

Stony Brook University



OFFICIAL COPY

The official electronic file of this thesis or dissertation is maintained by the University Libraries on behalf of The Graduate School at Stony Brook University.

© All Rights Reserved by Author.

**Gothic Elements and Racial Stereotypes
In the Construction
Of the Passing Character**

A Dissertation Presented

By

Kimberly Divonne Smith

To

The Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

English

Stony Brook University

August 2012

Copyright
Kimberly Divonne Smith
2012

Stony Brook University

The Graduate School

Kimberly Divonne Smith

We, the dissertation committee for the above candidate for the
Doctor of Philosophy degree, hereby recommend
acceptance of this dissertation.

Dr. Eric Haralson - Dissertation Advisor
Associate Professor - English Department

Dr. E. Ann Kaplan - Chairperson of Defense
Distinguished Professor - English Department

Dr. Tracey Walters - Committee Member
Assistant Professor - Africana Studies Department

Dr. Susan P. Wright - Outside Reader
Associate Professor - English Department
Clark Atlanta University

This dissertation is accepted by the Graduate School

Charles Taber
Interim Dean of the Graduate School

**Gothic Elements and Racial Stereotypes
In the Construction
Of The Passing Character**

By

Kimberly Divonne Smith

Doctor of Philosophy

In

English

Stony Brook University

2012

My dissertation analyses the construction of the passing character in the American literary tradition as s/he is depicted by both black and white authors through their use of gothic elements, in ways that challenged or substantiated racial stereotypes (or sometimes do both). Furthermore, this study demonstrates how the passing figure reflects the enduringly haunting racial landscapes of America. Specifically, this comparative study critiques the works of Mark Twain, Charles Chesnutt, Nella Larsen, Danzy Senna, and William Faulkner. Also, included in this study is an analysis of racial dynamics in both versions of *Imitation of Life*, the 1934 adaption as directed by John Stahl and the 1959 version directed by Donald Sirk.

Dedication Page

To my parents, Wendell and Clara Smith
for their love and support
throughout my journey of life and education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: Gothic Elements and Racial Stereotypes of the Passing Character.....	1
Literature Review.....	5
CHAPTER 1: Gothic Passing in Mark Twain’s <i>Pudd’nhead Wilson</i> and Charles	
Chesnutt’s <i>Paul Marchand F.M.C.</i>	30
Internal Duality.....	49
<i>Paul Marchand F.M.C.</i>	62
Chapter 2: Nella Larsen’s <i>Passing</i> and Danzy Senna’s <i>Symptomatic</i> : Gothic Depictions	
And Racial Conflicts.....	89
Clare’s Story.....	101
Danzy Senna’s <i>Symptomatic</i>	123
Chapter 3: William Faulkner’s <i>Light in August</i> : Joe Christmas, The Blank Slate in Iconic	
Gothic Dress.....	156
Chapter 4: <i>Imitation of Life: Delilah and Annie: Mothers of Gothic Darkness</i>	
Casting of Peola.....	199
Delilah/Bea: The Two Working Women.....	201
Delilah’s Nativity/Peola’s Struggle.....	203
The Threat of Blackness/Mother.....	206
Peola’s Adulthood and Her Racial Doubles.....	210
Images and Construction of Blackness/Darkness.....	212
Trying to Define Her Identity/Haunting of Blackness.....	214
Complete Denial of Blackness.....	215
Death of Mother/Blackness.....	217
<i>Imitation of Life</i> : Donald Sirk.....	220
Two Mothers and Daughters Meet.....	224
Denial of Blackness.....	227
Sarah Jane and Suzy Adult Doubles.....	229
Sarah Jane and White Boyfriend.....	233
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	
	251
Endnotes.....	257
Bibliography.....	260

Acknowledgements

I extend my sincere gratitude for the diligent and consistent help and support that I received from my committee advisor, Dr. Eric Haralson, my defense chair, Dr. E. Ann Kaplan, my committee member Dr. Tracey Walters and my outside reader, Dr. Susan P. Wright.

Additionally, I am thankful to my godmother, Dorothy McCormick and friends Joycelynn Thomas, Cynthia Urban, and Barbara Daniels for their unwavering support. The many family members I would like to thank include my uncles Obadiah N. Jones, Jr., Larry Jones, Jack Smith and Johnny Richards. Also, I am grateful to my aunts Mrs. Leola Richards, Mrs. Arlene Jones, Mrs. Linda Williams and Ms. Verdell Smith.

Posthumously, I thank my grandparents Minnie and Obadiah N. Jones and Mrs. Leola Smith. Also, I am grateful to my deceased aunts, Mrs. Catherine Haskins, Ms. Ina McIntyre, and Ms. Geraldine Smith.

Finally, I am most appreciative of the continuous, sincere and loving support I have received from my parents, Wendell and Clara Smith

Gothic Elements and Racial Stereotypes
In the Construction
Of the Passing Character

Introduction

Passing is the act of abandoning some aspect of one's birth identity in order to assume another identity that one feels is superior. Because of perceived racial, gender, class, and/or religious prejudices, some people have often felt the need or desire to engage in passing in order to reap the opportunities and promises upon which America was founded. From the time of the Puritans, America has been seen as a beacon of hope for those seeking a better life for themselves and their families. And so they came. After the Puritans, the Germans came, and then came the Italians, the Scottish, the Dutch, the Irish and the French _____ all seeking the chance to start anew in the New World of America.

However, this new world was not all a land of milk and honey because even though in this new country people could remake themselves, their innate prejudices came with them. So from the beginning, issues concerning race and ethnicity conflicted with concepts of power, authority and superiority and the lengths that one would go to in order to achieve status. This, of course, started with the mistreatment of Native Americans. And, of course, eventually slavery and the subjugation of blacks were brought to these shores. As the racial system/hierarchy became more and more formalized those who were considered superior were those of mostly White English Protestant descent. Obviously, this did not include blacks or Native Americans but also did not include Irish, Italians or any of the white ethnics who now occupy whiteness.

The fact that these groups did at some point in our nation's history assume the mantle of whiteness reflects that racial categories are not static. In the racial history of the United States many of the white ethnic immigrants were not considered white or black but they were characterized in some of the same ways as blacks were. For instance, Irish and Italian immigrants were thought of as untrustworthy, lazy, and animalistic. In fact, many of the cartoons in newspapers characterized them as monkeys and apes. But through the changing political, economical and cultural landscapes of America which included such occurrences such as the Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression and, of course, WWI and WWII, they were able to assimilate and eventually establish themselves as white citizens.

Unfortunately, the option of assimilation was only afforded to the few blacks who were light enough to pass. Therefore, for the most part, after slavery and throughout the late nineteenth and early-mid twentieth century, along with Native Americans, blacks continued to be a beleaguered, oppressed race that was unable to gain acceptance as fully entitled American citizens. However, those few blacks who physically looked white because of white ancestry or because they were actually biracial, could sometimes re-invent themselves and ascend the racial hierarchy system. Even when those persons chose to pass for white, they were restricted to one or two situations. Firstly, they could either choose to continue to live in their black community, ignoring their white blood or secondly they could decide to tempt fate, venture into the white community and choose to pass. In regards to the white community, the passer represents the fear of blackness being unidentified. From the moment of emancipation (1865) there had been a real legal and societal mandate to separate the races, white and black.

The passer, without the mark of blackness, is able to trespass into the previously forbidden world of whiteness. The separation of the races was meant to prohibit the act of

miscegenation from occurring because this process could produce children who could pass in the white community. Unaware of the true or so-called legalized identity of the passer, white America is now vulnerable to the passer. The passer is able to succeed through race performance. The passer is able to mimic whiteness to the point of not being detected. However, the passer is not home free because he/she lives in constant fear of being exposed.

Even though during the 1960's these rules and regulations were legally erased, the white community and America as a whole wanted to take comfort in the fact that blackness could be identified by sight. So the reality of the passer represents the actuality that race is not as identifiable and as concrete as people might falsely believe.

For black people the passer represents someone who is capable of leaving the struggles of blackness behind for the societal advantages of whiteness. People who pass from black to white have the ability to make their lives better because of their biological difference from most black people. Also, some black people feel that the act of passing is a betrayal to the black community. Instead of realizing that the passing person is simply trying to make his/her own place in a racial system that really does not recognize him/her, the black community holds him/her accountable for attempting to attain success and achievement that is mostly allowed him/her because of physical whiteness. The passer, caught in the crossroads of the two communities (black and white), reflects the dichotomous images of the product of miscegenation, the one viewed in the mirror and the one viewed by society.

Because of this schizoid situation, the passer is seen as threatening to both groups of people (black and white). The passer in many ways has always represented the dichotomy of America. In literature there has also been basically two ways in which the passer has functioned. Either there is a return to blackness or a tragic end for the passer. In many of the return to

blackness models (*Plum Bum* Jessie Fauset, e.g.), there is a very didactic point: one should stay true to his/her race and not attempt to be someone that he/she is not. However, in many of the white writings on passing (William Faulkner, e.g.), the character is either outed with draconian consequences or dies warning of the penalty of crossing the color line. But some of these novels are much more complicated and reflect the paradoxical and often tragic outcomes of daring to defy society's legal, social and cultural restrictions.

The one drop rule is an essential element in passing novels attempting to define and characterize one of the most puzzling aspects of American life, past, present and future--the race issue. The one-drop-of-black blood concept, legislated by white men to define the progeny and end the progeny's acts of miscegenation, has oddly been embraced by black America. For some peculiar reason, some blacks consider it to be race disloyalty to claim the white identity, even though to do so must surely require turning a blind eye to facts boldly staring one in the face. For a black person to be light enough to pass there is probably a significant amount of white ancestry. Either one of the parents is white or there is white or mixed raced ancestry in the background of the parents. So the blackness that the passer is supposed to loyally claim is but only one part of his/her identity. Even though it may be as minute as "one-drop" of black blood, it is inherently considered as "bad blood" because of the dichotomy of black and white in America. There would be no superiority of whiteness if there was no inferiority of blackness. So the passer, recognizing the negativity of the label of blackness, chooses to walk away from the invisible internal blackness and towards the physical whiteness. At this point, the passer is deciding to fight his/her internal conflict and become the shaper of his/her identity.

The gothic, racial stereotypes and the passing figure will be elements of my study. I will be looking at how writers use gothic symbolism, language and tropes to depict the passing

character in their deconstruction or construction of racial stereotypes. These gothic tropes and symbols include alienation, isolation, monster stereotype, vampire image, blood myth, double and blackness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of the critical work that has been done on passing in America has looked at the situation of blackness in literature and its function. For example, in Gayle Wald's book *Crossing the Line* (1996) she argues that because of the instability and fluidity of racial categories, there are disruptions in the racial discourse which the passer is allowed to take advantage of in search of an identity. Wald looks at how people negotiate these racial identities and how these disruptions within racial discourse help to create a changing racial context. She looks at the similarities and differences between black and white passing narratives such as *Black Like Me* and *Passing* and their representation of this disruption of racial categories. However, she does not deal directly with whether they promote or disrupt stereotypes per se and does not look at them in the gothic context; nor does she examine how the passing character reflects the Gothicism/racial haunting/repressed nature of the country. Additionally, her investigation of the one drop rule illustrates its dichotomous power to hinder one from forming his/her own identity while also significantly impacting the national construction of race in America.

Elaine Ginsburg's *Passing and the Fictions of Identity* (1996) expands the landscape on which we critically look at passing. She explores the racial passing narrative from black and white to white ethnics such as Italian and Jewish people, but also brings in an analysis of gender passing narratives as well. Ginsberg continues the line of thought that race is a concept

predicated on societal racial narratives. In these different versions of racial and gender passing, Ginsberg looks at the cultural motivations behind these different types of passing. The adding of gender allows Ginsberg to discuss the formation of identity in all of its facets and to illustrate even more so the commonality of passing to these different groups. Also, the inclusion of gender continues to illustrate how passing can be a tool of the oppressed in their endless battles with the oppressors. Her argument continues to show passing as an effective means of challenging some societal beliefs that racial and gender roles are biological and with non-changing characteristics.

In Juda Bennett's *The Passing Figure: Racial Confusion in Modern American Literature* (1998) Bennett chronicles many of the passing novels by Black writers and ends her book with a comparison between William Faulkner's *Light in August* and the movie *M Butterfly*. She starts off by looking linguistically at the construction of racial words and the evolution of rigid roles that were seen as natural. As she provides a trajectory of passing as a recurrent theme in American literature, she also critiques its formation of racial roles and concepts.

Stephen Belluscio has written *To Be Suddenly White: Racial Passing and Literary Realism* (2006) which also investigates the passing narratives of different ethnic groups. He explores the impact of the realist movement on African American, Italian and Jewish passing narratives. In doing this work he illustrates that issues of race and passing go beyond the African-American community, pointing out that they might affect any ethnic person or group that might need or desire the privileges, benefits and opportunities that are basically inherent in being white.

In M. Giulia Fabi's *Passing and the Rise of the African American Novel*, he analyzes and discusses the importance of the work of African American writers of the nineteenth century who often wrote in an instructional manner. Because blacks as newly emancipated slaves were

woefully lacking in education, these writers devised ways of combining storytelling with teaching. Fabi's argument is that these late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers should not be shrugged off as unimportant or uninteresting because some considered them to be too didactic.

Congruent with this is the argument as well that these writers really challenged the concept of race by using the biracial character as their central figure. The pre-Harlem Renaissance writers used the biracial figure and miscegenation to not only talk about significant racial issues but other issues of the day that were important to black Americans. Pre-Harlem Renaissance writers such as Frances Harper, author of *Iola Leroy*, used the mixed-raced character to discuss topical issues of the day concerning African Americans. Using the biracial figure as a focal point of the pre-Harlem Renaissance writings allowed these writers to express their own frustration and angst concerning the African American's place in the American racial stratosphere.

A more recent book on passing has been written by Brooke Kroegur who did a literary biography of Fannie Hurst, the author of the passing novel, *Imitation of Life*. Kroegur has also written *Passing: When People Can't Be Who they Really Are* (2003) in which she looks at different versions of present day passing. She is interested in determining if an old concept is still viable in modern times and if it is, in what way? She profiles modern day cases of passing and develops the idea that passing in modern times is much more varied. It is not just black passing for white but multiracial people now sometimes passing for different groups to gain admission into a certain school or for other reasons that they have to mark a race. Also, she illustrates that there is age, class, and gender passing, just to name a few types. The reasons people have for passing have also changed because while the racial divisions are there, they are

not as stark as they have been in the past. So as racial mixing becomes not just a national actuality, but also a global reality, the act of passing loses some of its restrictive elements as it blends into the multiracialism of the world. Therefore, in today's society, there is even less chance of someone being "outed" as black passing as white. Subsequently, the act of passing not only persists, it has morphed into and created many other identities based on personal, social and professional reasons that people have for re-inventing and/or re-imagining themselves.

Another current work on passing expands the definition even further. Writers Maria Carla Sanchez and Linda Schosberg wrote *Passing: Identity and Interpretation in Sexuality, Race and Religion*. In this work Sanchez and Schosberg talk about the idea of racial and gender categories being marked as essential when they are not. They further comment on the cultural anxiety produced when these categories are disrupted because society then does not know if any of its boundaries are real or not. Passing in whatever form disrupts these supposed established categories. Sanchez and Schosberg then go on to discuss Judith Butler's idea of performance and how it relates to gender and race passing. Consistent with the act of passing are the contradictory motives within passing narratives. Sanchez and Schosberg contend that the very concept of passing is a challenge to authority and an encouragement to oppose rigid social constructions in order to claim the identity denied by society. The authors connect passing to issues regarding sexuality and queer theory. They believe that racial and sexuality passing are mirrors of each other and reflect ways in which people are either trying to conform to society or reshape their identity. The authors also connect racial passing issues to religion, most directly to Judaism.

Along with these books concerning the passing figure, there is also one significant book which addresses the one drop rule. James Davis wrote "*Who is Black?*" (2001), which looked at

the history of the one drop rule, compared the United States' construction of race with that of other places, especially Brazil, and looked at how different groups internalize the rule. One of the interesting aspects is that he critiqued the general acceptance by blacks of the rule as the definitive means of determining blackness. Davis does not place the issue of the passing figure at the center of his focus, but he gives a detailed account of the one drop rule's origin and function in society.

My project differs from these because I am interested in the connections between passing, secrets, repression and the construction of individuals within society. Passing with its need for secrets and repression has connections to what can be considered Gothic Literature. Gothic Literature's origins are European. The novels usually dealt with secrets, castles, evil noblemen, damsels in distress and inhospitable environments. Also, many of the secrets and conflicts that resulted in the gothic novel took place within the families of the aristocratic households or with outsiders who were taken in by these wealthy families. As the industrial revolution took hold, the Gothic horrors became more spread out. Horrors could now be found in the cities where children were forced to work in unsafe and unclean conditions, where sexual perversions were played out in foul and murderous acts and where serial killers now had a plentiful of victims. The horrors of the everyday were now supplanting the horrors of the evil nobleman in the aristocratic household.

Originally, when Gothicism was transported to the United States of America, there were imitations of some of the European notions of castles, family lineages and evil and dark secrets. But as the nation acquired more of an identity, it became painfully obvious that America had its own horrors in which Gothic stories flourished, and though there were shared similarities with the European conception American Gothicism, assumed different shapes and forms. America

from its very inception had an inherent double. First and foremost, it continued to promote itself as the guiding light to a new and better life for the downtrodden and oppressed. But underneath this hopeful image was also the reality of taking the Indians' land, massacring them, enslaving black people and denying equality to women. As the real history of the country is repressed, the ideal history flourishes. But even in the ideal version, there is the reality of the horror that the true characteristics of America's great rise, actions and behaviors were often motivated by desires of wealth and power. These actions were often illegal and immoral.

So in order to justify these activities within America's fabled, glorious history and to maintain white male elitism and power, an ideology had to be created that explained the negative occurrences of America's past. Subsequently, the creation and maintenance of certain roles preserved the reputation of America as the beacon of equality and opportunity for all. However, the contradiction occurs within the ideology of biological racial and gender roles instead of socially constructed roles that have helped to keep discrimination in place. Gothic literature is a melodramatic attempt to represent the historically haunting secrets of the past that continue to lurk menacingly in the present; clearly, racially thematic literature speaks to this truth.

A history of the term gothic is found in Fred Botting's *Gothic* (2007). He discusses the term from its eighteenth century beginnings to its varied uses in the modern era. He looks at four areas that he says frame the gothic: excess, transgression, diffusion and criticism. Botting discusses how these themes can be seen in the stock characters of gothic literature and film, and their characterization of an age riddled with anxieties about cultural changes. He then goes on to look at the origins of the English Gothic and the main stories which gave it its form. From there he heads into American gothic literature and film discussing the various new terms evolving from changes in cultural and social conditions. To be sure, social and cultural conditions in

England, Europe and America helped redefine the gothic. In addition, Botting does discuss the Gothic's close association with psychoanalytic discourse, looking at the different literary tropes which correlate to Freud. Mostly this is a good concise introduction and history of the term.

David Punter is a scholar who has written a number of books on the Gothic. One of the many books he has written is called *Gothic (2001)* and in many ways it is similar to Fred Botting's book in that it attempts to give a history of the term. But Punter is different, first by saying that no literary work is essentially gothic, that Gothicism is really a defined set of characteristics, literary tropes and symbols. Together these elements function to give a sense of a gothic mood to the work. Punter, secondly, starts off by illustrating how the social conditions started to produce these tropes in literary work of the eighteenth century. Punter's argument is that it is impossible to pin down what is gothic and what is not, ultimately concluding that it should be left up to the reader to determine. In this critical look at the gothic and its essence, Punter stays away from an actual definition. Instead he looks at the parameters of Gothicism, its influences and the social issues or anxieties that gothic literature addresses. One way in which Punter differs from Botting is that he does not value the historical elements as much as Botting does.

David Punter's other most noted literary criticism on gothic literature is *A Companion to the Gothic (2001)* which is a collection of essays by different authors. This book discusses major critical areas and how they have affected gothic studies such as psychoanalysis and cultural studies. He also profiles the most known and primary gothic texts from England and America and discusses their significance to the development of the genre. Also, he looks at the continuing debates within the genre and critics' differing opinions on the composition of the gothic.

Another collection is the esteemed *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Literature 2002*), which has essays that focus on the differing ways in which the gothic is viewed. This collection looks at the primary texts that have formed the gothic canon and also looks at the genre in the twentieth century. The writers want to see how this form has changed shape and how it will be informed by the society of the future. It looks at ways in which gothic fiction has been expanded in the twentieth century as it relates to how the world around it is changing.

Whether the gothic is a genre of literature or an abstract combination of tropes, elements and symbols that congeal to give the text a sense of foreboding and terror have been some of the major crucial areas of debate within gothic criticism. Also, critics have wanted to investigate whether as a genre it supports the status quo or is a uniquely revolutionary literary art form. These debates can be seen in the discussion of important gothic fictional texts.

Markham Ellis' *The History of Gothic Fiction* (2001) takes up the literary form and the gothic elements. Ellis looks at the novel as a form and how Gothicism works within that genre. He does not give the reader an in-depth history of Gothicism; instead he provides a history of the linkage to the novel formation. Ellis is discussing how Gothicism is "a theory of history: a mode for the apprehension and consumption of history" (11). He discusses how the novel and, by extension, the gothic novel is the result of the response to the social and historical events that are taking place. Also, Gothicism is at the center of these continuing debates and helps the novel to address more of these debates which may not be obvious or overt.

One of the first major works on American gothic fiction is Leslie Fielder's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1966). Fielder uses psychoanalysis to discuss the inherent gothic nature of American Literature. According to Fielder, the gothic works to illustrate that, "Through these gothic images are projected certain obsessive concerns of our national life: the

ambiguity of our relationship with Indian and Negro, the ambiguity of our encounter with nature, the guilt of the revolutionist who feels himself a parricide---and not least of all, the uneasiness of the writer who cannot help believing that the very act of composing a book is Satanic revolt. " 'Hell-Fired' Hawthorne called *The Scarlet Letter*, and Melville thought his own *Moby Dick* a 'wicked book' " (27).

Fielder is looking at American literature from the canonical works and discussing the depiction of American history in literature. America's very inception was not standard and therefore filled with its own horrors; its literature surely cannot escape the tinge of darkness because, "The American writer inhabits a country at once the dream of Europe and a fact of history; he lives on the last horizon of an endlessly retreating vision of innocence----on the 'frontier,' which is to say, the margin where the theory of original goodness and the fact of original sin come face to face. To express this 'blackness ten times black' and to live by it in a society in which, since the decline of orthodox Puritanism, optimism has become the chief effective religion, is a complex and difficult task" (27). Fielder's argument is that blackness is the haunting symbol of the American landscape and literature. Blackness is seen in the symbol of the American Negro but is also seen in other symbols that point toward a dark past and ambiguous future. Fielder not only analyzes race but gender and sexuality as well. He believed that the American writer could not deal with these issues in adult ways and resorted to childish interpretations.

One of the many things that critics of both the English and American Gothic deal with is distinguishing the differences between the two. The American Gothic was heavily influenced by the English Gothic; however, there are also significant differences. So what are the variations? Literary critic Allan Lloyd Smith deals with this in his work in determining the

definition of the American gothic. He connects it to certain American ideals that have created its own brand of gothic fiction, "...to believe the past can be superseded, transfigured, overcome by the valiant present----a very American assumption—the Gothic, however, is about the *return* of the past, of the repressed and denied, the buried secret that subverts and corrodes the present, whatever the culture does not want to know or admit, will not or dare not tell itself" (1). Smith's definition illustrates how the American character is oppositional to the actual meaning of Gothicism. America is seen as the country in which one can leave the past behind and start off anew and potentially become extremely successful at a new life. But what belies this idea is that the past does not obligingly stay behind but instead reasserts itself within American society in various ways. As people come to America trying to re-imagine themselves, America as a country is attempting to do the same thing. But as with some individuals, the country's horror-filled past is brimming too close to the surface, and, in some cases, is standing side by side with its present.

Another new criticism on the American Gothic is the collection edited by Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy. Their book is *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative* (2009). Martin and Savoy think that there have been many books that discuss the history of literary Gothicism and how it has had several redefinitions since it first came into the literary marketplace. They are looking for points of intervention into the already established narratives that deal with race, gender and class. Martin and Savoy discuss the examination of American narratives with new literary assumptions on social and racial identities. New theory such as queer theory and its reinvigoration of psychoanalysis is one area that would be a new assumption.

A book that takes a look at the history of the Gothic novel is authored by Maggie Kilgour. Kilgour's *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (1995) specifically looks at the formations of the rise of the novel. My interest in the Gothic has to do with Kilgour's statement on "predatory and demonic relations" and how that has framed the racial structure and repression in America. The racial climate and the demonization of blackness have created the nightmare that the passer and society live in. The racial ideology has poisoned society so that unbridled tensions cannot be contained because the divisions create a society that does not connect but lives in isolation. Kilgour also argues that the gothic is just as much about the present as well as the past because the past constructs the present. So the gothic is always commenting on contemporary society.

Kilgour also analyzes the difficulty in defining the gothic aspects of literature. She contends that there are inherent contradictions and ambivalences which hamper reaching a clear conclusion. Also, Kilgour conveys that many people think that the gothic is radical and subversive but critics of this point of view feel that it has reached its limit. But as Kilgour writes, the gothic has the potential to show us what we really are as a society, "The gothic is thus a nightmare vision of a modern world made up of detached individuals, which has dissolved into predatory and demonic relations which cannot be reconciled into a healthy social order" (Kilgour 12).

Theresa Goddu contributed to the American Gothic theoretical framework in an insightful text called *Gothic America* (1997). Because Goddu maintains that America is inherently gothic due to the haunting specter of race, her text is relevant to my central argument that the gothic is specific to the depiction of the passing figure. She goes on to discuss how Gothicism comes to the surface when racial constructs or issues disrupt the idea of America as a bastion for equality and freedom for everyone. When these repressed issues come to the surface, there is a collision

with what the country expresses itself to be and what it is. When these repressed issues rise to the surface, the country's purported reputation collides explosively with its reality as it is known by the "other".

Through looking at Gothic criticism and passing literature one can see the possibilities of linking them together to have an analogous discussion about repression and subversion in American society. There has been one book which looks at the two concurrently in an academic sense. Justin Edwards, in his book *Gothic Passages*, is one of the first to write a book length study looking at passing through a gothic lens. His goal is to analyze the development of Gothic literature and its connection to the passing and racial discourse of the nineteenth century. He examines how racial language, rhetoric and discourse were created and continued through the gothic lens. However, the text does not provide an in-depth look at the passing novel's either continued use of or challenge to stereotypes. I will be looking at how the construction of the passing character challenges and/or continues stereotypes. Analyzing this latter aspect illustrates that passing novels respond and comment on other issues than just changing roles but also predatory and demonic relations within the society

The texts that I will discuss deal with the formation of identity for the passer and conflicts of the identity that society wants to assign to the passer. These conflicts arise because of American society sees race and identity as unchanging biological characteristics. As I noted earlier, since the time of the formation of the one drop rule, American society decided that race was reducible to blood and if the blood could be separated, the white race would remain pure. The country's identity is formulated from its method of separating people into categories which are seen as immovable and unchanging. As I also wrote, the passer represents a threat to that identity because she/he cannot be defined as one particular entity. Instead the passer has a more

fragmented U.S. identity which is threatening to the supposed unity of American culture and society.

