the importance of examining the psychosocial implications of what this study deems as Gothic Trappings is mentioned. This study will continue the discussion of how these symbolic devices contribute to the “madness” and violence that occur in spaces that were meant to protect the women that resided in

them but instead demonstrate how they were imprisoned and what these spaces did to the psyches of the female characters who inhabited them.

Janet Sayers argues in her review of Elaine Showalter's "The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980" that Showalter also explores the mistreatment and restrictions of women. As Sayers points out, Showalter argues that "it was the "romantic 'madwoman in the attic' era of British psychiatry in which women [were] portrayed as deranged animals, [and] were physically restrained in private homes and institutions that essentially revealed the psychic compulsion of nineteenth-century men to control the mind and bodies of women"(109). Showalter uses Brontë's depiction of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* as an example to show how "madness" was portrayed in her time. She argues that Brontë symbolizes the authoritarianism of male-dominated psychiatry in the surrogate figure of Mr. Rochester who diagnoses his wife Bertha's illness simply by stating that she is "mad" suggesting the close alliance of patriarchy with the psychiatry of the time. Consequently, Showalter examines the system of patriarchy specifically as it applies to the men who had the authority to diagnose women. My research will contribute to the ongoing discussion of why Bertha Mason is locked up in the attic of her home because of an uninformed diagnosis. Through this so-called diagnosis given only by her husband, Bertha is confined to a space that is in itself a micro- example of the notorious Victorian madhouses, where the inmates were treated no better than the prisoners confined in the inhumane jails of the time.

In examining the marginalization of women in a patriarchal culture, Peter Grudin addresses the mistreatment and the isolation of Rochester's

mad wife, Creole woman Bertha Mason and further examines the ways in which Bertha is a reflection of Jane in his article “Jane and the Other Mrs. Rochester: Excess and Restraint in ‘Jane Eyre.’” Grudin states,

Bertha is a figurative representation of something unspeakable and as a projection of Jane’s own dark potentials, Bertha is used to show why Jane must act as she does and why, despite the strength of opposing arguments and sympathies, the protagonist must decide to leave her beloved when his marriage is revealed.

(145)

Here, Bertha functions easily as a foil for Jane easily because of the differences in their character--one is viewed as having evil qualities while the other is pure. The negative traits of Bertha and the positive traits of Jane allow readers to reach the conclusion that although nineteenth-century women were supposed to be submissive to masculine authority, these same women could also challenge the restrictions placed on them. This study will continue the discussion of why Jane and Bertha Mason are connected to each other even though they appear to be antipodal characters. By doing so, the author will clarify Charlotte Brontë’s purpose of showing that she and many nineteenth-century women found themselves conflicted on whether or not their treatment by men was justified.

Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, already discussed above in relation to intersectionality, is a major work that applies feminist criticism to various nineteenth-century women writers' literary works which address the many issues pertaining to the status of women. Further, because of their interest in exploring the

anxieties of nineteenth-century women, Gilbert and Gubar apply feminist literary theory to various nineteenth century works in order to understand the deep psychic roots of much of the metaphorical imagery found in such works:

Images of enclosure and escape, fantasies in which maddened doubles functioned as asocial surrogates for docile selves, metaphors of physical discomfort manifested in frozen landscapes and fiery interiors--such patterns recurred throughout this tradition, along with obsessive depictions of diseases like anorexia, agoraphobia, and claustrophobia. (xi)

The grotesque imagery that Brontë uses in *Jane Eyre* is critical to understanding what she was trying to bring to light in her work-- the reality of confinement and the desire of freedom by its female victims, the severe reality of orphanhood, and an alienated and angry female foil who functions as an advocate against the mistreatment and abuse of the compliant self. More specifically in their chapter, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress," Gilbert and Gubar explain how Brontë presents the realities of female confinement, orphanhood, starvation, rage and even madness in *Jane Eyre*. They describe Jane as a

protagonist who struggles from the imprisonment of her childhood toward an almost unthinkable goal of mature freedom are symptomatic of difficulties every woman in a patriarchal society must meet and overcome: oppression (at Gateshead), starvation (at Lowood), madness (at Thornfield), and coldness (at Marsh End). Most important, her confrontation, not with Rochester but with Rochester's mad wife Bertha, is the book's central confrontation. (339)

If this is the novel's central confrontation, its central metaphor is the claustrophobic "Red Room" in which Jane was actually confined as punishment. Gilbert and Gubar see this room as a "patriarchal chamber" that represents Jane's vision of the society in which she is trapped. This study explores the underlying psychological and social issues that Gothic Trappings such as the "Red Room" raise from a feminist point of view.

In her essay "Girl Talk: Jane Eyre and the Romance of Women's Narration," Carla Kaplan argues that *Jane Eyre* has occupied a position of privilege in the feminist canon (5) as a form of girl talk. Like all good "girl talk," *Jane Eyre* explores issues which include "psychological self-division, ambivalence about passion, sexuality, and anger over the suppression of female desire and ambition, and the difficulties of self-assertion" (22). Jane's character along with the other female characters in *Jane Eyre* influences and encourages all women, from nineteenth-century critics to modern feminist supporters to have an honest dialogue about the harmful anti-feminine outcomes of patriarchy. Hence, Jane's desires for intimacy, recognition, and change in class position resonate with every important theme involving the feminist struggle.

When considering why Jane is viewed as a threat to the other characters and those outside of the novel (critics and men), John Peters' "Inside and Outside: *Jane Eyre* and Marginalization through Labeling" provides insight into how the characters and critics from the outside label Jane as an "other." Peters proves that Jane is treated so because she is an intruder from outside of the community, because she is an enigma, and because her ideas are threatening; hence, the other characters marginalize her in order to dismiss her and her ideas and thereby transform her into something non-threatening (Peters 57).



Peters' assessment of Jane as "other" contributes to this study's premise that Jane and other female characters function as Gothic and racial "others" whose personal behaviors are seen as evil and used to justify their marginalization.

While Jane Eyre's life clearly reflects the theme of entrapment, because of her race Bertha Mason's life is the more crucial when exploring the theme. Laurence Lerner's "Bertha and the Critics" focuses on the criticism that surrounds Mr. Rochester's supposedly insane wife. The critics whom Lerner discusses had different perspectives about the purpose that Bertha Mason serves in *Jane Eyre*. For example, critics such as Helene Moglen, Shirley Foster, and John Maynard suggest that Bertha represents sexual desire for Jane. Helene Moglen states that "Bertha tearing the wedding veil and leaning over Jane's bed is seen as a fantasy of sexual violation. The need to protect Jane against what Bertha represents is felt both by Rochester, unconsciously no doubt, and even more unconsciously, by Jane (qtd. in Lerner 273). Shirley Foster claims that "she [Bertha] represents the bestiality of purely physical lust," while John Maynard likewise asserts that "Jane sees... in [Bertha] a live symbol of the dangers of madly uncontrolled sexual feeling (274, 275).

While these critics and many others support the idea of Bertha as a symbol, of Jane's own sexuality, Lerner provides a counterargument of what Bertha really represents: "To see Bertha as Jane's double is, I suggest, fitfully true, but not in a way that grants her any special status as the double for Jane" (Lerner 295). Instead, Lerner makes the case for other characters in the novel who function as doubles for Jane in various ways. However, Lerner fails to see that Bertha does have special status as a

“Gothic” double in a novel that is clearly not only a romance but a demonized racial other to be despised and feared by lily-purse White female readers and whose incarceration is therefore justifiable even if inhumane. Instead of this more salient interpretation, Lerner aims to explain why Bertha is a minor figure whose “madness equals incurability and can be equated to incurable drunkenness, a class gap seen as unbridgeable in marriage” (299). This may be a belief expected of an entitled patriarch, however, to posit hereditary insanity as the cause of Bertha’s “madness” is to ignore the biggest reason why and how Brontë used the theme of “madness” in the first place. Chapter three of this study will expound on the causes for Bertha’s madness and what it represents, and how her character is therefore extremely significant to this Gothic text.

Because of its depth and complexity, *Jane Eyre* has become the foundation for other Gothic female texts. Diane Long Hoeveler’s *Gothic Feminism* explains how and why:

British women as writers sought for the first time in fairly large numbers to define for themselves how they experienced the social, political, and economic upheaval that occurred between 1788 and 1853. They feared that economic disinheritance would befall women swept away by the newly emerging industrial base, and as an escape they imagined a world where the wily little woman would triumph through her skillful use of femininity as manipulation and guile. Gothic Feminism taught women that pretended weakness as strength, and that the pose, the masquerade of innocent victim, would lead ultimately to possessing the master’s goods and property. Gothic feminists believed that the weak and the meek deserve to inherit

the earth and that women's best defenses were a beguiling demeanor and a sweet smile. (246)

Sue Thomas' article "Christianity and the State of Slavery in 'Jane Eyre'" explores West Indian slavery to provide the context for Jane Eyre's story. Thomas provides a thorough analysis of a "more broadly historical intertextuality of Jane's Gothic narratives of identification with the slave. By doing so, [she] discloses further meanings of slavery and empire in *Jane Eyre*, as well as the ways in which Gothic and heroic modes become a means, for Brontë and her characters alike, of articulating racialized identifications and disavowals" (57). Thomas' historical analysis of *Jane Eyre* allows for further discussion on how Creole woman Bertha Mason fits into all of this. Thomas makes parallels between what character Jane experiences and West India's history of slavery. This study parallels Thomas' research, but goes further to introduce intersectionality as the groundwork for why Bertha experience what she does.

Susan Meyers' "Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of '*Jane Eyre*'" theorizes that the institution of colonialism is used symbolically in Brontë's novels: "Brontë uses references to colonized races to represent various social situations in British society: female subordination in sexual relationships, female insurrection and rage against male domination, and the oppressive class position of the female without family ties and a middle-class income" (249). These social situations identified in *Jane Eyre* point to the various ways in which women encountered social oppression, including sexism, classism, racism, colorism, ageism, and colonialism. Meyers contributes significantly to the discussion of "otherness" by arguing that "the novel's position on economic

redistribution is worked out through the central figurative elements of racial “otherness,” colonialism, and slavery.” (257). Further, Meyers defines the ways that racial “otherness”

becomes the signifier of the oppressor. By using dark- skinned people to signify not only the oppressed but also the oppressor, Brontë dramatically empties the signifier of dark skin in her novel of any of its meaning in historical reality and makes it merely expressive of “otherness.” By assigning these two contradictory meanings to the signifier “non-White,” the novel follows this logic: oppression in any of its manifestations is “other” to the English world of the novel, thus racial “otherness” signifies oppression. (261)

Even though Meyers provides many examples of how Brontë uses racial “otherness” in addition to Bertha Mason, this research provides additional insight into how racial “otherness” is in fact used throughout the novel. More specifically, this study will explore how Bertha Mason’s condition as a slave who has no free will functions as Gothic.

Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is well-illuminated by contemporary mainstream feminist scholarship, but such scholarship fails to consider the concept of “intersectionality” discussed earlier which is needed when considering how women of different backgrounds such as Black women experience oppression. Therefore, a Black feminist perspective is needed in order to examine Hannah Crafts’ usage of Gothic Trappings within the context of the unique form of oppression that Black women suffered during the nineteenth century.

bell hooks' classic Black Feminist study *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981) explores the experiences and problems that Black women faced as a result of racism and sexism. Furthermore, in order to arrive at the truth of Black women's experience during those times, she explores "the impact of sexism on the Black women during slavery, the devaluation of Black women during slavery, Black male sexism, and racism within the recent feminist movement" (13). Another significant text that explores the perceived inferiority of Black women with regards to age, race, class, and sex is Audre Lorde's "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Differences" (1984). The primary issue for Lorde is that "[i]gnoring the differences of race between women and the implication of those differences presents the most serious threat to the mobilization of women's joint power" (856). Further, Lorde argues that until White and Black feminists address their differences with race, they will not be able to join collaboratively as a force. This is because when the White woman fails to recognize her own built-in privilege of Whiteness and defines woman in terms of her own experience alone, then women of color become "other," the outsider whose experience and traditions are too alien to comprehend (856). Although during the nineteenth century White and Black women experienced similar oppression from the patriarchal establishment, White women's privilege still allowed them to escape the cruel forms of oppression that Black women endured.

Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2000) explores the objectification of Black women as the Other, the term used in poststructuralist criticism which is so essential to this research.

She argues that “maintaining images of U.S. Black women as the Other provides ideological justification for race, gender, and class oppression”(Collins 70). Further, Collins states that “[o]bjectification is central to this process of oppositional difference. In binary thinking, one element is objectified as the Other, and is viewed as an object to be manipulated and controlled” (70). Black women are therefore more vulnerable to various forms of oppression rationalized by that objectification, as if they were not fully human--the same logic by which third-trimester abortions in so many states are justified. Collins notes that “[d]enying Black women status as fully human subjects by treating us as the objectified Other within multiple binaries demonstrates the power that binary thinking, oppositional difference, and objectification wield within intersecting oppressions” (71). The concept of Intersectionality is therefore necessary when looking at both oppositional difference and objectification in literary works like *The Bondswoman's Narrative* in order to show the unique patriarchal domination experienced by Black women.

Maisha L. Wester’s *African American Gothic: Screams from Shadowed Places* (2012) examines the manner in which African American texts reveal the “archetypal depictions of racial, sexual, and gendered others as construction useful in the production of White patriarchal dominance” (2). Quoting Avril Horner, Wester identifies the distinction between the two types of women in Gothic texts: “There are only two types of women in the tradition: the dark lady/temptress whose passion dooms and/or destroys the masculine hero, and the typical Gothic heroine usually presented as a proper woman, demonstrating “passive courage in the face of danger” (22). However, in *Jane Eyre*, Jane can be viewed actually as both the dark lady and the Gothic heroine. Although appearing

to be sweet and innocent, she ultimately destroys Mr. Rochester when she falls in love with him and confesses her feelings to him, after the fire which leaves him blind. Wester notes that in the nineteenth century Gothic text, the destructive temptresses were marked often as racially miscegenated. Kari Winter explains that the enslavement of Blacks and the stereotypes of gender made it possible for White men to put women into categories of “good White angels and evil Black beasts” (qtd.in Wester 22). Jane and Bertha clearly exemplify this dichotomy in *Jane Eyre*. Brontë depicts Jane as prim, proper, and rational, whereas she presents Bertha as a savage animal. In regard to this study’s discussion of *The Bondswoman’s Narrative*, the following observation by Wester is also relevant: “In the majority of American slave narratives, the South becomes the haunted landscape, its darkness troubled by the wails and screams of the...tortured, through which a White villain pursues and torments a Black heroine and her dark hero” (30). This kind of scenario is evident in Hannah Crafts’ *The Bondswoman’s Narrative* whose setting is the South and whose principal location for the action is the Lindendale plantation and mansion, which is haunted by those tortured there as an enforcement of slavery.

In her chapter “Haunted Lands and Gothic Voices: Slave Narrative Rewritings of Gothic Motifs,” Wester explains that the life of the slave is essentially Gothic itself. She argues that “the murders/suicides, rapes, entrapment and escape cycles, torture (brutal whippings), and familial secrets (illegitimate births) that make up numerous Gothic plots constitute real, daily existence under slavery” (35). Moreover, slave narratives frequently recount, among slavery’s infanticidal threats, the common recourse to suicide among slaves” (40). The darkest aspects of slavery encompass what the slaves endured while

being chained and stripped of the dignity that they as humans rightfully deserved and the horror and terror they experienced under the brutal slave system.

When slave masters sought to take children from their families and sell them, this would sometimes result in a slave woman killing her baby just as in Morrison's novel *Beloved*. Sometimes she would even commit suicide after such act was committed. In *The Bondwoman's Narrative*, such is the case when a slave woman is sent away by Mrs. Wheeler to be resold after she discovers that she is one of Mr. Wheeler's "favorites." To make matters worse, Mr. Wheeler has children with this slave. When it is time for the slave to be sold along with her baby, she slits her baby's throat and kills herself.

Like Hannah, Bertha Mason experiences enslavement when she is imprisoned in an attic for fifteen years. Similarly, slave woman Harriett Jacobs in her autobiographical narrative *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl* (1861) experiences a semi- involuntary confinement in which she is forced to hide out in a small crawlspace for nearly seven years. In her memoir, Jacobs describes to how the darkness contributed to her oppression as well as how it affected her psychologically. By analogy, clearly Bertha's confinement drove her mad, so that once escaped from the attic, she commits suicide jumping to her death. Wester examines Crafts' novel as a Gothic slave narrative designed to emphasize the "torments of slavery." Slavery proves to be appropriate for Gothic texts because of the atrocious and pervasive suffering imposed by this cruel institution.