My dissertation will look at the various ways in which authors situate the racial passer. The texts I will study are Mark Twain's *Puddin'head Wilson*, Charles Chesnutt's *Paul Marchand F.M.C.*, Nella Larsen's *Passing*, Danzy Senna's *Symptomatic*, William Faulkner's *Light in August* and both Donald Sirk and John Stahl's versions of *Imitation of Life*. I argue that the gothic elements in these texts are used to challenge and/or reinforce stereotypes about race through the character of the racial passer. In all of these novels, it is mainly society (whether acknowledged or disavowed) against the passer. When the author uses gothic elements to illustrate the ills of society or its complicity in the racial issues of the passer, he/she is challenging racial stereotypes. However, when the author employs gothic elements to frame the passer as a negative or monstrous evil the writers are continuing stereotypes. Twain and the other authors employ gothic tropes to illustrate, highlight and accentuate the complex issue of race and the passing figure. I will illustrate that the author's manner of dealing with racial passing is due to a complicated set of personal and social agendas.

This is a new area because instead of just looking at how the gothic elements are depicted in the construction of the passing characters, I am looking at the aims of the texts and the authors and society's influence on these constructions. These constructions are heavily influenced by the following determinants: (1) the race and ethnicity of the author (i.e. white, black, and Biracial): (2) the cultural and historical background of America of the time (i.e. Reconstruction, Harlem Renaissance and Multiculturalism) and (3) the writer's own personal ambivalence and/or loyalties. The above correlations are tied to the writers' or filmmakers' agenda when creating the passing character. Many of these writers or filmmakers create the passing figure as either a

threat and/or a monstrous figure (vampire image), or an ambivalent, confused or a misunderstood character (tragic mulatta/mulatto). These constructions are often influenced by the personal history, identity, beliefs, and of course, the particular time periods of the authors and filmmakers.

Also, the laws of the time will be analyzed; for example, Plessy versus Ferguson, the root of the separate but equal doctrine and the origin from whence the tainted blood mythology evolves, is crucial to the configuration of the literary works of the period. The blood imagery, along with the haunting, uncontained monstrous black figure, is the most continually used gothic symbol in connection to race. When the bloodlines are mixed, the line of demarcation is blurred and the blood is considered to be contaminated and polluted. This imagery of contamination and pollution is used by various writers to construct the passer as either victim or villain, depending upon the author's literary and/or personal agendas.

This dissertation is not concerned with Gothic literature as a defined topic of discussion. Instead I am focused more on applying such gothic elements as doubles, masking, the monster, and the sense of fear, horror and terror in analyzing the particular author's depiction of the passing figure and his/her struggle to claim a functional identity. Also, stock features of Gothicism such as ambiguity, repression and uncertainty lend themselves handily in the portrayal of this character, his/her turmoil and society's angst. In addition, these same gothic devices will be discussed in reference to their substantiating or challenging of the author's main viewpoint concerning the passing character. For example, Mark Twain's *Puddin'head Wilson* is often contradictory in that there are some scenes in which gothic elements are used to support negative stereotypes of the passer; then there are other scenes that gothic elements are used to challenge those stereotypes. In particular, his characterization of Tom Driscoll confounds Twain's plot as he substantiates more than challenges stereotypes. I am building on David Punter's idea that the

gothic is a combination of literary elements that gives the work a gothic mood instead of representing it as a united literary genre. The dissertation looks at these literary elements in the construct of the passing character to investigate the terrifying and haunting mood of the text and its agenda in terms of racial construction.

Accordingly, we will see that the passer fears she/he is the object of hatred, envy and contempt by both communities, black and white, with many writers relying heavily on using gothic symbolism to depict those feelings and emotions. An example of this is the sense of isolation that Greta in *Symptomatic* feels because of her mixed raced heritage. Senna's depiction of isolation illustrates that Greta does not feel that she is connected to anyone and is moving through life alone because she feels as though no one can share her particular struggle. People don't know the passer's true identity; hence, these characters suffer "internal conflict."

While Greta feels isolated from both the black and white communities, these groups feel threatened by the passer because of different yet related reasons. As already noted, the white community is threatened because they cannot tell who is black or white. They want definitive rigid racial roles and categories but the passer transgresses these roles and travels unnoticed in their communities.

As will be explored in the chapter on Nella Larsen and Danzy Senna, the black community considers passing as a disloyalty to racial unity and there is also a sense of jealousy because of the independence and risk-taking of the passer. These writers also use gothic symbolism to illustrate the betwixt and between situation of the passer regarding his/her community and the world. The passer, not really feeling a part of either the black or white community, desperately yearns to belong. Because of this need to belong, shifting identities are characteristic of passing novels and of Gothicism. The passer takes on different roles to conform

to the situation he/she is in. But still the passer often paradoxically ends up alienated from not only both worlds but also from the self. Situating the passer as alienated from himself/herself and as a threat to the community helps to create the gothic atmosphere of isolation. The isolation represents that he/she has no connection to a community; therefore, he/she feels alone. As the passer experiences this alienation from both worlds, questions of when and where the passer's racial identity will be revealed, and by whom, emerge. This again is prompted by the gothic sense of fear of the unknown which permeates throughout the passing narrative. Passing narratives inherently have a sense of terror and mystery because the passer is an unknowable character and fear of the unknown looms far and wide in mainstream society.

For most of this dissertation I will compare two works per chapter, looking at each writer and/or filmmaker of parallel periods and his/her use of gothic symbolism to construct the passing figure. In the first chapter, I plan a comparative analysis of Mark Twain's *Puddn'head Wilson* (1894) and Charles Chestnut's *Paul Marchand F.M. C.* (1921) *Puddn'head Wilson* is about a slave woman named Roxy who has a child who is identical to the master's child and was born at the same time. While miscegenation is a covert theme of the story, passing is also related to the narrative. Haunted by the fear that her son might one day be sold "down the river", Roxy impulsively yet deliberately switches the babies. From that point on the plot of the slave child raised as the privileged white master's child begins to take shape.

Twain's interest in writing a passing novel parallels his interest in racial issues. He closely followed the Plessy vs. Ferguson case which codified the separate but equal law. Fascinated by what he termed as a "fiction of law", Twain was motivated to reflect on the impracticality of that legislation, which was by extension based on the "one drop" rule. Therefore, he created Roxy and her son as a kind of literary validation of the futility of the law.

Throughout his life into adulthood, Tom Driscoll repudiated the law by convincingly passing as white.

In interrogating *Puddn'head Wilson*, I will first look at Twain's two agendas in the writing of the novel and their contradictory and conflicting goals. On the surface, it seems as if Twain's initial objective was to write a novel that challenged the notion of racial characteristics being caused by nature, and the false notion that blackness is innately evil and whiteness is inherently good, nature vs. nurture (environment). But as my argument states, his negative characterization of Tom Driscoll, Roxy's son, undermines that goal.

Along with commenting on Twain's employment of these themes, I will also discuss the author's personal agenda as it impacted this contradictory work. Overwhelming Twain's laudatory and admirable motivation is his need to make as much money as possible to end the financial woes that plagued him at the time. He could not perform an extensive racial critique because he needed the same audience he was critiquing to buy his book to relieve him of his financial distress. Because of his financial imperative, Twain, unfortunately, falls into the trap of creating the black Tom (Roxy's child) as a gothic monster in order to appeal to a racist public and sell his book: this conflicts with the few times he does seem to question the one drop rule, genetics and race constructs. Examining the author, his persona and social world in which he wrote the work will help to analyze the conflicts of the two different agendas and support my thesis that gothic elements can be used to both challenge and sustain stereotypes.

I will analyze other critics who have been on both sides of the argument in regards to *Puddn'head Wilson*. Many of the critics have traditionally felt that Twain is fully illustrating the environment argument in the novel. But there is a sizeable number of critics who also think that possibly Twain is playing into the racial thoughts of the day in his construction of Tom as a

degenerate. I contend that Twain does not definitely assert that nurture over nature is a clear thesis of his book. Throughout the story, Twain vacillates between supporting the nature over nurture theme, then vice versa. At many points in the novel he substantiates both so it is not exactly clear which one Twain ultimately validates.

Contrasting Twain's work with that of Charles Chesnutt, I will look at Chesnutt's *Paul Marchand F.M.C.*, which is widely considered to be a retelling of *Puddn'head Wilson*. Chesnutt challenges racial stereotypes much more directly than Mark Twain. Chesnutt's cultural landscape and political ideology wove their way into his work as did Twain's but differently because each writer had his own personal and literary goals that defined his novel. *Paul Marchand F.M.C.* is about a Creole man who discovers that he is white, heir to a fortune and then subsequently deals with the inherent struggles and conflicts that follow. However, before Paul finds out that he is white, Chesnutt portrays him as a flawed man who is indignant about his status. But after he finds out about his true race, he then temporarily takes on the face of the slave master. Chesnutt allows the reader access to Paul's introspective deliberations as he contemplates whether to claim his new life as white and abandon his family or continue as a Creole and forfeit his vast inheritance. Unlike Twain, Chesnutt details the transformation and the internal struggle so the reader clearly sees how environment is influencing the turnaround.

Because Chesnutt felt that white society would be more inclined to accord equality and justice to blacks if convinced of their humanity, Chesnutt diligently strove to present such an image of blacks in his stories. However, one of the most insightful and influential aspects of Chesnutt's writing is that he was light enough in complexion to pass (but never did). As a black person with white physical traits, he gained entry into both worlds, black and white, but he

did not bring along his own preconceived notions about the passer and endeavored to present both sides of the coin.

Chesnutt also critiques the multi-layered identity issues concerning Paul, the protagonist. Because of his Creole identity Paul is separate from the black community but still considered inferior to whites. Chesnutt juxtaposes the white world's view of Paul versus his own self-image. Along with this sense of multi-layered identity, Chesnutt depicts multiple doubles in connection to Paul's self. The double, a gothic symbol, is normally seen as a twin of the self. In *Paul Marchand F.M.C.* and most other passing novels, the passer himself/herself intrinsically has a double in that he or she is running away from a version of the self that represents fearful and unresolved identity issues. Chesnutt creates several doubles for Paul's identity problems such as the mulatto who kidnaps Josephine, Paul's cousin Philippe, who is the actual Creole, and Paul's internal white double. These doubles illustrate a complex view of Paul Marchand and do not just convey the invisible blackness of the passer as an unmitigated horror.

Instead, Chesnutt literarily demonstrates that the horror is situated within the system that promotes whites as higher evolved creations than blacks and then systematically excludes blacks on the basis of manipulated and fictionalized legalities. Chesnutt wanted to illustrate the impact and legacy of slavery and racism in America and the continued victimization of blacks. Indeed, he does not have a dual agenda as Twain does but instead Chesnutt uses gothic symbolism to achieve one united purpose. He does not construct blackness as the gothic monster but instead illustrates through characterization reversal that the gothic monster appears when Paul Marchand discovers that he is white and assumes the persona of the privileged white man in New Orleans society.

The second chapter of the dissertation will be concerned with linking *Passing* (1929) by Nella Larsen to *Symptomatic* (2004) by Danzy Senna. Although, *Symptomatic* is not a rewriting of *Passing*, Senna is most definitely playing off of the same themes and issues that Larsen critiqued. The authors' personal lives are connected because both Senna and Larsen are products of mixed raced households but they lived during different time periods which affect how they approach the subject of passing. Another important aspect of their writing is that even though both Senna and Larsen were of mixed racial heritage, Larsen clearly looked black whereas Senna can quite easily pass and is often mistaken as white. These two differences between the authors affect the way they use gothic symbolism to broach the subject of passing.

Publicly, Larsen was a major supporter of the Harlem Renaissance period of the 20's-30's in which uplift culture was the dominant black ideology. However, *Passing* reflects her private yet complex, ambivalent and ambiguous feelings concerning the uplift ideology and black identity. Racial uplift was a political ideology which prophesized that the actions of blacks should promote the betterment of the race. This ideology frequently contradicted artistic expression, as I will explain in the chapter.

Passing is about two women who are childhood friends who pass in different ways, Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield. Clare, choosing to abandon her life as black and pass as white, has been married to a white man for years. She has a daughter and husband who believe that she is white. As the story begins, Clare is experiencing regret about her life and is yearning for the life that she left behind in Chicago. When a happenstance meeting between Clare and Irene occurs, Clare seeks to reestablish her friendship with Irene and to re-connect with the black world. On the other hand, Irene, who is also light enough to pass, has married a black man and has two sons who visually look black yet she does occasionally pass to get into restaurants and places that

would not normally admit blacks. In other words, Irene is a situational passer, one who passes to sometimes escape from the second-class status of blackness.

In the first part of this chapter I will critique Larsen's use of gothic imagery in order to present her own particular conception of the passer in the persona of Clare. She depicts Clare, the main passing character of the book, as the outsider who is torn between the life she has created as a white woman and the life she abandoned as a black woman. Once Clare is introduced into the story as a passer, there is, of course, an aura of mystery and secrecy about her. As I will show often times, a sense of monstrosity emerges along with the fear of the unknown through Larsen's depiction of Clare. Along with validating my argument that gothic literary elements can be used to challenge racial stereotypes, this depiction also illustrates the passer's potential to threaten both blacks and whites.

The element of the unknown resonates throughout the novel, climaxing at the end when the reader is left guessing as to whether Clare's death was accidental, suicidal or murderous at the hands of Irene. Because Larsen suffered from racial conflicts, she most likely worked out her identity issues through the characters of Clare and Irene. Both Clare and Irene symbolize a certain aspect of Larsen's life and identity. Clare represents Larsen's sense of isolation and alienation as the only black person in a family of whiteness. Irene is representative of Larsen's life as a black elite wife trying to live up to the politics and social world of the black community. Larsen's ambivalence is evidenced in her construction of the passer as vague and threatening. No doubt the reader is aided in understanding the conflicted world of the passer through Larson's own experienced feelings of doubt, insecurity, and ambiguity concerning race.

Larsen uses gothic motifs, alienation and isolation to understand Clare's actions. Most passing novels during the Harlem Renaissance did not allow for passing to go unpunished

because it was seen as being disloyal to the race and to political unity; therefore, Clare must die because she is antithetical to racial pride and the uplift ideology. Larsen continues the ideas of the Harlem Renaissance that positioned the passer as tragic, irredeemable, and threatening to racial progress. But Larsen also challenges stereotypes by illustrating the racial problems in both black and white societies that keep the biracial figure from forming a cohesive identity.

This chapter includes my critique of Danzy Senna's *Symptomatic* and her employment of gothic techniques to depict the passing figure. Establishing an aura of mystery at the very beginning, Senna presents the main character, the narrator, as nameless. The narrator is a young, biracial woman who, because she looks white, has often passed. She does not deliberately decide to pass, but she makes no effort to inform or broadcast to whites that she is actually biracial. In her parallel to *Passing*, Senna casts Greta, a somewhat older biracial woman, approaching her forties, as one of the narrator's most persistent doubles. Greta meets the narrator and immediately feels connected to her because they are both perceived as white by mainstream culture. As their relationship develops, Greta becomes unhealthily attached to the narrator. The narrator begins to fear that she will eventually transform into Greta who is already an emotional and mental disaster because of her anguish over the world's perception of her.

Also, similar to Larsen's critique of the uplift ideology and its significance on the black community, black women particularly, Senna comments on the inherent alienation and isolation of the passer within the black community. Senna also makes clear the connections between the passer and his/her sense of ambiguity in white society.

In the third chapter I will focus only on William Faulkner's *Light in August* and discuss the dichotomy of Faulkner's agenda. I will connect Faulkner to Mark Twain and discuss their depiction of the passing figure. Faulkner's novel is an attempt by a white southern male writer to

comment on the problems of race in the South, as southerners are compromised and aggravated by the legacy of miscegenation. To some extent, Faulkner is committed to addressing the ills of the oppressed black race in the south; however, there is always the tug of his heart that pulls at him to defend his southern homeland.

Representative of Faulkner's paradoxical goal is Joe Christmas, the embodiment of the tragic mulatto. Denied any knowledge of his identity and separated from his family from his birth, Joe Christmas as a biracial person, spends his entire life never knowing his true identity. Not only does Christmas endure a torturous, lonely life because he has no identity or family, he is killed by the white community because it believes that he is a black man passing as white. Living in a world dominated by Jim Crowism and segregation, Christmas could be seen as Faulkner's poster child to warn against the evils of miscegenation. In his desperate attempts to survive, Christmas weaves back and forth from situating himself as white to casting himself as black, whatever is most expedient and beneficial at the time. Faulkner uses gothic tropes to represent Christmas as alienated and isolated from both the black and white communities.

I will discuss the stereotypes of the black man and the white woman, the feeling of alienation, the double and the vampire image in terms of the black man as the gothic monster pursuing the white woman. As mentioned, Faulkner, like Twain, has a contradictory focus. He wants to show the problems within the construction of race in the American South but he also promotes certain stereotypes about blacks that can undermine his message. He is not as concerned with the audience as much as Twain is but there are other divided loyalties within Faulkner who once infamously said if it came down to black civil rights and the boys from Mississippi, he would choose the boys from Mississippi. However, he does understand more than most white southern writers the complexities of race in the American South. He also has

written about the plight of black Americans from a more sympathetic view than some white writers but along with all his compassion for the difficulties of blacks, his loyalties to the South resonate deeply and are clearly evident in his work. Although Faulkner realizes that the South has problems in its relationship with blacks, he is still a white man of the South and to some degree he holds some of the same stereotypical beliefs that blacks are confronted with daily.

The last chapter in my dissertation will compare the two *Imitations of Life* films, the 1934 John Stahl version and the Douglas Sirk 1959 version. The visual form of film is important in illustrating the passing myth because it allows one to see directly how images are challenged or manipulated. Accordingly, these films simultaneously challenge and support stereotypes.

Although, the gothic elements in the films are not as directly depicted as they are in the literature, they are enhanced by visuals such as lighting, ambiance and settings. This time I will be analyzing the passer, Peola/Sarah Jane, and her racial identity problems and the embodiment of her mother as a horror. She feels that in order to escape the horror of blackness, she must separate from her mother. In both films, I will be looking at how certain gothic elements such as the depictions of blackness, excess and mirrored images are illustrated in accessing each film's unique use of gothic symbolism in constructing the passing figure.

I will also look at the ways in which the 1934 film seems to oddly negate some of the racial stereotypes in contrast to the 1959 version continually promoting them. Both films have racist imagery but the John Stahl version does more to present Peola/Sarah Jane as a less stereotypical character. Inherent in both films are the dichotomy of the two worlds of black and white as good/bad respectively and the characterization of the mother as embodying the daughter's hatred and horrific vision of herself. The mother as the double of the daughter is innate in the films because she represents the horror, terror and fear of being black. Also, Sirk

and Stahl are playing with the fear of many daughters: As they grow older, they will become their mothers.

In conclusion, this dissertation deals with the passing figure as he/she is depicted by several authors chosen on the grounds that each author's characterization offers a uniquely personal and profound view of this literary figure. The particular stories and films chosen for this dissertation are illustrative of the utilization of gothic tropes and symbols that enhance and illuminate the sometimes dark, secretive, ambiguous and monstrous features of the passer. Also, I have approached this subject from the standpoint of its cultural, historical and social impact on this country which bears partial responsibility for the actual creation of the real person, and by extension, the literary character.

Also, as it demonstrates the relationship of history to literature, this work presents a chronological perspective of the development of the literary passer throughout the historical events of America. Starting with Tom Driscoll as the passer during slavery and ending with the film version of *Imitation of Life*, history and literature co-partner in an effort to provide a clear and in-depth analysis of this tragic and controversial figure.

Chapter 1

Gothic Passing in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and Charles Chesnut's F. Paul Marchand F. M.C.

¹As a story of the passing figure during slavery, Mark Twain's novel, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, is a contradictory text that veers from its author's original intent. Joining in one of the most popular and controversial topics of the day (nature vs. nurture), Twain writes the novel to challenge the theory that racial characteristics are innate to the black race. Using the backdrop of slavery and its lasting legacy of miscegenation, Twain creates the character of Tom Driscoll in his efforts to refute negative stereotypes concerning blacks. However, his laudable efforts are impinged upon by his dire financial distress and urgency to absolve himself from constantly mounting debts. At this point, the novel becomes a contradictory text as Twain is confronted with the reality that his readers and the subjects of his book were one and the same (the Southern slaveholding aristocracy).

His dilemma: How could he covertly critique the same public he needs to purchase his book? So instead of outwardly critiquing the institution of slavery as eternally oppressive and inhumane, Twain writes a vague and ambiguous tale that simultaneously challenges and sustains racial stereotypes. To accomplish this, I contend that Twain incorporated the use of gothic literary tropes in his depiction of the passing figure. The gothic literary tropes that Twain uses are the internal and external double, triple consciousness, masking, repression, familial secrets

¹ The endnotes for this chapter can be found on page 259.

blood and monstrosity. These tropes are used to construct the passing character as a depraved individual while seeming to validate nature more than nurture in Tom Driscoll's character.

In this chapter I will discuss Mark Twain's employment of Gothic tropes in *Puddn'head Wilson* (1894) to critique the stereotypes of race in his day as he simultaneously reinforces (perhaps unwittingly) those same racist stereotypes. Twain overtly uses the aforementioned gothic tropes throughout the narrative to stigmatize blackness as monstrous, immoral and unethical. Just as prevalently, the theme of miscegenation runs subtly yet consistently throughout the novel as it is presented through the gothic trope of mixed bloodlines. Through his examination of miscegenation, albeit coyly written, Twain provides an analysis of the passer who symbolizes the contradictions within the southern society and Twain's own opinions on race.

Mainly, the discussion of whether race is defined as socially constructed or biological is at the core of the novel. Nature defines racial characteristics (usually negative for blacks) as existing at birth, meaning that the person cannot change. His behavior is linked completely to his race. Nurture, on the other hand, says that behavior is not linked to birth and race but the environment the person is raised in is the dominating force in producing a person's character. These ideas were famously discussed in the nineteenth century and Twain joins the debate with his novel *Puddn'head Wilson*. Twain clearly wants to be on the side of nurture but because of his dual purposes, he sometimes substantiates biology as the defining characteristic over one's character regardless of learned behavior which produced a very contradictory book. Furthermore, Twain's characterization of fake Tom seems to demonstrate that one's nature can limit the ability to learn more positive behavior.

As he presents this critique, Twain also alternately comments on and illustrates the American fear of the mixture of bloodlines. In both America and Twain's novel, miscegenation is one of the most enduring and consequential legacies of slavery and is the impetus for the issues that are simultaneously central to the racial fear in America (blood contamination and fear of the uncontained) and symbolic of American Gothicism. Some of the central issues of Gothic literature are inheritance, property rights, repression, family ancestry and mixed bloodlines, which are seen as connected to the racial obsession and fear within American culture. These characteristics resonate as gothic when they are used to deny the present and create an artificial past to keep the secrets hidden. Likewise one can see these same issues featured prominently in *Puddn'head Wilson* as Twain's story is a tale of nature (biology) vs. nurture (environment) and exposed family secrets. As Allan Lloyd Smith said, the American gothic consists of things the culture did not want to know and/or confront, and are reflective of this and resonating throughout the novel are the secrets of slavery and relations between slaves and slave masters.

Briefly, *Puddn'head Wilson* is about a slave mother, Roxy, who has a child who strongly resembles the slave master's son. Wanting to save her child from the horrors of slavery, Roxy devises a baby switch between the two children. Her son grows up to be the heir to a southern aristocracy and the slave master's baby is raised as a slave.

However, the question that is constantly in the back of the reader's mind is who is Tom's (Roxy's son) father. Twain does play a cat and mouse game by not stating the obvious: the master or the master's brother might possibly be the father of Tom Driscoll. Then, to further confuse readers, Twain has Roxy even state that the father is Cecil Burleigh Essex. Essex's lineage can be traced back to the first families of Virginia. In her book *Dark Twins*, Susan Gilman writes about Twain's original version of the story in which he had passages that dealt

with Tom's discovery of his true parentage. It was clearly something he purposely took out of his published narrative and left for the reader to surmise for himself/herself.

As I develop further, one of the first issues to surface for the reader is the question of Tom's paternity. Why does Twain decide to have Roxy lie about the father since both men would have come from the first families of Virginia? In the beginning, the narrator, cavalierly, tells the reader that Cecil Essex is not a concern of the book. So even though Roxy names Essex as the father, Twain has put the reader in a mindset of indifference about the character; and no further information is given. Is this done just as a teaser for the reader? Or is it meaningfully planted at the beginning to grab the reader as an "ah-ha" moment of recognition later when Roxy does name Essex as Tom's father?

Why does Twain just nonchalantly mention the information, giving no further details about the issue, and even more importantly, why did he excise the whole secondary story of Tom confronting his father from the final manuscript? Twain's possible reason for using a family that is no longer viable in the town could be to avoid holding anyone in the actual story and town accountable. He would then avoid having to be concerned with telling the father's reasons and responses. Twain completely shuns any discussion concerning the raping of slave women by their slave masters. In order to avert the reader's attention from this issue, Twain makes the father basically irrelevant. Although Twain wrote his book during Post Reconstruction, he was apprehensive about making that direct linkage between the master's family and Tom. Again, the complications of slavery and miscegenation lurk menacingly behind Twain's tale of nature versus nurture.

Also, according to early manuscripts, Twain included a revenge plot in which Tom sets out to find his father and kill him. The early manuscripts consisted of a confrontational scene

(while Tom is in the process of stealing) between Tom and the judge in which the judge reveals himself to be Tom's father. Undeterred by this revelation, Tom completes his mission and kills his father. Yet in the finished version, Twain takes a completely different turn, one which results in a somewhat conflicted plot and the revamping of Tom into a more negative character. According to Anne P. Wigger, "This aspect of the plot was changed, and most of the material concerning the heredity influence of slavery was deleted from the published book, a deletion which blurs to some extent Tom's characterization" (96).

What was the motive for Twain's new plot mechanism and character change of Tom? Possibly, some insight is revealed through some of Twain's letters which express his intense angst over his dire financial situation. Consequently, his overwhelming need to relieve his financial debt could have impacted his writing. The first draft of the novel clearly indicts slavery and depicts all society as its victims. However, Twain knew that his audience was not going to buy a book that was pointedly indicting the South and the white community for being at fault in the issues concerning race. As a result, Twain retooled some aspects of the book, making it more pliable for his intended Southern readers.

As noted, one of the things that makes the novel complicated is the divided intentions of Mark Twain. In a letter to Fred Hall, Twain discusses what he wants to get for the novel as a serial in a magazine, "Now, then what is she worth?.....I don't want anymore syndicating--- nothing short of 20,000----- anyway and that I can't get--- but won't you see how much the Cosmopolitan will stand? Do your best for me, for I do not sleep these nights, for visions of the poorhouse" (123-124). Obviously, this letter indicates Twain is concerned chiefly with obtaining the most money possible for the novel to alleviate his desperate financial situation. Consideration of book sales could have been a factor in making him tone down the racial

implications and using gothic symbolism in a more ambivalent way rather than the direct manner he used in the first manuscript. This dilemma between purpose and audience is one of the main reasons that Twain's novel falls short of its primary goal to critique slavery and its legacy of miscegenation.

Therefore, the switching of the babies, when Chambers becomes Tom and vice versa is the catalyst of *Puddin'head Wilson's* plot and the vehicle of Twain's argument concerning race. This is another way that Twain is harkening back to the long established history of miscegenation at the hands of the white slave owners. The fact that the master's son and Roxie's son look so much alike is indicative that the master or the uncle is possibly the father of Tom. This subtext gives validity to miscegenation being uncontrolled. But since Twain is living in a society that uses all of its overt discussions about race to construct a different reality, his subtlety probably went undetected by many of his readers who are mostly complicit themselves in this societal and systematic wrongdoing.

Issues in *Puddin'head Wilson* such as paternity and ancestral lineage have been used as gothic tropes since the reinvention of the gothic English novel in the nineteenth century. As the gothic reinvents itself to situate family bloodlines as its center, "...guilty secrets of past transgression and uncertain class origins are the sources of anxiety (Botting 114). This point clearly relates to Twain's *Puddin'head Wilson* because it is about revealing family secrets of the past, a past that is not only symbolic of the individual family, but also of America as a whole. Indeed, the revelation of these close to home horrors creates a more real fear and terror than just those of imagined ghost-like tales.

Within *Puddin'head Wilson* the fear of miscegenation is a clandestine part of the story along with Twain's overt question of whether behavior is determined by environment or biology.

According to critic Justin Edwards, ". . . establishing a bloodline acquires a specifically racial dimension in the United States, where miscegenation inspired the fear expressed in the racist discourse of the 'affront to white womanhood' and an anxiety about the imagined moral and physical decay of the nation" (xxv). Since miscegenation symbolized the corrupted and soiled purity of the nation, it was incumbent upon the nation to draw strict racial lines which involve racial, biological and scientific barriers to prevent racial mixing. Of course, racial mixing had been occurring since the beginning of slavery when the plantation owners sexually abused slave women, but then it was just "business as usual" and no one voiced any objections, except for abolitionists who used it as a reason to end slavery.

However, after the Civil War racial mixing assumed a different connotation because the fear of miscegenation was heightened after the emancipation of slaves. The stereotypes concerning blacks, miscegenation and its product (the biracial child) went through two distinctive phases. Prior to the Civil War blacks were seen as lazy, childlike, subservient and in need of supervision. However, at the same time slaves were usually also linked to violence in relation to the fear of slave uprisings. After the Civil War blacks were viewed quite differently. Since they were no longer slaves, the south did not have a system to control them as they had during slavery.

The black male, in particular, was now seen as violent, unpredictable and lusting after white women, and, therefore, was a monstrous figure that needed to be contained. According to racial theorist Felipe Smith. "The 'brute Negro' type so prominent in the literature of the era is preeminently a post emancipation Negro who has been allowed to slide back to the evolutionary level from which he had been raised by white intervention..." (41). Legal rulings such as Plessy

vs. Fergusson and racial myths were used to control the black population and to keep them separated from the white populace.

Because of the new characterization of blackness, miscegenation became a prominent and immediate threat to whites. Postbellum white society feared that a white man/white woman might unknowingly marry and have children with a mulatto who was undetectable as black because no longer were the boundaries of slavery there to maintain and keep the black person in his/her place.

These fears of miscegenation resulted in the concept of the one drop rule. According to F. James Davis, author of *Who Is Black?*, the one drop rule constitutes "...that a single drop of 'black blood' makes a person black. It is also known as the 'one black ancestor rule,' some courts have called it the 'traceable amount rule; and anthropologists call it the 'hypo-descent rule,' meaning that racially mixed persons are assigned the status of the subordinate group" (5). This one drop law was enacted to prohibit those that looked white but had "black blood" from gaining access to the privileges of white society, and therefore it aided whites in controlling blacks.

The novel is sometimes viewed as a critique against the prevalence of miscegenation by southern aristocratic men. Twain was able to soften his critique of contemporary southerners by setting his story during slavery. His analysis is focused on the lingering issues of miscegenation and the separation of the bloodlines. The continuing intimate relations between the races (white men and black women, especially) was still a hidden part of southern life. Many black women were victimized by white men because even though it was after slavery, they were still in many cases economically tied to the white community and had no legal voice. As a result of the imbalance of power between the races, white men could legally rape black women even after the

abolition of slavery. They also knew that there would be no legal ramifications and access was almost a given because many black women worked as maids in white households.¹

The complicated status of blacks after slavery is commented on by Eric Sundquist when he says that, "Blacks were free, according to law; but the law as Twain understood clearly, was more than ever in the process of reenslaving them...The 'dual citizenship that in effect allowed the reconstitution of aspects of chattel slavery in a system of segregation subverted black freedom (105-106). In his novel about racial politics of the time, Twain addresses the post-reconstruction identity of blacks. Sundquist talks about the duality that was inherently a part of southern race relations and, in a larger sense, American race relations. He continues this analogy in his discussion of the North and South, " Both in Twain's novel of racial crisis and in the rising national penchant for Confederate nostalgia, the 1850's and the 1890's, the South and the North, and white and black became freakishly twinned in the failure of freedom" (105-106). The passer in passing novels not only represents the duality within American culture from a literary perspective but it also signifies it within the law. The Plessy vs. Ferguson ruling codified this duality.

Plessey vs. Ferguson was the court case to test the new color line by challenging the "separate but equal" doctrine. In this case Homer Plessey, a black Creole, who could pass as white, decided to challenge the laws segregating blacks and whites on railroad cars, "In 1892 Homer Plessey, a 'Negro' by dint of being one-eighth African-American, was jailed for entering a whites-only railroad car in New Orleans. His case drew national attention as it made its way to the Supreme Court (which in 1896 ruled against him), not only for its test of black citizens' rights, but for raising the issue of how 'race' is defined. A connoisseur of race based travesties in America, Twain followed the case closely; Roxana was his literary response to it" (Powers

xiv). Plessey was found guilty by the local judge and the ruling was subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court and further installed as the separate but equal law. The novel discusses so many of the issues that were involved in the case and the ensuing verdict that it is clear that Twain on a smaller scale is trying to depict the racial complexity and ambiguities induced by miscegenation.

Plessy vs Ferguson legally codified the gothic symbolism of whiteness and blackness as doubles of each other almost in the image of a two-headed monster. Neither head can exist without the other or it will cause its own destruction but instead of acknowledging this dependence, one head continually tries to assert its superiority. The other head, deemed inferior, is forever trying to keep up with its twin. Both heads are needed in order to function or the monster will self-destruct.

The basic structure of the South since slavery consisted of an economic system in which whites needed black labor and blacks needed either shelter/food or after slavery, employment. Both groups of people are needed for the economic system to survive. Even though the white community wants to feel as if it is superior, it still needs blacks economically. The idea of separation that Plessy vs. Ferguson validated gave a legal theory to this duality and to the realization that one could not get rid of the other as seen in the phrase "separate but equal." But it also gave credence to the idea that privileging one group (head) over the other was a possibility. The true realization of this ruling is that it could never work because each group needs each other for its own survival and even the ruling nods to this truth in some part. Yet, the ruling speaks to the fact that since the erasure of blacks from the community cannot be attained, social segregation is the closest thing that can be achieved. This duality would divide the country into two different incarnations that would forever haunt its legal and political ideology.

Hence, Twain uses many gothic tropes in *Puddn'head Wilson* to continue stereotypes primarily and, to a lesser extent, subvert them. Even though he does give credence to essentialism, Twain also wants to illuminate the nurture part as well, which was his original intention. Therefore, within the gothic subtext of the novel, Twain posits two contrasting gothic critiques of his society and its attitude toward miscegenation. The first critique is reflected in the way that Twain uses Gothicism to show that purity of the bloodlines cannot be achieved and sustained because of the repression of the knowledge that slave masters are taking sexual advantage of slave women.

Secondly, the gothic also appears when Twain seems to give credence to the idea of a black person as immoral and monstrous and attributes it to his/her inherent and mixed bloodlines. This can be seen in the characterization of Tom Driscoll as a criminally depraved person. According to Lawrence Howe, "Twain's duplicitous version of racial stereotyping finally plays on a racist nightmare more deeply embedded in the consciousness of white Americans than the fear of Negro violence: the fear of 'passing' or invisible blackness" (511). And therein lies the gothic elements of miscegenation as they relate to society's relationship with the passer: the horror, the terror, the fear of the invisible passer who can secretly intrude, invade and insinuate himself without detection into whiteness. Representing Tom as a person of mixed bloodlines, Twain has him cheat, steal and murder to achieve his ends, depicting all that the stereotypical black entails. Toni Morrison discusses the sense of blackness as a separate from entity from Americaness in the literary imagination, "Moreover, such knowledge assumes the characteristics of our national literature emanate from a particular 'Americaness' that is separate from and unaccountable to this presence [black]" (5). At the beginning of the novel, Twain seems to be focused on discussing how one's nature is not decided by blood and the absurdity of

trying to keep miscegenation from occurring when it has already permeated throughout white society. Twain's proof of the fluidity and the continuation of miscegenation is reflected in his introduction of Roxie, Tom's mother, when Twain gives the reader a description of invisible blackness. He first describes Roxy's physical look when the narrator states that, "from Roxie's manner of speech, a stranger would have expected her to be black, but she was not. Only one-sixteenth of her was black, and that sixteenth did not show. Her complexion was very fair, with the rosy glow of vigorous health in the cheek..." (13-14). Superficially, this passage simply sets the foreground for the presentation of Roxy as a progeny of miscegenation. However, it is actually loaded with insinuations, nuances, and innuendos concerning the undeniable mutability of the mixed race slave. Twain further illustrates how Roxy's look defies the idea that one can tell who is black and white, legally or otherwise, "To all intents and purposes Roxy was as white as anybody, but the one-sixteenth of her which was black out-voted the other fifteen parts and made her a negro. She was a slave, and salable as such. Her child was thirty-one parts white, and he, too, was a slave, and by a fiction of law and custom a negro" (13-14).

Roxy as a character who has a heavy amount of white blood proves that the separation of bloodlines is a false ideology. Twain concedes only one element of Roxy's traits as being identifiable as black: her speech. By doing that, he is placing nurture over nature because speech is learned from one's environment. In this excerpt, Twain is setting up the falseness of the notion of segregation by the order of the one drop rule which is really just a "fiction of law." He is trying to explain to his audience the problematic consequences of miscegenation, calling attention to the reality of slaves looking just like white people. Twain is saying that Roxy and her son are proof of the invisible blackness that has permeated throughout white society, illustrating that attempting to stop miscegenation would be futile. He continues this in his

description of Tom. The narrator describes Tom as having, "blue eyes and flaxen curls, like his white comrade, but even the father of the white child was able to tell the children apart---little as he had commerce with them---by their clothes..." (14).

Tom is the monstrous prodigy that, if let loose, would corrupt the genteel, supposedly respectful and moral world of mainstream America. According to James M. Cox, "Tom Driscoll is the nightmare plaguing the moral sleep of Dawson's Landing. Only one-thirty-second black, he is invisible to his victims, the six generations of white patrimony contributing to his creation..." (279). Driscoll's mere presence is the gothic signifier of southern white society which is trying to repress the fact that blackness is staining the purity of whiteness and cannot be stopped. Recognizing Tom would be ruining the illusion of the separation of the bloodlines.ⁱⁱ

Parallel to the different image of Blacks as threatening is the new way in which Gothic literature is reimagined in the nineteenth century. According to literary critic Fred Botting, "Gothic novels frequently adopt this [transgression] cautionary strategy, warning of dangers of social and moral transgression by presenting them in their darkest and most threatening form. The tortuous tales of vice, corruption and depravity are sensational examples of what happens when the rules of social behavior are neglected" (Botting 7). As Tom Driscoll becomes darker and darker and is portrayed increasingly in demon-like fashion, one does not know what to make of the character. Without the proper context to aid in understanding the origin of Tom's characteristics, one could think of this text as a warning about the monster within society. His focus is unclear when talking about how slavery affects everyone negatively. Clearly, this is a tale of vice, corruption and depravity which serves to delineate Tom simultaneously as the victim and the cause but Twain fails to clearly indict the society from which Tom comes.

The gothic subtext of the novel, as stated before, critiques and reinforces racial stereotyping. For example, in the beginning there is a strong critique of racial stereotypes and a prime example of this can be seen in the preamble to Roxy switching the babies. She and the other slaves have just been summoned by Percy Driscoll and accused of stealing. Driscoll makes it very clear that the culprit will be sold down the river. Roxy escapes this fate because she has a solid alibi but the mere thought of this dire consequence occurring motivates her to devise the plan of switching the babies. Roxy feels that she is doing the only thing she can do to protect her son forever. Twain describes her growing fear when the narrator states that, "A profound terror had taken possession of her. Her child could grow up and be sold down the river! The thought crazed her with horror. If she dozed, and lost herself for a moment, the next moment she was on her feet and flying to her child's cradle to see if it was still there" (14).

Twain uses gothic subtext in phrases such as "had taken possession of her" and "crazed with horror" to strongly critique the racial stereotyping of the day. Slaves were thought not to have any feelings for their children, even to the point of indifference about them being sold and sent away from them. Here Twain explicitly deflates this racial myth through Roxy's angst and concern for her child. This fear of waking up one day and never seeing her child again is an everyday reality for Roxy as a slave and it is as if the fear takes hold of her and forces action.

So, her fears are intrinsic and always at hand, waiting to be activated by any of the brutal and merciless acts of slave masters. Twain employs the idea of supernatural elements (possession) of Gothicism to demonstrate the anguish, the fear and the horror Roxy experiences as she deals with the cruelest of the realities of slavery: a mother's child being taken from her. When Twain talks about her profound terror, he infuses in her a supernatural force which

possesses her, denying her any semblance of peace. Sleep at best is sporadic, only between bouts of uncontrollable fear.

A combination of gothic sensibilities and nineteenth century sentimentalismⁱⁱⁱ illustrates the mental anguish that slave mothers endured as they lived with the constant threat of losing their children. Simultaneously, Twain demonstrates the humanity of slaves via the figure of the black mother who cares just as much for the well being of her children as the white mother. As a reader, one experiences Roxy's emotions as they shift from relief then to terror and horror and ultimately to the all consuming need to protect her child no matter what the costs. Again, at this point one might think that Twain is attempting to relate Roxy's fears and actions to that of any mother, to the inherent commonality of mothers to protect their children no matter what the price.^{iv} Indeed, Roxy is so desperate in her need to save her child that at one point she considers killing herself and her son, death being preferable to a life of damnable slavery down the river.

But ultimately, she seizes upon the idea of switching the babies. Consequently, the switching of Chambers for the master's son, Tom Driscoll (for the purposes of this essay Tom will be used to name Roxy's son) would automatically insure that her son would not experience the ravages of slavery. James Cox's concept, "the human stain", illustrates that it does more than just mark the monstrous prodigy in Twain's time period; it also marks the American culture that denies the progeny's existence. The invisibility of the stain (sign of racial mixing) is gothic because it is constantly shadowing white America as its double. The stain is a marker representing the difference of the mulatto from both blacks and whites and also symbolizing the horror of American history itself. Cox's discussion of the stain correlates with this idea of its usefulness as a gothic symbol because Tom is "spawned at the very center of their [first families] legalized institution of slavery, he crosses the color line in the white disguise six generations of

white blood had given him. He is, after all, the son of white men's casual lust gratified by a series of aggressive sexual acts at the expense of their slaves" (280).

Twain is using the human stain (referred to by Cox) to critique not only those families but also southern society's covert manner of allowing them to cover up their behavior while making the victims out to be monstrous and threatening. As Twain underscores the greed, self-interests and complicity of slaveholders, he is simultaneously evidencing the hidden underside of American history. So much of the history of miscegenation and the ideology behind blood and race function as a secret history within the official history of the United States.

Not only is Tom passing for white but the southern aristocracy is passing as well, passing as moral, decent and upright members of the community when in fact they are the perpetrators of violence and sadism against the black community. As the legislator of the rules and stereotypes that cost slaves and free blacks at worst their very lives and at best restricted freedom and quality of life, the southern aristocracy is the true gothic monster of this novel.

Explicitly, Driscoll is a gothic symbol of the oppressor because he is living proof of white society's continued miscegenation activities while still attempting to keep white blood free from taint. Also he is a product of rape of the black woman by the white man. Thomas Driscoll symbolizes the secret and also the continual open destruction of the illusion of purity, and at the same time, he represents the savagery perpetuated on blacks. For the oppressed, Driscoll simultaneously is representative of the privilege to be able to cross over and seek the life that is unencumbered by the shackles of slavery and blackness. Yet he also represents a certain horror because he is now of the class which inflicts the terror under which blacks constantly must live.

As the story evolves, it becomes evident that Twain uses the same gothic techniques in order to uphold some of the racial notions that he critiques elsewhere. One example of this is the

construction of Tom as the gothic monster and violent animalistic black man to uphold a negative racial stereotype. Twain does nothing to rectify this construction; in fact, one could say that he adds to it in his depiction of Tom as someone who kills his "uncle", steals, and treats his mother cruelly. But at other times Twain has used the gothic tropes to illustrate the problems of racial categorization.

There are those elements that point to Twain's continued criticism of his society but also there are those segments of the text, such as his introduction of Tom to the readers, which seem to be crafted cleverly to slant the readers toward negative impressions of Tom from his infancy:

'Tom' was a bad baby, from the very beginning of his usurpation. He would cry for nothing: he would burst into storms of devilish temper without notice, and let go scream after scream and squall after squall, then climax the thing with 'holding his breath'-----that frightful specialty of the teething nursling. . . . The baby Tom would claw anybody who came within reach of his nails, and pound anybody he could reach with his rattle. He would scream for water until he got it, and then throw cup and all on the floor and scream for more. He was indulged in all his caprices, however troublesome and exasperating they might be; he was allowed to eat anything he wanted, particularly things that would give him the stomach ache. (26).

This passage is an example of the contradictory impulses within the novel. At the beginning of this passage Twain clearly says that Tom's bad behavior was there from the time of his usurpation, before complete knowledge of his superior station in life could have been known to him. However, he does not inform the reader of Tom's behavior before the usurpation, before he is believed to be the heir apparent of the Driscoll family. At that time when he is known as Chambers, he would not have anyone but his mother to care about pleasing him. We are not given any indication as to how Roxy relates to her son as he is just the child of a slave woman who must take care of her child, the master's child, and perform all of her other slave duties. So

the reader does not get a chance to compare and/or contrast the baby as Chambers and then as Tom.

Nevertheless, Twain's first description of Tom's temper as 'devilish' and the comparison of his screams to storms in the sea foreshadow the horror that Tom will become as an adult. This part of the passage in some way assuages his white readership during this period who have no problem believing that a black child could be a problem from usurpation. In the first part of the passage, after Twain has discussed the problems of Tom's temper, he then relates in an aside that this is the result of teething. So Twain ultimately ascribes Tom's temper outbursts to the normal child developmental phase of teething which all children experience, black or white. However, by the time Twain gives the reader this somewhat "normal" reason for Tom's outbursts or reminds them about the constant indulgence that he was given by adults, the reader already has formed a negative image of him.

Furthermore, the usurpation passage illustrates both nature and nurture as the forces behind Tom's eventual poor character and subsequent immoral behavior. However, it is more indicative of Twain's bias toward the nurture theory at this point in the story. Twain says that "Tom' was a bad baby, from the very beginning of his usurpation." (19) His choice of the words, "beginning of his usurpation" (19) gives support to the nurture theory because it denotes that his behavior began after he was switched. But as soon as he provides this support, he immediately gives very vivid descriptions of Tom's bad behavior. If a reader was inclined, he/she could just forget that he used the word usurpation in the beginning and just assume that Tom had problematic characteristics from birth. Yet, toward the end of the passage, Twain indicates that Roxy and others constantly cater to Tom's willful and selfish whims to the point that his behavior is extremely disagreeable.

Consistent with the ambivalence of the novel, this passage vacillates from validating nature to supporting nurture. Here Twain changes positions within the same passage and now attributes Tom's irascible behavior and disposition to the fault of Roxy and others who continually administer to his desires, indicating that nurture is the culprit for this totally unlikable, unpleasant baby. However, Twain's depiction of Tom after usurpation is compromised by his lack of any description of Tom before he was switched. This latter critique might have stood more firmly if Twain had not already stirred so fervently the reader's dislike of Tom with his validation of the nature theory. So instead of this passage being an example of nurture trumping nature, it becomes a clear illustration of the contradiction that is at the core of the text.

As Tom grows up he assumes the moniker and mannerisms of master in his relationship with his mother, as "she saw her darling gradually cease from being her son, she saw that detail perish utterly; all that was left was master---master, pure and simple, and it was not a gentle mastership either" (24). As Twain clearly depicts the evil incarnate of Tom as the slave master, so does he vividly illustrate Roxy's sense of loss of her beloved son. To Roxy, her son seems possessed, as if taken over by an unknown entity. Through this narration the reader sees how the effects of slavery have twisted and destroyed Roxy's connection to her son. In Twain's depiction of Roxy's disappointment and sadness, he is trying to get the reader to realize what she has sacrificed. Here, Twain challenges racial stereotypes by providing imagery so vivid that one can see visages of a beautiful child being distorted and ultimately replaced by the demented face of a slave master. In this imagery one can see the use of doubling: it is as if there are two people in one body. Just as the passer threatens white America because of his invisible blackness, Tom threatens his mother with his visible whiteness, which has now been transformed.

Internal Duality

The issue of the blood or genetics takes center stage in the novel when Tom learns that he actually is partly black and a slave and not the white son of the master. With blackness as the commanding force triggering Tom's changed behavior, Twain writes the scene in a manner that is illustrative of Tom as being apologetic and humble in his dealings and actions with whites now, "It was the 'nigger' in him asserting its humility, and he blushed and he was abashed. And the 'nigger' in him was surprised when the white friend put out his hand for a shake with him. He found the 'nigger' in him involuntarily giving the road, on the sidewalk, to the white rowdy and loafer" (49).

This internal duality is a symbol of the double consciousness that Dubois discussed in *The Souls of Black Folks*. He describes it as the, "...sense of always looking at oneself looking through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (E-text University of Virginia Library).

This construct is important in analyzing the passing character and Dubois' belief is seen in Tom's internal duality. But the difference in this excerpt is that there is more of a triple consciousness at play. In Dubois' concept the black person does not feel connected to America because of his/her inferior status. So the two identities cannot be reconciled because being black

means to not have full American status. But what goes on in the texts in this study inclusive of Twain and Chesnut is that the passers feel isolated from society generally and specifically from both racial communities. So it is as if they are on an island of their own.

At least two elements of Gothicism surfaced in the above passage: First, Tom's inclination to go "shrinking and skulking here and yonder" (49)... invokes gothic images of secret unlawful actions. Secondly, the desire to seek solitude relates to the gothic tension of hidden refuge and safe flight from the piercing eyes of others. Tom's need now to escape from society is clearly because he knows his true identity and now when he sees everyone else, he believes that they know as well. He feels that the human stain is visible to people so he has to hide from them because, "so strange and uncharacteristic was Tom's conduct that people noticed it and turned to look after him when he passed on..." (49).

This is clearly a nod to environment because Tom had interaction with these same people before he knew that he was part black but now that Tom knows, his mind is causing him to behave differently toward them and then they in turn act differently toward him. His brief internal change is due to seeing himself in the inferior position because he feels that the black person must see himself in this way because this is what he was taught as the white elite slave owner. This new context does not stem from an inherent sense of inferiority but instead evolves from his background as the master's son and slave owner. Because Tom has felt superior to the slave, when he is confronted with his own blackness, he immediately assumes the role he feels slaves must play even in their own consciousness.

In conjunction with his temporal sense of inferiority is the conversation Tom carries on in his head. Twain uses an internal double in order to show the two versions of Tom. It is as if this black version was lying dormant in him waiting to manifest and become humanized into a fully

formed personality and identity that now haunts Tom. The negative power of 'black blood' has informed every aspect of Tom so that he does not evaluate how he has really changed or not changed since learning of his true identity but he just immediately accepts the identity that society has dictated for him. Not only is he imitating whiteness but blackness as well. The dual conversations in his head are examples of his imitation. He is acting the way he feels a black person would act and think. Tom has learned this from the education of his white environment. Since he has never been in any substantive or meaningful way among black people, he does not know if his actions or thoughts are accurate or not. Tom has never been among blacks in their most intimate and private settings and has never seen the humanity in them, so his subconscious feelings are due to the result of external observations.

Also, according to Eric Sundquist, imitation set the standards of the racial engagement of the day, "the mulatto concentrated the problem of racial doubling insofar as he could be said to imitate or parody, but not to own, the property of whiteness..." (117-118). The particular form of imitation that Sundquist is discussing is illustrative of the main feature of passing, whether it is inactive or active passing. Since the passer or light-skinned black could on the surface imitate whiteness, at issue was a way to keep this person from attaining any ability to achieve white rights. The mulatto represents the visible and the invisible and the dual citizenship in the nation. According to Eric Sundquist, "dual citizenship that made for *de facto* racial dualism left the mulatto a 'freak' of natural law, while the spread of segregationist thought and policy made the light mulatto an uncanny reminder that blackness both *was* and *was not* visible and whiteness both *was* and *was not* a form of property with legal significance" (117-118). The mulatto was the person who could not be tamed or restricted because he could blend into whiteness and attain the economic and social equality that was denied him as a black. Therefore, since Tom really

has no true identity because he is imitating both whiteness and blackness, he only has to suppress one imitative identity in order to superficially attain the other identity. Identity derived from imitation is environmental because it is constructed by one's place in society, interaction with others and, of course, how society sees the person.

In the excerpt below, Twain again equivocates by casting environment as a factor but then he reverts back to a more biological argument. Assured that only Roxy knows his true identity, Tom becomes comfortable with the situation, returns to his original personality and "comes to an agreement within himself, "In several ways his opinions were totally changed, and would never go back to what they were before, but the main structure of his character was not changed and could not be changed" (50). When Twain distinctly declares that Tom "was not changed and could not be changed", he is giving a firm nod to nature as the determinant of Tom's character. If environment contributes to construction of a particular personality and then one changes the environment, there is the possibility of a change in personality. But Twain says there is no possibility for a permanent change when the narrator states that his changes were always temporary, "...effects [from a temporary change could have a significant impact]. Under the influence of great mental and moral upheaval his character and habits had taken on the appearance of complete change, but after a while with the subsidence of the storm both began to settle toward their former places" (50). He then shows that Tom returns to his bad ways and again takes on the role of master. The brief interlude in which he was concerned with the meaning of blackness for him is over and he is back to his carefree and malevolent deeds. From this point, Twain in many ways abandons his original environmental thesis until about the end of the narrative.

This internal back and forth within Tom when he finds out he is white is Twain's example of race as performance. Tom dances between both roles, black and white, and performs them both stereotypically. According to Judith Butler, "That one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again" (272). Other critics such as bell hooks have applied Judith Butler's gender theory to race and one can see the performance in action. When Tom acts as black or white he is playing to a role or a set of perceived actions and constructs whether stereotypically or not that were conceived by society before him. When he acts the role of the black slave he is performing the set of stereotypes that white society has scripted for the slave. But Twain takes it out of performance when he says that Tom switches back to what was his nature and could not be changed.

The premise that nurture or environment outranks nature (biology) loses its stride in the second half of the narrative in which Twain seems to devote an inordinate amount of effort to illustrating that Tom's viciousness and demonic personality dominate his being and actions and evolve from his blackness. It is difficult to say that Tom's behavior is symbolic of his being raised as a slave master because Twain has no other "white" characters who have this vicious personality exhibited towards their own family. It is expected that Roxy's master would treat slaves in a negative fashion but neither him nor the judge treat negatively other white people who are seen as their equal.