*Summary*

In this chapter, we have considered how the theoretical perspectives of Feminism, Black Feminism, and psychoanalytic criticism can illuminate Gothic literature written by nineteenth-century female writers such as Charlotte Brontë and Hannah Crafts. The authors cited in this chapter support theories relevant to their purpose. Psychoanalytic and Feminist criticisms have encouraged critics to thoroughly examine how female characters and their lives represent a fictionalization of the female authors who created them. Also, the theories demonstrated provide the framework for discussions of the experiences that women endured as a result of a patriarchal system that subjugated them.

According to Sigmund Freud, the objective of psychoanalysis is to investigate the unconscious and the conscious mind and how these components of the mind make up a person's individuality. Freud believed that a person's unconscious mind is the source of dreams and creates symbols that also are seen in literature as well. This study argues that the use of the kind of symbols referred to as Gothic Trappings in texts like *Jane Eyre* and *The Bondswoman's Narrative* represent what Sigmund Freud refers to Freudian symbols created from the unconscious psyches of the female authors who created them. Consequently, using Brontë and Crafts to model the process, this study aims to show how Gothic Trappings symbolize various modes of entrapment experienced by women in the nineteenth century as an aspect of their subordinate status. Also, it is this project's intention to show how the Gothic Trappings used in these literary texts have different meanings based on the race of the women that they affect. Thus, Intersectionality is key

to understanding how racism determines the kind of oppression that Black women characters experience in *The Bondswoman's Narrative*.

This study concludes that two women who were from different ethnic backgrounds and geographic locations but who lived during the same time period produced literature that allowed them to creatively use the Gothic mode, including what this study refers to as "Gothic Trappings," symbolize women's inferior position as the worst outcome of patriarchy. Through their works, both Charlotte Brontë and Hannah Crafts have paved a way for other women to intertwine the Gothic with the genre of literature of their choice to demonstrate the realities of their worlds, thus making Brontë and Crafts important but underappreciated feminists of their time.

### CHAPTER III

#### GOTHIC TRAPPINGS AND FEMALE VICTIMS IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S *JANE EYRE*

In her *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë enables her readers to follow the life journey of her female protagonist, Jane, from childhood to adulthood. Through the harsh events that Jane encounters, it is evident that the oppressions are the result of her female gender and low social status. To further highlight the experiences of female characters like Jane, this chapter will explore how “Gothic Trappings” have psychologically and physically “trapped” female characters within an oppressive patriarchal social order. Furthermore, the “madness” experienced by characters is a consequence of being confined in domestic situations ostensibly meant to keep them safe and protect them, but instead serve primarily to disempower them.

When exploring the Gothic Trappings that manifest themselves in *Jane Eyre*, it is important to first examine Jane's orphaned childhood when her journey as a marginalized "other" begins. It is through her hardships as an orphan that the theme of Gothic Trappings is first introduced. From orphanhood to adulthood, Jane continues to encounter situations that further replicate the symbolism of the Gothic Trappings that permeate the Gothic world of *Jane Eyre*.

By examining the cultural spaces that Jane finds herself confined within, we can see how the novel serves as a critique of the prevailing societal mistreatment of women, especially those considered lower-class for one reason or another.

### *The Other*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in terms of how the White female is positioned against her White male counterpart, she is

...nothing other than what man decides; she is thus called "the sex," meaning that the male sees her essentially as a sexed being; for him she is sex, so she is it in the absolute. She is determined and differentiated in relation to the man, while he is not in relation to her. She is the inessential in front of the essential. She is the subject; he is the absolute. She is the Other. (de Beauvoir 26)

When a man compares himself to a woman, he views himself as a superior subject whereas the woman is defined in his eyes as exclusively a sexual object whose body is intended to satisfy his sexual needs and to bear children. Unfortunately, the biological processes that the woman's body performs such as a menstrual cycle, pregnancy, and breast feeding are perceived by the male gaze as defects, thus distinguishing the woman as an object inferior to man intellectually and thus limiting her to roles within the private sphere: the home.

### *The Orphan Child as "Other"*

During the nineteenth century, orphaned children had an especially hard time in coping and adjusting to the world around them because of the sudden change in

their lives as a result of being abandoned in a world unknown to them and without any social services to provide for their needs. According to the article “Orphans,”

When a child’s father or mother dies, the household’s survival is endangered and several possibilities can be considered: (1) the household may survive, deprived of the deceased parent; (2) the household may be altered by the departure of some of the children or the arrival of a newcomer (aunt, mother-in-law, etc.) who is willing to help the surviving parent; (3) the household may be recomposed by the arrival of a stepfather or stepmother, sometimes accompanied by his or her children, if the surviving parent remarries; or (4) the household may be scattered, with the orphans being separated from their surviving parent. From the sixteenth century, onward in European societies widowers generally remarried more often and more quickly than widows. Therefore, the recomposed household in which orphans were brought up included a stepmother more often than a stepfather. A few surveys hint that orphans, more often than other children, may have been the victims of sexual abuse especially from their stepfathers or stepmothers, but the sources offer little of substance. (2)

The pain experienced from the loss of parents triggers emotions for orphan children such as anger, animosity, withdrawal, and violence, especially if the place that they are sent to treats them like outcasts because of their impoverished state. But orphan children were exposed to even horrible social conditions compared to non-orphaned children of this time. Some of these conditions included malnutrition, child neglect, physical abuse, and emotional abuse, which oftentimes resulted in bad behavior. The disturbing psychological

trauma that developed in orphans because of the harsh abuse that they endured at such young ages led to uncertainty about where they belonged as individuals in a culture that believed that they did not belong in normal, polite society. Melanie Kimball notes,

Orphans are a tangible reflection of fear of abandonment that humans experience. Orphans are outcasts, separated because they have no connection to familial structure which helps define the individual. This outcast is not caused by actions of their own but because of their difference from the “normal” pattern established by society. Orphans are a reminder that the possibility of utter undesired solitude exists for any human being. Orphan characters in folktales and literature symbolize our isolation from one another and from society. They do not belong to even the most basic groups, the family unit, and in some cultures, this is enough to cut them off from society at large. In other cultures, orphans are regarded as special people who are clearly marked as being different from the rest of society. They are the eternal Other. (559)

Orphans make good candidates for an “other” status because of the cruel and unfair treatment that they endured while in an orphanage as well as how they were treated in society once they finally left the orphanage. When they finally entered society, they were ostracized and excluded from various aspects of ordinary life because they were not seen as social equals. Furthermore, because they did not belong to a family or social group, they were easily placed in settings separated from everyday working-class people where they were marked as Others and regarded as cultural outsiders and outcasts.

Being abandoned and isolated from society because of a situation out of one's control is a frightening prospect. No human wants to be forced into an isolated space that resemble a prison because of a tragic event that has occurred in their lives. Orphans are placed in their difficult predicament because of a devastating situation that is out of their control. No matter what social class that certain individuals come from, if no one claims them or no estate is left behind for them, they will become the new residents of an orphanage. Being left alone with no one to claim as family and isolated from the rest of society shapes the anxiety that an orphan experiences at the very idea of such things happening to them.

Unfortunately, orphanhood had become a standard feature of the nineteenth-century culture due to the high risk of death among parents; thus relevance of this topic in the literature of this time is virtually self-evident. John Mullan explains why:

The orphan is above all a character out of place, forced to make his or her own life in the world. The novel itself grew up as a genre representing the efforts of an ordinary individual to navigate his or her way through the trials of life. The orphan is therefore an essentially novelistic character, set loose from established conventions to face a world of endless possibilities (and dangers). The orphan leads the reader through a maze of experiences, encountering life's threats and grasping its opportunities. Being the focus of the story's interest, he or she is a naïve mirror to the qualities of others. (1)

Because the Gothic mode has the power to display the psychological and emotional trauma of orphanhood, this is usually one of the first Gothic elements noticed in a Gothic

text because of the frequency of orphanhood and the importance of formative development in a person's life. Orphans draw from their reader's natural emotions of sympathy for children thus abandoned and traumatized. Since orphan children are a constant reminder of undesired seclusion, orphan characters are often included in novels such as Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist*-- an example of an orphan tale that begins with how a child and his mother are marked as "other" because of their respective statuses as fatherless child and single parent. According to Ruth Richardson,

A child born outside of marriage, or 'out of wedlock', was regarded as 'illegitimate', without full legal status, and this was a serious stigma until the mid-20th century...Unfortunately, many unwed women mothers, or widows with small children, ended up like Oliver's mother: without a home, in poor health, hungry and exhausted, before they would apply to enter the last place of refuge for the desperate: the workhouse. There, such women would be expected to undertake some of the drudgery of the institution. These women were singled out in some places by having to wear a special uniform which drew attention to their status as unmarried mothers. Some women became institutionalized and ended up as pauper nurses, others might leave their child in the institution, to try to make a new life outside. Like many women, Oliver's mother was too weak when she gave birth, and died, leaving him alone in the world. (pars. 9-10)

As children who were born out of wedlock or whose "deadbeat dads" had cut and run from their responsibilities, they were considered orphans in the eyes of society because a family was deemed normal and functional only if both parents provided care.



In the beginning of *Jane Eyre*, readers follow the life of Jane as an orphan subjected to unexpected hardships because of the unforeseen death of her parents, who lost their battle with the typhus fever that was common at the time. As a child, Jane is a maltreated and lonely orphan who only stands to receive further humiliations from any adoptive family or institution intended to look after her (Cavallaro 154). Jane experiences her first share of humiliation and abuse from her adoptive family, the Reeds, who are her relatives. She acknowledges her inferiority to the Reeds when she encounters her first moment of isolation from them:

Me, [s]he had dispensed from joining the group, saying, ‘She regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance; but that until she heard from Bessie, and could discover by her own observation that I was endeavoring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner--something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were- contented, happy little children.’ (Brontë 11)

As a child who has recently been sent away from a life that was genuine with the people who truly loved her to a loveless life that is unfamiliar to her, Jane acknowledges the Reeds' detachment and emotionless feelings towards her. Here, Mrs. Reed expects for Jane to be a contented and happy child even after the recent death of her parents and not to mention the mistreatment that she immediately begins receiving from her, her children, and even the servants. John G. Peters identifies this when he claims that

This scene is indicative of Jane’s situation at Gateshead, and her otherness in relation to the Reeds remains unchanged throughout the novel. Even later at her

aunt's deathbed, Jane says of Mrs. Reed. "Poor, suffering woman! It was too late for her to make now the effort to change her habitual frame of mind: living, she had ever hated me--dying, she must hate me still" (p.142). Gateshead becomes representative of Jane's position outside the social order as a whole. (58)

Jane's mistreatment by the Reeds, although seemingly outrageous, should be far from surprising. Studies have shown that children are much more likely to be mistreated by stepparents than by natural parents-- a sad fact of life sometimes referred to as "The Cinderella Syndrome" (Daly and Wilson 197). Jane's abuse at the Reeds' house foreshadows her mistreatment at the Lowood School and her marginalized social status once she enters the labor pool as a housekeeper, and more generally even symbolizes what being excluded from class privilege during the nineteenth century was like.

Evolutionary biologist David P. Barash explains why Jane's abuse by her stepparents is predictable:

Evolution frowns on taking care of someone else's kids because there is no payoff in offering parental assistance when you aren't really the parent, when the genes thus promoted are not our own. To summarize two decades of research on human beings: Youngsters living with a stepparent are from forty to sixty times more at risk of neglect, abuse, and infanticide than are comparable children living with their biological parents. This is true even when other factors such as income, education level and ethnicity are taken into account. Like it or not-- and, given the high frequency of step-parenting and blended families, many people don't like it--

the step relationship is by far the highest predictor of a child's maltreatment (157, 163).

In other words, the blended family will not function in the same way as the traditional family because of the absence of shared ancestry to knit families together. This is evident for Jane and her Aunt Reed, who is only related to Jane through marriage. Mrs. Reed takes Jane into her home not because she feels obligated but because her husband, who is blood-related to Jane and who was on his deathbed, made her promise to take care of Jane. However, although Mrs. Reed takes Jane into her home as promised, she psychologically abuses Jane under her watch and allows her children to do so as well. This shows that Mrs. Reed does not desire to provide the same affordances to Jane that she provides for her own children.

Genetically speaking, since Jane obviously shares none of Mrs. Reed's DNA, this aunt only by marriage finds it hard to treat Jane in the same manner as her own children. Even on her death bed, she carries her ill feelings towards Jane. Mrs. Reed's true feelings towards Jane are evident when she indicates that she too suffered a great deal, although with far lesser cause:

I had more trouble with that child than anyone would believe. Such a burden to be left on my hands, and so much annoyance as she caused me, daily and hourly, with her incomprehensible disposition, and her sudden starts of temper, and her continual, unnatural watching of one's movements! I declare she talked to me once like something mad, or like a fiend; no child ever spoke or looked as she did; I was glad to get away from the house. What did they do with her at Lowood? The

fever broke out there, and many of the pupils died. She, however, did not die; but I said she did; I wish she had died! I had a dislike to her mother, always; for she was my husband's only sister, and a great favorite with him; he opposed the family's disowning her when she made her low marriage; and when news came of her death, he wept like a simpleton. (Brontë 271-272)

Mrs. Reed's disgust for Jane has finally reached its peak while she is on her deathbed. She even wishes death on a child that she has sent away, one that has not communicated with her for some time. Apparently, the root of the problem is Jane's mother, who was Mrs. Reed's husband's only and favorite sibling, and whose DNA thus gave her much more favoritism and privilege than Mrs. Reed. Even after her mother's and uncle's passing, Jane pays for Mrs. Reed's envy as a result of that close relationship.

Because Jane is treated so poorly by those around her in her new life, she misbehaves, largely in a defensive attempt to safeguard herself from those who attack her. In her introduction to *Jane Eyre*, Susan Ostrov Weisser points out that "the rebelliousness of Jane's childhood lies in her outspoken insistence on her right to be loved and valued as an individual, and her equally passionate resistance to the rigidly hierarchical social distinctions of class that informed Victorian society (Brontë xxv). Likewise, Judith Sloman in her article, "Jane Eyre Childhood and Popular Children's Literature" sheds further light on the nature of Jane's rebelliousness:

Brontë, unlike most contemporary children's writers, imagined at least some children having intense and complicated inner feelings which could not be expressed within the genteel environment. Such a child, like Jane having to exist

without love and understanding or acceptance in a place like Gateshead, might naturally have hostile feelings. Too timid and powerless to try to express them, except under immense pressure, this child might well appear nasty and withdrawn, unloving instead of unloved. (107)

This perspective provides an unusually appropriate explanation of Jane's true intention of wanting to fit in an environment that miscasts her as an "other." When Jane decides to stand up for herself, she is labeled as a misfit and troublemaker. As Judith Sloman further suggests,

The contrast between Jane's usual sudden appearance and her unexpectedly violent outburst causes her to be thought as evil; the Reed family, and their servants connect her general unresponsive with some kind of intrinsic moral flaw, although they give her nothing to respond to positively. (107)

According to Mrs. Reed and the servants who observe Jane daily, Jane is merely a violent child because the violent outbursts provoked by the constant emotional and physical abuse that she receives from them. In other words, Jane lashes out and acts negatively because of the prejudicial treatment that she encounters, rather than purposefully misbehave because she is inherently disobedient. As Barash and Barash note, "It is difficult to identify an imaginative literary depiction of the stepchild as a happy, well-adjusted, wholly accepted member of either family or society" (173).