One could say that Twain does not show any black people in this way as well but that would be incorrect because Roxy degenerates as a character when Twain has her collude with

Tom in committing his crimes and blackmails him as well. The sympathy that the reader feels for Roxy, at the beginning of the narrative, slowly becomes more ambivalent as her actions deteriorate. So in order to prove that this environment is so toxic that it could produce Tom, Twain would have had to illustrate a "true white" character who would be shown to be depraved in actions toward the slaves and to his family and community as well. Anne Wiggers discusses how the missing discussion of slavery in more earnest detail, as it is in the first manuscript, effects the characterization of Tom:

The discussion of slavery makes clear that part of Twain's original intention was a demonstration of the influence of inherited training. Tom ponders which is 'base or high' in him, his white or his Negro blood, and Twain states that neither is high if not debased by slavery. Tom is base because of the effects of slave owning. He is brutal because of slave owning heredity, and his inherent brutality is reinforced by his training as a white master; he is cowardly because the Negro blood in him has had to submit to generations of subjugation. Slavery itself, acting on generations of slaves and slave-owners, is the corrupting force in Tom's nature. (94)

Wiggins concludes that Twain is indicating that Tom's loathsome character is due to the many years of cruelty and inhumanity of slavery. This explains the missing elements that prevented Tom's full development as a decent person. There are vestiges of Twain's original intention when Twain shows that as a baby Tom was given his every whim. But Twain does not fully discuss the significance of how training of not just Tom but generations of slaves and slave masters in general have caused his behavior. The narrative lends itself to a discussion that supports Tom's brutality as more nature than nurture. Where does the training come from that makes him a brutal neer do well?

The negative gothic elements of the character of Tom are intensely illustrated in the second half of the novel. He truly embodies the monstrous character that white America seeks desperately to keep outside of its domain. As mentioned before, when Twain accelerates the

problematic personality of Tom Driscoll, it is hazy as to whether he is challenging stereotypes or exacerbating them. According to Lawrence Howe, "the criminal's mulatto identity appears to invalidate the motto of social determinism by playing right into the negrophobic rhetoric of the 1890's that sounded the alarm about the dangers of miscegenation" (497). Therefore, Twain's rigid portrayal of Tom as someone who has no regard for anyone, whether it is his white family or his black mother, seems to lend support to the view that blacks did not have the same familial concerns and feelings for their families as whites. Twain wants no one to empathize or sympathize with Tom.

To avert any belief that Tom's behavior might improve, Twain firmly and quickly thrusts him back into a world of criminal activity in order for him to pay for his gambling debts. Twain describes him preparing for a new attack on his uncle's house, "he went to his uncle's house and entered by the back way with his own key and slipped up to his room where he could have the use of mirror and toilet articles. He had a suit of girl's clothes with him in a bundle as a disguise for his raid, and was wearing a suit of his mother's clothing, with black gloves and veil" (50-51).

This is the first of two times in which Tom engages in masking. At this point, Tom is knowingly passing for white and is clearly beginning to gender pass as well as he pretends to be a woman in order to commit his criminal endeavors. As the story evolves it does not matter to Tom whether he is related to this white family or not; he continues to prey upon them. So even if one were to say that Tom at this point is not completely cast as a predator because he knows he is not preying on his family, the fact is at the time that he started these raids he did think that he was preying on family and community. Therefore, Twain is enforcing the stereotype of the black male as a predator and as a criminal degenerate. When Twain writes Tom as one who preys on his own family, he is establishing him as a totally remorseless character with no concern for

anyone, not even for the judge, the man who has reared him his entire life. Anne Wigger again makes the point that the change in storyline obscures Twain's main point in the narrative. She discusses how the removal of the search, confrontation and revenge storyline against the white father subsequently impacted the plot:

This aspect of the plot was changed, and most of the material concerning the hereditary influence of slavery was deleted from the published book, a deletion which blurs to some extent Tom's characterization. Even so, it is important to recognize Tom as an intended representative of the moral decay which arises from slavery, for to consider him base simply because of his Negro blood is to ignore the central purpose of the book---an ironical examination of slavery. Tom's characterization is furthered obscured by his role in the search-revenge plot, because even though Twain changed the plot, Tom still functions in the published work as a melodramatic villain as well as a representative of the hereditary effects of slavery, a combination of roles which, almost of necessity, leads to confusion. (96)

Twain's lack of context obscures a clear reading of his text and the function of Tom. Also, considering that the majority of his audience, especially in the South, believed in the malevolence of blacks, they could easily see the black Tom as threatening. Tom is supposed to represent that one's character is derived from nurture more than nature. But if the reader is seeking reassurance of biological racial stereotypes already set in the culture, Twain's book lends itself to that reading (nature) because Tom's character is not given context or reasoning for who he is and what he does. He is only presented as a brute malignant character.

When considering Tom and Roxy's discussion about his lineage and behavior, readers might be able to sense the complexity of the relationship between blacks and whites, and understand how blacks have internalized the negative stereotypes that the American culture has cast upon them. This internalization is a nod to environment and how it has affected the slave's mindset. Subsequently, Roxy's attempts to chastise and question Tom's deplorable behavior reveal her innate bias for Tom's white blood and prejudice against his black blood. As she starts

her tirade, it is evident that she has bought into the belief that all the "good blood" came from somewhere else other than his black ancestry, except possibly for Pocahontas and a "nigger King". She declares that his less than honorable self is due to "de nigger in you" (75-76).

Here Twain brings to the forefront of the novel the previously covert yet somehow ubiquitous issues of bloodlines, inheritance and paternity. The stories in much of English Gothic fiction are centered on family intrigue and tangled family history in isolated, countryside settings in huge castle estates. Some of these stories are also based on issues of colonialism, race and the depiction of the other as evil. Therefore, these themes once transported to the American gothic story continued to take on a much more racial context in some cases. In addition, because slave owners and their families made their life in America along with their slaves, these gothic themes (property, inheritance, family secrets) reflected the entire nation's sins and not just the south's issues. *Puddn'head Wilson* is concerned with all of these themes because the main reasons for the strict white/black divide goes to the subject of property, power and inheritance.

Also, the majority of the white reading public at the time would have understood the importance of this blood tie as well. It could be said that Twain is informing his audience again that the so-called best of southern families did not have "pure bloodlines" and any one of them might have a possible "Tom" in their midst. Although Twain does not even begin to delve into discussing the history of miscegenation and its continuing consequences (never openly assigning guilt and responsibility to ruling white men), one might say that he is possibly pushing the alarm that any of them might have reason to fear the invisible encroachment of the "passer" upon their property and money.

One could say that Twain was providing a negative critique of the biological theory but again for most common readers of the time period, it would not have been read that way. If he

had been a good son and person, Roxy would have attributed it to the white bloodlines. More likely than not, readers would have seen this as supportive of the notion that blacks were inherently bad since even Tom's mother, a black woman, considers his black blood as the source of his evil. Of course, as with most texts, those words could be read differently and could be seen in a more ironic way but the common reader of a segregated south would probably not be inclined to the more ironical reading. In other words, Twain does not allow Roxy to critique her slave master; instead, he presents her to bolster the strength of the aristocratic system through her praise of its supposedly superior bloodlines.

As Twain progresses in depicting Tom's degenerate behavior, Tom prepares to commit his worst crime, the murder of the judge, and to do it he engages in masking. Tom has already used gender passing when he dresses as a white girl to commit some of his crimes but when he passes as a black woman, he goes further into the gothic world of 'the other', "He pulled down his window-blinds and lighted his candle. He laid off his coat and hat, and began his preparations. He unlocked his trunk and got his suit of girl's clothes out from under the male attire in it and laid it by. Then he blacked his face with a burnt cork and put the cork in his pocket" (99). One could say that at this point in the narrative there is triple passing at play. The first element of passing is, as has been previously stated, the fact that Tom Driscoll is knowingly at this point passing for white. Unlike most passing novels in which the protagonist knowingly passes from the beginning, Tom consciously passes only from the point of revelation by Roxy. Now Tom's full knowledge of his racial heritage puts a decisive choice in his hands, which becomes a defining element in the novel. At this point, he chooses to continue playing the part of a white man; thus the novel turns Tom Driscoll into a more traditional passing figure.

The second level of passing is in terms of gender, as he temporarily dons women's clothing to commit these crimes. The third level of passing occurs when Tom commits the crimes in blackface. This level is really the most interesting level of passing that Twain has exhibited in the novel. Tom is now a partly black man passing for a white man passing as a black woman. At this stage in the novel Twain becomes even more complicated because here it becomes arguable that he is illustrating the illusion of race and gender. Again, here Twain is illustrating not just racial but gender performance as well. According to Butler, "Gender is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraints" (179). Tom is using gender and race within the constraints of his society to pull off his masquerade.

Race and gender both, Twain suggests, are masks that can be put on and taken off in some instances. At the same time, Tom can be seen from different perspectives as a white man, a black man or a black woman, depending upon the circumstances and mask he is wearing. When Twain has Tom play out three roles, he is also saying that race and gender characteristics, and stereotypes might emanate more from society than biology.

Through the triple masking one can see that Tom is losing himself and becoming "the other" at the same time. In *The Circles of Fear and Desire*, William Patrick Day writes about "the other" being a version of the self in gothic literature, "the self is found in the other, and the Other is in fact a face of the self" (22). Tom experiences all three aspects of the gothic as defined above with the final transformation climaxing in his triple masking in terms of race and gender, when he becomes the face of "the other" in order to commit the crime. When he is told that he is really a black man who has been passing as white, he instantly becomes "the other", yet he still uses society's conception of "the other" to enact his plan to steal from his uncle. Tom, in this racially complex story not only reinforces stereotypes to a willing audience but

simultaneously critiques the same stereotypes which are imprisoning him. Through his assuming and discarding of roles to continue his criminal activity, Tom ultimately proves to the discerning reader that racial stereotypes are socially generated. But also by acting out criminal ways he helps to continue some people's negative stereotype of the criminally degenerate black male. The reader cannot really interpret whether Tom has ever had any core integrity because Twain has illustrated a lack of introspection and little response to the revelation of his true identity.

As William Day states, all of this masking and unmasking keeps the self from forming an identity, "because as the line between self and other disappears and the integrity of the self vanishes, the protagonist is left alone with the fragments and shards of identity, unable to distinguish between what is me and what is not-me, what is real and what is imagined, or whether such distinctions really make any difference" (22). As a result, at this point in the narrative, Tom suffers from a somewhat shattered and ambiguous identity, but mostly one that is resoundingly negative. Tom can no more distinguish the real Tom from the fake Tom than the white community of Dawson's Landing can distinguish between who is white and who is not.

In the end, most people might conclude that Twain's novel is a complete critique of racism and racist attitudes. During the subsequent trial of the wrongly accused twins, Pudd'nhead Wilson's brilliant fingerprinting procedure reveals the true murderer, Tom Driscoll. Not only are Tom's criminal acts found out but his "true" racial makeup is revealed. Since Tom has been revealed as black, he is not eligible for the prison which was reserved for white people only. Paradoxically, and because of the "one drop of black blood", Tom is defined as a slave. His punishment is to be sold "down the river" to pay the debts of his uncle because, now that he is black, he is property. The crux of the debate over Twain's novel is seen at the end with the fate of Valet de Chambers, the white heir.

Chambers is the true white heir but because he is the living double of Tom, he has to deal with the shadow of blackness. The first thing that stands out is that Chambers continues to give Roxy money even though she condemned him to a life of slavery to save her real son. This seems to illustrate the essential goodness and decency of Chambers, who is really white, against the seemingly innate treachery and criminality of Tom, who is really black. This dichotomy seems to give evidence to the fact that Twain, to some degree, is giving credence to the determining role of race and nature.

On the other hand, the idea of Chambers' condemnation to life as a pseudo black man because of his training supports the notion that racial identity is more a matter of nurture than of nature (or blood). Because the slavery environment in which he was nurtured is so rigidly ingrained, Chambers/Tom is never going to take his rightful place in white society. According to Twain, "The real heir suddenly found himself rich and free, but in a most embarrassing situation. He could neither read nor write, and his speech was the basest dialect of the negro quarter. His gait, his attitudes, his gestures, his bearing, his laugh---all were vulgar and uncouth: his manners were the manners of a slave" (120-121). Thus Twain leaves the reader lamenting over the thought that Chamber's real life was stolen from him.

The gothic elements of dualism and triple passing illustrate the contradiction within the text and Twain himself. Tom and Chambers are each other's twin and represent the connectedness of white and black. At the same time, Twain, to a large degree reinforces racial stereotypes because Chambers, the white twin, represents the inherent goodness of white America while Tom, the black twin, symbolizes what some might see as the inherent evilness of black America. At best, Twain used gothic symbols to show how environment creates racial stereotypes but at the same time, perhaps unwittingly, he also helped create a monstrous figure of

blackness in the character of Tom. Because there is such a confusing depiction of Tom, nurture is prominent but does not overwhelm nature. Therefore, Twain's dual purpose posits the novel in an ambivalent and confusing state.

After writing a narrative that subtly informs, alarms and warns the white southern patriarchy of the risks of miscegenation, Twain masterfully develops an ending that assures them that ultimately these imposters will handily be taken care of by the "fiction of law" that categorizes them by the "one drop of blood" rule. Indeed, fake Tom's final fate was determined by supposedly "de nigger in him". The tragedy exists in the irony of Roxy's switching the babies to avert her son from a life of slavery, only to see her worst fears realized as he is sold "down the river".

Paul Marchand F.M. C.

The story of *F. Paul Marchand, F.M.C.*, (1921) is widely seen as a retelling of Mark Twain's *Pudd'n'head Wilson*. Charles Chesnutt incorporates some of the same gothic techniques used by Twain in his depiction of Tom Driscoll to challenge some of Twain's racial notions. The gothic depiction of Twain's Tom is further illuminated when he is juxtaposed against the characterization of Paul Marchand, clearly illustrating the powerful influence the environment has over a person's character and behavior. Using some of the same gothic techniques as Twain, such as the double, extreme elements of fear, horror, possession and the hidden power of family secrets, Chesnutt promotes his argument that racial characteristics are socially constructed. Yet unlike Twain, Chesnutt more explicitly marks slavery as the culprit for the societal problems that have emanated from slavery and its most persistent legacy of miscegenation. As the story of

Paul Marchand unfolds, Twain's rendering of Tom as the unknowing passer becomes more susceptible to scrutiny and comparison.

I contend that Chesnutt's literary skill, informed historical knowledge and strategic use of gothic symbolism such as multiple doubles, isolation, ambiguity and possession enable him to artfully challenge the racially stereotypical image of the passing character. I contend that Chesnutt uses gothic symbolism to state that racial characteristics are due to the environment. Because Chesnutt effectively conjoins his literary skill with his historical knowledge, he is "frequently dismissed as superficial when readers fail to recognize what it is__an often ironic or even harshly satiric attack on notions of white superiority balanced by an objective rendering of the human qualities, good and bad, of whites and all hues of African Americans" (Prothro Wright and Pickens ix). As Chesnutt employed the above method of writing, I contend that Chesnutt presents Marchand in direct refutation of Twain's Driscoll to emphatically state that racial characteristics are due to environment. Simultaneously, Chesnutt uses gothic symbols to challenge Twain's substantiation of racial stereotypes to depict the passing character.

As a writer, Chesnutt considered himself to be an agent of change for African Americans. Although Chesnutt agreed with Twain's reputation as a defender of equal rights, there were elements of *Puddn'head Wilson* that Chesnutt challenged in his reversed version of the story. One of Chesnutt's missions was to convince the white population of the humanity of blacks. Charles Chesnutt wrote in his journals: "The Negro's part is to prepare himself for recognition and equality, and it is the province of literature to open the way for him to get it...to accustom the public mind to the idea; to lead people out, imperceptibly, unconsciously, step by step, to the desired state of feeling" (Bentley and Gunning xii). Therefore, through his work, Chesnutt strove to teach society about the African American condition and the complexity of race.

As a person who was considered light enough to pass but who chose not to, Chesnutt understood the intricacies and complexities that the passer struggled with in choosing to abandon his black identity to pass as white. Also, as someone whose physical features mimicked those of white people, Chesnutt was often mistaken for white. Such occurrences make Chesnutt's novel all the more significant because, unlike Twain, he does not just project onto a character what *he* thinks the character feels. Chesnutt can actually put his own experiences into the thoughts and actions of Paul, therefore, developing a much more concrete character and a more nuanced perception of race. This may not be the most important aspect of the differences between the two but it plays an elemental part in the comparison of Tom and Paul as unknowing passers.

Also, Chesnutt does not have the conflict between his literary intent and buying public that existed for Twain. At the time of the writing of *Paul Marchand, F.M.C.*, Chesnutt was having difficulty getting published because of the intentionally critical message of his novel, *Marrow of Tradition* which overtly criticized the southern white elite and their violent treatment of blacks during Reconstruction. Therefore, *Marrow of Tradition* was not received as enthusiastically as his other stories which dealt primarily with the black community. Even though his third novel *The Colonel's Dream* (1905) was published, it had extremely low sales which were in contrast to the success he had known for his other works. In addition, the literary environment in which Chesnutt attempted to publish *Paul Marchand F.M.C.* was not conducive or receptive to its publication during his lifetime as well.

Chesnutt's virtual lockout from the publishing world had a surprisingly freeing effect on him: He was now able to write whatever he wanted. So Chesnutt did not have to worry about the audience in the same manner as Twain. Also, Chesnutt's agenda was not compromised

because his main purpose was to help the black and white communities better understand each other and the complexities of race in America.

Paul Marchand F.M.C. (free man of color) is about a Louisianan Creole black man who discovers that he is really white and heir to a fortune. His initials indicate that he is not a slave but he is in an inferior position to whites. In the novel, Marchand is suddenly declared the head of a powerful and wealthy white family. Chesnutt portrays Marchand as a man who is lovingly devoted and committed to his family before he learns of his true identity. Yet upon discovering that he is in reality a white man and not the Creole black man he had assumed he was his entire life, he is tempted to abandon his family and assume his true identity as a wealthy white man. He cannot have both. Society, custom and law dictate that he must choose between his new found identity and his loving family. The setting of the novel during slavery helps it keep its gothic mood because "The terror of possession, the iconography of entrapment and imprisonment, and the familial transgressions found in the gothic novel were also present in the slave system" (Goddu 73).

He has to make the choice because as a wealthy white man from a prestigious New Orleans family he cannot be married to a Creole woman; it would constitute going against the one drop rule and participating in miscegenation. Here is the first major difference between Paul and Tom. Chesnutt depicts Paul intensely tussling with his heart and mind in an epic battle that seems to have no clear winner. Caught betwixt and between his two identities, Paul, as a Creole, cannot fathom living without his wife and children whom he passionately loves. Yet, as a white man with tremendous wealth and status, he begins to seriously question whether they have any place at all in his new life. Chesnutt illustrates Paul Marchand as an evolving character. Contrary to Twain's plot of limited introspection from Tom, Chesnutt's story clearly illustrates

the importance of the environment and its influence on the emotional response of Marchand. The reader, hand-in-hand with Paul, is aware of his emotional struggles. However, after Tom learns of his true identity, Twain barely gives the reader even a glimpse of Tom's feelings, emotions or introspection. Tom Driscoll does not evolve as character. Instead Tom is portrayed as a degenerate, unfeeling criminal who continues engaging in unlawful and felonious deeds. Both of these texts illustrate that according to literary scholar Frederick Frank that the American gothic's difference from the British gothic is that it, "concentrates on mental terror and moral horror" (Goddu 8).

In the formation of identity within *Paul Marchand F.M.C.* there is a gothic bent in terms of Marchand's external and internal doubles. Within most gothic texts there is a sense of twoness that constructs the passer's identity confusion. According to Eve Sedgwick, "The inside life and the outside life have to continue separately, becoming counterparts rather than partners [which creates] a doubleness where singleness should be" (13). This constructs works with the passer in general but specifically Paul Marchand he is constantly dealing with an outside life and an inside life. Before the knowledge that he is white, Marchand lives in his creole identity which conflicts with his inside life that constantly acknowledges his contradictory place in society. Because Marchand is neither black nor white, he does not have a place in society and this knowledge effects his negotiation of his outside life (creole).

Integral to Chesnutt's story is his setting, New Orleans, Louisiana, a racially ambivalent area which heightens the construction of racial tension in the novel. In New Orleans race is not merely a white and black issue but it is tied to the amount of one's "black and white blood." Because he is one fourth black, Marchand is racially categorized as a quadroon, giving him

status over slaves but still subjecting him to the cruelty of racism that all non-whites must suffer. But because he does visually look white, Paul could pass.

Racial relations in Louisiana have always been different from the rest of the country. According to Dean McWilliams, "Before the Civil War, Louisiana recognized a tripartite racial schema, with the free mixed-blood population having their own distinct status between Negro and white. After Reconstruction, Louisiana, like the rest of the South, sought to impose a rigid binary system, strictly dividing whites from all individuals with even the slightest trace of African ancestry" (Xiv-xv).

This discussion of racial politics in Louisiana illustrates the complexities of race and the one drop rule in general and the amount of mixing that was already occurring. Moreover, it illustrates how the South's segregation plan never could work completely because mixing had already occurred and was an ongoing process. Even though the novel is set in New Orleans which has its own racial system, it is still set in the south which has its own Gothic racial undertones. According to Teresa Goddu, "Identified with gothic doom and gloom, the American South serves as the nation's 'other,' becoming the repository for everything from which the nation wants to disassociate itself. The benighted South is able to support the irrational impulses of the gothic that the nation has as a whole..." (3-4).

When Louisiana tried to enact a more rigid binary system, it was very difficult for blacks, especially Creole blacks, to understand their supposed new place in society. This was the time period for the infamous Plessey vs. Ferguson decision. Because of their special status, it would take a Creole to challenge the new racially discriminatory laws that whites were trying to establish in Louisiana. A light skinned Creole man was purposely chosen by the lawyer Albion Tourgee to challenge the law.

Although Creole men could still be lynched, brutalized and demeaned if a white man felt that a Creole person stepped outside of his place, they did have a certain amount of privilege but had to walk a fine line in order to maintain this privilege. According to Dean McWilliams, "*Paul Marchand, F.M.C.* introduces in its title the ambiguities and tensions within this paradoxical society. There are, first of all, the contradictions in the initials and in the class they designate" (185). F.M.C. stands for free man of color which clearly does not define Marchand's place in the racial hierarchy because even though he has more freedom than the ex-slave, he still has less than white Louisianans. Hence, Marchand's myriad of emotions reflects his conflicted racial identity.

As Tom does in *Puddn'head Wilson*, Paul Marchand also has to face his racial twin later in life. But again there is the conflict of the external life and internal life which creates one of the main elements of Gothicism: doubleness. There also is the idea of double consciousness working within Paul. The construct of double consciousness as discussed by W.E. B. Dubois is about the fact that blacks have a divided consciousness. In their inner world they feel a conflict between being American and Black because the subjugations of the American society prevent them from truly feeling American.

As for Paul, because he is Creole, he actually has a triple consciousness. He does not feel part of the black community even though at times he is treated as such by the white elite. Paul knows that his freedoms and opportunities are limited within the white elite even though they have positioned Creoles as more privileged than blacks. Paul wants to assert the role of the head of the household by saving his sister-in-law from harm but through this act he ends up in jail.^v His masculinity is subsumed in the presence of the white man. So he is having difficulty in dealing with his place in society and his own self-image which contradicts his societal status.

When Paul realizes that he is white, he is forced to reckon with his racial other and the conflicts between who he thought he was and who he is now. Of course, Paul is now of the elite majority ruling society, unlike Tom, who has fallen into the inferior abyss of slavery.

Here is possibly the most defining and consequential difference between Tom Driscoll and Paul Marchand's identity revelations: their new selves are the reverse of each other. Tom discovers that he is part of a subservient race and Paul learns that he is part of a master race. Chesnutt is clearly going against any idea of race characteristics being biological. According to Mathew Wilson, "despite his interest in environment as an explanatory principle, Twain participates in the American consensus on race mixing: Tom is evidence of how race mixing leads inevitably to degeneration. By the 1920's, Chesnutt has long since rejected the discourses of blood and degeneration" (Wilson 188-189). Another major difference is that because Tom is not put into any insightful or informative context, one gets the clear impression that a person of mixed racial heritage will more than likely develop into an evil or malignant character. This belief would have matched the prevailing thoughts on the mulatto in white America at the time. Chesnutt counteracts this notion by presenting mixed-raced characters as neither totally good nor bad but as humans with a range of attributes and faults.

Similarly, as with Tom in *Puddn'head Wilson*, Paul's paternity is significant from the very beginning of the narrative. Marchand's beginnings are more ambiguous than Tom's because he does not know either his mother or father. However, Paul does not have a problem with the ambiguity concerning his lineage because he is quadroon and lineage and legitimacy are not as important to him as they would be to the average white Louisianan.

Chesnutt skillfully shows Marchand's ambiguity but also illustrates that he does not aspire to be white. He holds no illusions and does not believe in should haves or would have

beens. In contrast to Tom in *Puddn'head Wilson*, from the beginning of the story Marchand is drawn as an admirable character. Chesnutt does give him flaws, such as his need for revenge, but the flaws are depicted in a humane way and the reader can empathize with him and understand his feelings. His identity is seemingly conflicted, but he is more grounded and sympathetically drawn than Tom.

Also, Chesnutt challenges the racial stereotypes employed by Twain by illustrating the difference in which Paul differs from Tom in their handling of their business affairs. Pierre Bearepas, Zabet's employer and patriarch of the Bearepas family, is childless; his only possible heirs are his five nephews and Chesnutt illustrates them as neer' do wells and not worthy to inherit. In contrast, Marchand is drawn as someone who has successfully managed his wife's estate while Bearepas' nephews have mountains of debts and their various business dealings have not done very well. Again, the disparity between Paul and Tom is evident here as well. Paul is a successful businessman while Tom shows no business acumen at all.

However, when Pierre Bearepas dies, the will reveals that he has a son who will inherit the estate and he is Paul Marchand. Through this scene Chesnutt sets the groundwork for the construction of the debate between nature and nurture. Henri, one of Bearepas' nephews said, "He has been bred a quadroon, and blood without breeding is not enough to make a gentleman. He would disgrace the name by some Negro trait. No such man can maintain the honor of the Bearepas" (110-111). According to the words of Henri, nurture overwhelms nature. Hence, the issue of environment takes center stage in this conversation among the nephews who do not care that he is actually white. All they can see is that he has been raised as a quadroon and not as a white person; so because of his environment he cannot truly be white even though biologically he is white. Chesnutt is saying that environment is more important than blood even if white

America does not admit to this. Since these nephews thought of Marchand as Creole, they refuse to think of him as anything else, regardless of biology, except Philippe who does welcome him. Also, this is evident of the gothic because familial secrets are being revealed through the will as the dead white father speaks to the living.

Chesnutt gives Marchand a lineage and history which Twain does not give Tom. Paul Marchand's mother had a relationship with Beurepas after she thinks that her husband, to whom she is unhappily married, has died. She keeps her affair secret and just when she and Beurepas are about to go public, her husband returns. He dies soon after but she is pregnant and in order to save her honor, Beurepas places the baby with a Creole woman to be raised as such. Beurepas, however, kept up with the child. This story gives Paul and the reader the lineage that Twain denies Tom. Roxy gives very confusing, contradictory and limited information about Tom's family. Chesnutt gives Paul a clear familial history once he is revealed to be Beurepas' son, and there is no guess work as to who is his father or mother. Chesnutt chooses to offer full and complete disclosure to the reader concerning Paul's background, whereas Twain opts to shroud Tom's paternity with confusing and misleading dialogue.

When Julie, Marchand's wife, learns of the news, she prepares the children for the symbolic death of their father. In her mind, if one finds out that he/she is really white, the black Creole life will be left in favor of the white life, "She loved her husband and knew that he loved her. But he had possessed her, and now he might leave her. She was a quadroon, and he might take to wife any one of the many beautiful unmarried white women of New Orleans... But his good fortune was her undoing" (116-117).

Julie seems to be thinking about Paul as if he has died; it is as if she is in mourning. She realizes that once everyone knows Paul is white, their relationship will not be seen the same way and Julie and her children would now be seen as the illegitimate second family.