Orphans and their stories are often captured in Gothic works because of the brutal treatment they suffer as well as their desire to "escape" their harsh fate—also a plot

element common in Gothic. In relation to this, Dani Callavaro points out that in Gothic literature, whether classic or modern,

[C]hildren are relentlessly persecuted, victimized, abandoned and released into unknown dangers by adults anxious to protect themselves. The victimization of the young is often warranted by the claim that children are not the innocent creatures that Romanticism made them out to be but actually dark and latently monstrous beings. (213)

Jane makes a good candidate for this idea that in Gothic texts, there representatives of the dominant culture that it is actually acceptable to victimize and oppress children in general because they deserve it as part of their socialization. Additionally, Dani Callavaro further notes that Gothic texts are

narratives of darkness that tend to construct the child as an ambivalent creature. On the one hand, children are associated with innocence, simplicity, and lack of worldly experience. In the Romantic ethos, in particular, they are often ideated as exemplary beings, unsullied by murky deviousness of socialized existence. On the other hand, precisely because children are not yet encultured, they are frequently perceived as a threat to the fabric of adult society and they retain a connection with a primordial and inchoate world that does not respect rigid codes and fixed patterns of meaning. (135)

Children who are presented in Gothic narratives are thus regarded in one way as innocent and angelic while in another, they are viewed as evil and devious. Children are often isolated from the adult world because adults do not view them as equals but a distraction

because of their inability to follow the rules mandated by society. Besides *Jane Eyre*, there are other novels that depict children who are ostracized from society, such as Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), Charles Dicken's *Bleak House* (1852), and Dicken's *Great Expectations* (1861), to name a few of the novels that include orphan tales. All such novels share the same objective, which is to show how poorly orphan children were treated and how some were able to eventually rise above their situations, just did as *Jane Eyre*.

Social class is also a contributing factor in how the child Jane is treated, because she arrives at Mrs. Reed's home poverty-stricken. Although Mrs. Reed fulfills her husband's dying wish of taking care of Jane, she undermines that by treating Jane as an outcast. Jane states with remarkable sympathy for her oppressive caretaker, "It must have been most irksome to find herself [Mrs. Reed] bound by a hard-wrung pledge to stand in the stead of a parent to a strange child she could not love, and to see an uncongenial alien permanently intruded on her own family group" (Brontë 22). Again, Jane foresees Mrs. Reed's problem with her as a result of her actions when she systematically restricts and excludes Jane from family occasions, thus confirming Jane's intuition that she is the "Other" in the Reed's home.

In her new environment, Jane has no one to turn to for support, considering that not only do Mrs. Reed's children exclude her from their presence, but also the servants whom Mrs. Reed has ordered to look after Jane. Placing Jane with her servants suggests that Mrs. Reed views Jane in the same manner as her "help," which is simply as a sociocultural "other." Mrs. Reed places Jane even beneath the servants, because in the

same way that the servants depend on Mrs. Reed for their very own survival, Jane is dependent on the servants for hers, and they regard her as an inferior “other.” Bessie reminds Jane of her lower class standing compared to the Reeds when she declares, “You ought to be aware, miss, that you are under obligations to Mrs. Reed. She keeps you; if she were to turn you off, you would have to go to the poor-house” (18). Miss Abbot joins in on Bessie’s discussion by concluding, “And you ought not to think of yourself on an equality with the Misses Reed and Master Reed, because missis kindly allows you to be brought up with them. They will have a great deal of money, and you will have none; it is your place to be humble, and to try to make yourself agreeable to them” (18). This passage confirms the inequality and injustice inherent within social class structures in England. Even if Jane grows up with her cousins, she should never view herself as equal to them because they will always be of a higher social class than hers. Also, because of this, Jane should stay on good terms with her cousins by conforming to their expectations because unfortunately while she is living with them her life depends on them for her very survival.

Jane does not only struggle in vain to gain equality with the Reeds, but she experiences her first case of patriarchal dominance by her cousin John Reed, who constantly abuses her. On one of the many occasions that Jane is forced to be alone from Mrs. Reed and her children, she decides to take solace in the library, a place that allows her to escape mentally from a toxic environment full of destructive behavior towards her. Even in the library that Jane isolates herself in, John Reed finds a way to abuse her. He explains to Jane:



You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mamma says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mamma's expense. Now, I'll teach you to rummage my book-shelves; for they are mine; all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years. Go and stand by the door, out of the way of the mirror and the windows. (15)

This passage confirms decisively that Jane is a powerless outsider in the Reeds' home. As mentioned before, Mrs. Reed controls the behavior of all those in the home because she is in fact the matriarch. Out of the three children, John enjoys the most privilege as he is the family's future patriarch, and thus Brontë uses him to further prove her stance on the influence of patriarchy on women's lives. John Reed's verbal abuse shows entitlement as he ridicules Jane for rummaging his books and having to depend on his family.

John feels privileged to treat Jane in the manner that he does not only as a cousin, but even more to the point, his gender allows him to do so without any fear of reprisal. He is the only cousin seen mistreating Jane since her female cousins Eliza and Georgiana Reed primarily isolate themselves from her by constant companionship with their mother. Also, Jane tells us that "he had not much affection for his mother and sisters, and an antipathy to me" (14). The behavior exhibited by John justifies the impression that because he is in fact a male, his biological and psychological make-up influences his behavior towards the women in his life. During the nineteenth century in Britain the patriarchal system guaranteed male privilege and power; thus, John Reed's feelings and behavior are excused because of the superiority conferred by his gender. Because Mrs.

Reed turns her ear from the sadistic abuse that her son inflicts on Jane, he continues to do so. Jane remarks:

He bullied and punished me- two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrunk when he came near. There were moments when I was bewildered by the terror that he inspired, because I had no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions: the servants did not like to offend their young master by taking my part against him, and Mrs. Reed was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse, though he did both now and then in her very presence more frequently, however, behind her back. (14)

Mrs. Reed allows John Reed to treat Jane thusly not only because her niece by marriage is an outsider in their home who deserves no affection, but also because he is the man of the house. Moreover, it is Mrs. Reed's deliberate intention to create an uncomfortable environment for Jane, thus setting her up to act in a disobediently enough manner to justify Mrs. Reed's decision to send her away. Thus by constantly harassing and abusing Jane, John Reed makes his mother's decision to send Jane away even easier for her. John G. Peters suggests,

Besides the possibility of Jane's usurping her own children's place, Jane's fiery temper and strength also threaten Mrs. Reed. These characteristics challenge Mrs. Reed's authority as head of the family and as a member of the ruling class; they also threaten to influence the Reed children. In addition, Jane exposes the Reeds'

selfishness and charitability. This becomes particularly important, because the Reeds represent the ruling class as a whole. This becomes clear as Jane grows and continues to challenge cultural norms concerning the role of women and class in society. (61)

This line of thought suggests that Jane is a threat not only to Mrs. Reed herself but also to what she represents, which is the higher class which prides itself on its right to power. Symbolically, Jane challenges prevailing social biases and norms, and her behavior may thus be construed as a call for those who are thus marginalized to stand up for their own human dignity.

When Jane finally speaks up and shows some independence, she is stripped of it because she speaks her mind. She will not allow John Reed to get away with his cruel treatment towards her, and thus cries, "Wicked and cruel boy! You are like a murderer- you are like a slave -driver- you are like the Roman emperors!" (Brontë 15). What the murderer, slave driver, Roman emperors, and John have in common is that they are all patriarchs who support social conventions which marginalize women. Jane expresses her concern when she says, "No one had reproved John for wantonly striking me; and because I had turned against him to avert further irrational violence, I was loaded with general opprobrium"(21). Ironically, instead of being reprimanded for striking Jane, John is spared, and she is punished. John Reed can thus be seen as a symbol of patriarchy itself because the patriarchal system dismisses any corruption or misdoing by the patriarch himself. In this case, as mentioned before, John's cruel behavior is ignored and dismissed as a defensive mechanism to offset Jane's accused disrespect towards him. Justice is

finally served as the Reeds' children face difficulty later in their lives. What Brontë reveals to readers is that no matter what a person's social standing is, he or she are not excluded from hardships and misfortune.

Adversity follows John Reed and his sisters Georgiana and Eliza during their adulthood. Writing on how spoiled children like Mrs. Reeds do not eventually live a happy life, Judith Sloman observes the following:

The spoiled child of these children's books is characteristically self-destructive; he or she degenerates morally and physically and does not always live to grow up. In the case of the Reeds' children, they are 'self-punished'. John Reed and his sisters eventually meet stereotyped fates: John dissipates himself and his family's property in a life of sensuality, and then kills himself which in turn causes his mother to die. Georgiana grows fat and marries for money. Eliza becomes a nun, a less conventional ending, but surely a variation on the loveless existence that the selfish child was generally expected to bring upon himself or herself. (113)

Ironically, the Reed children end up with terrible fates, especially John Reed who eventually turns into a drunk wasting away any money that his family has as well as killing himself in the process. Although this is unfortunate, it serves the purpose of justice for Jane, since they end up poorly as a consequence of an upbringing that teaches them that they are superior to those beneath them and that their privileged status would always put them ahead of those less fortunate.

Jane's life at the Reeds would only prepare her for the continued abuse that she would encounter because of her status as an orphan and later as a governess. The Reeds'

estate, Gateshead Hall, and especially the Red Room marks the beginning for what Jane will experience through the rest of the novel- namely, Gothic imprisonment in spaces that “trap” women within patriarchal confines.

In Gothic literature, the setting--which most of the time is a gloomy, threatening mansion or castle-- is oftentimes identified as a major influence upon the plot. The significance of Gateshead Hall, Lowood School, and Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre* is that these spaces are all symbols of confinement, terror, and oppression. Moreover, the kind of abuse that Jane endures within them marks the different stages that she, as a protagonist, experiences during her life. For example, while Jane lives at Gateshead Hall, she is a “Cinderella” in the residence of her relatives by marriage. What she experiences at Gateshead Hall can be described in one word: Hell. Living in a space inhabited by individuals of a higher social class humiliates her and keeps her confined to separate parts of the home. Of these, the notorious “Red Room” is the most oppressive.

Many of the rooms used in both *Jane Eyre* and *The Bondswoman’s Narrative* to confine female characters like Jane, Hannah and her mistress, and other female characters oftentimes contain dark secrets that consist of some sort of crime and/or torment. We can examine the “Red Room” that Jane is confined to as a salient example. Jane describes the Red Room as

A spare room chamber very seldom slept in; I might say never, indeed, unless when a chance of influx of visitors at Gateshead Hall rendered it necessary to turn to account all the accommodation that it contained; yet it was one of the largest and stateliest chambers in the mansion. A bed, supported on massive pillars of

mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damask, stood out like a tabernacle in the centre; the carpet was red; the table at the foot of the bed was covered with a crimson cloth; the walls a soft fawn-color, with blush of pink in it; the ward-robe, the toilet-table, the chairs, were of darkly polished old mahogany. Out of these deep surrounding shades rose high, and glared White, the piled-up mattresses and pillows of the bed, spread with a snowy Marseilles counterpane...This room was chill, because it seldom had a fire; it was silent, because remote from the nursery and the kitchens; solemn, because it was known to be so seldom entered. The housemaid alone came here on Saturdays, to wipe from the mirrors and the furniture a week's quiet dust; and Mrs. Reed, herself, at far intervals, visited it to review the contents of a certain secret drawer in the wardrobe, where stored divers parchments, her jewel-casket, and a miniature of her deceased husband; and in those last words lies the secret of the red-room- the spell which kept it so lonely in spite of its grandeur. Mr. Reed had been dead nine years; it was in this chamber he breathed his last; here he lay in state; hence his coffin was borne by undertaker's men; and, since that day, a sense of dreary consecration had guarded it from frequent intrusion. (Brontë 18-19)

Jane is confined in the Red Room first as a punishment for her disobedience of her cousin, John Reed which appalls the servants. Miss Bessie yells, "For shame! For shame! What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactress' son! Your young master!" (17). The Red Room confines Jane to a frightening space that she

believes is haunted because of its past but its very oppressiveness intensifies anxieties that have arisen from the cruel transition to the Reeds' home.

Also, the thought of Jane's uncle's ghost being in the room with her causes her to experience a nervous breakdown which even in itself may be understood as a desperate attempt to escape. Gilbert and Gubar focus on this idea that, "In the red-room, however, little Jane chooses (or is chosen by) a third, even more terrifying, alternative: escape through madness. Seeing a ghostly, wandering light, as of the moon on the ceiling," she recalls that

'My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down.'(341) The child screams and sobs in anguish, and then, adds the narrator coolly, 'I suppose I had a species of fit," for her next memory is of waking in the nursery and seeing before me a terrible red glare crossed with thick Black bars'(chap.13), merely the nursery fire of course, but to Jane Eyre the child a terrible reminder of the experience she has just had, and to Jane Eyre the adult narrator an even more dreadful omen of experiences to come. (341)

The Gothic psychological disturbance that Jane experiences is claustrophobia due to her being in such a cramped space. Jane suffers a nervous breakdown because of two things. First, she experiences fear because of what she thinks is her uncle's ghost; and second, she is overwhelmed with the feeling of being trapped with no way to escape. However, her aunt refuses to free her from this patriarchal space seem to be inhabited by its owner even after death.

Further, Gilbert and Gubar suggest that the feelings that Jane experiences in the Red Room serve as a paradigm for the plot of *Jane Eyre*: Jane's anomalous, orphaned position in society, her enclosure in stultifying roles and houses, and her various attempts to escape through flight, starvation, and even madness (341). As they see it, Jane's experiences are all

in one way or another, variations on the central, red-room motif of enclosure and escape" Charlotte Brontë quite consciously intended the incident of the Red Room to serve as a paradigm for the larger plot of her novel is clear not only from its position in the narrative but also from Jane's own recollection of the experience at crucial moments throughout the book: when she was humiliated by Mr.

Brocklehurst at Lowood, for instance, on the night when she decides to leave Thornfield. In between these moments, moreover, Jane's pilgrimage consists of a series of experiences which are, in one way or another, variations on the central, red-room motif of enclosure and escape. (341)

The Red Room thus foreshadows the kind of confinement and oppression that Jane will continue to endure as she continues to journey through life, especially at her next place of residence, the Lowood Institute, the second of the novel's three primary spaces of Gothic entrapment.

Lowood is a home for young girls who "have lost either one or both parents, and this is called an institution for educating orphans" (Brontë 61). However, Lowood fails to provide sufficient necessities for the girls, including food, educational tools, suitable clothing for the harsh weather, and adequate heating. Further, the young girls of Lowood



are punished if they fail to follow the rules and expectations set for them. Even the building itself lacks proper heating. Without the necessities to survive the hardships of everyday life, many girls become ill with the typhus virus and as a result die from illnesses sustained from the harsh conditions that they were living in. Jane argues,

Semi-starvation and neglected colds had predisposed most of the pupils to receive infection. Forty-five out of the eighty girls lay ill at one time...Many, already smitten, went home only to die; some died at the school, and were buried quietly and quickly, the nature of the malady forbidding delay. (91-92)

Moreover, soon after this terrible virus breakout, the school is described as lying in a “cradle of fog and fog-bred pestilence; which, quickening with the quickening spring, crept into the Orphan Asylum, breathed typhus through its crowded school and dormitory, and ere May arrived, transformed the seminary into a hospital” (91). Many of the girls would die from this illness. Jane continues,

While disease had thus become an inhabitant of Lowood, and death its frequent visitor; while there was gloom and fear within its walls; while its rooms and passages steamed with hospital smells-the drug and the pastille striving vainly to overcome the effluvia of mortality--that bright May shone unclouded over the bold hills and beautiful woodland out-of-doors. (92)

Although Lowood School is contaminated with the typhus virus, after a year the environment around it is described as being pleasant, where flowers begin to blossom. Ironically, these beautiful flowers only serve the purpose of being placed in a young girl's coffin after she has succumbed to the typhus virus.

Besides the condition of the school and lack of necessities, the verbal and physical abuse that the girls encounter is another form of oppression that they experience at Lowood. For example, Jane is persecuted by Mr. Brocklehurst who has been influenced by Mrs. Reed to believe that she is a deceitful child who lacks refined social behavior. As Mr. Brocklehurst reveals in a conversation with Jane's teachers and peers:

This I learned from her benefactress; from the pious and charitable lady who adopted her in her orphan state, reared her as her own daughter, and whose kindness, whose generosity, the unhappy girl repaid by an ingratitude so bad, so dreadful, that at last her excellent patroness was obliged to separate her from her young ones. ( 81)

As a consequence of Mrs. Reed's negative portrayal, Jane is immediately punished when her "treacherous slate somehow slipped from [her] hand, and falling with an obtrusive crash, directly drew every eye upon [her]" (78). Exclaiming that she is "a careless girl!" (78), Mr. Brocklehurst quickly isolates Jane from the rest of the girls and orders her to stand on a stool as the rest of the girls resume their daily routine—a sadistic shaming ritual to further isolate her as an outcast. He illustrates this by informing the teachers and orphan girls:

Miss Temple, teachers, and children, you all see this girl?... You see she is yet young; you observe she possesses the ordinary form of childhood; God has graciously given her the shape that she has given to all of us; no signal deformity points her out as a marked character. Who would think that the

Evil One had already found a servant and agent in her? Yet such, I grieve to say, is the case. (79)

Without observing Jane for himself in order to get a better understanding of what is really going on with her, Mr. Brocklehurst accuses her of being a servant to the devil. The only thing that Jane has done that goes against being an obedient child is to challenge those perverted Christian ideals. Sadly, Jane is once again singled out as the "Other" because of what is deemed as disorderly behavior for a child. This proves that the reason for Jane's "otherness" that adults like Mrs. Reed and Mr. Brocklehurst fail to understand her misbehavior, which simply does not fit what they are used to in their world. Hence, Jane is punished time after time for what her superiors view as disrespectful and evil, all because of her strong will to speak up for herself to those who cause harm to her and others.

Other orphan girls besides Jane experience the harsh reality of being at Lowood. An important character named Julia Severn becomes a victim of discrimination when Mr. Brocklehurst criticizes her for her naturally curly red hair. Believing that Julia's hair goes against the pious dress codes of the school he orders the teachers to cut off her curls. Mr. Brocklehurst prepares us for this ordeal by asking:

Miss Temple, Miss Temple, what-- what is that girl with curled hair? Red hair, ma'am, curled-- curled all over?... Julia, Ma'am. And why has she, or any other, curled hair? Why, in defiance of every precept and principle of this house, does she conform to the world so openly- here, in an evangelical charitable establishment- as to wear her hair one mass of curls? (77)

Mr. Brocklehurst's expectations include how the girls should wear their hair for very good reasons as far as he is concerned. First, showing female hair--especially if it is already noticeable because of its color-- is evidence of mankind's original sin, pride. And second, because hair is the clothed female body's most powerful sexual signifier, thus suggesting lust, one of the seven deadly sins.

As far as clothing is concerned since they only have uniforms to wear which do not even protect their body heat, their hair is the only thing that can give them a personal identity at Lowood. It is indeed the one personal characteristic that they have, considering the dull and unsanitary clothes that they are given to wear, and Julia Severn's curly red hair is what makes her stand out from the rest of the girls. Her beautiful curls encourage her self- confidence even though she an orphan child. As a way to show the girls their inferiority as orphans, Mr. Brocklehurst tries to create an environment with stringent rules that limit and restrict them from having any sort of individuality. Thus, they are marked them as a collective "Other"--a deliberate strategy designed to keep the girls in their respective place in society once they graduate from the school.

Because Lowood is supposedly a religious charitable institution, Mr. Brocklehurst uses religion to rationalize his behavior towards the girls. After he gives the speech quoted above to the teachers and girls, he is interrupted by female visitors who happen to be his wife and daughters. Ironically, his wife and daughters' dresses and appearance contradict Mr. Brocklehurst's expectations of the girls at Lowood. Thus, his belief that the girls at Lowood should not have nice clothes and that their hair should be cut short is

merely evidence of his hypocrisy and class prejudice, as Mr. Brocklehurst believes that girls should dress according to their status in society.

Jane is not the only young lady punished at Lowood because of the patriarchal structure of power, which Mr. Brocklehurst rationalizes as Christian:

I have a master to serve whose kingdom is not of this world; my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh; to teach them to clothe themselves with shame-facedness and sobriety-- not with braided hair and costly apparel; and each of the young persons before us has a string of hair twisted in plaits which vanity itself might have woven; these, I repeat, must be cut off. (77-78)

Mr. Brocklehurst uses religion shamelessly to persuade the girls as to why they should not submit to the flesh of womanhood by wearing their hair loose or braided, and why they should avoid wearing expensive clothes. However, he in fact does this to justify why the girls wear the worn clothes that they do and why he has ordered them to have their hair tied up.

Other female characters in *Jane Eyre* are victims of the same abuse for the same reason--the outcast status of being an orphan. Helen Burns is very significant in Jane's survival during her early days at Lowood--in fact, Helen is an even more pathetic victim than Jane as well as the one girl pupil who befriends Jane while she at Lowood. Ashly Bennett theorizes Helen's significance this way in her, "Shameful Signification:

Narrative and Feeling in *Jane Eyre*,":

*Jane Eyre* positions shame as a relational, representational, reading mode in the depiction of Jane's childhood encounters with Helen at Lowood. We see the

problem of individualized subjectivity and social relation that haunts Jane's first days at Lowood in her fuzzy perception of her new surroundings, and especially the other girls, as an indistinguishable mass. In each instance, Jane recognizes another individual and interrogates possible forms of intimate interactions with her. The narration similarly finds in Helen an individual character around which to organize Jane's past perceptions and present memories: Helen, and Jane's reactions to her, "merit record."(307)

On Jane's first day, Helen is severely punished because of her untidiness. The mistreatment of Helen from the very beginning is what connects the girls to each other, and their shared experience of abuse is what helps them both cope each day. The first time that Jane witnesses Helen being physically and emotionally abused is when Miss Scatcherd scorns her by declaring:

Burns, you are standing on the side of your shoe; turn your toes out immediately.

Burns, you poke your chin most unpleasantly; draw it in. Burns, I insist on your holding your head up; I will not have you before me with that attitude. (65)

Miss Scatcherd punishes Helen by sadistically inflicting lashes on her neck with twigs. On another occasion, Helen is "condemned by Miss Scatcherd to a dinner of bread and water" (81) because she wipes out an exercise in her workbook to avoid having to copy it. And once again, she is punished for her untidiness in a humiliating way when "Miss. Scatcherd [writes] in conspicuous characters on a piece of pasteboard the word slattern and binds it like a phylactery round Helen's large, mild, intelligent, and benign-looking forehead" (88). However, notwithstanding her own unmerited punishment, Helen

believes that Jane is in fact innocent of the accusations held against her and gives her spiritual advice that calms Jane's spirit. Although Helen provides the comfort and friendship that Jane needs so desperately, it would all end too soon; tragically, Helen Burns succumbs to an unknown illness.

Other than Helen Burns, Miss Temple--the one kind and humane teacher—becomes very influential in Jane's life. While Jane is at Lowood, she becomes the mother that Jane never had and guides Jane during her journey at Lowood. These two are inseparable as they share the passion of empowering the other girls with their voice. While educating the girls, Miss Temple becomes Jane's mentor and the person who would influence Jane to be a teacher and governess.

When Jane finally leaves Lowood, her journey as an orphaned child is complete, and she begins her 'awakening' as a young woman. As Jane reminisces about the years spent at the Reed's home and at Lowood, she decides that it is now time to emerge from the daily routine of being confined to an institution isolated from the world. The tools of success needed to survive that Helen Burns and Miss Temple have given Jane encourage her decision to finally leave Lowood and adventure out—but only to gain a new kind of servitude: that of a governess at Thornfield Hall.

### *Thornfield as a Gothic Trapping*

Thornfield Hall is where most of the plot takes place, and Brontë uses it as a site to showcase most of her novel's Gothic elements. There is an eerie Gothic atmosphere at Thornfield, a mansion isolated from its surrounding towns. This solitary mansion has many unused rooms and apartments that have some importance in the disclosure of

Bertha Mason's identity. What Thornfield represents is the dreadful secret reality that haunts its grounds. The grounds that Thornfield Hall sits on are oftentimes unkempt, giving the estate an even more Gothic look. When discussing Thornfield, Gilbert and Gubar suggest that it is "more realistically drawn than, say, Otranto or Udolpho, it is more metaphorically radiant than most Gothic mansions: it is the house of Jane's life, its floors and walls the architecture of her experience (347). The Gothic element of Thornfield embodies the Gothic elements of Jane's experiences through most of her life.

Thornfield's mysterious attic-room is where the presence of Bertha Mason is finally revealed. Bertha is locked in an apartment on the third floor far away from the rest of Thornfield, and therefore Jane's confinement in the Red Room is what links her most explicitly and symbolically to Bertha. This is because both of them are confined to a "space" that oppresses them because of their status as an "other." In Bertha's case, according to Mr. Rochester, she has a mental illness that dictated his decision to place her in confinement to the attic for fifteen years. In other words, the attic room represents a prison where Bertha Mason serves time in an isolated space for years due to a possible actual mental illness. To explain why Brontë would incorporate madness as a theme, Valerie Beattie affirms:

Brontë's overlapping of madness and power indicates a deliberate undermining of the disciplinary force of confinement. On her visits to prisons and insane asylums Brontë clearly obtained more than visions of repression. Indicatively, in her letters she associates the reality of life with repression and oppression: "I selected rather the real than the decorative side of life." Furthermore, the parallel between these



subjective states and, collectively, Brontë's solitary confinement in the parsonage, her fictional metaphors of release, and her own physical release through enforced self-starvation, are striking. It would appear that madness and confinement generally presented Brontë with a powerful analogy for patriarchy's reception of female rebellion; at once active and passive, dangerous and containable, meaningful and meaningless. (495-496)

Here, Beattie argues that Brontë intertwines the themes of madness and power to show the influence that patriarchy has upon the lives of its female subjects. As Beattie further explains, both madness and power are used to show the

problematic conventions of Victorian romantic courtship and the misogynist prison-like conditions of patriarchal marriage. Through the variable verbal and physical release afforded by madness, both women contest the subjected positions into which they have been forced through restrictions of gender, class, and race norms. (499)

This is apparent when madness is identified with Jane's experience as an orphan and Bertha Mason's imprisonment in the attic. Power comes from those who view themselves as superior to those deemed inferior because of their social class standing, gender, or race, or even presumed lack of normal sanity.

As to why Bertha Mason was not sent to an asylum for her condition, if mental illness was the true reason why she was confined to an attic room, the reason is surely compassion and common sense, since Victorian "madhouses" were little more than dangerous places of mass incarceration for the mentally ill. There were no private rooms,

no therapists, terrible food and sanitation and thus were more like the worst prisons known today. But nonetheless, and no matter how well motivated, or not the attic room serves as a Gothic space that cages Bertha Mason, who later appears on her knees as if she were an animal when she is finally discovered. Because she is forced into confinement in this space where she may be mistreated by her caregiver, Mrs. Grace Poole, it should not come as a surprise that she would end her life by jumping off the roof of Thornfield after setting it on fire. However, since there is no actual evidence that Bertha Mason had an illness to begin with, this accusation may even have been created by Mr. Rochester in order to facilitate and rationalize his commission of various acts of adultery.

Finally, Bertha Mason's confinement to the attic room mirrors Jane's confinement in the Red Room in the sense that they both are imprisoned in these gothic "spaces" because of their anger which is a form of "madness" induced by their abusers. Furthermore, while confined to these spaces women experience the "madness" because of the extreme isolation that they both experience, and the isolation affects their mental state and even causes them to have nervous breakdowns. Jane's nervous breakdown merely causes her to faint, whereas Bertha Mason, as a result of her prolonged isolation of fifteen years in solitary, commits suicide, an act common in harsh prison conditions even in our time. According to Jason Breslow, "A 1995 study of the federal prison system in the U.S. found that 63 percent of suicides occurred among inmates locked in "special housing status," such as solitary or in psychiatric seclusion cells" (4). This study provides insight on why Jane and Bertha Mason experience madness as they too are confined in prison-

like cells as a result of restrictions placed on them because of either gender, class and/or race.

Dani Cavallaro provides insight into the mythological, historical, and psychological approaches to darkness (viii). He states, "In earlier Gothic narratives, both castles and mansions, as receptacles of mystery and evil, are often contrasted with the outside world as the daylight domain of rationality and order" (Cavallaro31). Cavallaro uses R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to demonstrate the idea:

Stevenson departs from this formula by making inner and outer worlds mirror images of each other. Relatedly, while earlier Gothic characters might wish, if not actually manage, to escape violence by breaking out of the oppressive home into the outside, Stevenson's characters are unlikely to find solace or sanctuary in the urban darkness haunted by the like of Jack the Ripper. (31)

Stevenson's idea that both inner and outer worlds provide mirror images of each other is a good analogue of Brontë's parallelism in the characterization of Jane and Bertha Mason. Although both women mirror each other, they are also complete opposites of each other-- Jane represents the outer world while Bertha Mason represents the inner. A Gothic character like Bertha does not find comfort being locked away in the dark attic-room for fifteen years; yet, when given the opportunity to escape, she finally escapes the darkness that haunts her for good.

A novelistic atmosphere that provides some form of suspense and mystery in the plot is very common to all Gothic texts, and certainly in *Jane Eyre*. While staying at

Thornfield, Jane experiences unexplained strange events that occur. First, there is a weird noise that sounds like evil laughter that appears to come from somewhere in the house.

Jane states,

While I paced softly on, the last sound I expected to hear in so still a region, a laugh, struck my ear. It was a curious laugh; distinct, formal, mirthless. I stopped; the sound ceased only for an instant; it begun again louder; for, at first, though distinct, it was very low. (127)

Throughout the novel, the sound continues until the actual maker is revealed and confronted. The noises continue, and Jane states, “When thus alone, I not unfrequently heard Grace Poole’s laugh: the same- the same peal, the same low, slow ha! Ha! Which, when first heard, had thrilled me; I heard, too, her eccentric murmurs; stranger than her laugh” (131). Here, Grace’s laughter along with her murmurs haunt Jane.

The frightening laugh which Jane hears gets worse with time. At one point, Jane is awakened by a “demoniac laugh; low, suppressed, and deep, muttered, as it seemed, at the very key-hole of my chamber-door” (177). At this point, the rudely awakened Jane cries out, “Who is there?” What follows shortly is a sound that sounds like “something gurgled and moaned” and “Ere long, steps retreated up the gallery toward the third story stair-case. A door had lately been made to shut in that stair-case; I heard it open and close, and all was still (177). Of course, Jane assumes that it is Grace Poole who she deduces must be possessed with the devil; therefore, she seeks Mrs. Fairfax for clarity. Jane will soon learn that the mysterious noise is in fact a reaction to what Jane feels.

Not only are strange noises heard throughout Thornfield on several occasions, but a suspicious event happens which has Jane questioning what really is going on. As she prepares to find Mrs. Fairfax, she notices that the air appears filled with smoke. At that very moment, Mr. Rochester's door creaks and a smoke cloud pours out, because Mr. Rochester's room is on fire. As Jane describes it, "tongues of flame darted round the bed; the curtains were on fire" (177). Since Mr. Rochester is still asleep in his bed Jane wakes him immediately by extinguishing the flames with water. This is the first of a number of truly baffling events that occur at Thornfield. Jane attempts to investigate the matter; however, Rochester tells her that he will investigate the third story where Grace Poole resides. When he returns from the third story, as suspected by Jane, Grace Poole is accused of the incident. Rochester makes Jane promise to not speak on the matter to anyone: "Meantime, I am glad that you are the only person, besides myself, acquainted with the precise details of tonight's incident. You are no talking fool; say nothing about it" (179). Because Rochester is Thornfield's representative of the patriarchal order, it is Jane's job to obey and respect his wishes. However, the next morning, she decides to question Grace Poole about the incident and expected, Grace acts as if she knows nothing of the fire that occurred. This incident consumes Jane so much that she suspects that Grace Poole may in fact be a psychotic lunatic. Jane acknowledges that

I occupied in puzzling my brains over the enigmatical character of Grace Poole, and still more in pondering the problem of her position why she had not been given into custody that morning, or at the very least dismissed from her master's service. He had almost as much as declared his conviction of her criminality last

night; what mysterious cause withheld him from accusing her? Why had he enjoined me to secrecy? It was strange-....(185)

Grace Poole is the servant that Mr. Rochester blames for some of the strange events that arise at Thornfield. Gilbert and Gubar argue that

Women in Jane's world, acting as agents for men, may be the keepers of other women. But both keepers and prisoners are bound by the same chains. In a sense, to question Grace's position at Thornfield is to question her own. (351)

Rochester easily blames Grace for Bertha Mason's actions because since she works for him, she will not challenge his accusations if she wants to keep her job. It is evident that the women who work in Thornfield, whether the governess or servants, serve the same master. Jane has her own preconceptions and her suspicions of how Mr. Rochester calmly treats the matter. She could easily be submissive and drop the issue when told; however, Jane chooses not to do that. Brontë creates her protagonist as a courageous character who questions, challenges, and resists those Victorian ideals that worked against women during her time. The dominant male society often "silenced" women by not allowing them to voice their concerns, and thus for Brontë to create a female character who spoke up when needed, but in a respectful manner, says a lot about what she was trying to accomplish with Jane. Women during this time were required to be submissive and Jane expresses this point clearly when she states, "retaining every minute of respect, every propriety of my station, I could still meet him in argument without fear or uneasy restraint; this suited both him and me" (187). This implies that although Jane did not understand why Mr. Rochester would keep Grace Poole's behavior a "secret," she knew

that even in confronting him about it, she would still have to be respectful because of her position and place as both a servant and a woman; nonetheless, she still has strength of character to challenge him.