Also, the language that is used to describe their marriage has changed. At first, the narrator says that they loved each other totally but in the third sentence the word 'possessed' is now being used. Because she realizes that he is white and she is quadroon, she knows Paul can no longer love her but now possesses her. Possession, period, is an economic and a legal term but Chesnutt is also using it with a tinge of gothic horror. The idea of a husband possessing his wife situates her as an inanimate object or slave and the husband as master. Even though Julie knows her husband as a kind and loving man, she fears that his knowledge of his white identity will cause him to reject her and the children as his real family.

Chesnutt illustrates how easy it is for the slave-owner and white superior to emerge when Paul has to confront Zabet to find out the true mulatto. At first, Zabet adamantly sticks to the story that originally five boys came to New Orleans, but when she refuses to reveal the true story, Paul immediately changes his persona. Paul takes a rawhide whip and pistol and threatens Zabet, with a terrifying look on his face:

"Zabet," he said, "you are my slave."

"But, master," she stammered, "I am free-----my mistress gave me my freedom."

"You are my slave, Zabet. You were never legally freed. You are mine, by inheritance from my father."

"He never claimed me----I have been free for thirty years."

"Then if you are not mine, you belong to my cousins."

"God forbid"! muttered Zabet, crossing herself. (121-126)

Paul immediately takes on the role of the slave master to get the information that he needs from Zabet. As Paul's threatening persona emerges, Zabet is frightened because Paul is now the opposite of the even-tempered and kind man that she has known. However, Paul, intent upon retrieving this information from Zabet, refuses to back down and continues to act the part of the elite white man who sees her as nothing but property. Paul clearly understands that his new identity gives him new and total power over people who overnight have been deemed his property, "You see upon the table an inkstand, in which is a pen, with one stroke of which I can transfer you to a slave dealer. You are old, but still capable of much hard work" (121-126). Chesnutt has Paul more definitively imitate what he thinks he knows of the slave master. According to Elizabeth Bell, "All performance can be approached as faking, making, breaking, and staking: Performance holds possibilities to imitate a life world, to create a life world, to transform a life world, and to stake claims about that life world" (24). Paul in his performance as the white slave master is doing multiple things here. He is imitating the white slave master to understand and stake a claim to his newfound world and identity.

Unlike Twain, Chesnutt, in the above conversation between Paul and Zabet, illustrates that the change in Paul's personality is due more to environment than biology. Chesnutt illustrates that after he finds out that he is not black but actually the white descendent of Beaufort, he takes on, even if briefly, the role of the slave master. When he is interrogating Zabet as to what happened during the trip from Haiti to New Orleans, he does not hesitate to assume the role of the slave-owner, treating Zabet as his slave and inferior in order to obtain the name of the actual mulatto of the family. The language that Marchand uses as he threatens and insults Zabet is of a monstrous nature.

The mere fact that he threatens Zabet with violence to insure terror and demand obedience from her is an example of his gothic change in personality. Paul Marchand as he was depicted before this moment with his family would have never been this cruel to another human being, "Zabet trembled. Never in her life had she been whipped, but she knew what such an order meant. So Zabet trembled and the blood in her veins stood still. Beurepas went on, coldly and incisively: "A touch of this pistol, a thrust of this sword, and you would go to meet your God, Zabet, with all your sins upon you soul..." (126-127). This intense and threatening conversation between Paul and Zabet is illustrative of how Chesnutt used gothic symbolism in order to depict the environment as a stronger influence than biology. Paul Marchand metamorphoses from an even tempered decent man into one who terrorizes an old woman and reduces her to nothing more than an object (slave).

When he says to Zabet, "you are my slave, you belong to me", Marchand is discarding his history of subjugation and becoming the slave master. Twain in contrast never showed any white man in *Puddn'head Wilson* as evil, even the slave master was portrayed in comical terms that softened his cruelty. Striving to depict both races, black and white in an egalitarian manner, Chesnutt does show how some white people and the system at large can corrupt people and encourage them to engage in inhumane acts towards others.

On the other hand, Tom in *Puddn'head Wilson* is described to the reader as a difficult person from the time he is a baby and his personality worsens as he gets older. Yet Twain fails to show the process by which Tom changes into a horrible person because of his environment. Because of this, Twain gives the impression that Tom was bad tempered and difficult from infancy (establishing nature as the cause). Twain never fully lets the reader see how his change of status in society affected Tom.

Consistently, Tom and blackness are vilified in *Puddn'head Wilson* while Chesnutt attempts to show the humanity of Paul as Creole and as a white man. Also, Chesnutt provides some insight and compassion to the plight of the slaves. Paul is dealing with the choice of whether to stay within the Creole race with his wife and children or take his rightful claim to whiteness. In the scene with Zabet, his double has come to surface in his quest to find the truth about his history. It is as if his other self reflects his interpretation of behavior as seen in the white men around him. According to Martin Tropp, "from early in the evolution of the horror story, these same two visions of the double contended, for they expressed the conflict between denying and integrating the darker sides of our nature and our culture..." (210-211). Although neither *Puddn'head Wilson* nor *Paul Marchand F.M.C.* is a horror story, some of the same elements such as doubles are used in both novels. In *Wilson*, blackness is seen as the darker side of Tom's nature. Twain suggests that because Tom was a corrupt individual when he thought he was white and was unaware that he was black, his knowledge of his double did not turn him to the dark side because he was already there. One could assume his evilness is due to his blackness because Twain is not very clear. To some extent, this vague atmosphere piques the interest of the reader as he/she is simultaneously drawn in while rejecting the horrific double as a reflection of the self. For many of Twain's readers, the black double justifies their interpretation of blackness as evil.^{vi}

The family secrets in *Puddn'head Wilson* and *Paul Marchand* are the secrets of the country. The hidden mixed race identity of America, that which the country refuses to acknowledge, is reflected in these twisted family histories. The following discussion of the English gothic novel reveals the common ground it shares with the American gothic, "the dead controlled the living, not as specters or through curses and legacies, but by sheer force of genetic

inheritance extending back to prehistory... [the answer] can be found when we examine them as manifestations of the shadow cast by an undying past, of the brutality unleashed when the light of civilization is averted, of the Gothic power of blackness" (Tropp 109). In the American context the stain of slavery and miscegenation are examples of the lack of enlightenment in a civilized culture in which darkness and blackness consistently loom.

Similarly, both Twain and Chesnutt provide cautionary tales of the forever haunting legacy of miscegenation. The past continually appears as it threatens the present and the future of the American family dynamics by revealing its dark, piercing and disruptive familial secrets. Both Tom and Paul Marchand have secrets that emanate from their dead white fathers. In *Puddn'head Wilson*, there is an assumption that Roxy's slave owner or the slave owner's brother is the father of Tom which would account for his strong resemblance to the white Tom. In Paul Marchand the secret is brought from Haiti to the United States but still is representative of the enduring legacy of miscegenation in America. Both of these white men have left a genetic inheritance to their sons but have also left them victims of a nation bent on separating people through the one drop rule. In terms of the American context, the dead and the guilty in these instances are not just these particular white fathers, but all the white men who raped slave women and by extension the founding fathers of the nation who allowed a hideous system to continue.

Along with the mixed racial background come questions of property inheritance. White owned property is really at the heart of debates regarding who is black and white and one could argue is the reason for the strict enforcement of the one drop rule. Many white southerners embraced the notion that black blood was evil and white blood had to remain pure and free from taint. This pervasive ideology enabled those in charge to have the support of the masses who

were not necessarily benefiting from this law. Many poor whites were not in much better economic situations than many blacks in the South, but through this law they could attain superior status. The acceptance of this ideology helped the white men who had sired these biracial children not only keep them from being accepted in white society but also from inheriting their property. White families who owned property had a vested interest in keeping their black/mixed relatives out of the official family lineage. Because lines of inheritance would not have ended with the death of the direct heir, but could have persisted for successive generations if the heir had children, many of these families could have been haunted financially for decades. If "Tom's" father in *Puddn'head Wilson* had acknowledged his mixed-race son, then Tom's heirs, even after the end of slavery, could possibly have legally challenged an inheritance right to the property.

At the heart of *Paul Marchand F.M.C.* is the dilemma of who has rights to Bearepas' property. From the beginning of the novel, the question looms: Which nephew will inherit Bearepas' vast fortune and estate? All five nephews are falling over themselves to please their uncle so they can gain access to his property. But upon their uncle's death they find out that he has given the property to his bastard son, whom they thought was Creole. Chesnutt uses this plot to illustrate to his readers that the one drop rule is not primarily a matter of science or social theory but instead is grounded on the need to keep the property within the family, the (white family).

Paul begins to compare his new racial identity with his old identity and place in society. One of the most important differences between the two narratives is that *Puddn'head Wilson's* Tom does not really change his view of himself before and after knowledge of his racial identity. Twain has Tom feel a brief period of shock, and then depicts Tom as an even worse gothic

monster than before the time he knew he was black. Twain never gives the reader any kind of rationale for Tom's continued displays of aberrant behavior. This leads the reader to think that his behavior is due to nature.

Contrarily, there is not just one side of Paul shown to the reader. Paul, before the identity revelation, is trying to negotiate his Creole identity and is dealing with his problematic relationship with New Orleans blacks. After his identity revelation, Paul is now trying to shift his personality to that of the white elite slave owner by assuming a personality that is contrary to his former self. This illustrates that Paul is trying to shift his role to fit the environment that he finds himself in. No longer is he sandwiched in between identities of the black and the Creole; he is an elite white man with all of its societal advantages.

Paul Marchand had never been content with just "some rights" or the fact that as a Creole man he was treated better than blacks or slaves. Whether he was Creole or not, it meant that he was still subjected to the whims and racism of white men which now he could inflict onto inferior Creoles and Blacks. He can legitimately claim to be of the elite group. He is now part of a community that he had fought against all of his life and now has to try to fit within its ranks.

Subsequently, Marchand decides to have a duel with each of the nephews in an effort to avenge the pain that was wrought upon him by white men. His decision to duel is considered a gentlemanly way to solve disputes during this period and shows the nephews that he is using the resolution of white men. Henri illustrates the contradiction in Paul's contention that they had wronged him and their belief that no insults had ever occurred, "...To us Paul Beurepas did not exist; and we did not exist; and we could not insult one who had not come into being. The acts of which you complain were directed against a certain *soi-disant* quadroon, who, in his turn, no longer exists. A white man could not insult a man of color, and therefore there was no insult"

(133). This explanation by Henri not only insults Paul but explains that in general the insults from white men reflect southern society's denial of Creoles as equal to them. Henri's explanation is that there was no insult inflicted upon Paul because a white man cannot insult a man of color. This construct lumps Paul in with the same black men that he is technically superior to according to the racial caste system. This is very similar to the reasoning in *Puddin'head Wilson* that Tom, as a slave, was considered to be property and not a person; therefore, he must be sold down the river. Whether black or Creole, the person could not in any way be on the level of the white populace.

Also, there is a strong gothic quality to Henri's explanation. Henri says to Paul that neither he nor they existed, so there was no insult. The idea that language has the power to erase people, their prior relationships and experiences is part of the denial process of America. It is as if the slate was wiped clean, a rebirth of sorts, and as if they never existed before the will. Everything beforehand is erased which also means Julie and her children are now non-existent. The idea of language having the power to create and restore identities supports the nurture instead of the nature theory. According to Frantz Fanon's theory of race, the "[color problem] exists primarily in language itself: . . . Supply a single answer and the color problem would be stripped of all its importance" (Fanon 1). "Fanon implies in this passage that if language is transformed, if the answer to this 'problem' is found, then the issue of race will simply disappear, the specter will be exorcised" (Piggford 146). If a single line according to Fanon can exorcise the specter, then a single line can create the specter. So Henri's discussion with Paul incorporates the idea of language creating what is ghostly and what is not.

At this point in the narrative, with Paul's shift in identity, the reader wonders, who is the real Paul? McWilliams poses the question as follows, "And yet there remains a fundamental

ambiguity about the identity and motives of the man who accomplishes this vengeance. Is this the black man in the jail cell who swore vengeance against the white oppressors" (McWilliams 187)? There is inherent ambiguity in the construction of Paul's identity. Previously, his only link to blackness occurred when he was in jail with other black people wrongly incarcerated. Because Paul does not discuss the rights and wrongs of the racial system, he is allowing Henri to say they could not have insulted him because at the time he was Creole. But his problem is not the years of insult to his race but the specific insults that came from the nephews which in turn are his family. Because he is trying to avenge those particular insults, he feels he must assume the mantle of revenge against the white man. Does Paul really believe in this revenge tactic or is he merely duplicating the white man's code of conduct? Is this the way Paul Marchand sees himself and is this the banner he wants to wave? This is not clear because he is now assuming the persona of the white father. So exactly who Paul Marchand is remains a mystery.

The revelation of Paul's identity more intensely illustrates Chesnutt's focus on the problems relating to race construction, determining whether they are biological or environmental. The conundrum of looking at race based on blood is illustrated in the next encounter when Paul meets with Don Jose. He and Josephine had been thinking all this time that Philippe, one of Bearupas' nephews, would become the heir and marry Josephine in order to resolve Don Jose Morales' debts with Bearepas. Also, Philippe and Josephine had fallen in love. When she finds out that she must marry Paul, the conundrum of race looms more clearly because she does not accept his new racial designation, "I could never bear the sight of him," declared Josephine. He has been brought up as a Negro. He must feel as a Negro; I could never be sure of him. Besides, father, I love Philippe" . . . (153-154)!

By exposing the reader to all the different viewpoints of Paul's sudden change in race, Chesnutt illustrates how arbitrary these artificial barriers are. In simply a matter of a few days, Paul's Creole wife and children are ruled legally non-existent and he is now free to marry a white woman. At this point, the double in the novel is the Creole self that Paul needs to shed to fully take on his white identity. Even though he is now officially white, his life as a Creole man is still shadowing him. Josephine mentions his wife and children as obstacles to her marriage to him and when her father lets her know that these obstacles can be overcome, she then describes the disgust she would feel in a marriage with Paul. The fact that he was brought up a Negro causes her to believe that there are true biological differences between Paul and Philippe. In her mind the environment is more important than who he really is biologically. Chesnutt is showing that societal brainwashing on race is clearly more important than recent biological realities and that in the end racial identity is more environmental than biological.

Paul Marchand has an internal double that shadows him either as a Creole person or as a white man. But when Negroes take over Trois Pigeons, Don Jose's estate, Marchand comes face to face with his double. Due to the debt Jose owes him, Marchand can take possession of Don Jose's property whenever he chooses but he hesitates to do so. When he hears that blacks have taken over the estate and have taken Josephine as a hostage, however, his response is that of a white man who does not want to lose his property. When he gets to the property, he has a confrontation with one of the black men who is threatening Josephine. But he is besieged with conflicted emotions because he knows "He must save the woman, but he pitied, even while he condemned, the ravisher" (159). He goes to the property as Paul Beaurepas but as he encounters the double, his persona of Paul Marchand returns, "[Paul] saw, beyond the evil countenance of the man who had faced him, the long night of crime which had produced this fruit---the midnight

foray in the forest, the slave coffle, the middle passage, the years of toil beneath the lash, the steady process of imbrutement which the careless endowment of white blood had intensified...." (159).

This is an important moment for Paul because for the first time since the revelation of his true race and his seemingly wholesale adoption of the white master mentality, he is faced with his former colored/black self as he sees reflected in the angry role and the black man's subjugation. According to Bell, "When we study performance as a critical endeavor, we are interested in the operations of power that produce these names, conflicts, privileges, and oppressions in language and in the felt realities that fuel them" (25). When he looks into the man's eyes, he is confronted with the same resentment he felt towards the white race as a Creole man and the whole history of black subjugation. His double leaves him feeling truly betwixt and between because he knows he must save the white woman who is innocent and at the same time he understands the rage that has driven the black hostage taker. There is no doubt that at one time he did see all members of the white community as monolithic and wanted to kill all of them because of their sins against the black community.

As the scene with the "mulatto" kidnapper progresses, there is a mutual recognition between Paul and him. Paul's preoccupation with the mulatto puts his life in danger because it blinds him to the other man coming at him from behind, ready to kill him. Chesnutt illustrates this secret language between those who are, or who have lived as, mulatto. The mulatto feels a need to warn Paul of the man behind him even though he is working with him to overtake the white men. He clearly does not see Paul as white and there is something in their nonverbal communication that informs Paul that this man is more like him than not. They both recognize

something in the other. For Paul it is as if another part of him was holding the woman. He saw his rage against the white community come alive in the face of the mulatto.

The slave takeover also illustrates that this system of slavery affects everyone, black and white, negatively and violently. Not only does one of the slaves die but also the white overseer, a consequence of slavery that is illustrated as "...Chesnutt reminds his audience that victims and victimizers are as indistinguishable from one another in a slaveocracy as is differentiating white from black or attributing negative or positive qualities exclusively to either race. *Paul Marchand* the novel and Paul Marchand the man are poised to disrupt all race-based assumptions" (Wright 78). Through the overseer's death, the novel illustrates that no one gets out of this morally corrupt and violent system unscathed. The violence, whether it is on the body or the mind, impacts everyone. As an administrator of his duties, the overseer is a perpetrator of violence upon slaves. Yet ultimately, he becomes a victim of violence when he is killed by the enraged and revenge seeking mulatto. So as much as slaves are the complete victims, those in power are also victims to various degrees and Chesnutt shows the horror of slavery as it effects everyone. Unlike Twain, who compromises in his final version his argument against slavery (depicting Tom, the mixed-race character as the monster and villain); Chesnutt represents slavery as the evil entity.

One of the things that is also clear from looking at these various characters of white, black and mulatto is that Chesnutt does not only ascribe negative characteristics to blackness or whiteness; his characterization is much more fluid, "Chesnutt, more fairly (and, the student of history would argue, more accurately), does not avoid assigning negative characteristics to black characters, but he equably delineates white characters with like qualities" (Proto-Wright 77).

This scene repositions Paul's sense of self yet again. He remembers when he was Creole and wanted that percentage of white blood to actually mean something in society. Marchand thinks about the fact that passing was out of the question once he aligned his loyalties with the Creole community by marrying his wife, Julie. Also, for the first time he thinks about Julie and his children and how they have been affected by his change of identity. He realized that even though he loved his wife, nothing could make her white and legally his wife. The encounter with his double makes Paul reassess the kind of life he really wants and he asks himself if he truly could give up the life he had for the real benefits of whiteness. In analyzing his relationships with Julie, his children and Josephine, he is very practical. He realizes that to stay with Julie would mean leaving the white world that he is now accepted in and giving up the money and property that he is entitled to as a white man. As a white man, he could no longer be legally wed to Julie and it would be as if the marriage did not take place. Julie would be reduced to simply a mistress.

As he thinks about Julie's plight, he also begins to think about his changed and now less than loving feelings for his children, "And Julie's children? Curiously enough, Marchand found himself thinking of them as *her* children. A week before, they had been *his* children. He had not only loved them, but had been proud of them----now he could only be ashamed of them" (169-170). Interestingly, Chestnut's illustration of the ambiguity within Marchand's mind acutely marks his already mentally distanced stance from his family. They are now the "other" family in the shadows because he thinks about Julie and the children as if they are a problem that needs to be resolved and not as his family. These mental discussions show that Marchand has the ability to departmentalize and put aside emotional feelings. His ambiguity illustrates a more calculating and cold aspect of his personality because the reader gets the sense that he sees Julie and the

children simply as millstones. Without Julie and the children he would probably put aside any feelings that erupted in the meeting with his double and take his rightful place.

The relationship between Paul and Philippe again evokes the image of the double, one of the most pervasive gothic symbols. Philippe is Paul Marchand's double just as the black kidnapper was because, of course, if Paul is not black, then one of the five cousins has to be the mulatto. This is the mystery that pervades the novel. Who is really Creole? Chesnutt allows the reader and Marchand to know that Philippe is the Creole, but Marchand does not let any of the five cousins know the racial truth. Paul knows what Philippe will be in for if he were to find out that he is Creole. He would be in the same position as Paul except that he would now have to accept his place in the Creole world and leave the white world. Even though he claims to not feel any familial love for his new family, by saving Philippe from the sure mental and actual hell he would endure, he is acting as a family member. Paul remembers that Philippe welcomed him in the family and was the only cousin who treated him fairly. McWilliams describes Paul's dilemmas, "If this is so, Paul Marchand and Philippe Beaufort's situation are opposite and yet strangely symmetrical: a white man raised as a mulatto; a mulatto man raised as white...he forces the race-proud Beaufort family to accept, unwittingly, a mulatto as its leader" (McWilliams 190).

Philippe is Paul's double even if he does not know it and that is possibly the reason he stands alone from the rest of the family in his dealings with Paul Marchand. Throughout the novel they have unwittingly been there for each other as if they were family. The parallel of Paul saving Josephine and Philippe saving Lizette illustrates early on that these two will have a link that goes beyond mere blood relations. Chesnutt establishes the relationship between these two men in the initial stages of the novel so one is not surprised when it comes to light that each

is the half of the other. Paul possesses the secret of the family and the fact that the family is now headed by a mulatto insures that he has his revenge on the white elite families who have dictated his life. With this new revelation Chesnutt is illustrating again how society cannot reasonably keep the blood separate because some of those who are of mixed ancestry can and do successfully pass unnoticed. Chesnutt suggests that some of the most elite white families of the South more than likely have people who are of mixed ancestry invisibly among them and many of the white people who think they are pure may as well have mixed blood. Here again the gothic trope of invisibility covertly yet prominently positions itself within the race phenomenon of mixed bloodlines.

Paul's business prowess is compared to Philippe. Chesnutt exposes Philippe as an ineffectual leader who does not avert the family's business decline. Because of this, one might infer that Chesnutt is promulgating racist stereotypes by suggesting that the racially mixed cousin is not very smart in business. But instead Chesnutt more likely is saying the training these cousins received as entitled white elites did not include much learning in the ways of business. Paul, growing up as a Creole man, knew he had to make his way in the world and support his family so it was crucial for him to become adept in the business world, leading him to become probably more proficient and successful than Philippe at running the business.

In terms of the use of gothic symbolism, Chesnutt makes it clear that biology is not the dominant determining character factor whereas Mark Twain tends toward a vague stance on the issue. For Chesnutt the gothic monster is not blackness but the ambiguous state of the passing figure. Paul is different from Tom in many ways. For instance, Tom is a temperamental child from infancy and grows up to be a dangerous criminal. Furthermore, the revelation of his birth

does nothing to change his personality one way or the other. Also, Twain does not have even one black character who is not depicted as having malignant tendencies.

Chesnutt contrarily illustrates Paul's love for his family, along with the feelings of rage and anger produced by his intermediate status in society. When he finds out the truth, the reader is privy to his struggle as he undergoes a temporary change of personality, which is clearly linked to the revelation of his identity and his need to know the truth. Chesnutt uses the gothic symbol of the double to depict the racial and personal predicament that the passing figure faces in society. He provides a variety to whiteness and blackness that Twain neglects to give in his story. Twain goes to extreme lengths to create a black monster predator figure whereas Chesnutt says these issues are much more nuanced than that. He also deals with the reaction of those whites who learn of Paul's true racial status but do not change their interaction with him, thereby, revealing that racial identity is not determined by blood but by social attitudes.

Each novel has an ending that supports its author's agenda. Twain symbolizes the "innate goodness of heart" of white blood when white Tom, even though Roxie has ruined his life, still financially takes care of her. Characterizing white Tom as inherently kind and forgiving applauds his white blood. However, he is shown as being strongly damaged because of his many years of life under slave conditions. There is an interesting twist which occurs here: Twain does allow nurture to determine character to the extent that white Tom is portrayed as the victim of his surroundings but black Tom seems to be defined primarily by his deviant (black) blood as he remains largely unaffected by his environment. Yet the harsh and oppressive environment of slavery is the reason Roxy switched the babies in the first place.

One drop of black blood, as visibly minuscule as it is, overpowers the customary influence of money, family, education and training. That one drop of black blood seeping

through the veins of Tom triumphs over everything. So again, even though the ending nods its head to environment being the real culprit throughout some parts of the text, biology ("de nigger in you") takes precedence as the cause for the depiction of black Tom as the gothic monster. But because there is not another black character who is rendered as anything but morally ambiguous, the reader feels that Twain really is vacillating between biology and environment.

When the reader finds out in *Paul Marchand F.M.C.* that Philippe is the real Creole, it is very different from the revelation of Chambers in *Puddn'head Wilson*. The character of Philippe has been depicted with all his faults and strengths and is not just an appendage to the end of the story. On the other hand, Chambers is barely mentioned until the end of the story. Also, the reader feels as if he/she has been on this sojourn with Paul Marchand, traveling the twists and turns of his rugged journey of self-discovery. However, there is similarity in the two endings.

After the knowledge of his racial identity, Paul (like white Tom) is also unable to fit into white society because of the racial construction of his environment. This realization occurs when he thinks of one of his doubles, the mulatto who held Josephine. Because Paul is unable to fully incorporate himself in white southern elite society, he knows that his doubles will always pursue him in New Orleans. Eventually Paul realizes that he, his wife, and children must move to France in order to survive as a family. Also, overall Chesnutt gives a much clearer view of American society and race than Twain. Twain, bowing to his readership, presented a mere shadow of a passing figure, one who belied historical facts and eradicated societal guilt. Chesnutt, upholding his personal aspiration to illustrate the humanity of blacks, provided a less monstrous view of the passing figure, one that was clear and multi-faceted, and most of all, human.

Chapter 2

Nella Larsen's *Passing* and Danzy Senna's *Symptomatic*: Gothic Depictions And Racial Conflicts

² Although they are separated by actual chronological time and the cultural and racial events of history, Nella Larsen's *Passing* and Danzy Senna's *Symptomatic* are literary mirror images of one another. Indeed, Senna's novel can be read as an updating of Larsen's. Both novels feature two women who superficially seem to be in opposition but on a deeper level are two sides of the same coin. Herein is the crux of both novels: they offer introspective and reflective self-examinations of the passing figure through the intertwining characters of Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield in *Passing* and the anonymous narrator and Greta in *Symptomatic*. Hence, both authors approach the subject of passing from a psychological perspective and through a pointedly gothic lens. In addition, as the four passers are female, I will look at the uniquely different situation of the female as opposed to that of the male.

Psychologically, the novels allow the reader access into the mind of one of the passers who provides commentary and observation on the actions of the other character. In *Passing*, Larsen chooses Irene to reflect the passers's inner thoughts while Senna allows the appropriately named "unknown narrator" to convey the angst and frustrations of the bi-racial/multi-racial individual. Because Larsen and Senna do allow exposure of the mental exploration of Irene and the unknown narrator, the reader is privy to the first-hand illumination of two integral elements of passing: first, the covert world of blacks who can pass, whether intentionally or unintentionally and secondly, the conflicts of their identities as they continually morph from one

² The endnotes for this chapter are on page 259-260, 6-12

personality to another depending upon who they are with and how they are categorized by society.

Both of these novels critique racial identity issues through the lens of gothic symbols. The double and ambiguity are two literary themes depicted throughout the novels. Ambiguity is an element of all passing novels but is more prominently reflected in these works than in most because their more psychological perspective. Ambiguity, as a psychological and gothic symbol in passing novels, is instrumental in illustrating the sense of confusion and the blurring of identity that often characterize the mixed-race person.

This psychological perspective is not seen as much as *Puddn'head Wilson* and *Paul Marchand F.M.C.* Definitively, Twain caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place, as he gingerly attempted to avoid alienating his readership of white aristocracy while also offering criticism on slavery and miscegenation, did not delve into the psychological motivation of Tom Driscoll. Although Chesnut did provide the reader access to the mental musings of Marchand, he still focused more on presenting a particular social message than with tracing the character's psychological development. Larsen and Senna are concerned with their audience as well, but their own conflicted identities come into play in the construction of these characters; therefore offering the viewpoint of the female passer.

Particularly, I contend that Larsen's use of gothic symbols and tropes enhance and intensify her challenge of racial stereotypes as she illustrates the ambiguous situation of the passer as she is caught between both racial communities, but is not a part of either one. I will look at the particular issues concerning the female passer caught between duties to community, family and self. The gothic tropes that I will discuss are ambiguity, identity confusion, isolation, doubling, secrecy and alienation.

Also, Larsen uses gothic symbolism not only to show the ambiguity of the two characters but also to critique the Harlem Renaissance world in which they lived. Hence, Larsen, like Twain, has a double agenda: primarily, her goal is to critique the passer yet because her story is set during the Harlem Renaissance, she strategically plots the story as it relates to the issues of the day during this era of political, cultural, educational and artistic black leadership. Again, employing the use of literary tropes of Gothicism such as doubling ambiguity, and secrecy aided Larsen in her portrayal of the complexity of the passer when confronted with the vacillating duality of two identities. Although Senna used some of the same gothic tropes as Larsen, the time elapse between the novels and a completely different racial landscape resulted in the illustration of the passer as a multi-cultural person dealing with problems fitting into a society of rigid social identities and its effect on one's psyche.

More so than previous writers, Senna and Larsen deal much more directly with the issue of an authentic identity and the privileging of blackness as the default identity. Passing complicates this idea. According to Josh Tosh, "Passing is thus a powerful subversion of the basic assumptions that perpetuate the mythologies of race (and the very possibilities of authentic identity). As it is predicated upon the fact that race is performance, the act of passing suggests that all racial categories are arbitrary and ultimately untenable" (3). Passing is a performance because the passer is attempting to successfully imitate the white race to the point that the black race is completely subsumed. Yet being visibly white is not always enough. It is often only part of the performance. Even though society is indoctrinated to judge by certain visual clues such as skin color and other facial features, it is important that the passer is skilled at developing the behavior, mannerisms and speech/language of the race/class the passer is performing.

Tosh's statement reflects on the societal issues concerning multiracial identity and deals with those who either pass or could pass. Someone who is light enough to pass undoubtedly has a significant degree of white ancestry in his/her lineage, even if it is not directly from interracial parentage. But the white ancestry is not acknowledged by either whites or blacks because the only lineage that is seen as authentic is black because this is legally sanctioned by the one drop rule.

Even though both white and black groups see the white ancestry as insignificant or invisible, their reasons are different. Steadfastly rooted in their belief that the one drop rule is legally enforced, and therefore prevents racial intermixing, the white community believes that race can be seen and is marked by the visual. However, the resistance of blacks to acknowledge white ancestry can be viewed as a pragmatic tool to employ blackness as a unifier for political gain. According to social theorist Dinesh D'Souza, "For today's black leaders, black solidarity remains an essential organizing principle for the battles to come. How can an African American community so divided between a middle class and an underclass expect to preserve a cohesive political identity? Part of the answer comes as a surprise: the one drop rule" (236). So for both communities albeit for different reasons, the one drop rule is an important part of developing a racial and social identity. For the passer and mixed-raced persons, this leaves little room for them to shape their own identity. The one drop rule is a rigidly enforced dogma that considers race within a binary system: black and white. There is no room for mixture or other ethnic groups.

Many passing novels tend to deal within this binary instead of overtly critiquing it which is why during this time period passing novels abounded and most of the novels concluded with the "reveal", which is when the passer's "true" identity is discovered, and a return to blackness

occurred. Danzy Senna discusses how these portrayals often paralleled the societal and racial norm, "In traditional literature of passing, the protagonist was always thought to be mutable. In traditional literature of passing, the protagonist was always thought to be authentically black because of her one drop of black blood. The idea of passing relied on the notion that there was an authentic racial self that one was concealing" (449).

Conversely, James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* did not follow the return to blackness model; the passer stayed in his life as a white man, but the novel did persist with the idea that the passer would always regret choosing to leave the black community and that the authentic self was black. Even though Johnson does make that break from the traditional literatures of passing, he does not truly illustrate the betwixt and between status of the passer as pervasively as Larsen and Senna. Hence, he critiques white society and the passer but does not offer a similar critique of the black community. As much as these novels did critique the idea of rigid racial roles in society, they did not get beyond the passer's return to blackness and rejection of any parts of the white identity. Also, in many passing novels written by black writers there is the tendency not only to critique society but to also blame the passer for choosing to pass; therefore, he or she is usually written as regretting the decision and sometimes even being punished by either or both communities.

Larsen illustrates how the figure of the mulatta is invisible in both black and white culture. Senna more directly challenges the assumptions of authenticity for the multicultural person. Both of these novels interrogate the ambivalence not only of the passer but also of society and its need to put people in rigid racial categories. The act of passing itself interrogates social and ethnic roles. Twain and Chesnut did overtly critique the invisibility of whiteness within the passer, but Larson and Senna not only deal with that invisibility but also the problems

of fitting into either/both the black or white community. Gothic symbolism can be used to go against the status quo. Passing can be seen as a gothic act that goes against the status quo. According to Robert K. Martin, "...the gothic can allow for the voice of the culturally repressed and hence act out a resistance to the dominant culture" (Martin and Savoy 130).

The mulatto is a major part of the racial ideology of the past and the present because it is the undeniable outcome of the mixing of the races which this country has persistently attempted to repudiate. According to George Hutchinson, "The mutely 'tragic,' 'ghostly' figure of the 'mulatto' haunts our racial ideology as its absent center, the scapegoat whose sacrifice both signifies the origin of racialist discourse and sustains it" (374). In many ways the mulatto is the center of our racial discourse because she/he embodies the best and worst of both races.

Both of these novels deal with the particular situation of the female passer/mixed race person. Larsen particularly deals with the burden put on women within the context of the racial uplift ideology via Irene. Irene as the black elite woman has to uphold the community and her core family as well. Dubois essay, "The Work of Negro Women in society" discusses how it is the woman's responsibility to ensure the cohesion of the family, "The perpetuation of the race, the transmission of culture, the ultimate triumph of right depend primarily upon the physical motherhood of the nation. There is no use trying to rear a race or nation on the physical foundation of mothers too weak or wanton to bring forth healthy children (qtd Dubois 139-140)." (Smith 285). According to Dubois, every aspect of uplifting the black race is dependent upon the [black] woman/mother.

Nella Larsen's *Passing* is set in 1920s Harlem, New York, at the time of much political activity among blacks. As the daughter of a white Danish woman and a West Indian father, Larsen experienced firsthand racial ambiguity. For reasons unknown, her father abandoned

Larsen and her mother when she was a baby. While Larsen was still a young child, her mother married a Scandinavian man, Peter Larsen, and the couple had a little girl. This situation helped create Larsen's identity and racial dilemmas. Since Larsen did not look light enough to pass, she was basically a black child within a white family to the outside world. As the only non-white, Larsen was growing up as an outsider in her own family and was seen as different from everyone else. Hence, this sense of racial invisibility often emerges as a fundamental component of Larsen's literature.^{vii} Therefore, critics such as Merrill Horton believe Larson's mixed race identity issues during her childhood influenced her writing of this novel. Horton goes on to say, "...We cannot psychoanalyze Larsen's fictional characters, but scholars...have provided us with enough biographical information about Larsen to suggest that *Passing* is indeed a therapeutic exploration of issues in the black race that Nella Larsen found difficult to reconcile" (37-38).

Larsen wanted to show that mixed race people have to deal with being outsiders in their communities and, at times, their own families. One can see this in the creation of Clare. Even though Larsen was not light enough to pass as white, she felt the same isolation and invisibility that Clare felt as a child. In her creation of the character she wanted people to understand that those who pass might be selfish but it comes out of not having a community and/or family. This is representative of triple passing because Clare and Larsen feel separated from black and white communities. Larsen was practically erased out of her family because she was the black member of a white family just as Clare is the dirty secret of her white aunts. Larsen wanted to show that the passer has a complicated relationship with race and with society because of his/her conflicting roles in white society and in the black community.

In fact, because of Larsen's biracial status yet her inability to pass, she is caught between two races. She is conflicted not only about her race but her allegiance to black middle class

culture. According to Merrill Horton, "...For Larsen, the Harlem Renaissance was both an opportunity and a restriction: a crucible of sorts. The tension between the object of Larsen's art, the world of Harlem, and 'the complexities of personal identification with that world,' is embodied in the two main characters of *Passing...*" (33). This contradiction is represented in her work by her use of gothic symbols such as invisibility, doubles and ambiguity. She has put her sense of ambiguity into the construction of both characters and their conflicted senses of self. Irene represents her conflicting feelings of opposition yet compelling sense of duty toward the uplifting of her race. Just as definitively, Clare symbolizes Larsen's familial isolation and alienation throughout her childhood.

The mirror imaging of the two characters can be seen in the beginning scenes of the novel, as they are introduced in Irene's version of passing, situational passing. This is significant because Irene represents the political ideology of racial uplift which was the black dominant political thought during the time. First, Larsen sets up Irene as a passer and communicates her rationalization along with the concept of racial invisibility. Of the two characters, Irene seems to be the one who more closely resembles Larsen's feelings of dividedness because she is struggling with her own sense of split identity. Her conflict stems from her relationship with her husband and family and also from her sense of obligation to the black community. These different obligations are indicative of the female place in the black community at the time.

Larsen sets up the reader's introduction to Irene's passing as accidental: through a scene in which Irene faints in the street, is mistaken for white, and is taken for revival to the Drayton Hotel restaurant. As she sits in the restaurant of the Drayton Hotel, she muses about her situational and undetected passing and wonders if the white woman staring at her knows her secret. Astutely, Irene sees herself in opposition to white America, "...White people were so

stupid about such things for all that they usually asserted that they were able to tell; and by the most ridiculous means, finger-nails, palms of hands, shapes of ears, teeth, and other equally silly rot. They always took her for an Italian, a Spaniard, a Mexican, or a gypsy" (16-17).

At this stage in the narrative, Larsen is informing the reader of the variability and difficulty of detecting race by sight. She is critiquing society's concept that blackness has to be visible so it can be marked from whiteness, that some physical feature will reveal the outsider so that he/she cannot blend in with mainstream white society. Through Irene's internal discussion, she realizes that the joke is on white America because blacks do recognize that blackness can appear as white. For white Americans, however, the miscegenation history of the country is hidden and unacknowledged.

Another aspect of Irene's rumination is her belief that being any other ethnic group is clearly better than being black. Irene realizes she cannot pass for WASP but she can pass for a myriad of other ethnicities which would all be allowed to sit in the Drayton without a problem, "Nevertheless, Irene felt, in turn, anger, scorn, and fear slide over her. It wasn't that she was ashamed of being a Negro, or even of having it declared. It was the idea of being ejected from any place, even in the polite and tactful way in which the Drayton would probably do it, that disturbed" (16-17).

Furthermore, Irene's thoughts illustrate another concern of the passer: the constant dread of being "outed" as black. This apprehension seizes Irene as she sits in the Drayton restaurant and notices that the "white woman" is staring at her. She feels as though the woman is sizing her up, trying to determine if she is some kind of "other" who does not belong in the restaurant. Desperately, Irene wants to belong in this restaurant; she does not want to be thought of as a member of an alienated group that is distinctly marked as such. People who knowingly pass live

with the fear and dread that they will be found out, ultimately suffering the consequences of ridicule and rejection. It is the risk that is always there, the factor of living on the edge while seeking security and comfort.^{viii}

This scene at the Drayton is important for two reasons: First, Larson fans the angst and worries that are innate to the passer so that the reader can empathize and, secondly, she sets up the gothic trope of the double that will become an essential part of the story. Clare Kendry, the woman staring at Irene, is the double to Irene and vice versa in the narrative. Clare and Irene grew up together as children but Clare was the janitor's daughter, who was mostly raised by her white aunts. They made her feel as if she should be grateful that they had taken her in from her alcoholic father.

The coincidence of Clare seeing Irene is made more evident because in the preceding chapter she has received a letter from Clare expressing a desire to see her. In the letter Clare talks about her loneliness and how she wants to reconnect with Irene and the community of her childhood. This is a harbinger of Clare's decision to return to the life she had repudiated to pass for white.

Clare dances between and tries to reconcile both identities. This gives her power because she is the one in charge of how others see her and, of course, she has more knowledge about her different lives than anyone that she is associating with from either community. Through passing there is the shift in power that destabilizes the racial roles in the hierarchy. As Lori Kahn states, Clare attains certain subjectivity in her role as the passer and complicates that role by returning to her childhood friends. (127) Even though there is a certain invisibility to passing because one is subjugating one identity for another, the power lies in the fact that the white community is

unaware of her "true" identity and the black community, aware of her "true identity", resents her ability and daring to pass.

There is also a power to her racial performance of whiteness which keeps not only Irene but others jealous of Clare's ability to pass. According to Judith Butler, "Here is the trick of passing itself that appears to eroticize Clare, the covering over of astonishing black by ivory, the sudden concession of the secret, the magical transformation of a smile into a caress. It is the changeability itself, the dream of a metamorphosis where that changeableness signifies a certain freedom, a class mobility afforded by whiteness that constitutes the power of that education" (170). Clare's racial performance shows that she has the ability to be different things to different people. Choosing to perform as white affords her the opportunity to claim the inherent opportunities of the white race.

Both Irene and Clare have a sense of invisibility that they thought passing would alleviate. One of the main gothic traits of passing literature is the sense of being an outsider. Since her childhood Clare has always felt like an outsider. It is clear in Clare's letter to Irene that she still feels as if she is an outsider even though she has run away from her home to find acceptance. To Irene, she writes, "...For I am lonely, so lonely...cannot help longing to be with you again, as I have never longed for anything before; and I have wanted many things in my life....You can't know how in this pale life of mine I am all the time seeing the bright pictures of that other that I once thought I was glad to be free of....It's like an ache, a pain that never ceases...." (7). The above excerpt from the letter reflects Clare's overwhelming need to re-connect with and gain acceptance by the black community. Via Irene, Clare feels that she can accomplish her goal and end the misery that she suffers as a result of abandoning her black identity when she chose to pass. The above quote illustrates the loneliness associated with the

passer and reflects upon the gothic themes of outsiderhood and isolation. Clare has led a successful life with her husband but she does not feel connected to her white life. The desire to unite with the black community consumes Clare to the point of obsession.

Although Clare's longing for Irene has been seen in some cases to be symptomatic of lesbian desire, it can also be seen as an obsession that each woman has for the other's life. Clare does not want to be romantically involved with Irene; she wants to return to the black community. She wants to assume her "real" identity and to re-enter the world of blackness which Irene inhabits as a matter of regularity. However, all the longing and envy are not just on Clare's part. Irene, dissatisfied with her life as an elite black wife and mother, secretly envies and covets Clare's sense of risk taking and her boldness to inhabit another identity. Both characters obsess about each other because each has what the other wants and, as Larsen has staged the plot, both function as the other's double.

Doubling is, of course, a gothic trope that is imbedded in the construction of the passing character. Fred Botting characterizes gothic fiction as follows, "Uncanny effects rather than sublime terrors predominated. Doubles, alter egos, mirrors and animated representations of the disturbing parts of the human subject from the culture and language in which s/he was located, these devices increasingly destabilized the boundaries between psyche and reality, opening up an indeterminate zone in which the differences between fantasy and actuality were no longer secure" (11-12). Both Clare and Irene have problems with recognizing and adhering to the boundaries that define the identities they want to inhabit and the ones that constitute their reality. Since Clare pretty much created her own altered reality in terms of her life, as part of the white community she is more cognizant of these destabilized boundaries than Irene. As will be

discussed later, Irene has created a life that she desperately wants to escape from and her temporal passing gives her that avenue for escape.

Clare's Story

Gothicism explores the recurrent horror of having to decide who is and who not legitimate family.^{ix} Clare's family dynamic illustrates one of the main gothic plotlines: the secrecy of paternal bloodlines and the extreme efforts to maintain these secrets as opposed to the benefits of revealing them. After her father's death, Clare was then raised by her white aunts who treated her as the family's dirty secret. Even though in this narrative there is not a question of paternal identity and there is no vast fortune or estate to inherit, Larsen still uses the sense of shame brought on a family because of a societally prohibited sexual liaison. Clare embodies that shame, which evolves into a sense of alienation as the aunts make her feel that she does not belong to the family. Clare tells Irene about the unloving and hypocritical aunts, "For all their Bibles and praying and ranting about honesty, they didn't want anyone to know that their darling brother had seduced-----ruined, they called it-----a Negro girl. They could excuse the ruin, but they couldn't forgive the tar brush. They forbade me to mention Negroes to the neighbors, or even to mention the south side" (34).

As a result of her aunts' forbidding her to mention her blackness, Clare is shamed into denying her black identity. The grandfather's sexual transgression is the ruin, but Clare represents the tar brush. Clare's aunts do not hold anything against their brother but Clare, as his granddaughter, incurs their wrath because no matter how white she looks, they know that Clare's blood is tainted. She is not choosing to pass at this point but this moment of racial isolation

causes her to feel that she has no roots. Inevitably, she feels that she can more easily slip totally to the other side. Being alienated from the black community, and seemingly invisible to her aunts and family, Clare feels no attachment to either.

Her aunts illustrate white society's belief that people can be separated by blood. According to Mae Henderson, "...Saks calls [the belief system] 'the metaphor of blood,'... [which] essentialized the notion of race in American Jurisprudence. And it was this notion that the infusion of 'one drop' of 'black blood' was racially determinative that rendered what Joel Williamson describes as 'invisible blackness'" (xxxvi-xxxvii).

Again, the blood metaphor used to represent tainted purity is the gothic symbol that is most used in passing novels and is the undercurrent of the works. Even though Clare is in the north and is not subjected to outward segregation as she would be in the South, she must still contend with the philosophy of the 'one drop rule.' This particular passage about the aunts tellingly reveals that many white people knew that attempting to separate the "bloodlines" between the races was a fruitless exercise.

The idea of a hidden world that everyone knows about but does not acknowledge is another major gothic theme of the passing novels. But in *Passing* Larsen shows how two worlds exist in both communities. These aunts know that Clare is the product of miscegenation but they want to conceal her to maintain their standing in white society.

Throughout the novel, Larsen consistently reflects on Clare's sense of isolation, and the negative effects of a biracial child growing up in a white household. Forever haunting Clare is her sense of confusion and isolation, contributing to her lack of an identity and the ambivalence that exist within her. Simply put, Clare does not fit anywhere. Even though Clare is visibly white, she still feels alienated from her white aunts because they obviously see Clare as visibly

black (even though she is visibly white) since they are aware of her "one drop" of black blood. Therefore, Larson is able to project the same sense of isolation that she felt through the characterization of Clare. Clare and Larsen both shared a mixture of emotions, according to literary critic George Hutchinson, "Tangled feelings of love and abandonment, anger and self-loathing, empathy, shame, and powerlessness stamped Larsen's emotional development in childhood and shaped the attachment problems that would afflict her until she died" (25). In a parallel fiction, Larsen made the isolation obviously more distinct and made the white relatives actively reject the black part of Clare, forcing her to assume a white identity.

The fear of exposure is constantly there and is most illustrated in marriage and parenthood for the female passer. The scene in which Irene and Gertrude, another childhood friend, visit Clare is important; first, because it illustrates the fear of those who pass or use their lighter skin for societal advantage. Gertrude is not passing in her inner world; her husband and his family know that she is black but they accept her because she is light enough to be perceived as white by the outer world. When Irene, Gertrude, and Clare discuss their children, Larsen illustrates the fear that Gertrude and Clare have about having a child that might have a darker hue. This is particular to the female passer. When asked about whether she had boys, Clare declared, "No, I have no boys and I died of terror the whole nine months before Margery was born for fear that she might be dark. Thank goodness, she turned out all right. But I'll never risk it again. Never! The strain is simply too—too hellish" (49).

This passage employs two words that are indicative of gothic symbolism: "terror" and "dark." Darkness is symbolic of evil and fear. Clare's statement illustrates the ever gnawing terror that her race will be found out through the child. The phrase "dying of terror" illustrates Larsen's use of the gothic language as she equates being outed as black to death. Specifically for

Clare, the revelation would result in either her husband Jack finding out that she is indeed black or he would think she had had an affair and the child was the result; either way, it would be disastrous for Clare. Rather than endure such turmoil, Clare declares that she will not have any more children.

As this conversation continues, Gertrude joins in the discussion, highlighting deeper apprehensions of the passer concerning the color of the unborn child, "No, she went on, 'no more for me either. Not even a girl. It's awful the way it skips generations and then pops out. Why, he actually said he didn't care what colour it turned out, if I would only stop worrying about it. But, of course, nobody wants a dark child" (49-50). Even though Gertrude's husband is aware that she is black, she is still worried about having a child who is visibly black. The "fear of the dark" is not only the fear of white society but also one that haunts the passer and blacks who have used their light skin for privilege without really passing.

Continuing this thought, Irene mentions Clare's daughter and the consequences of Clare being found out to be black. When Irene brings up the topic of her daughter, most would think that Clare would care about what the revelations would do to Margery but it does not seem to faze Clare. But as much as Irene may disapprove of Clare's attitude toward her daughter, she also again admires and envies her attitude of risk. In many situations Irene has felt as if she could leave her family but instead stayed because she felt duty bound.

Clare, however, feels, 'that being a mother is the cruelest thing in the world'....." (101-102). This quote illustrates a gothic technique: taking something that has iconic significance such as motherhood and perverting its meaning. Clare's comment inverts the concept of motherhood from loving devotion to cruel indifference. A risk-taker like Clare would see motherhood as stifling for the mother because it destroys the freedom to live without thinking

about the responsibility for her children. Therefore, Clare does not want to think about the almost certain upheaval of Margery's life if it was revealed that Clare is passing as white.

The novel develops another main gothic theme as it traces how the sins of parents are inherited by the children. This idea starts with Clare's birth because the sins of her grandparents produced a biracial child who had to endure being on the outside looking in. The same stain of Negro blood has been visited on Margery and, if Clare is found out, Margery would also endure the same pain, isolation, confusion and ambiguity that Clare endured. This inevitable chain of events is what makes motherhood for the passer such a traumatic event. Far from the wonderfully exhilarating event it is made out to be, motherhood sometimes precipitates the loss of freedom and the onset of feelings of entrapment for the mother. This is a theme that runs through Larsen's work and is discussed in much more detail in *Quicksand*. Irene feels trapped in her marriage just as Clare feels further trapped in her life with a child. If Clare had more children, there would be the haunting fear that her secret could be revealed at birth. The tragedy for Margery is that she would have to suffer the impact of the revelation of Clare's true identity twofold: dealing with her own shock and her father's reaction as well.

Larsen continues her use of gothic devices and double meanings when Clare's husband, Jack, joins the women and refers to her as "Nig." He considers it a pet name for her but clearly Larsen is illustrating the racism of Clare's husband and the high cost of passing for Clare even within her very private sphere. Also, this pet name suggests that maybe he suspects and is subconsciously testing Clare and her friends, "It was hard to believe that even Clare Kendry would permit this ridiculing of her race by an outsider, though he chanced to be her husband. So he knew, then, that Clare was a Negro? From her talk the other day Irene had understood that he didn't" (54). Irene's thoughts are supposed to guide the reader's digestion of this insulting name

being used as a supposedly innocent and affectionate nickname. Irene's confusion mimics the disconnect between the narrative and the reader. Larsen uses the gothic device of confusion quite heavily to convey issues connected with passing such as lack of an identity.

Mystery is a gothic element that pervades all passing narratives since the storyline exists only because the passer is keeping his/her black identity a secret. One party has the secret but the other party does not and does not even know that he/she is dealing with an unknown entity. Throughout the novel, Larsen has planted mysterious and intriguing seeds concerning the mindset of Irene and Clare, particularly Clare, as they navigate within the often risky and turbulent sea of passing. The crux of the story: will the secret be revealed? The sense of mystery, intrigue and secrecy is heightened in *Passing* when Clare plays with fire by bringing her husband around her black friends.

Therefore, Larsen illustrates to her black and Harlem Renaissance audience the complexities of not only passers, but of light-skinned and mixed-raced blacks. Along with trying to work out her own feelings of racial isolation, Larsen is also trying to bring some understanding to the burdens of race on black women from different backgrounds, particularly as they apply to the uplift ideology. Irene is representative of the black upper middle class woman who often felt obligated to work for the black race.

At the end of passing narratives, the passers mostly renounce their created identities and assert their black identities. Most likely many authors opt for this traditional ending to avoid being the object of the black community's ire. Often times the black community considers a passer to be a "Benedict Arnold" (a traitor) to the black race. So the authors placate the readers with this "return to blackness" ending to fend off any negative reactions to their books. However, in order to convey that racial oppression effects the black person's psyche in

innumerable ways, Larsen suggests that the passer could be seen as a victim of racism just as much as those who are actively fighting the system. The passer is a victim because in her own way she is fighting a system which does not allow her to advance.

One could say that passing is a passive aggressive way of fighting the system. The passer has more power than others in society because he/she has the knowledge of both worlds which gives him/her a power that neither whites nor blacks possess. According to literary critic Debra Shostak, "A person passing is fluent in the gestures, habits, and assumptions people have about race... Passing exploits just how much physical variation there is in any racial or ethnic grouping, thereby destabilizing the very concept of "race" (70). So in order for people to pass successfully, they have to be excellent imitators, lending themselves to being cast as performers. If race can be performed so expertly by the passer, it supports the premise that race and racial categories are not real. But the passer as a performer with behind the scenes access carries the burden of knowing the reality of racism in its most candid and intimate corners. This is indeed a burden because access does not necessarily mean acceptance.

The misreading of "the other" (another strong enabler) of passing is also part of the novel's gothic undertones. The body in the mind of the passer is reshaped which causes misrecognition. For example, even if Jack, Clare's husband, does not know his wife is black, he does seem to have an unconscious feeling that makes him pause, but he continues to purposely misread her body because the idea that he could be married to a black woman is a horror that he cannot face. According to Hershini Bhana Young, "Thus, not being seen as mixed-race, but as only black or white by others and by the state constitutes a psychological form of injury supposedly equal to centuries of material oppression with psychological effects" (289). Because this misrecognition is imbedded in society, it makes the revealing of the truth even more

shocking to those who have been deceived. The mixed-race person by passing or not passing is put into a psychological state that can be mentally as well as physically harmful.

As Jack discusses his reason for nicknaming Clare "Nig", one still wonders what game he is playing. Is he hoping that one of her friends will reveal something? The reader and no doubt Irene cannot help wondering if Clare knows the man that she married when she boldly ask Jack , "What difference would it make if, after all these years, you were to find out that I was one or two percent coloured" (55-56)? However, the discussion concerning skin coloration and Jack's nickname for Clare heightens in intensity when Bellew says, "...You can get as black as you please as far as I'm concerned, since I know you're no nigger. I draw the line at that. No niggers in my family. Never have been and never will be" (55-56). The idea that Clare could wake up and find herself black is presented by Jack as a horror, but one that is basically meaningless to him because he fully believes that she is white with no percentage of black blood. So throughout their marriage Bellew has bought the whole bill of goods concerning Clare's white identity. He takes for granted that no one would want to be black by choice, and, dismisses the possibility of any blacks being in his family.^x

As with all gothic and passing narratives, words and actions have double meanings. One can say that Clare is using this exchange to see if she possibly could tell Jack the truth. Also, there is the irony that threads through Jack's statement that there are no "niggers" in his family, although his wife and biological child are of mixed race. Again, this gothic theme of mixed bloodlines is intertwined here with secrecy. The theme of mixed bloodlines highlights the efforts of white America to favor segregation, hopefully forestalling miscegenation and the tainting of white blood. Unknowingly, Jack has introduced mixed blood into his family.