Another strange incident that occurs at Thornfield concerns a stranger by the name of Mason. Jane is awakened during the night by “a savage, a sharp, a shrilly sound, that ran from end to end of Thornfield Hall” (243). Jane recalls the noise “[coming] out of the third story; for it passed overhead. And overhead, yes, in the room just above my chamber ceiling- I now heard a struggle; a deadly one it seemed from the noise; and a half -smothered voice shouted “Help! Help! Help!” three times, rapidly” (243). When all the guests including Jane ask what has occurred, Rochester dismisses the incident saying, “A servant has had the nightmare that is all. She’s an excitable, nervous person; she construed her dream into an apparition or something of that sort, no doubt; and has taken a fit with fright” (244). Rochester eventually leads Jane to the third story chamber where he needs assistance with a mysterious domestic dispute. She hears in one of the rooms what appears to be “a snarling, snatching sound, almost like a dog quarreling” (246). Rochester leads her to Mason, whose “linen and arm appears to be soaked in blood” (246), and orders her to take care of him for a few hours. It is while Jane is doing so that she feels acutely apprehensive and claustrophobic: “I experienced a strange feeling as the key grated in the lock, and the sound of his retreating step ceased to be heard. Here then I was in the third story, fastened into one of its mystic cells-night around me – a pale and bloody spectacle under my eyes and hands- a murderess hardly separated from me by a single door....” (248). In this moment, Jane feels imprisoned and trapped just as she did

when she was in the Red Room at Gateshead by being locked into the same chamber that the "accuser" Grace Poole has resided in during her stay.

Eventually Jane and Mr. Rochester confess their love for each other. Rochester insists on Jane being his wife and tells her that it is her that he intends to marry (297). Of course, this comes as a shock to Jane because she believes that Mr. Rochester will marry Miss Ingram-- a noble and beautiful woman (296). Before Jane is to marry Mr. Rochester, she has a dream which Gilbert and Gubar interpret as a warning—  
 “a strange regretful consciousness of some barrier dividing her from Rochester” (358). Upon waking from yet another dream, Jane notices a form that emerges from her closet—a female figure who surveys Jane’s wedding garments that are hanging close by. The female figure that Jane sees is Bertha, whose existence at this point in the novel Jane is not aware of—only that, as she tells Mr. Rochester, “this was not Sophie, it was not lean, it was not Mrs. Fairfax; it was not so, I was sure of it, and am still--it was not even that strange woman, Grace” (330). However, Rochester assures her that it must have been one of them. Jane describes the figure that she saw as “a woman, tall, and large, with thick and dark hair long down her back” with a “fearful and ghastly face” (330-331). She further states that the woman had “a discolored face--it was a savage face...red eyes and the fearful Blackened inflation of the lineaments” (331). As Jane describes the woman, she is a supernatural Gothic element like a vampire with, as Grudin emphasizes, no redeeming human qualities: “First seen darkly as a ghost, then as a goblin, as vampiric and lycanthropic, Bertha never loses the mysterious qualities that make her very humanness suspect” (147). It is at this point that the narrative reaches its climax when



Mr. Rochester's secret is revealed as he attempts to marry Jane. Mason, the stranger who is injured at Thornfield has now returned with Mr. Briggs, who serves to remind Brontë's readers of the existence of Rochester's previous marriage. Right before Mr. Rochester and Jane are about to say their vows, they are both interrupted by Mr. Briggs who declares:

I affirm and can prove that on the 20th of October, A.D- (a date of fifteen years back), Edward Fairfax Rochester, of Thornfield Hall in the county of- and of Ferndean Manor, in -shire, England, was married to my sister Bertha Antoinetta Mason, daughter of Jonas Mason, merchant, and of Antoinetta his wife, a Creole at church, Spanish Town, Jamaica. The record of the marriage will be found in the register of that church-- a copy of it is now in my possession, signed, Richard Mason. (339)

The "secret" has finally been revealed--Not only is Mr. Rochester already married, but married to a woman of mixed-race of Creole descent. Susan Meyers states in her article "Figurative Strategy of *Jane Eyre*" that "Brontë finds herself confronting the non-figurative reality of British race relations"(250) when she incorporates a "Creole" woman into the narrative. Meyers claims that Brontë's figurative use of Blackness in part arises from the history of British colonialism: the function of racial "otherness" in the novel is to signify a generalized oppression (250). She believes that Brontë uses the analogy in *Jane Eyre* for her own purposes, to signify not shared inferiority but shared oppression (Meyers 251). Comparably, Dani Cavallaro argues that the masterful Rochester relies on wealth obtained through colonial exploitation (165), further helping to explain why he

married a Creole woman in the first place. Mr. Rochester reveals why he married Bertha Mason in a long confession, as follows:

Well, Jane, being so, it was his resolution to keep the property together. He could not bear the idea of dividing his estate and leaving me a fair portion; all, he resolved, should go to my brother, Russell. Yet, as little could he endure that a son of his should be a poor man. I must be provided for by a wealthy marriage. He sought me a partner betimes. Mr. Mason, a West Indian planter and Merchant, was his old acquaintance. He was certain his possessions were real and vast; he made inquiries. Mr. Mason, he found, had a son and daughters; and he learned from him that he could and would give the latter a fortune of thirty thousand pounds; that sufficed. When I left college, I was sent out to Jamaica, to espouse a bride already courted for me. My father said nothing about her money, but he told me Miss Mason was the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty, and this was no lie. I found her a fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram, tall, dark and majestic. Her family wished to secure me, because I was of a good race, and so did she. Oh, I have no respect of myself when I think of that act! An agony of inward contempt masters me. I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her. I was not sure of the existence of one virtue in her nature. I had marked neither modesty, nor benevolence, nor candor, nor refinement, in her mind or manners; and I married her--gross, groveling, mole-eyed Black head that I was! With less sin I might have-- but let me remember to whom I am speaking. (Brontë 355-356)

Rochester marries Bertha Mason because of a monetary agreement and exchange between his and her family. He admits in the passage above that he is ashamed that he agreed to such terms and that he did not truly love Bertha from the beginning and knew little about her. To provide further context for Bertha's symbolic value to the author, Peter Grudin assures us that

within a Gothic context rich in symbolic potential the novel presents a rhetoric of Rochester's mad wife, Bertha. A new twist on the Gothic motifs of dark secrets, family curses, and monstrous or unearthly apparitions, she exists within a tradition that subverts the decorum of verisimilitude, and other conventions as well. (145)

Bertha Mason, the "mad" wife whom Rochester keeps locked away has been confined and isolated from the world because Rochester himself has gone partially mad, as implied here by his hysterical insistence on heredity factors:

Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family-- idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was both a mad woman and a drunkard! As I found out after I had wed the daughter; for they were silent on family secrets before. Bertha, like a dutiful child, copied her parent in points. (Brontë 341)

Mr. Rochester tries to justify his having locked Bertha away for fifteen years by claiming that her madness was in her genes, but perhaps more plausible is that Bertha Mason's "madness" is a result of her confinement and isolation from the world, not her mother's own madness and drunkenness. Bertha Mason was in solitary confinement, ostracized

from all human contact except for Grace Poole who served as her jailer and the “distraction” from her strange behavior. To justify Bertha Mason’s behavior as being hereditary is absurd when she has been isolated for such a prolonged period during which her madness advances and her only relief is to “act out” by prowling throughout the night.

As the representation of something unspeakable and as a projection of Jane’s own darker self, Bertha is used to show why Jane must act as she does and why, despite the strength of opposing arguments and sympathies, the protagonist must decide to leave her beloved when his prior marriage is revealed (Grudin 145). Bertha Mason is a representation of Jane’s “dark” side, sometimes called a “doppelganger.” Cavallaro describes Jane as the “civilized” alter ego of a “literal victim of colonial abuse, the madwoman considered hardly more valuable than chattel” (164). Gilbert and Gubar see this dual identity,

On a figurative and psychological level it seems suspiciously clear that the specter of Bertha is still another--indeed the most threatening--avatar of Jane. What Bertha now does, for instance, is what Jane wants to do. Disliking the “vapoury veil” of Jane Rochester, Jane Eyre secretly wants to tear the garments up. Bertha does it for her. Fearing the inexorable “bridal day,” Jane would like to put it off. Bertha does that for her too. (359)

On some deep psychological level, as Gilbert and Gubar explain, Bertha Mason’s character is the “self” that Jane struggles to control—the dark and evil self versus the innocent and angelic self which is her public persona. As Meyers points out, Brontë

wanted to show that, “Brontë uses the analogy [of a Black Creole woman and White British woman] in *Jane Eyre* for her own purposes, to signify not shared inferiority but shared oppression” (251).

*Racial Secrets as Gothic Trappings*

The significance of secrets in Gothic texts is that they are often “dark” secrets that if revealed could potentially destroy the life of the person who conceals them. In the case of *Jane Eyre*, the terrible secret that is literally hidden in the Thornfield Estate is Rochester’s wife, Bertha Mason. Ultimately, this secret destroys Thornfield by fire leaving Rochester blind and the house in ruins, while Bertha- in a final act of desperate self-assertion-jumps from the roof of the Thornfield Estate to achieve her freedom from a patriarchal oppression. Bertha Mason therefore serves as more than a “secret” to Jane. She is the weapon that Charlotte Brontë herself “secretly” uses to share the anxieties that she dealt with in her life as a woman, and those around her in the patriarchal society in which she lived. For this reason, she creates a “submissive” Jane who represents the role that women were subjected to during the nineteenth century and a “mad” Bertha Mason, who represents those repressed rebellious feelings that many women harbored in their subconscious minds in contrast to their meek social behavior. In some way, Bertha Mason represents both Brontë’s and Jane’s oppressed self- consciousness, represented by the Gothic trapping of an archetypal Madwoman, a social pariah best kept in the attic of the subconscious mind until some act that triggers the exposure and purgation of the demonic self--for Jane, Bertha’s suicide, for Brontë the act of writing the novel, a highly therapeutic achievement.

There are many messages that can be discerned in *Jane Eyre*; however, the most important that relates to this study is Brontë's use of Gothic Trappings to symbolize the various forms of oppression that female characters experience in this novel. In the end, the female victims escape the oppression that they experience; however, how they escape it is another story. In the case of Jane, she escapes her social class standing by a hypergamous marriage, but for Bertha, there is nothing except to jump to her death to escape her imprisonment. Likewise, throughout the novel the Gothic symbols and devices that Brontë chooses to use contribute to the themes of imprisonment and confinement and are essential in understanding the subordinate status that women of the nineteenth century found themselves condemned to and which they so much resented, no matter how tolerant of it they might have appeared.

## CHAPTER IV

### GENDERED, SEXUALIZED AND RACIAL OTHERS DISPLAYED THROUGH THE USE OF GOTHICISM IN *THE BONDSWOMAN'S NARRATIVE*

When exploring the lives of women characters within the Gothic genre of literature, Gothic theories such as Gothic Feminism, coined by Diane Long-Hoelveler and Female Gothic, created by Ellen Moer, have been identified as theoretical frameworks utilized in the genre. These frameworks have been adopted by many Gothic women writers as tools of analysis. For example, these Gothic theories have enabled scholars to analyze works such as *Jane Eyre* by deconstructing the lives of the women characters, while highlighting the impact of patriarchy within their lives. However, these theories were not utilized in the analysis of the Black woman's experience in African-American Gothic texts such as *The Bondswoman's Narrative*. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to include the experiences of Black women in Gothic texts and critically analyze how their oppression differs from that of their White counterparts.

This study consequently has introduced the theory of "Gothic Black Feminism," as a literary analytical tool. Gothic Black Feminism is a theoretical framework that aims to put the intersectional experiences of race and gender experienced by Black women at the center of the Gothic genre.

As discussed earlier, the mainstream Gothic Feminisms used as frameworks to theorize the victimization of women within Gothic texts only speak to White women's experiences of imprisonment and entrapment in domestic spaces. However, enslaved Black women were not privy to the privileges granted to nineteenth-century White women, whose entrapment in domestic spaces was still better than what Black enslaved endured. Thus, Gothic Black Feminist theory enables readers of Black Gothic texts to truly dissect the coded expressions of Gothic spaces that Black women were trapped in as a result of their own distinctive marginalization. Moreover, through the lens of Black Gothic Feminism, readers will be able to do the following:

- Identify how the brutal experiences of Black women are Gothic;
- Explore the significance of the Gothic spaces of entrapment endured by Black women;
- Examine the ways in which Gothic conventions are used by African-American women writers as a system of codes to show the extremely oppressive reality that these women faced because of their gender and race;
- Utilize the “visibility” of intersectional oppressions experienced by Black women in Gothic texts to include these women in the discussion of Feminism.

Thus, utilization of Gothic Black Feminist theory allows for Gothic texts to be viewed through a lens that observes, deconstructs, and analyzes the various layers of oppressions experienced by Black women within such texts.

Emily Brontë and her sister Charlotte are credited with being the first to introduce and use Gothic Trappings to illustrate the oppressive conditions of nineteenth-century



women. The previous chapter of this study focuses on the patriarchal symbols of “Gothic Trappings,” such as spaces of confinement. These spaces include the plantation, hidden rooms in the master’s home, and the overall position of women below men that Charlotte Brontë includes in *Jane Eyre*. Though the Brontë sisters depict the various entrapment spaces of women during their era, they obviously fail to notice the reality of Black women during this time in similar spaces. Moreover, there were many early enslaved women writers who were not known as were the Brontë sisters, since they were not allowed to read, or write, much less to publish their own works. Their confinement in silence thus made it very challenging for them to tell their stories. While it would be a century later before Hannah Crafts’ *The Bondswoman’s Narrative* (2002) would be published, this work not only gives insight into the life of a former slave woman, but it also allows the Black woman’s experience to be deconstructed and analyzed within spaces of entrapment comparable to those of White women, while highlighting the differences of their experiences due to their race.

There is a difference between exploring the use of Gothic Tropes and Trappings in African-American texts, such as the slave narrative, and exploring them in books written from a Eurocentric point of view. Eurocentric Gothic texts consist of a mixture of horror and romance. For example, a Eurocentric Gothic text typically includes European architecture, a distressed damsel, and a Byronic hero or antagonist. Nevertheless, the Gothic genre also embraces Black Gothic texts that show how the very existence of a slave was Gothic by virtue of elements, such as rape, murder, entrapment, secrets, torture, and escape cycles- ( events repeated during the journey of escape that make it hard to

break free). Black Gothic texts like the slave narrative demonstrate the horrors of dehumanization peculiar to the slave experience. For example, enslaved people endured physical and psychological abuse such as brutal whippings and racial name calling designed to make them feel inferior and less than human. In order to share these experiences of dehumanization and entrapment, the Gothic genre served as a tool that African-American women writers used to confront the bondage of slavery and challenge the Eurocentric perspective of women's oppression.

Although this study explores similar issues of class and gender when dissecting the lives of female characters in both Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Hannah Crafts' *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, it also highlights how race contributes to the uniquely oppressive conditions experienced by Black women in Gothic literature. In the case of Black women, their race was the first factor in determining how they were treated differently from White women. Further, Black women were punished the harshest of all by patriarchal society because of their race. Moreover, because the system of patriarchy influenced intersectional oppressions endured uniquely by Black women, White women would be treated far better and experience oppression differently from Black women. Slave women were subjected to being whipped, shackled, imprisoned, sexually abused and raped by their White masters. Such experiences by slave women in the Fictional domain are Gothic Trappings, devices set into place to trap their victims into a cycle of victimization by rape, imprisonment, and abuse on the grounds of both their race and gender. The ultimate purpose of such horrendous abuse was to weaken the soul and spirit of these Black women so that they would not have the energy to resist the laws of slavery

that shackled them. The bondage of the enslaved and their struggle to gain freedom from the cruelties of the institution of slavery is captured through the slave narrative. The slave narrative functions as the voice that liberates the narrator and other slaves who get to hear their stories be told from their own perspective. Slave narratives effectively contradict what slaveholders claimed slavery to be. These narratives depict the reality of what slavery truly consisted of-- gruesome brutal beatings, rape, separation from family, kidnapping, and a harsh workload with little food and clothing. The kinds of oppression endured by many enslaved men and women is what makes it clear that such treatment in fiction meets the criteria for Gothic Trappings, especially since the institution of slavery itself has been successfully theorized by a member of scholars as inherently "Gothic."