There are other scholars who believe that this is not a mistake due to Jack's ignorance, but instead that it is possible that the comment reveals his suspicions concerning his wife's racial heritage. In discussing Bellevue's rationale for calling Clare "Nig", literary critic Perry Carter says, "He seems subconsciously aware that his dear 'Nig' is in fact a Nigger. The Nigger hater is sleeping with a Nigger, and has begotten a Nigger child, and has himself been Blackened or Niggerized because he was careless about the spaces he chose to penetrate" (239). In this interpretation Jack represents the white male carelessly penetrating and intruding in the black woman's space but the other interpretive possibility__ that he might subconsciously know that Clare is black__ is even more interesting. At this point, Jack's internal double has taken over. The conscious Jack could not ever perceive that he could even accidentally have married a black woman. The subconscious Jack has an idea that Clare could actually be a black woman and he is waiting for either her or her friends to trip up in their conversations with him. He is not yet able to consciously acknowledge that he has been duped by this black woman into crossing the color line but his nickname for Clare gives the impression that he might be aware of it on a subconscious level.

The conversation between Jack and Clare's friends continue to reveal more clearly Jack's connection of blackness to some sort evil personified. He answers Irene's question as to whether he disliked blacks, "...I don't dislike them, I hate them. And so does Nig, for all she's trying to turn into one. [Blacks] They give me the creeps. The black scrimy devils..... And I read in the papers about them. Always robbing and killing people. And," he added darkly, 'worse' " (57). By firmly believing Clare hates blacks, he is able to dismiss the idea that she could be black. The gothic element here is the association of blackness with filth and fear. The imagery from Bellevue makes the atmosphere seem surreal because he is spewing his strong words of vile

contempt in front of his black wife. His words do beg the question of who is fooling whom. At first, Clare was putting the joke on him by passing as white but at this point in the gathering, one does not know who is pulling the wool over whose eyes.

Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter* discusses the fact that Clare passes with her silence, "It is only on the condition of an association that conditions a naming that her color becomes legible. He cannot 'see' her as black before that association, and he claims to her face with unrestrained racism that he would never associate with blacks. If he associates with her, she cannot be black. But if she associates with blacks, she becomes black, where 'race' itself is figured as a contagion transmissible through proximity" (171). This illustrates that not only is it Clare's race performance that keeps her from being identified as black but also the participation of her intended audience. Jack as her audience does not want to see blackness and combined with his stereotypical views on blacks, Clare is allowed to succeed in her race performance as white.

Parallel to this idea is Jack's own whiteness, according to Judith Butler, "...If he were to associate with blacks, the boundaries of his own whiteness,...would no longer be fixed. Paradoxically, his own racist passion *requires* that association; he cannot be white without blacks and without the constant disavowal of his relation to them. It is only through that disavowal that his whiteness is constituted, and through the institutionalization of that disavowal that his whiteness is perpetually---but anxiously---reconstituted" (171). Bellew can only perform his whiteness if he knows that there is a negative other, blackness. His whiteness gets its power because blackness is seen as dark, evil and grotesque, all three gothic tropes used in Bellew's tirade against blacks.

Language becomes the gothic symbol that Bellevue uses to distinguish between himself as a white man and blacks who are "the other". According to Henry Louis Gates, "...We must also understand how certain forms of difference and the *languages* we employ to define those supposed differences not only reinforce each other but tend to create and maintain each other" (15). This can be employed to see language as a gothic trope used to create the unreal racial differences between groups in order to enforce the hierarchy.

Passing in itself is a duplicitous act. This suggests that there is one who is the joker and the other who receives the joke. The undercover nature of passing, however, lends itself to one joke being played on top of another. According to Sara Ahmed, "The irony in which the reader shares as a knowing witness is precisely that the woman who is its object (the wife of the teller) is 'a Nigger'. That is, the woman, Clare, is a black woman, who is passing as white, partly through assuming the role of wife to a white man. The logic of the joke is then: the black woman who is (mis)read as white (becomes white) may (or may not) become black" (87). First, the joke is twofold because Jack may subconsciously know Clare's true racial identity and is not misreading her but continues to subconsciously let her believe he has been misreading her body as white. An essential element of passing is misreading a person's race based on the body because society is conditioned to believe that race is a visual marker. However, because Clare is secure in her knowledge of the ways and mannerisms of white society, she may be misreading Jack's verbal clues indicating that he may not know the truth.

Another major gothic theme illustrated in most passing texts is the keeping of a secret. Irene is seen as Clare's silent collaborator because she could have revealed Clare's identity but she does not; she keeps her secret. After her meeting with Clare, Irene chastises herself for keeping Clare's secret and allowing Jack to degrade black people and she wonders to herself

how Clare could have lived with the situation for as long as she has. This says a lot about not only Irene's confusing relationship with Clare but also about her conflicted feelings toward the black community. She has a divided relationship with Clare; on the one hand, she understands Clare's need to pass and wants to protect her, but she is also upset with herself for defending someone who has abandoned her race. Race binds her to Clare's secret even as she is appalled that Clare would go this far to achieve another identity.

Irene's reaction to Clare's repudiation of her race reflects her own internal racial division and hypocrisy. Irene, as Clare's double, is keeping her own secrets. Her situational passing is something that her husband, Brian, does not know about. This behavior of Irene conflicts with her supposed dedication to the race and her position as a role model of racial uplift politics of the Harlem Renaissance. Her negative reaction to Clare's relationship with her race reflects Irene's desire to be able to throw all of it overboard as well and delve into another identity. The burden of racial identity and lifting up the race falls primarily on black women and Irene cannot admit it to herself but in Clare she envies someone who has escaped that obligation. Since Clare was poor and never had money of her own and Irene is part of the black elite, their backgrounds are not exactly identical. Clare never would have been put in the position to be the symbol of racial uplift.

In writing *Passing*, Larsen was giving voice to characters who are very divided on where they stand concerning issues of race and race loyalty, "It was, she cried silently, enough to suffer as a woman, an individual, on one's own account, without having to suffer for the race as well. It was a brutality, and undeserved. Surely, no other people so cursed as Ham's dark children. (152-153). Irene feels trapped in her life and bound to her race. She does not see the black

community as nourishing her soul but instead as slowly killing her. Irene is feeling the same desperation that Clare voiced in their discussion.

When Clare and Irene meet for the first time after the scene with Jack at the hotel, they have a revealing conversation which illustrates their connection. Discussing the constant and innate risks involved in passing, Irene, unable to reconcile Clare's lack of trepidation concerning her daily risk taking as a passer, attempts to caution her about her perilous undertaking to re-enter the black community but Irene still envies Clare's risk-taking. This conversation illustrates that the obsession each has with the other is less a sexual one but more a desire to have the life that the other inhabits. As I develop further, each is the other's double; each sees a reflection of herself in the other. Irene considers safety to be essential so she settles for a proper life as a black wife of a doctor, but she is unable to resist the lure of the white world so she surrenders to the urge by passing occasionally. Irene's risk-taking is moderate but still gives her flight and a sense of danger which she experienced in the beginning of the narrative when she thought Clare was a white woman who detected that she was black.

Clare is the exact opposite of Irene in that she does not need to be safe. She wants to connect to her people again and she feels she can do this through restarting her relationship with Irene. The interesting thing about Clare is that she never really was a part of the black elite community when she was growing up. Clare is the ultimate gothic outsider, the woman without a community, without a definite race. However, she is determined to find a place where she can at least be recognized for her true self and not have to pretend to be the self she has created as Mrs. Bellew.

Clare's need to be around her black community leads her selfishly to think only about fulfilling her desire and to jeopardize her assumed white identity and the people involved, Jack

and Margery. It is even possible that her actions might be a deliberate rebellion against Jack whom she considers more like a keeper of a cage instead of as a marriage partner. She has passed in order to achieve a life of stability and material prosperity, but she finds herself trapped in a cage that isolates her from her natural being, even more than when she was a biracial girl in Chicago. She longs for a life in which she and everyone else knows who she is. Irene and Clare's conversation reveals Clare's torment, "She {Clare} said vehemently, violently almost: "Damn Jack! He keeps me out of everything. Everything I want. I could kill him! I expect I shall, someday" (107). Clare's language, very gothic and melodramatic, strongly conveys that she no longer sees Jack as a means of respectability and financial security; instead, she sees him as someone from whom she must escape. Her vehement declaration that she expects to kill Jack in order to obtain her goals seems more than an idle threat to Irene----or to the reader. Also, her desire to kill Jack could also be a metaphorical need to kill whiteness because it has entrapped her through the persona of Jack.

Just as Larsen skillfully employs gothic language to articulate Clare's intense hatred of Jack, She also employs the use of gothic symbolism to show the complexity and psychology of the passer. The complexity is due to the fact that she is outside of both races and can comment critically on race as it is constructed by both the black and white communities. Larsen's characterization of Clare's complexity is shown in Clare's conversations with Irene about her life. The sense of safety and freedom that she sought from passing was fleeting. Instead, those feelings were gradually overcome by the ever increasing thoughts of isolation and captivity, motivating Clare to reach back and reconnect with the black community.

Irene reminds Clare of the bargain she has made in exchange for the life she wanted. In many ways the passer makes a Faustian deal with the devil: she forsakes her black identity for a

life of material prosperity and social equality. Clare eventually realizes that the deal is not what she really wants but, as with most Faustian agreements, it is not so easy to break. Irene reminds Clare that "everything must be paid for", thus harkening the credo of the Faustian deal.

To understand the gothic impulse at the heart of *Passing*, one must ask why Clare flirts with risk. Putting her own desires before the concern of others, Clare runs the risk of endangering her life and others. To some degree it is masochistic to consciously gamble with the security of life in favor of a possible chance of reconnection to the black community. She knows the bargain she has made. Why is she unable to accept her assumed identity and just live out her life as a wealthy white woman? The complex issues involved in Clare's risk taking are discussed by Lori Harrison-Kahn. Kahn's discussion of excessive femininity and race connects the work clearly to Gothicism because excess is seen as a gothic trait because it depicts the character as not of the mainstream, but one who is of aberrant actions. Clare performs race in an excessive way that puts her in danger, clearly proclaiming that she adheres to no boundaries in performing race to obtain her goals. Clare has been subsumed by her role to the extent that she has no exit because at this point in Clare's life there is no other role. So if she cannot inhabit this role as a living persona, she dies in the persona. (127)

Clare's penchant for melodrama is illustrated in her conversations and letters to Irene and is her way of giving life to the tragic mulatta role. She is performing blackness and whiteness to an extreme degree. In her emotional plea to return to the black community she, of course, is not thinking about the isolation she suffered as a child when she was considered as black. If so, she might remember that she felt alienated as a child, similarly as she does now as an adult. Is this return to blackness a fantasy for Clare? The danger that emanates from passing is due to the fact that the passer can shape his/her own identity at the expense of others. The danger exists in the

threat of being discovered as black. For a white man to find out that he has been played by a black or biracial woman would attack not only his sense of ego but it would also destroy the supposed demarcation between what is black and white and reveal that these markers can be seen visually. When this idea is challenged, the response can be violent. Ultimately Clare, no longer has a "real" subject position because her visibility now is based on her feelings of invisibility that led her to create her new identity.

The gothic themes of invisible blackness and race detections are evident when Irene is talking to Hugh Wentworth. Irene and Hugh Wentworth, begin an interesting discussion concerning passing. Hugh notices Clare and cannot quite decide what race she is when Irene hints that she is black, Hugh cannot believe that he could not tell:

(Wentworth) "Damned if I know! I'll be as sure as anything that I've learned the trick. And then in the next minute I'll find I couldn't pick some of 'em if my life depended on it".

"Well, don't let that worry you. Nobody can. Not by looking".

"Not by looking, eh? Meaning"?

"I'm afraid I can't explain. Not clearly. There are ways. But they're not definite or tangible....." (118-119).

Here again the gothic symbol of invisibility is floating throughout all the discussions of passing. Wentworth is a white man who is intimately involved with the black elite of Chicago and feels very sure that unlike most whites, he could tell if someone is passing. Even though the passer may be invisible to most, Wentworth feels that there are some markers that make the invisible visible to him. After Irene lets him know that he did not mark Clare correctly, he talks about how unknowable the passer can be even to him.

Wentworth also talks about how he thought he knew the trick. This description underscores the fact that passing is a joke which is being played on someone else who is ignorant

of the true situation. For all of Wentworth's supposed racial sophistication, he is still trying to decode race by the visual and Irene lets him know that his eyes will fail him almost every time.

The joke is a gothic trope because it relates to the idea of deception. Someone is deceiving someone else for their own gain or in the case of the passer maybe even deceiving themselves as well. Who receives the joke is questionable because the passer thinks he/she is in control but in actuality the passer could be the joke's cruelest victim. The joke helps to create the optical illusion of what is real or not. Wentworth illustrates the fact that he was taken in by the optical illusion. When Wentworth discovers that even with his close ties to the African American community, he can also be deceived, he is placed in a position of wondering what is the real versus the illusive in his world. The idea of reality vs. non-reality is the major concept of the gothic.

As the story evolves, Irene's growing jealousy of Clare intrudes into her life. She is jealous of Wentworth's preoccupation with Clare, thinks her husband Brian is having an affair with her and she sees Clare as taking everything from her life. Irene is beginning to let her jealousy of Clare get out of control because even if she does feel trapped in her life, she still desperately wants to hold on to everything, "She was caught between two allegiances, different, yet the same. Herself. Her race. Race! The thing that bound and suffocated her. Whatever steps she took, or if she took none at all, something would be crushed. A person or the race. Clare, herself, or the race. Or, it might be, all three. Nothing, she imagined, was ever more completely sardonic" (152-153). As two sides of the same coin, both Clare and Irene feel the same need to leave their so-called perfect lives. The meeting of these two women has ignited a fire in them which cannot be contained and is destroying them from the inside out.

Blackness is, of course, one of the main gothic symbols within passing texts because of white society's innate fear of darkness. Society is fearful because it has constituted blackness as threatening and dangerous. The passer is threatened by blackness because his/her reveal of blackness could bring down his/her carefully constructed white life. Also, blackness for the black non-passing person can be seen as restraining because it can often deny him/her access to the doorway to success. Irene and Clare both see blackness in one of these threatening ways. Clare now wants to go towards blackness because she feels she is being trapped by her life as a white woman. Irene wants to abandon blackness because she feels burdened by always having to be the example and having everything in her life measured by race.

The fact that Irene and Clare have been established as each other's double is an important gothic element because it relates to the concept of twinning. Her irrational thoughts about Clare lead her to think about Clare's possible death because then she believes that she would be rid of Clare, the evil appendage to her life. Of course, if Clare dies, Irene's life is not changed in any significant way because she has irrationally blamed Clare for all her problems, forgetting that her life was seriously problematic before Clare. Since Clare and Irene are to a large extent mirror images of each other, Irene will lose part of herself through Clare's death and will continue to be even more trapped in her unhappy life.

Irene's irrational fear of Clare climaxes after she sees Jack Bellew on the street. When Jack sees Irene on the street with an obviously black friend, Felise Freeland, he clearly makes the connection that Irene is not white. Irene believes now that Jack could be onto Clare which divides her sense of self as well. In one sense, she believes in race loyalty and feels that she should warn Clare. In another sense, she feels that if Jack confronts Clare, their marriage could be over and Clare would be free to take her husband and family away from her. In her mind

Irene just wanted Clare to disappear, "Then came a thought which she tried to drive away. If Clare should die! Then----Oh, it was vile! To think, yes, to wish that! She felt faint and sick. But the thought stayed with her. She could not get rid of it" (158). These passages indicate that Irene is on the verge of losing her grip on reality and her sanity. She now knows that Clare's whole constructed reality could be falling apart.

But now that Clare could be free from her ties to at least Jack Bellew, if not also from her daughter, these feelings take a backseat to Irene's feelings of fear, jealousy, and resentment. To Irene, Clare's reflection in the mirror is monstrous and grotesque. Larsen constructs the passer into a monster to show the increasingly irrational way that Irene sees Clare. Step by step, Irene's mental anguish mounts as the prospect of Clare's death continually invades her thoughts. These thoughts permeate Irene's mind unceasingly because she has made Clare the problem and the only way Clare will go away, especially if her marriage is over, is through death.

Irene's divisions within herself end up putting her in the same position as Clare. First, when she was walking with Felise and saw Jack Bellew on the street, she could have tried to invent an excuse to explain why they were together. Instead, she simply gives him non-verbal confirmation that his thoughts are accurate. Fearful that Bellew will now realize that Clare is really black, Irene experiences a radical mood shift as she worries that Clare could now be free to take her husband. Throughout the novel there has never been any indication that there is a real, true love between Brian and Irene. Basically, the marriage seems to be one of convenience and functionality. The reader might note that again Irene and Clare double each other in their marriages. Irene sought financial security and chose Brian in order to maintain and improve her financial status, her social standing within the black community and increase her material comfort.

Also, Clare married Bellew for financial security. However, Clare is willing to abandon her marriage in order to return to her black identity. But Irene is most concerned with maintaining her financial and elite status. Irene, never before allowing love to be the dominating factor in her life choices, rationalizes that she is open to anything rather than losing Brian and the status quo of her life, "Nevertheless, she meant to keep him... True, she had left off trying to believe that he and Clare loved and yet did not love, but she still intended to hold fast to the outer shell of her marriage, to keep her life fixed, certain" (170). Irene sees Brian as her possession and she will not lose him to Clare. Her connection to her middle class lifestyle and to a superficial claim to an elite status is through her marriage to Brian. Irene chooses to not tell Brian about the encounter for fear that he will think he now has a chance with Clare.

The exposure of the racial truth in *Passing* leaves readers with the same ambivalence and ambiguity depicted throughout the novel. The only clear thing that emerges from the ending is that Jack Bellew is now fully aware that his wife is passing. When the passer is revealed, he/she is usually transformed into a horrific monster, especially in the eyes of the white person he/she has tricked. In this disclosure that idea continues as Jack storms Irene's party to confront Clare:

...But Bellew didn't heed him. He pushed past them all into the room and strode towards Clare. They all looked at her as she got up from her chair, backing a little from his approach.

'So you're a nigger, a damned dirty nigger!' His voice was a snarl and a moan, an expression of rage and of pain....

Clare stood at the window, as composed as if everyone were not staring at her in curiosity and wonder, as if the whole structure of her life were not lying in fragments before her. She seemed unaware of any danger or uncaring. There was even a faint smile on her full, red lips, and in her shining eyes.

It was that smile that maddened Irene. She ran across the room, her terror tinged with ferocity, and laid a hand on Clare's bare arm. One thought possessed her. She couldn't have Clare Kendry cast aside by Bellew. She

couldn't have her free.

What happened next, Irene Redfield never afterwards allowed herself to remember. Never clearly.

One moment Clare had been there, a vital glowing thing, like a flame of red and gold. The next she was gone.

There was a gasp of horror, and above it a sound not quite human, like a beast in agony. 'Nig! My God! Nig! (176).

All reveal scenes have an element of gothic horror as the mask is lifted and the white person sees the passer's true self for the first time. But this one has immediate nightmarish consequences for the participants. Jack's vicious turn on Clare represents the white person's anger at being deceived. Clare has now turned into the black monster in his eyes and he no longer sees his wife but instead a black person who has played him for a fool. However, it is Clare's calm, placid, obvious relief that her secret is out that precipitates the tragic outcome of this revelation. This unperturbed reaction from Clare incites Irene who knows that Clare has been looking for some way to dissolve her marriage. At this point, Irene also sees Clare as a monstrous person who is determined to take over her life in any way possible. Irene acts decisively and Clare falls quickly and tragically. It is as if Clare was a candle that just blew out. Jack's cry for Clare, even though he uses a racial epitaph, is surprisingly heartfelt which contrasts with his earlier hateful words.

Irene's thoughts towards Clare's death do point to her possible involvement or at least to the fact that she is glad that Clare is dead. Larsen does not actually say exactly how Clare dies: does she accidentally fall, fall on purpose, does Irene lightly push her out the window? The ambiguity of the incident is maintained but Irene's words are interesting to ponder, "What would the others think? That Clare had fallen? That she had deliberately leaned backward? Certainly one or the other. Not-----." (177). Irene's musings concerning Clare's death could be indicative of the fact that she killed Clare. Although Larsen never truly lets the reader know, she does give

strong hints that Irene could have killed Clare or at the very least she is not unhappy with the end result. Yet Irene will not find freedom through Clare's death because even afterwards, Irene's mind is still obsessing on Clare. Clare, as Irene's double, will continually haunt Irene by the ghostly possession of her mind.

In the characterization of Irene, Larsen illustrates that the arms of the black community can at times be strangling. Larsen herself was a part of the black elite in the Harlem Renaissance and reveled in being part of this community as a married woman. However, conformity to certain ideals was needed in order to truly belong. Conforming to these strict behavior codes and rules could also conflict with individual freedom and autonomy, especially that of the black woman. Specifically, in *Passing* Larsen critiques the Harlem Renaissance community by illustrating how Irene is trapped in her role as a black elite wife. Despite Irene's strong espousal of middle class life, she often felt it was a double edged sword of comfort and burden.

Both Clare and Irene are doubles of Nella Larsen. The characters represent Larsen's double agenda of critiquing white society and the black community. Through Gothic tropes such as the monstrous character, the double effect, invisibility, ambiguity, outsiderhood and obsession, Larsen shows that the passer and mixed raced person are often outsiders to whatever life they are born in or try to create. Ultimately, Larsen depicts the passer as a creation and, to some extent, a victim of both the black and white communities that are often guilty of contributing to the horror of racial stigmatization.

Danzy Senna's *Symptomatic*

Danzy Senna's novel *Symptomatic* was published in 2004. It deliberately incorporates elements of Nella Larsen's *Passing* but at a much more heightened gothic level. Senna does not just replicate the novel. She is consciously trying to create an updated version of the narrative which is aided by a span of about seventy years and subsequently, a whole different racial landscape. Therefore, Senna enhances and deepens the literary scope of the passing figure because she travels to places that were restricted by time and circumstances to Nella Larsen and, therefore, unimaginable as a context for telling the story of the modern day passer, particularly the female passer. The changes have been significant; however, the racial terrain remains jagged and bumpy. Hence, Senna and Larsen ultimately deal with some of the same issues, albeit differently.

Symptomatic is about an unnamed biracial young woman who can pass for white who moves to New York. She has identity and racial issues concerning how she views herself and how society sees her. She eventually connects with another woman who also can pass for white and a friendship develops. The friendship leads to a more dangerous obsession that could possibly be fatal for the narrator.

Senna's novel formulates a gothic story of two women who share an identity and deal with the disappearance of the self. Senna uses some of the same tropes as Larsen does, such as forging a human double, sharing an envy of the other and being confused by and disconnected from society. All four characters share invisibility within their society; however, one of the main differences between the two novels is that Greta and the narrator are not passing in the same

sense as Irene and Clare. Even though both Greta and the narrator are of mixed race, they both look as if they are white but instead of actively passing, they allow other people to make decisions about their race and act or not act accordingly. Being judged only by their outward appearance contributes to their feelings of invisibility.

As the two women form a bond based on these shared experiences, Greta loses herself in the identity of the narrator. Senna's extreme characterization of Greta complicates the issues of identity and passing. Both novels describe a dangerous friendship due to obsession but Senna is much less ambivalent than Larsen in her discussion of racial identity and passing. Senna clearly depicts the two characters as outsiders in mainstream society which no doubt contributes to them becoming dependent on each other.

I contend that Senna uses gothic symbols and tropes to challenge racial stereotypes by (1) showing how the mulatta is used and isolated by the black and white communities, (2) illuminating how strict racial categories have damaged the mulatta and (3) critiquing the problems of the mixed raced movement. The gothic tropes and symbols I will be analyzing are alienation, isolation, blood, monstrosity, obsession, doubling and mental instability

Both of these characters exhibit a passive performance of race which complicates the resistant theory of black performance. According to sociologist E. Patrick Johnson, "Black performance as a mode of resistance functions to suture the gap between the oppressor and the oppressed, the vocal and voiceless, the dominator and the dominated-----indeed, to make the "bottom rail become the top riser" (Madison and Hamera 457). In this particular text the women again perform race through silence and it protects them while at the same time inflicting emotional pain upon them. The protection that passing provides is an example of the resistance to the dominate culture but it also backfires on the passer.

Danzy Senna and Nella Larsen are dealing with very similar issues in the two texts. Senna did use *Passing* as a jumping off point for her novel so the similarities are in many ways very deliberate. Even though they have similar agendas, there are clear and significant differences. Senna and Larsen want the black community as well as the white community to understand the betwixt and between position of the passer, a position that often means that he/she is an outcast in both communities. They both want to deal with the psychological damage that can be inflicted when one does not have a distinct identity or when that visual identity contradicts with the way society or his/her community views the person. Simultaneously, there are some major differences such as their interpretations and messages, depiction of the black and white communities, the overt or subdued usage of gothic symbols in the construction of the passing character, and the development of self.

Senna is writing in a "post-racial" era, which means that the country has supposedly moved beyond race, purportedly making it a non-issue in the U.S. In many ways the "mulatto" is considered symbolic of racial changes that have occurred since the civil rights movement. The mixed race movement has been trying to gain momentum to change racial categories so that they better reflect those who want to claim their entire racial heritage.^{xi} Writing at a time in which the "mulatto/a" is the symbol of racial harmony and togetherness rather than a tragic figure, Senna discusses in her essay "The Mulatto Millennium" about the mulatto as an accessory, "Strange to wake up and realize you're in style. It was the first day of the new millennium and I woke up to find that mulattoes had taken over...According to the racial zodiac, 2000 is the official year of the mulatto. Pure breeds (at least the black ones) are out and hybridity is in. America loves us in all of our half-caste glory" (Utne.com).

Senna is confronting the idea that the "mulatto" is the new trend because he/she represents the coming together of the races. According to Senna, for most of America's history the "mulatto" has been denied, but now he/she has become a welcome accessory for America. The attention given to the "mulatto" in this era is due to society's continued annoyance with the talk of racism, reparations and civil rights. In the post-civil rights era there is a need to say that racism is a thing of the past and that the broad acceptance of the "mulatto" has come to fruition. But in America's supposed acceptance of racial hybridity, there is still no firm analysis of what it means to American society and the future of race relations.

The "mulatto" is between two different agendas: the first agenda is that the mixed race movement wants to use the civil rights gains in order to convince America to understand that people can fit into more than one racial category. The other agenda is, of course, directed to that segment of American society that wants to put the blighted past of slavery, Jim Crow and racial strife behind. Literary critic Hershini Young discusses the issues connected with the mixed-raced movement, "The destabilization of blackness as a category, despite a long history of enforced hypodescent, helped put black social justice claims on tenuous ground, thereby assisting conservatives who wished to end programs of what they termed 'reverse discrimination' against whites" (Young 289). The mixed race movement can unwittingly give credence to the notion that race is not a barrier to advancement. Yet, this was not their goal. Their goal was to validate the right of biracial people to claim both of their cultures, but in a world that wanted to get rid of any thoughts about race, their message was co-opted. In the early nineties, at the same time that the movement was discussing how they represented the future of America, the conservative agenda was taking over the country, putting minority groups in a lesser position in society. So if society believes that there was significant proof that mixing with

all different races is occurring at a high rate, then clearly there is no need to continue fighting for civil rights. The battle is over.

Also, in all of the media discussions there is no real analysis of race in American culture. The color-blind era which came after the civil rights period allows society to believe that racial issues are simply a matter of personal likes and dislikes instead of them being embedded into American institutions, determining the course of lives. What is obvious is that the mixed race movement tells American culture that there are no stable racial identities or if there are, they can be contested if one wants to embrace all of his/her racial heritage. Since very few people in America are racially "pure", then that automatically results in more and more people who are not relegated to one racial category.