### *Slavery as Gothic*

In its attention to the chaos surrounding the darkness of human nature, Gothic literature provides its readers dark elements and tropes that bring attention to the irrationality, death, decay, and terror that exist in a society that prides itself on rationality and reason. Speaking of how the Gothic mode functions, Maisha Wester asserts that "The Gothic navigates and manipulates a series of somewhat standard tropes. Such tropes establish a fundamental sense of ambivalence, and the bind of a genre that has within its mechanisms of racial oppression; but the genre and its tropes are also capable of expressing the precarious position of being in America" (5). In her novel, Crafts incorporates the conventions of Gothic within the narrative in order to illuminate the darkness behind the events that occurred under slavery. The slave narrative effortlessly welcomes the Gothic into its structure because of the intrinsically nightmarish Gothic

existence of the slave's life. For this reason, Crafts' use of several Gothic conventions and trappings in her novel works to show slavery's horrendous and treacherous ways.

Though the White woman is seen as the "other" to her White male counterpart, it must be acknowledged that the Black woman experiences multiple forms of "otherness." Audre Lorde asserts that "in a patriarchal power system where White skin privilege is a major prop, the entrapments used to neutralize Black women and White women are not the same" (118). The traps set to put Black and White women in their subordinate place to men are not the same due to one simple factor: race.

*The Other "Other"*

In the lives of Black women as the other "other," they are not given the same opportunity as White women to manipulate and utilize the advantage of their Whiteness for their own safety and protection of their womanhood. For example, Hannah Crafts shares a story told by a slave woman by the name of Lizzy that illustrates the conditions of an enslaved Black woman who is sexually violated by her master. As a result of her mistress's anger, she is punished by the mistress who demands that she be sent away. Therefore, the mistress Mrs. Cosgrove demonstrates her role as 'other' when she dictates the fate of the other "other's" lives as a result of her husband's infidelity with slave women. During the time that Mrs. Cosgrove is away on a trip attending to her family, Mr. Cosgrove sexually exploits the slave women whom he thinks are beautiful. As a result of his craving for beautiful slaves, he has fathered several children with them. In order for slave masters like Mr. Cosgrove to justify their behavior, bell hooks states, "White male slave owners usually tried to bribe Black women as preparation for sexual overtures so as

to place them in the role of “prostitute. As long as the White slave owner “paid” for the sexual services of his Black female slave, he felt absolved of responsibility for such acts” (25). White male slave owners believed that their behavior was justified. After raping their slave women, they would provide them with gifts, thereby allowing them to believe their behavior was acceptable since the women would take the gifts. Furthermore, mistresses were known for having to deal with their husband’s constant infidelity with female slaves. Upon her return from Europe and having discovered her husband’s act of infidelity, Mrs. Cosgrove expresses her true feelings:

Rage, jealousy, hate, revenge all burned in her bosom. To think that she had been rivaled by slaves. She, with English and aristocrat blood in her veins. It was too much to be endured, but she had great self-command; her tears soon dried, and she said, in a voice perfectly calm. ‘Their presence in this house I will not endure. They shall tramp and their children with them.’ (Crafts 176)

Mr. Cosgrove’s affairs with his slave women makes Mrs. Cosgrove question her rightful place as both his wife and the mistress of the plantation. Consequently, she sees her husband’s favorites as a threat to her marriage and position as the first lady of the plantation and consequently demands that their children be sent away.

Mistresses used their power over slaves to gain power in both their society and in their homes. Their role as a mistress over slave women allowed them to compensate for their inferior status as women. Erin Mulligan states,

Slave ownership elevated the status of both genders, giving White women more power within the slaveholding system. Affluent White Southern women, or

southern mistresses, supported this institution of slavery because of the ideological agency slave ownership provided in the strict social hierarchy of the South. [As well] not only did slave purchase alleviate [mistresses] from domestic chores, it also provided them with enhanced agency in the home over slaves, men included. (pars. 2, 6)

Mrs. Cosgrove demonstrates her superiority over one of the slave women that her husband has hidden away in their home. Hidden in a part of the home that Mrs. Cosgrove is forbidden to go into, there is no evidence of a secret door or passageway anywhere in the home; therefore, she is forced to investigate her suspicions by going outside to look in through a window. While doing so, she discovers her husband's secret in a hidden patriarchal enclosed space. Confronting the young slave woman whom she has discovered hidden in an apartment within her home, she angrily declares

Never mind your master, I am mistress of this house, and will be. Not one, not even him, of whom you speak, shall thwart or interfere with my will. Get yourself and your children ready and be off. Steer right for the North, and never stop short of Canada. You will be safe then, and your infants will not inherit the curse of their mother's slavery. (Crafts 183)

Thus, by this assertion of her own authority, Mrs. Cosgrove has claimed her rightful place as the mistress of the plantation with power comparable to that of her husband.

When Mrs. Cosgrove stepped in to make sure her husband sent away his Black concubines, she also impacted their lives in a cruel way. For example, of the three beautiful slave women being sent away, one stabs her infant and herself to avoid the

harsh reality of being sold again to perhaps a harsher master. Mistresses like Mrs. Cosgrove contributed to the infanticide of slave children killed by their slave mothers who did not believe that their children should endure the horrors of slavery. Similarly, Toni Morrison's neo-slave narrative *Beloved* depicts the act of infanticide committed as an act of slave resistance when female protagonist Sethe slits the neck of her baby girl in order to protect her from being sold into slavery. Speaking of the present, Audre Lorde also speaks to the condition of Black and White women in a patriarchal social order which is still patriarchal:

White women face the pitfall of being seduced into joining the oppressor under the pretense of sharing power. This possibility does not exist in the same way for women of Color. The tokenism that is sometimes extended to us is not an invitation to join power; our racial "otherness" is a visible reality that makes that quite clear. For White women there is a wider range of pretended choices and rewards for identifying with patriarchal power and its tools. (118-119)

Notwithstanding the shared oppression that both White and Black women encounter from men, White women are still able to co-exist with patriarchy if they conform to its lopsided sexist behavioral codes.

The Black slave women who submitted to concubinage against their masters against their will had no choice but to submit to their masters whether they liked it or not, since

The enslaved Black woman could not look to any group of men, White or Black, to protect her against sexual exploitation. Often in desperation, slave women

attempted to enlist the aid of White mistresses, but these attempts failed. Some mistresses responded to the distress of female slaves by persecuting and tormenting them. (hooks 36)

In some cases, as hooks observes, if a slave woman sought the help of her own White mistress, depending on the type of mistress she was she might not only turn her back on the abuse, but also punish the slave woman even more for ‘talking nonsense.’ hooks mentions that some mistresses would even go as far as encouraging the use of Black women as sexual objects because it spared them from unwanted marital sexual advances themselves (36). Therefore, the slave woman could easily be oppressed by not only her White male master, but also his wife. Deborah White states,

The White woman’s sense of herself as a woman, her self-esteem, and perceived superiority depended on the racism that debased Black women. White women were mistresses because Black women were slaves. White women had real power over enslaved women because Black women were really powerless. (6)

Overall, Mrs. Cosgrove still had much more power than her Black female slave counterparts even if her husband put his “favorites” in a position to feel as though they were in a superior position to their mistress. Clearly then, the oppression experienced by the enslaved Black woman was much harsher during slavery than that of her mistress.

Furthermore, Deborah White states,

In fact, Black women did not experience sexism in the same way White women did. Owing to their color, White men saw Black women differently and exploited them differently. Race changed the experience of Black womanhood. The rape of



Black women, their endless toil, the denial of their beauty, the inattention to their pregnancy, and the sale of their children were simultaneous manifestations of racism and sexism, not an extreme form of one or the other. (6)

The mistreatment of female slaves included some of the worst possible physical and psychological abuse that no human being should have to endure.

Central to the system of slavery was the sexual oppression and exploitation of women. bell hooks states that “institutionalized sexism formed the base of the patriarchal American social structure along with racial imperialism. Sexism was, after all, an integral part of the social and political order White colonizers brought with them from their European homelands, and it had a grave impact on the fate of enslaved Black women” (15). The sexual and physical abuse that White colonizers inflicted on Black women was adopted by the White masters who owned them. Many of the slave women that the masters liked would be called ‘favorites.’ These ‘favorites’ would be exploited against their will and would later have no choice but to accept sexual exploitation. hooks states, White male slave owners wanted enslaved Black women to passively accept sexual exploitation as the right and privilege of those in power. The Black female slave who willingly submitted to a master’s sexual advance and who received presents or payments was rewarded for her acceptance of the existing social order. Those Black women who resisted sexual exploitation directly challenged the system; their refusal to submit passively to rape was a denouncement of the slave owner’s right to their persons. They were brutally punished. The political aim of

this categorical rape of Black women by White males was to obtain absolute allegiance and obedience to the White imperialistic order. (27)

Indeed, the threat of rape or other physical brutalization inspired terror in the psyches of displaced African females (hooks 18). Moreover, and as a further source of mental distress, it was very common and for some masters to impregnate their concubines. Often, these women and their children were given special privileges, unlike other slaves. However, the downside to this fortunate outcome was that an indignant wife would demand that such children, as visual proof of the husband's infidelity, be sold down the river for sake of appearance and the wife's feelings. Eventually, whether the children were sent away or not, this kind of miscegenation would give rise to a new type of racially-mixed African American who became known as the "tragic mulatto."

In *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, as Williams points out, "the motif of the tragic mulatto, another staple theme in American fiction of the period, and the privileged White male predator sowing his wild oats among his slaves" (146) provides Crafts with her central theme. In the beginning of the narrative, readers realize that there is a secret in the novel centered on the character that Hannah never names but just calls her mistress to protest her identity as if this were an actual rather than fictional slave narrative. In the case of Hannah's mistress, a wealthy man who called himself her father sent away a mulatto slave woman by the name of Susan, said to be Hannah's mistress's mother. This implies that Hannah's was her mother's slave master, and under the laws of enslavement, Hannah's mistress's mother was his chattel property. Hence, the brutality of sexual abuse

and rape experienced by so many chattel slave women is appropriated by the author as one of her main Gothic trappings.

For Hannah's mistress, her desire to live the life of a free woman ceases when a mysterious dark figure with the wickedly ironic name Mr. Trappe is discovered to be lurking around and following her every move. Mr. Trappe is later identified as a lawyer who knows the true identity and heritage of many mulatto slaves who have passed as free White people. Because Mr. Trappe knows that Hannah's mistress is in fact the love child of her mother's master, he uses this to his advantage by exploiting Hannah's mistress' father when he realizes that he has adopted her, thus allowing her to pass as a free White child but at the same time making her a prisoner to Mr. Trappe because of his acknowledgement of this "passing."

*Enslaved Child as "Other"*

In the same way that the previous chapter discusses Jane's childhood as an orphan and the conditions surrounding such status in *Jane Eyre*, orphanhood functions to show how orphaned slave children suffered even more extreme conditions when separated from their parents. However, what the trope of orphanhood accomplishes in slave narratives such as *The Bondswoman's Narrative* is to expose and condemn one of slavery's cruelest acts—the separation of families and how it affects slaves.

*Mulatto as Racial "Other"*

Like Hannah's situation as a mulatto, by no means were all slave children completely Black since many were fathered by their mothers' masters. According to Wilma King, "The majority of enslaved women who gave birth to children of a

“different” color did not harm them, yet the children had to cope with emotions that were related to their color. Some children were embarrassed, humiliated, and angered due by the thought of their fathers raping their mothers” (260). Mulatto children faced a very harsh childhood. They were a reminder to the world that a White and Black person had ‘mixed.’ They “were objects of sales, punishments, and other abuses the same as boys and girls of a darker hue. Mulattoes were subjected to an added burden by slaveholding women who suspected that their husbands were the fathers of these children” (261). Moreover, the children and their mothers were often mistreated by the mistress who was constantly reminded by their very presence and her husband’s adultery.

One advantage of being a mulatto slave that Black slaves were not able to get away with was the act of “passing.” The act of “passing” allowed mulatto slaves who appeared to look White to pass for White and be viewed therefore as a legitimate member of White society. Such is the case for Hannah’s mistress in *The Bondswoman’s Narrative* when she attempts to marry the White master of a plantation. From the description gathered by protagonist Hannah about her mistress’s life, one can safely assume that the unidentified mistress is a very light- skinned mulatto:

‘I was studying her, and making out a mental inventory of her foibles, and weaknesses, and caprices, and whether or not she was likely to prove an indulgent mistress. I did not see, but I felt that there was mystery, something indefinable about her. She was a small brown woman, with a profusion of wavy curly hair, large bright eyes, and delicate features with the exception of her lips which were to large, full, and red. She dressed in very good taste and her manner seemed

perfect but for an uncomfortable habit she had of seeming to watch everybody as though she feared them or thought them enemies... I noticed this, and how startled how she seemed at the echo of my master's footsteps when he came to lead her downstairs...I fancied then that she was haunted by a shadow or phantom apparent only to herself, and perhaps even the more dreadful for that.'(Crafts 27)

It is clear from Hannah's observation of her mistress that not only does her mistress possess similar facial features as her, but she also acts in the same manner of a scared and paranoid enslaved woman who is constantly watching over her shoulder in order to escape the sexual abuse endured by her master.

In contrast, as a mulatto child, Hannah was not as fortunate to have her White father claim her as his own, thus she lived her childhood as an enslaved child. Hannah recalls her childhood:

'No one seemed to care for me till I was able to work, and then it was Hannah do this and Hannah do that, but I never complained as I found a sort of pleasure and something to divert my thoughts in my employment. Of my relatives I knew nothing. No one ever spoke of my father or mother, but I soon learned what a curse was attached to my race, soon learned that the African blood in my veins would forever exclude me from the higher walks of life. That toil unremitted unpaid toil must be my lot and portion, without even the hope or expectation of anything better. This seemed the harder to be borne, because my complexion was almost White' .... (5-6)

Because Hannah's skin was fairer than her slave counterparts, she is given preferential treatment, which consisted only of her housekeeping tasks around the house, performed in a space that provided warmth during the winter and cool air during the summer.

Hannah also enjoys the luxury of roaming beyond the plantation boundaries from time to time: "I was employed about the house, consequently my labors were much easier than those of field servants, and I enjoyed intervals of repose and rest unknown to them" (6).

When she has free time, she tries to read "some old book or newspaper that chance had thrown [my] way" (7), a rather risky transgressive act since it was illegal for slaves to read and write. Furthermore, like Jane in *Jane Eyre*, Hannah experiences the friendship and companionship a formerly wealthy White couple who had become "poor through a series of misfortunes" and who for more than fifty years had occupied the same house, sharing it together, all the vicissitudes of life--its joys and sorrows, its hopes and fears" (9). This elderly couple teaches her to read and to better cope with the circumstances of being a slave in addition to providing for her a space of comfort and relief from drudgery.

In turn, Hannah picks up good habits of manners and behavior that enable her enforced identity as a chattel. Hannah states, "Of course, my opportunities were limited, and I had much to make me miserable and discontented. The life of a slave at best is not a pleasant one, but I had formed a resolution to always look on the bright side of things, to be industrious, cheerful, and true-hearted, to do some good though in an eternal reward" (11). This improvement in mental outlook enhances her ability to help other slaves to find ways to cope in their situation, especially the slave children: "I pitied their hard and cruel fate very much, and used to think that, notwithstanding all the labor and trouble they gave

me, if I could so discharge my duty by them that in after years their memories would hover over this as the sunshiny period of their lives I should be amply paid.” (11)

Like her mistress, Hannah has fair skin, the major difference between them being that the mistress was not sold into slavery, but instead was taken in by “an educated and rich gentleman whom she calls father, and by whom she was introduced to society as his daughter” (44). Consequently, in contrast to Hannah, who knew nothing but a life of slavery that granted a few privileges, the mistress was granted privileges given only to the White society. But there is a dark shadow, Mr. Trappe, who haunts her life because of her “secret,”—hence, she becomes a slave to Mr. Trappe, who blackmails her to buy his silence and avoid compromising her life as a free woman.

#### *Race as a Gothic Trapping*

Hannah Crafts' *The Bondswoman's Narrative* contains many hidden Gothic spaces that haunt and trap their female slave characters, beginning with “the house on Lindendale's Plantation, the woods, the unidentified house, and the hut, the jail, Mr. Trappe's prison, the Henry estate, and the Wheeler's house” (Jua 311). Each space may be viewed as a Gothic Trapping that represents White patriarchal dominance. For example, the Lindendale Plantation is haunted land cursed by a now-deceased slave woman who had been tortured on its grounds—Rose, “who had been nurse to his [Sir Clifford's] son and heir and was treated with unusual consideration by the family in consequence” (Crafts 21). An example Sir Clifford's sadism is when he asks Rose to drown the dog given to her by her daughter, who in turn was re-sold to a buyer in Alabama. When Rose

disobeys Sir Clifford, he summons the servants to seize her and her dog and orders the servants to beat the both of them. The depiction of a horrific and brutal lynching follows:

An iron hoop being fastened around the body of Rose she was drawn to the tree, and with great labor elevated and secured to one of the largest limbs. And then with a refinement of cruelty the innocent and helpless little animal, with a broad iron belt around its delicate body was suspended within her sight, but beyond her reach. (23)

When Rose does not obey her master's orders after he has asked her several times to do as she is told, he leaves her and her dog hanging from the tree during a terrible storm. After the storm, Rose is still alive and once again, when asked of her to kill her dog, she refuses. Here, Rose is an iconic example of those slave women who were not content with their status as slaves and in one way or another rebelled, even at the cost of their lives. Rose knew that she would die as a result of her actions, but as long as she died for what she believed in, it was an acceptable fate. Before Rose dies, she states,

It shall not be. I will hang here till I die as a curse to this house, and I will come here after I am dead to prove its bane. In sunshine and shadow, by day and by night I will brood over this tree, and weigh down its branches, and when death, or sickness, or misfortune is to befall the family ye may listen for ye will assuredly hear the creaking of its limbs. (25)

Rose's horrendous death is a reminder of the cruelty that slavery perpetrated. Because of this tragedy, the dwellers of the plantation believed that there was a "wild and weird influence" (20) in the tree after Rose's death that will forever haunt Lindendale, and both



slave owners and slaves will forever be reminded of Lindendale's cruel deed when they hear the tree tremble and shake. As a Gothic Trapping, the Lindendale tree will always symbolize the history of violence inflicted on the Black bodies of slaves throughout the South.

The plantation house itself is a gallery of Gothic Trappings. Hannah, describes the nature of the home that she works in as being "inexpressibly dreary" (14) because of a feeling that the past owners and family's presence and/or spirits are in the empty rooms of the large house. As she prepares the house for the arrival of the plantation's new mistress, she states,

There is a shadow flitting past through the gloom. There is a sound, but it does not seem moral. A supernatural thrill pervades your frame, and you feel the presence of mysterious beings. It may be foolish and childish, but it is one of the unaccountable things instinctive to the human nature. (15)

The supernatural presence in Lindendale is essentially what provides this setting with Gothic imagery. Also, as the first "space" introduced in the novel, Lindendale is very important in shaping the upcoming events that will occur with the plot surrounding this setting.

The first occurrence of a Gothic haunting in the novel happens in a room that the master frequents often because it holds memories of his ancestors who were masters before him. In this eerie room, Hannah discovers supernatural apparitions as she cleans this Gothic space before the arrival of her mistress. Hannah describes the room as

being adorned with a long succession of family portraits ranged against the walls in due order of age and ancestral dignity. To these portraits Mrs. Bry had informed me a strange legend was attached. It was said that Sir Clifford De Vincent, a nobleman of power and influence in the old world, having incurred the wrath of his sovereign, fled for safety to the shores of the Old Dominion and became the founder of my Master's paternal estate. When the house had been completed according to his directions, he ordered his portrait and that of his wife to be hung in the drawing room and denounced a severe malediction against the person who should ever presume to remove them, and against any possessor of the mansion who being of his name and blood should neglect to follow his example. And well had his wishes been obeyed. Generation had succeeded generation, and a long line of De Vincents occupied family residence, yet each inheritor had contributed to the adornments of the drawing-room a faithful transcript of his person and lineaments, side by side with that of his Lady.

(15)

The dated family portraits of past masters are a constant reminder of the haunted history that past masters of this land inflicted on their slaves. Also, this room serves as a Gothic trapping for the new masters who will be reminded to uphold their family tradition of brutal slave handling —i.e., to remain trapped in the customs of their predecessors. The house slaves of this plantation sometimes themselves in this room for either cleaning or as servants for events that require them to serve their guests. For example, Hannah describes the eerie feeling that she experiences in the room:

Memories of the dead give at any time a haunting air to a silent room.

How much more this becomes the case when standing face to face with their pictured resemblances and looking into the stony eyes motionless and void of expression as those of a penhumed corpse. But even as I gazed the golden light of sunset penetrating through the open windows in an oblique direction set each rigid feature in a glow. Movements like those of life came over the line of stolid faces as the shadows of a Linden played there.

(16)

The eerie feelings that Hannah Crafts and other slaves have when they come in contact with these generational portraits remind them of barbarous and inhuman acts that were committed against former slaves on the very plantation that they now inhabit as mere property.

*Silence as a Gothic Trapping*

When Hannah and her mistress finally find the courage to escape the Lindendale plantation, the first place that they find as a place of refuge is an unidentified home that is described as “A farm-house in the outskirts of the village. It was a happy looking rural, contented spot, wanting, indeed, in the appearances of wealth and luxury, but evidently the abode of competence and peace” (Crafts 58- 59). At this residence, Hannah and her mistress meet a middle-aged woman who lives with a man whom she calls her father, Frederick Hawkins, but who is in fact her husband. She states, “He always spends the hour of sunset in reading the Bible. I call him father, though he is my husband it seems so natural like” (60). Biblically speaking, the woman refers to her husband as “father” in the

same way that Christians refer to their God as father. She has put him on a patriarchal pedestal rather than view him as her male companion. Hawkins agrees with his wife that she and her mistress can stay overnight. In stark contrast to Lindendale, Hannah describes the home as “the sanctuary of sweet home influences, a holy and blessed spot, so light and warm and with such an abiding air of comfort (60). The comfort that Hannah feels in the home encourages her to stay. However, after she and her mistress are escorted to a spare room in the home, they start to feel uneasy and uncomfortable--Hannah states, “we were alone, yet it seemed to me that the shadow of an evil presence was near us, that some evil presence was near us, that some evil eye was noting our doings, and that evil plans were concocting against us (62). While looking out the window Hannah notices,

Some large White fingers which those of a man were certainly. No less certainly was a man’s face that appeared there in another moment, the keen black eyes taking in the room and us at a glance. A keen black eye, and sharp angular features, though I obtained only a glimpse of them. But such an eye, only one person in the world possessed it, and that was Mr. Trappe. (63)

Mr. Trappe’s job is to trap and track down those slaves who he has a monetary arrangement with in order to keep their secret of living as free individuals by passing, and now he has found Hannah and her mistress. Fearing that Mr. Trappe will capture them, they do not sleep but decide to escape into the woods where they come across a cabin nestled in the woods which is clearly the scene of a terrible, bloody crime:

Neither floor, door nor window, an old bench, of which one was broken, a broken iron pot, and some pieces of broken pot, and some pieces of broken crockery were

scattered about. In one corner was a heap of damp moldy straw that had probably served as a bed, and in another was a bundle of old clothes. There was a dark deep stain on the ground that I could not divest from the idea of blood, and when we removed the straw in the corner the spears were matted and felted together as if blood had been split over and dried upon them. Removing the bundle of clothes, we found a hatchet, with hair yet sticking to the heft, and while searching for berries discovered the remains of a human skeleton which the dogs and vultures had disinterred. (66)

The cabin that Hannah and her mistress will dwell in for a few days is evidently a place of torture--A Gothic space representative of slave owners who intentionally left behind a gruesome scene in order to remind other slaves that escaped to this space what would happen to them if they tried to escape. Its terrifying impact on Hannah's mistress is obvious:

In consideration of these discoveries a superstitious horror took possession of my dear companion's mind. The mind of my companion became seriously affected. Want, fatigue, exposure, and the long long agonies of mental torture had deeply wrought on her physical constitution, and impaired intellect. She became querulous and complaining, upbraided me as the cause of all her difficulties, and the strangest accusations of conspiracy on my head. (67)

Even when Hannah's mistress has escaped, Mr. Trappe is able to still trap her psychologically and eventually she goes mad. As Hannah states, "After a time my mistress became decidedly insane, and her insanity partook the most painful character.

She fancied herself pursued by an invisible being, who sought to devour her flesh and crush her bones” (67). After the stay in the cabin where Hannah’s mistress identified a crime scene, she begins to show symptoms such as excessive fear, mood changes, and withdrawal from the world. To make matters worse, she and Hannah are captured at the cabin. Roselyn Jua describes the scene: “Mistaken for animals, they are almost shot. Out to seek game, the hunters trap two women, a more “profitable” find, for this entitles them to a significant ransom, concretizing the parallel between the women and animals and buttressing the argument on the commodification of the slave” (319). For the purpose of slave profit, there were bounty hunters whose jobs were simply to hunt the fugitive slaves down, either to re-sell them to their master or take them for themselves, putting them back on the auction block for a higher profit.

When Hannah and her mistress are finally caught by bounty hunters, they are placed in jail until their master is located. The essence of their journey has consisted of some form of entrapment, whether physical or mental with the jail as a trap until Mr. Trappe himself picks them up. While in jail, Hannah thinks she has “caught a glimpse of a rusty Black coat that reminded her of him” (87). This mysterious individual gives Hannah and her mistress presents such as clothing and fruit, which is uncommon for prisoners. The jailers identify the mysterious visitor as “having eyes that were keen and Black and wearing, a suit of Black like himself” (87). It is later realized by both Hannah and her mistress that he is no one other than Mr. Trappe himself. Over time, while Hannah and her mistress are jailed, the mistress’ health begins to improve, and she show

signs of hope. Of course, Hannah's mistress's improvement does not last long when she finds out that their new master is the dreaded Mr. Trappe.

The deliberate irony of the protagonist's name is unmistakable. Mr. Trappe is depicted in the story as a dark figure who lurks around preying on his victims and setting "traps" because of a monetary agreement that he has made with them to conceal the secret of their having passed for White. It is Mr. Trappe's job, in other words, to keep slaves trapped in slavery through his method of "blackmail."

Eventually Hannah and her mistress are released to an old man at a cottage residence who is their new master's overseer. Hannah recalls, "We were ushered into a large apartment that furnished in better taste would have been handsome" (93). But more important than her initial impression is the realization that we had only been transferred from one prison to another. The several doors leading from our apartment to others were all fastened in the same manner" (93). Hence, there is nothing comforting at all about this new place to which that they have been relocated after leaving jail. When they finally find out that their new master is none other than Mr. Trappe, they are taunted and threatened by him in the following manner:

Did you find a good home and pleasant company more desirable than the one so resolutely abandoned contrary to my expressed will and pleasure? That was a very bad move, very bad indeed; it hastened matters much, brought affairs to a speedy crisis, and was attended with most disastrous consequences to your husband. It hurried him to the grave, it hurries you to slavery. (96-97)

Mr. Trappe confesses to Hannah's mistress that because she did not submit to him sexually as he wished, he took it upon himself to kill her master and finally capture her for himself and sell her into slavery for having failed to submit to his lust. It is at Mr. Trappe's abode where Hannah's mistress finally succumbs from the mental torture that he has imposed on her: "she had escaped woe and oppression, and insult, and degradation. Through death she had conquered her enemy and rose triumphant above his machinations" (101). In other words, Death is the escape from both her entrapment and futile attempts to flee from slavery. Roselyn Jua says it best when she states, "[Hannah and her mistress] become trapped literally and metaphorically in the narrative as they lose their identities" (322). As both women attempt to escape slavery by running away, they only find themselves in situations that result in their capture.

Since Hannah and her mistress are trapped in the act of escaping, Roselyne Jua suggests that "The dominant narrative line of Crafts' Narrative is circular; the movement starts from the house in Lindendale, to the woods, back to the unidentified house, and then moves to the hut, the jail, Mr. Trappe's prison, the Henry estate, it becomes possible for her to assert her independence, something not previously attainable" (311). It is during this journey of escape that Hannah is truly able to be free for the first time, if only temporarily. However, during this brief time of "freedom," "no [true] route of escape is mapped out. They [she and her mistress] possess no sense of direction or destination, so rather than moving toward the river and freedom, they move away from it, get lost, move around in circles, and end up in a predicament worse than that from which they initially bolted" (317). In short, Jua emphasizes that the journey to escape slavery itself is a form



of entrapment. Although Hannah and her mistress have successfully escaped for a short period of time, they are still in a space that keeps them confined. Further, Jua notes, “Hannah is trapped within the circularity of the text, here amplified by the movement that seemingly leads not to freedom but to further entrapment and imprisonment” (317). However, she is eventually able to flee this entrapment by disguising herself as a White man, in order to avoid any suspicion whatsoever, and by posing as a White man.

*Racial Trapping through Patriarchal Exploitation*

The Gothic patriarchal figure Mr. Trappe traps mulatto people who either pass or attempt to pass as free persons. By having captured them, he makes a living from blackmailing his victims. If they fail to keep paying him in order to keep their secret, he exposes their “truth,” which destroys many lives in the process. Hannah’s mysterious mistress is one of Mr. Trappe’s latest victims. Mr. Trappe’s relationship with Hannah’s mistress results from him having been Hannah’s father solicitor, a role that allowed him to stay in the home with them. As Hannah’s mistress states,

Even when a child the shadow of his presence occasioned within me a thrill of dread and fear. As I grew older he professed a fondness for me, he even sought my hand in marriage, and my refusal made him an enemy. He had been in the secret for some time before he gave me any intimation of it, and then he did it to extort money. He has made a fortune that way. He has spent his life in hunting, delving, and digging into family secrets, and when he has found them out he becomes ravenous for gold. (45)

Because of Mr. Trappe's arrangement with Hannah's father, when her mistress leaves her father's home to be married to a White master, Mr. Trappe follows her to her new home in order to receive his bribe for not revealing her true identity. As he angrily reminds her, "Were you not to treat me on all occasions with due deference and respect and was I not to receive a monthly stipend from your income and knowing as you do that this stipend has not been paid?" (37). According to Adebayo Williams,

... if Mr. Trappe is the nemesis of "civilized" antebellum American society spreading panic and bedlam through its chambers of hypocrisy, making a fast buck through his legal legerdemain and manipulating other manipulators, he is also the nemesis of Hannah Crafts' narrative, forcing her to violate the internal structure of the slave narrative and to transgress the borders and boundaries of the genre. (146)

Although Crafts' fictional slave narrative follows the components of what an actual slave narrative consists of, such as leading event, path of escape, events occurring along the way and the result of a runaway attempt, her creation of Mr. Trappe and what he stands for as a manipulator who haunts both mulattoes and slave owners for his personal gain is what interrupts the typical structure of a slave narrative.

The cat-mouse game begins when Mr. Trappe investigates Hannah's mistress' husband. As he states to Hannah's mistress,

I am very consistent, madam..., very consistent in view of the plan marked out for myself. I wished of course to turn my knowledge of your birth to my own advantage. Had I betrayed what you really were I should have gained nothing

from it. I have found out that his property is mortgaged to its fullest extent, and that notwithstanding his position he is in fact a poor man (Crafts 38- 39).

In other words, further blackmailing would not benefit him because she is apparently broke, and her new husband is as well.

Additionally, Mr. Trappe reminds Hannah the advantages of the original deal. He states, “and how scornfully you rejected them--how you taunted me with being an old man, and said that you would rather be the veriest slave in existence than wed a man you could not love, you remember all this? (39). When she refuses to be with him and pay him, he decides to expose her secret of passing as a free White woman providing an example of the sexual exploitation that many slave women including mulatto slave women endured in slavery. If they did not comply with the sexual advances of their owners, there would be consequences such as forcible rape. An example of a slave master who constantly raped his slaves and a woman who used her intelligence and sexuality to escape the exploitation of her masters is shared in Harriet Jacobs’ autobiography *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. In her story, Harriet Jacobs recounts her experience of having a master, Dr. James Norcom attempt to sexually assault her at the age of 15. Her master went as far as having a cottage built a few miles away from the plantation so that he could take advantage of her privacy. In order for Jacobs to escape her master’s lust, she purposefully has an affair with an unmarried White lawyer by whom she becomes pregnant hoping to have both herself and her child resold by her master. However, Jacobs’ wishes to be resold do not work in her favor because of Dr. Norcom’s apparent obsession with her sexual favors and desire to continue the relationship. Even

after Jacobs has another child with the lawyer, Dr. Norcom remains obsessed by the prospect of having Jacobs for himself. As a punishment for her refusal to submit, he plans to retaliate by making her children plantation slaves. After years of threats and mistreatment from her master, Jacobs finally builds up the courage to escape to freedom (Andrew). Jacob's life narrative provides a real-life example of what Crafts portrays in her novel in the relationship between Hannah's mistress and Mr. Trappe after he has killed her husband.

When Mr. Trappe returns after being away for some time on business, he learns that his asset has run away and requests an interview with her husband. It is after this meeting that Hannah's mistress' husband is found dead by servants who go check on him after not hearing from him for some time. What they find is a murder scene with "several little pools of clotted gore" (74) and blood on ceiling outside of his room where they find "the master fallen from his easy chair; fallen on his face to the floor, his garments and the carpet saturated with the red stream that still oozed slowly from a ghastly wound in his throat (74). The murder appears to have been done by no one other than Mr. Trappe who, most likely out of anger, exposed the mistress' secret, but may have also bribed her husband to pay him to keep the secret. But after learning that the husband is destitute, he decides to just get rid of him because of debts owed. Consequently, we later learn that Mr. Trappe's deeds catch up to him as he will become the victim of a murder as a result of scheming and attempting to exploit yet another family.

*Conclusion: Challenging Patriarchy*

Hannah and her mistress are enslaved mulatto women who challenge patriarchal entrapment by attempting to escape their fate as sexual chattels. Both women would be subjected to sexual objectification for the rest of their lives because of the mixed-blood that runs through her veins. In this connection, Imani Copper states that

Slavery had long-reaching effects on the conceptualization of the Black body, which is later depicted by the emergence of the mulatto class. White slave owners executed their perceived right under the creation of commoditized Black bodies to sexually abuse their slaves, producing mixed race (mulatto) children. As a result of commodification, Black bodies were rendered disciplined subjects, beholden to the will of White men. (1)

Since Hannah and her mistress are the offspring of an act of rape, they would be subjected to a cycle of rape themselves as this was the very common abuse inflicted on slave women, especially mulatto women who were regarded therefore as easily-exploited damaged property.

Besides worrying about being sexually exploited, being an enslaved or free mulatto woman also came with worries about being resold at will, since mulattoes commanded a higher sales price because of their near White form of perceived beauty. Oddly enough when Hannah and her mistress escape Lindendale plantation, Mr. Trappe's spirit seems to follow them as they find themselves in Gothic spaces that trap them until he is able to capture them. Jua suggests that "to leave the house then is to abandon all rational thought and to plunge into chaos, here typified by their inability to attain safety.

They escape one prison only to find themselves in a labyrinth with no hope of salvation” (319). Here, Jua speaks to Hannah and her mistress’s experiences as they attempt to escape a system that continues to trap them. Sadly, even though they succeed in finally escaping, Hannah’s mistress dies from a brain aneurysm contracted during the stress of having been trapped again and imprisoned with Hannah for a lengthy time by Mr. Trappe.

Hannah and her mistress’s quest for freedom from slavery is a journey that they must embark on in order to escape the harsh conditions of slavery as enslaved mulatto women. Her mistress’s escape to freedom is ironically in the form of her death, as she no longer will have to worry about running from Mr. Trappe and being placed in bondage as the kind of desirable light-skinned woman who would most likely be passed from master to master on the auction block. On the other hand, after being sold back into slavery by Mr. Trappe, Hannah successfully, and ironically, escapes to freedom as a disguised White man. Even though both she and her mistress endured so much physical and psychological pain during their journey to freedom, in the end both women escape, and as a result no longer have to live in fear of Gothic entrapment.

CHAPTER V  
CONCLUSION

*Summary*

Since nineteenth-century female writers were fed up with patriarchal attitudes that silenced and limited them to patriarchal spaces that confirmed their subordination to men, this study investigated the contribution of female writers Charlotte Brontë and Hannah Crafts, who fused the Gothic into their novels-- respectively, an autobiographical romance and a fictional slave narrative --with the intentions of making sure that their readers would empathetically experience the brutal conditions that their female characters faced as a result of patriarchy. Further, readers of literature written by nineteenth-century female writers will notice that these writers incorporated the Gothic to show the true horrors of what it meant to be a woman during this time. By doing so, they paved the way for generations of other female writers to strategically use the Gothic in their works to challenge the entrenched societal norms that keep women in inferior positions to men. Although Jane, Bertha Mason, and Hannah, and her mistress find themselves in spaces of patriarchal entrapment as a result of either their gender, race, or social class, the severity of how and why they experience these patriarchal spaces ultimately depends upon their race.

The study emerged from the lack of scholarly analysis on the significance of Gothic Trappings in Gothic novels, and slave narratives where the female victims are Black. It is important to recognize that the underlying significance of the Gothic mode is different in Black Gothic texts as the experiences and encounters experienced by Black slaves were so much more severe than those of their White contemporaries.

The study utilized several theories that are relevant to supporting this research's hypothesis. First, Diane Hoeveler's theory of Gothic Feminism, a theory that focuses on the patriarchal subordination of White women. When analyzing and exploring the significance of codified Gothic spaces in relation to the female characters of *Jane Eyre*, her theory greatly supports this study's analysis. However, Hoeveler's Gothic Feminism is limited to the experiences of White female characters of works that are considered canonical such as Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Consequently, since her theory fails to address the experiences and oppression of women of color, this study has coined the theory of Gothic Black Feminism designed to examine the marginalization of Black women under a White patriarchy. Furthermore, Gothic Black Feminism allows women of color to be visible in the discussion of issues that relate to them, which are completely different from that of White women. Second, Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Criticism supports this study's assumption that the female writers such as Brontë and Crafts reveal both their conscious and unconscious psyches in the form of writing, thus suggesting they used their female characters as projections of their own psyches. Therefore, by applying Psychoanalytic Criticism to the novels selected, the writers' deepest motivations are revealed. Additionally, the theory of Psychoanalytic Criticism is relevant to reading between the



lines to discover the messages Brontë and Crafts embed in their work by using the genre of Gothic and its tropes. Third, early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft's framework for Feminist Criticism challenges the issues of inequality that White women faced during the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries that made it impossible for them to have full rights as citizens. Accordingly, Wollstonecraft's feminist framework supports this study's analysis of inequality issues explored by Charlotte Brontë in the lives of Jane and other female characters. On the other hand, when analyzing the conditions of Black enslaved women of *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberle Crenshaw's framework of Black Feminist Criticism is applicable, as hooks explores the experiences and problems that Black women face as a result of racism and sexism. More specifically, she examines the impact of sexism on the Black woman during slavery. Like bell hooks, Audre Lorde argues that both racism and sexism contribute to the oppression of Black women. She also emphasizes the differences between Black women and White women when investigating the issues of race and sex. Patricia Hill Collins explores the identity of Black women as the "Other," a concept which is essential to understanding the lives of Hannah and her mistress in *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, who are both mulattoes.

Because Feminism consisted of an agenda that lacked an intersectional approach and was a movement that excluded and marginalized Black women, Black Feminism in response surfaced in order to provide a space for women of color to raise awareness of the issues that they faced as a result of White supremacy. Additionally, Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of "intersectionality" asserts that in order to understand the

experiences of Black women, one must understand that it is impossible not to look at how systems of oppression such as racism and sexism interact and sustain each other. Further, Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality is befitting to this study considering the multiple forms of oppressions witnessed in the experiences of Black slave women in Hannah Crafts' *The Bondswoman's Narrative*.

The methodology employed in this research includes Comparative, Narrative, and Content Analysis. In this study, Comparative analysis allows for comparison and contrast of two or more ideas between *Jane Eyre* and *The Bondswoman's Narrative* when exploring how both novels utilize Gothic tropes as a way to symbolize the conditions of women during the nineteenth-century, a time when women were working towards obtaining an increased freedom from patriarchal gender expectations. The Narrative analysis is used to closely analyze the stories of these novels in order to interpret the actions of the female characters in response to the historical events occurring during the time in which these novels were written. Content analysis is used when closely examining the language of the novels in order to decode the author's underlying message of how the female characters' gender, race, and social class were essentially the primary determinants of their legal standing. The research question that guided this investigation was as follows: Why did nineteenth-century female writers envision racism, sexism, and poverty through the prism of Gothicism, using Gothic tropes? This study concluded that because Gothicism has the ability to illuminate symbolically the social and political aspects of the culture upon which the novels are based, its tropes serve to display the dark subconscious underside of these cultures politically, socially, and economically, thus

leading readers to the undermining issues of racism, sexism, and classism that these supposedly enlightened cultures conceal and which wreak havoc in the lives of the female protagonists.

#### *Connections between Novels*

Both novels analyzed in this study are connected through the use of Gothic trappings that show how the female characters are imprisoned in situations beyond their control. Also, female characters Jane and Bertha Mason from *Jane Eyre* and Hannah and her mistress from *The Bondswoman's Narrative* share a connection in their demand for equality, independence, freedom from exploitation and physical/emotional abuse within the racist and patriarchal societies in which they lived. Additionally, these female characters would go great lengths to escape being oppressed, even if the end result is death. Further, by utilizing the Gothic, Brontë and Crafts played on the emotions of their readers by showing how Jane's, Bertha Mason's and Hannah and her mistress' gender, race, and/or social-class contributed greatly to the hardships that they would face during their childhood, which would later follow them as adults.

#### *Final Thoughts on Patriarchy Influence of the Gothic*

As identified in *Jane Eyre* and *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, female characters are seen as powerless to the dominance-driven men who feel it is their right to maintain rule/dominance through various forms of patriarchal oppression that they inflict on their victims. Patriarchy will continue to be the underlying explanation for why female characters in literature are seen irrational and emotional, just so men can justify their belief that women are dependent on them for their survival. Dominant men feel the need

to have authority over their property, which includes women—a point argued convincingly by Margaret Daly and James Wilson in their essay, “The Man Who took his Wife for a Chattel.” It is worth mentioning that the most important aspect of patriarchy in Gothic literature involves the traditional roles that separate men from women economically, politically, and socially, which in turn strips from women the right to make the necessary choices for their lives, such as whether they want to obtain an education or marry who they please. Donna Heiland supports the idea that patriarchy influences the Gothic genre by noting:

For Gothic novels are all about how they function, what threatens them, what keeps them going. And what becomes ever clearer as one reads these novels is that patriarchy is not only the subject of Gothic novels, but is itself a Gothic structure. Patriarchy inevitably celebrates a male creative power that demands the suppression and sometimes the outright sacrifice of women. (11)

Gothic is thus appropriate for examining the lives of women of any era, geographic location, or race. Any literature that explores the demeaning roles of women as well as their marginalization would benefit from the use of Gothic tropes to symbolize these experiences for the purpose of creating empathetic terror in the minds of readers who may then take the conditions of these women more seriously. As long as women continue to be mistreated and viewed as inferior to men, there will always be room for female writers to create Gothic literature that show the underlying issues of patriarchal abuse committed against women.

*Final Thoughts on Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre*

While much scholarship has been dedicated to critiquing criticism of Charlotte Brontë *Jane Eyre*—a sentimental novel that embeds various Gothic themes, moods, characters, and tropes- by emphasizing the master-theme of female imprisonment. Claustrophobia is a fear that is exploited by Brontë, and manifested in hidden enclosed spaces, trapped doors, and windowless rooms as places of confinement where their female victims experience madness well appreciated by the reader. The very first space of entrapment that Jane experiences represent how she will continue to be trapped as a result of her social-class standing. As discussed in Chapter Three, in consequence of Jane's disrespect to her male cousin John, she is sent to the Red-Room, the room where readers can vicariously experience her madness. The Red-Room is the first Gothic Trapping introduced in the novel, and it foreshadows how the rest of the spaces that would imprison Jane would serve as the very same kind of patriarchal space used to keep her in her insubordinate place. The theme completes a full circle when we learn how Bertha Mason, Jane's dark alter ego, has been imprisoned for years in a claustrophobic attic where, even were she not of unsound mind, would drive her truly insane. In brief, this study uses the Gothic to explore the factors that make Jane and Bertha cultural and racial "Other," while showing that because their otherness is so threatening that they are forced into Gothic patriarchal spaces, that cripple their ability to function in the same manner as women who are more within the cultural mainstream.

*Final Thoughts on Hannah Crafts' The Bondswoman's Narrative*

This study's contribution to the scholarship of the Gothic is the exploration of Hannah Crafts' *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, which as a slave narrative has rarely been explored through the lenses of Gothic tropes. Especially considering the limited scholarship of her novel, this study found Crafts' slave narrative to be a phenomenal contribution to the Gothic. From the various Gothic Trappings of entrapment to the patriarchal predator Mr. Trappe who secretly tames these spaces, this fictional slave narrative contributes significantly to a genre in which other slave narratives can be included. Also, because the Gothic by definition plays on the anxieties and fears of readers, this genre rightfully shows how slavery itself, as an outcome of racial antipathies and anxieties, was a Gothic institution. Of course, this would be a nightmare for White people who depended on slavery as the way to keep their property and lives maintained through the hard labor of slaves. In short, this study continues the analysis of Otherness as an added layer of racism experienced solely by Black women. In the case of *The Bondswoman's Narrative*, the study investigated the lives of two mulatto female characters: one enslaved, while the other is free. As a consequence of their attempt to challenge slavery, Hannah and her mistress find themselves trapped in Gothic patriarchal spaces meant to psychologically and physically break their spirits, so that they would discontinue their resistance against oppressions experienced uniquely by mulatto women within the system of slavery.

*Recommendation for Future Research*

Given the different genres of literature that have and will continue to incorporate the Gothic in order to depict the struggles of women for equality, more scholars should continue to assimilate texts that are often excluded from the canon, and speak to the struggles and experiences of marginalized Black women. Too often when scholars discuss the issues that concern women, Black women are not a priority, and for this reason they are kept out of dialogues that would be relevant to their lives. Also, similarly the experiences of women of color of other cultures are often overlooked, and as a result so are the works that speak to the suffering endured by these women. With this said, scholars should explore how the Gothic serves to reveal the seriousness of the shared oppressions that women worldwide experience because of their sex, race, or social-class standing which in their home countries may be especially severe due to local economic and political factors. Speaking for herself, it is worth noting that the writer of this study's intentions are to further explore psychologically the connection between Gothicism and children's literature. Although there is abundant scholarship based on the psychoanalysis of children's literature, a psychoanalysis of the Gothic aspects of children's literature is mandatory in order to understand and mitigate the deepest fears that follow children into their adulthood.

*Contribution to Research*

Besides the recommendations for future research mentioned above, my study has three major implications for the field of the Gothic. First, since, Gothic literary theories were created for the benefit of those of European descent, it was important to create a

Gothic theory that incorporated the underlying principles of the racial disparities which continue to marginalize Black women. In order to support scholarly analysis of Black female characters in Gothicized texts, it is impossible to use a feminist theory for this purpose that was designed during a time when women of color could not reap the benefits enjoyed by White women. Second, with the Gothic literary canon and its elements reworked to include more diverse ethnicities and time periods, a broader use can be made of the devices “Gothic Trappings,”-patriarchal entrapment spaces which metaphorically capture and dramatize within the reader’s imagination the institution of slavery and female patriarchal imprisonment. Third, this study explores and analyzes the psyches the female protagonists of both novels in order to enable readers to gain a better understanding of how these women are marked as “Other,” and how their otherness comes with a very high price- loss of freedom, status, personal independence, self-esteem, and even the right to claim ownership of their own bodies. It is a price that only now as a society we are beginning to be relieved of and all the more reason to jealously guard the liberties we have already gained and press for more to achieve finally, true gender, racial, and social equality with liberty and justice for all.



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