Senna realizes that mixed raced individuals are trapped between two communities, forced to resort to unique and innovative means of survival. She is much more outspoken than Larsen on the entrapments, limitations and restrictions of the passer in both white and black communities. Even though Larsen very much used her personal experiences concerning race in her construction of Clare and Irene, she still was not a person who could pass. Because Senna can pass, she has a clear, birds-eye view of the problems and frustrations that confront mixed raced persons attempting to establish a stable identity. In her essay "The Mulatto Millennium" Senna states:

I think black people themselves bear some of the brunt of responsibility for these defectors from the race----our inability at times to accept our own diversity. ...But ultimately I'm not so fixated on what I or anybody else calls themselves. I think that identity politics (and all questions of racial pride) can be a form of narcissism, and at their worst are a distraction from real questions of power. ...I used to go out of my way to tell people I was black. Around black people I didn't know, I craved acceptance. Around white people, I didn't know, I wanted to avoid having to hear them make racist comments. I can now see that I was taking on the burden of other people's racial baggage. I was working hard to make other people comfortable. (3)

Senna here describes the problem that the mixed person faces being trapped between two worlds. Her comment concerning the lack of diversity among the black community is crucial in understanding the identity problem among those of mixed race. For many in the black community you are either black or a traitor to your race if you consider yourself multiracial. This, of course, leads some mixed race people to feel isolated from a community that should embrace all its different elements.

According to Senna, desiring to please both black and white people can cause the biracial person to work overtime attempting to please and acquiesce to both groups. Senna also discusses how the mulatto is trapped between these two identities and that she/he should not have to claim one side because society says so but if she/he does claim their hybridity, it does not make them any more special than those who cannot claim that hybridity. She indicts both black and white communities for not allowing the "mulatta" to find her own identity instead of having to fit in the black and white binary.

Writers such as Lisa Jones and Trey Ellis who are biracial have written that they have chosen to identify as black. Even within their scholarship they claim a black identity while still having an undercurrent in their work that is hostile to mixed race people who want to claim their entire heritage. Often times such ideas contribute significantly to the feelings of isolation suffered by biracial people and ultimately might motivate them to look for their own advocates.

Actress Jennifer Beals, who has an African-American father and a white mother, has been cast in several roles as white because of her light skin. In an interview she talked about growing up in a predominantly black neighborhood and being tauntingly called "whitey". She states, "As I got older and was more aware of television and magazines...I searched for images of girls who looked like me...As a biracial girl growing up in Chicago, there wasn't a lot there,

positive or otherwise. I mean I had Spock. And that was kind of it. And I think my theme song was Cher's 'Half Breed'" (realitytvworld.com). Jennifer Beals more recently was cast in the Lesbian Showtime show "The L Word" which at times compared the act of racial passing to gays passing as straight.^{xii}

More and more people are currently choosing to pick "other" as a racial category or choose more than one box. This new identity upends the notion that one drop of blood makes someone black. Senna discusses the invalidity of the one drop rule as racial categories are no longer defined by its rigid boundaries. According to sociologist Kerry Ann Rockquemore, "Racial identity is something far more fluid than it used to be. But there is still a social reality for race that we have yet to come to grips with. If you have a racial identity that does not neatly fit into this reality, how do you experience the world? How do others see you? How do you see yourself? 'What are you'" (Saulny, New York Times online)?

Reflective of this myriad of racial issues are Senna's constructed characters who have taken on all the racial baggage of different communities and responded in different ways as it takes a toll on their psychological state. Her use of gothic symbolism such as alienation illustrates the "mulatta/o's" need to forge his/her own identity in a world that wants to dictate his/her life. She is talking to two different worlds. The visible mulatto helps society justify the idea of racism being a thing of the past; whereas, the invisible one still represents an invisible predator because it is not possible to tell when he/she is present.

In the beginning of *Symptomatic*, Senna's narrator is living with her white boyfriend who is unaware of his girlfriend's racial heritage. Senna does not give her narrator an identity, a name or even a concrete description. This lack of a description and name prohibits the reader from formulating an image of the narrator, contributing to the fluidity of the biracial/multi-racial

person. Also, the lack of racial identity, namelessness, and invisibility all contribute to the crisis identity of the narrator. For example, at the beginning of the novel, when Andrew, the narrator's boyfriend, and the narrator are in bed, Andrew tells her, "I keep thinking you're going to disappear," ... "Maybe I was dreaming when I met you and just haven't woken up. Because it doesn't seem real sometimes. You know? That you're here, living with me" (2). The protagonist is not only invisible to the people in her life but to a large extent even to herself. Having no distinct identity and without a core sense of self, the narrator is like a sponge indiscriminately absorbing anything around her. She is a ghost wandering around through the pages of the narrative and people's lives.

The narrator has not made a conscious choice to pass as white and not tell her boyfriend; instead, she lets him assume his visual perceptions are correct. She does make a conscious choice, however, to not correct his assumption, which leads to one of the many conflicts that she has with Andrew. The choice to not tell him that she is biracial puts her in the prickly position of being exposed to people degrading her black self. When comparing her choice to Clare's, the difference is that Clare deliberately passed. At first, she passed because her aunts forbade her to tell anyone of her black ancestry. Later, Clare chose to continue passing when she married a white man without informing him that she was partly black. Against both her parents' wishes, the narrator has moved to New York City to be a journalist. Her parents feel as if her career choice is helping to sustain a false view of the world and assisting those in power. However, the narrator discusses why she feels that journalism fits her, "I tried to explain to her [her mother] what I loved about my work: The sense I got of disappearing into somebody else's story. Of watching and not being seen. Then and only then do the secrets reveal themselves to you" (6).

Interestingly, her mother does not believe in either non-fiction or objective journalism. She describes nonfiction as having an agenda because the writer cannot escape from his/her bias. Journalism supplies the masses with the worldview of the people in power which is a false version of reality. Magazines, media and newspapers can infiltrate a person's mind without his or her knowledge. Through this insidious invasion the media can mold people to think and believe what those in charge want them to believe instead of questioning what is going on around them. An example of this media manipulation can be seen in the way that President Barack Obama is constructed as the first black president when in reality he is biracial. Accordingly, the public falls in step and basically ignores his biracial and, possibly, multi-racial ethnicities. The media decided for a country that is known for the enslavement of African Americans presenting President Obama as black sells better.

The unnamed narrator's reason for choosing journalism again invokes the gothic trope of invisibility. Because her own identity is in flux, vacillating between black and white, the unnamed narrator prefers to immerse herself in the lives of others, living vicariously through them. This is also a foreshadowing of her relationship with her soon to be friend Greta who will take the idea of living through someone else to psychotic levels. The narrator wants to be unidentifiable because she is confused as to who she is and uncertain of the group with whom she should align herself. She does not seem to be able to assert herself and puts herself within situations (such as being around Andrew and his friends) in which she will be invisible because no one knows of her blackness. She sees herself as a ghost, as someone who is there, but not recognized by society. For her, this makes her investigative and reporting skills all the better: she can gain access to people's secrets because they do not recognize her as someone for whom

they must don their masks. The narrator does not realize that the invisibility could inflict mental harm to her as well.^{xiii}

Illustrative of the above is the relationship between the narrator and her boyfriend Andrew. Andrew does not know that the narrator is part black because he uses misleading visual clues to decide who she is racially. But also the narrator has chosen not to enlighten him about her race and has seemingly by choice put herself in the position of being in an intimate relationship with someone who does not really know her. This is the betwixt and between situation of the passer. The unnamed narrator is very similar to Clare. But in *Passing* we do not, as the reader, get to enter the mind of Clare Kendry as we do in *Symptomatic*. In a scene reminiscent of one in *Passing*, the narrator describes a scene in which Andrew's friends talk derisively of an African American couple on the Newlywed game in a way similar to Clare's husband, "...[Bob Eubanks asked]'Where's the craziest place you and your husband have ever made whoopee?'

Sophie [Andrew's friend] began to titter. 'Oh my God. Whoopee.'

'So all the other women go down the line blushing, giggling, saying things like 'the kitchen table,' 'his office,' 'the gym. 'You know, typical places. Then he gets to the big black lady. And she thinks for a moment real hard-----then says 'Uh, I'ze gon' hafta say in da butt.'(14-15)

This image is constructed around the mammy stereotype because the mammy is considered to be an asexual woman as opposed to the Sapphire or Jezebel black female stereotype which is more of an overtly sexual black woman. The overweight black woman represents this image of negative and comical sexuality. So any discussion of her and sex clearly is ridiculous and used for comic relief. This distasteful joke contributes to the narrator's feelings of invisibility because her blackness is undetected by the white people so they have no qualms about telling these racist

jokes in her presence. They do not think that even if she is white, these jokes might be offensive to her in general because her whiteness marks her as having the same assumptions about blacks as they have. Their discussion even turns into a charade as Sophie imitates the woman who cleans their dorm rooms, "How many times I gotta tell you?" she drawled. Sheeyit. Don't be leavin' them tampons soakin' in the toilet for my ass to clean up. I ain't yo' mama. And another thing. Yo skinny ass be leavin' paypah towels all over the fuckin' sink and you think I got time to clean up that shit" (12-13).

As this analysis purports, the narrator is like an island separated from any other community. She cannot truly feel a part of the white community because of the racism that exists. She cannot feel part of the black community because of its lack of acceptance and she does not want to become a black stereotype. According to Hershini Bhana Young, "This country's history of white exploitation of black labor, suggested metonymically by Retha, [the maid] is deliberately obscured via the caricature of a fat black woman who scratches her bottom, sings spirituals and mumbles about how much she hates the students she cleans up after." (293-294)

The invisibility of black people in the world of Andrew and his friends is heightened by the reader's knowledge of the fact that Andrew's girlfriend, the narrator, is black. Therefore she is invisible as well as culpable because she continues to allow them to speak and act negatively toward blacks. Even if she does not want to tell people she is black, she still goes along by not saying that their banter is wrong which hurts her emotionally. Young states that, "...Being on the inside, while it confirms the problem of racist privilege, results in a wounding so profound that the protagonist appears unable to do anything, let alone name and fix the problem"(294). The unnamed narrator's silence and consistent placement of herself in situations where she may hear

people talk negatively about blacks make her seem very masochistic. To some degree you could say that passers are constantly dealing with self-inflicted emotional pain because there is the constant dread of being outed as black.

This scene helps to illuminate more fully than her earlier comments precisely why the narrator wanted to be a journalist__to fulfill her desire to watch and not be seen. It also collaborates Danzy Senna's belief that the passer or mulatto is invisible in American society. Senna herself is very much connected to the character and many of those same experiences she herself has felt. This, of course, leads to the isolation which passers feel because they do not have a community. Senna explains the fluidity of mixed-race identity in her interview:

...I have also acted as a spy in my life. I am usually seen as 'white', Italian, Greek, Jewish and because of this optical illusion, so to speak I have been witness to what white people say and do when they think they're alone. As a child, I heard especially blatant expressions of racism in Boston. I was struck even at a very young age by the two faces I saw white people wear; the face they wore in mixed company, and the face they wore when they thought they were alone...I don't see my spy status as a blessing...When I remain in the position of spy, remain silent in those circumstances, I only feel pain. The hearing is not thrilling or enlightening for me----nor is it a novelty. (450)

Here Senna provides an in-depth look at the biracial person who is assumed to be white. Because there are elements of the gothic that are misleading and illusionary, the connection to passers or mulattos is reflected in that the optical illusion gives whites a false sense of security that they know who she is.

This idea of the optical illusion connects as well to the idea of race performance. According to Elizabeth Bell, "The primary apparatus for knowing the world is vision. The importance of sight to the ability to measure, to gauge, and to know the world privileges the viewer" (Bell 22). Bell believes that this is antithetical to performance and that it is an obstacle for performance theory to overcome. But in actuality one could say that the viewer assists in the

performance because he/she assumes the race and what imitative actions one sees will usually support that assumption.

Another aspect of the gothic in Senna's quote correlates to the scene with Andrew and his friends. Passing novels usually focus on the mask worn by the passer; Senna talks about the masks that some white people wear. As someone who can pass, she is privy to conversations in which there is no need to put up the pretense of not being racist. Since Nella Larsen was not light enough to pass, she never would have had the experience that Senna had of gaining access to private conversations of many white Americans. Larsen may not have felt comfortable in depicting these conversations without any idea as to how it would sound realistically. The difference between Senna and her narrator is that Senna does not see being a spy as a blessing but as a burden because she carries the knowledge of real feelings some whites bear towards blacks in the U.S.

Senna, unlike Larsen, is not only biracial but also knows the conflicted feelings of the passer living in a world so divided by race. Living in a color-blind society has not helped in dealing with the biracial person, according to literary critic H. Ibrahim, "...With the myth of the mulatta still in some ways intact, discourses on contemporary race can retain something of the magical, a smokescreen that obscures the shadows of racial history and racism's relation to concrete conditions" (170). In the text Senna illustrates that society has not dealt with the true meaning of the "mulatto" but has kept stereotypes alive that keep society from moving forward in thinking about race.

Furthermore, Senna mentioned that when some people find out that she is part black, they turn on her as if she betrayed them. The consensus is if you are different from what I can visually see, then it is up to you to announce that upon your arrival so I do not betray my racism

to you. In other words, so that I know what sort of mask that I am supposed to inhabit, you need to clearly demarcate your race. So for the "mulatto" who looks white, this moment of revelation can come even if he/she is not passing because, whether it is to the white or black community, one has to prove his/her blackness because it is the invisible part of the self. In many ways mixed race people who look white are expected to come out as black just as many gays have to come out as gay because people only interpret the visual clues.

In her relationship with Andrew, which is headed towards an end there is a revealing moment which speaks to her invisibility. Andrew himself has issues with his core identity. He reveals to the narrator that he once tried to kill himself because his girlfriend broke up with him. He carved her name into his wrist with a jackknife and now takes medication to moderate his emotions. This revelation illustrates how the narrator's own lack of a stable sense of self seems to bring her in contact with those who also lack a sense of self. So even in her most intimate relationships, she is still having trouble being seen. As Andrew explains, "When he finally spoke, it was to say, 'You want to hear something weird? Maybe you can help me figure it out. In all the months I've known you, I've never been able to remember what you look like. Isn't that bizarre? I used to think it was a good thing, the suspense I felt going to meet you in public-- -- this completely irrational fear I had that I might not recognize you. But it's something else, isn't it' (34).

Even though they are in a close personal relationship, his girlfriend's face does not make a permanent impression on Andrew's memory. Senna is using Gothicism here to depict the narrator as a ghost, a figment of her boyfriend's imagination or a distant memory. Andrew has emotional problems and clings obsessively to what he believes to be his life, and is unable to handle personal relationships ending. Again this relates to the idea that the narrator attracts

unstable people who feel as if they can become whole by being around her. As will be discussed later in the character of Greta, it is almost as if the unknown narrator attracts those known as "emotional vampires," who seek to address their instability by draining the emotional energy out of others.

Andrew could also be picking up clues that his girlfriend might be partly black and waiting for her to confess. He has probably noticed that she does not join in the racist conversations between him and his friends. He also does realize that she looks ethnic but has ascribed her ethnicity to Spanish or white ethnic. He might be slowly realizing that she could be black. Maybe every time he sees her, subconsciously, he may feel that all of a sudden he will see something in her that will betray her true racial heritage. This is similar to Jack Bellew's possible subconscious knowledge of Clare's blackness, when he calls her "Nig".

Meanwhile her new found friend Greta tells her about an apartment that she can sublet in the city while she is starting her new life. The occupant, Vera, has gone to Hollywood in hopes of making it as a singer and has left her cousin in charge of renting out the apartment. The narrator and Greta immediately strike up a bond even though the narrator does think that Greta tries too hard to fit in. These initial scenes between the two women invoke two striking elements. First, there is an immediate connection she shares with Greta. They both share a feeling of camaraderie. The narrator notices that they have similar features that give off an ambiguity in terms of racial identity. It is as if they are looking in the same mirror and see their reflections in the face of the other.

This, of course, is the beginning of the double symbolism between the two women. Even though this was used in *Passing* with Clare and Irene, the difference with these women is the recognition. They both recognize that there is something in the other that speaks to the self.

This recognition of the double takes the gothic symbolism on a completely different path and it makes the trope of isolation even starker. This starkness comes from the fact that these two women need to find each other to fulfill not only a social need but also an emotional one because of their isolation within the greater society.

Like some other passing novels such as *F. Paul Marchand, Symptomatic* has two sets of doubles as well. The other double is the absent landlord Vera. The narrator is alternately bothered by and obsessed with Vera. The apartment comes with all the items that Vera has left behind. It is as if she has stepped into someone else's life. Even though Vera is not dead, she is absent but her presence fills the place as if her ghost is there. From the moment that she came to investigate the apartment, the narrator goes through Vera's clothes and some of her other items trying to figure out who was the woman who left all of her material belongings. Also, from the time she moves into the apartment, she is constantly harassed by bill collectors and other people who knew the former tenant in a not so friendly way. The constant phone calls of these people wanting to talk to her and refusing to believe that Vera is not there are examples of her identity being subsumed by a ghost. The ghost is usually an image that is used primarily to invoke dead people, not those still alive like Vera. In many ways, however, the character of Vera is non-existent at this point in the narrative but she is still very present in the narrator's life, so much so that she intrudes into her sleep.

Her dream about Vera illustrates the degree to which this woman has invaded the subconsciousness of the narrator. In her dream Vera is white and this is noteworthy because she is one of the doubles for the narrator. When Vera gets beside her in the bed, at first this seems to be a comforting image. Vera seems to be appearing to protect the narrator and possibly start a sexual relationship with her. But in the most intimate part of this scene, it suddenly turns violent

when Vera threatens the narrator with death. The narrator remains passive in response to this possible attack. Senna is doing something very interesting here because the dream is illustrating two things. First, the appeal of the double for the narrator has already been established: the narrator wants to step into other people's lives and hear their stories. Obviously, by doing this she can avoid dealing with the issues that she has in her own life. In this light, it is not surprising that the narrator has already consciously and subconsciously formed a connection with her image of Vera. The narrator feels that they have a bond which shows itself in her dream.

Secondly, it is that connection which begins to assert itself in a deadly and sexual way because Vera becomes representative of the intimate and the threatening. If the absent Vera is in some way a double of the narrator, then it speaks to the narrator's subconscious in some very complicated ways. The sexual contact suggests that the narrator on some level wants a more intimate relationship with the Vera of her mind. But Vera's whispering into the narrator's ear that she is going to kill her makes the narrator feel a sense that this double could be threatening her life even in a dream. Here the double is being portrayed as the evil twin.

Senna uses the gothic symbolism of the double to construct a world of seduction and danger. Both sexuality and danger are associated with the double in Nella Larsen's *Passing*, but it could also be constructed as an obsession with the lifestyles of the other. Senna makes it very clear that the doubles of Vera, and later Greta, are meant to be simultaneously a sexual attraction and a threat to the narrator's sense of physical, emotional and mental health. Greta and Vera are in some way part and parcel of the unnamed narrator so it is not just sexual but it is the act of becoming one.

Masking is one of recurrent gothic themes throughout the text. This theme is continued in a conversation between Greta and the narrator concerning the narrator's ex-boyfriend Andrew.

The narrator felt that she should have been more forthright about herself and not ended their relationship so abruptly. Greta's response to the narrator is, "'Well, it wouldn't have made a difference,' she said. 'He would have just hidden his true colors, played Mr. Sensitive for a while, Mr. Curious, Mr. Enlightened, and then one night, when you were in real deep, he'd let his real self slip out'"(49). This passage illustrates Greta's true feelings about the masking of white Americans: The conversation reinforces the idea that when it comes to issues concerning race, there are masks being worn by everyone. This correlates with Dubois' theory of the veil in *The Souls of Black Folks*. Dubois talks about the fact that African Americans are separated from society by this invisible veil which keeps them in their own world. Conversely, it also gives a unique view into the world at large. This can be connected to the passer or biracial person because he/she is also disconnected from white and black communities because of a veil but that veil also allows them to see more clearly the problems within the black/white binary.

The narrator's interest in Vera morphs into more and more of an obsession which is fueled by the fact that people keep calling the apartment looking for Vera. As she moves into the apartment and interacts with people, the idea of Vera as her double becomes more and more a reality. This suggests there is already a gothic blending of identities; as the overriding identity (Vera) subsumes the less intact identity (the narrator). Since people either talk to her about Vera or think she is Vera, the narrator decides to go ahead and investigate who Vera is by looking at the things she left behind.

In the narrative, Senna illustrates how some white people react when they are influenced by their visual clues and assume the narrator is white but Senna also gives the reader the reaction of a black character. This is important to show that the ambiguity and projection from others do not come just from the white community. In the black community as well she is not seen as a

whole person either and a part of her is still invisible. One of the main things that Senna does not want the reader to ever forget is that everyone plays a part in how blackness is seen, whether it is seen as realistic, imaginary, or evil. Also, everyone plays a part in determining whether blackness is visible or non-visible.

In terms of visibility and blackness, Senna never lets go of the issue of power. White America constructed and enforced the system of racial hierarchy in order to preserve its power but Black America has power under the system even though they are the victims of it. The black community can either accept the diversity of Blacks or continue to strictly impose the rule of visibility by insisting that if you are not seen as black visibly, you are suspect and cannot claim blackness. And if one claims his/her biraciality the black community feels he/she is running away from blackness. So both communities have the power to isolate or embrace the mulatto. When the narrator has dinner with a black reporter, visible blackness comes forth again, "...And you, he said, if you were born black, who knows where you'd be"? I was quiet while he ranted, and stared at my own face in the mirror behind the bar" (83). The mirror image signifies the double, which with the mulatto wages an internal war. The reporter continues his rambling but all the narrator can see is the double in the mirror. She is wondering who she is and who the girl is reflecting back at her. One of the most powerful aspects of the mulatto identity is the double image created from the mirror. It signifies the internal battle between the black and white identities.

Ross, the reporter, already has decided that his lack of promotion in his world is due to his race without giving any reasons or evidence as to why this is the case. He automatically situates himself in the victim status and does not use his elite status to seize opportunities to better situate his career. This scene also exemplifies the continued use of the gothic trope of

invisibility. Ross assumes that the narrator is white and that she has had more advantages than he has because he is black. This again illustrates that blacks also define race based on visual clues and that whether she is in the black or white community, there is a continued feeling of invisible blackness that influences her lack of self.

Invisibility is the most consistent gothic theme throughout the text and is very much the focus of the bond between Greta and the narrator. The narrator is not actually invisible except, in her mind and in the minds of others. Greta and the unnamed narrator come together because they both know what it means to be seen as other than what you are. It is as if the other part of them, the black part, seems non-existent, yet they know it exists, so they are constantly looking for people who understand their plight.

Senna delves deeper into racial confusion than Nella Larsen. She wants the reader to enter the mindset of both of these characters and really see how society's view of race and the character's lack of a core identity can lead to instability and/or emotional distress. To clearly illustrate this, Senna stages a scene in which Greta and the narrator discuss the lyrics of the Rolling Stone's "Wild Horses". Greta feels the song says "raceless lady" when in fact the song says "graceless lady". Greta is obviously more in need of a connection to a similar spirit than the narrator, even though the narrator has some of the same issues and both have deep identity problems. Greta's need for connection is illustrated by the fact that she has imposed her version of the lyrics of the song and refuses to hear what the song actually says. Her connection to the idea of being raceless is again symbolic of the lack of a core identity that Greta has and in this society being raceless is being without a community.

Greta cannot identify with any community because it only includes half of her, not all of her. Surely, in this instance Greta does not want her reality challenged because her constructed world is all she has to hold onto. The narrator in some ways also has a constructed reality and no real connection to anyone but she still retains some objectivity. This conversation illustrates the damage to the mental and emotional state of the mixed-blood person. Judith Berzon discusses how the "mulatto" has been seen throughout society, "Mixed-blood individuals have been both hated and envied by their full-blooded black brothers and sisters. Because of this fact, the mulatto's position in American culture has appeared, to many social scientists and novelists, to be more ambiguous than that of the full-blooded black" (4). This ambiguous and indeterminate place within American culture are the issues Greta and the narrator are dealing with and fighting against. Greta's need to belong is more apparent but both women have this same need. The narrator deals with many of the same issues as Greta and is more and more falling into an emotional abyss, but she does it privately.

The narrator starts to think about her relationship with Greta and wondering how long it will last, "She agreed with everything I said, and we spent many hours comparing our experiences of being 'optical illusions,' as she called us. . . . She played 'Wild Horses' every time. I'd stopped arguing with her about the lyrics. They were whatever she wanted them to be" (84). Again, there is the term optical illusion and both Greta and the narrator are constantly victims of this. What is interesting about the term optical illusion is that people trust what they see above anything else but the eye can be the most untrustworthy of the five senses. Obviously, the other allusion is that race itself is an illusion but people do not plan on letting go of categorizing people by skin color and believing in what they see. The question that comes forth from Greta is

what is real and what is her constructed view of reality. But the larger theme of the novel is also that life to some degree is an optical illusion for everyone. What people think and believe is real.

Misrecognition is an important trope in the novel. When the narrator goes to interview Irwin, the black artist, he tells her out of the blue that she is an octoroon. This brings up again categorization and a need to place mulattos in a particular position. Along with her interaction with Irwin she starts to date a black man named Claude. After a few dates, while they are both in bed, Claude makes a startling admission:

'At the end of the day, I don't feel comforted when I see your face...
'It's like, I know you've got it in you, somewhere, 'cause I've seen your family photo.
And,' Claude said with a chuckle, I've seen this.' He patted my derriere.
'But when I look at your face, I see something else. And it's unsettling. You
know? The
dissonance.'... 'Are you even listening to me?'...

'Yeah, you're leaving me. I've fallen short'. (105-106)

Again, she has been evaluated and the verdict is that she does not fit. In her intimate relationships the narrator does not have the luxury of being able to feel comfortable in her own skin because it is not enough for her partner, boyfriend or either racial community. Claude is saying that he does not feel at home with her when he looks at her face. He needs to be reassured of her blackness by his eye and just knowing that the blackness is a part of her is not enough for him. He needs to be comforted by seeing it and the other implication here is that he wants society to know that he is dating someone who is black and not an 'other'. Because he does not see this visual blackness, it is not just uncomfortable but in some way possibly threatening.

Again, there is the gothic symbolism of the mulatto representing a threatening force that needs to be contained. The absence of visual blackness for both communities means fear either because it signifies a relationship to a community (white) or lack of relationship to a community

(black). According to Young, "part of *Symptomatic's* 'dark' vision is how the racially ambiguous character can reinforce racial categorizations and misrecognitions, leading to a deepening of the racial chasms that haunt the American landscape..." (297). This is clearly seen in the discussion with the narrator and Claude because even though he knows that she is black and has been having an intimate relationship with her, there is still a wall between the couple. Her last remark as she leaves, "I have fallen short" is very telling because again she cannot live up to expectations of what people want from her. Whether he is black or white, she cannot live up to what they want in a partner.

For the most part the double involving Greta is clearly the main one in the story but another mirror double appears when the narrator is on the subway. She feels someone watching her and notices a white girl looking intently at her. The narrator is in a car that is populated by minorities and the girl sees her and feels a kinship with her. This begins her descent into what some readers might see as paranoia. At this stage it is not clear if one can trust the narrator's version of events because she seems so isolated and consumed in her own view of reality. Recalling the bond the narrator formed with Vera, an absent figure she has never met, the reader has reason to doubt if the narrator is seeing reality when this new sense of connection arises.

The unreliability of the narrator that is felt by the reader at this point is a trope of Gothicism and it grows with intensity in the narrative. It is used as a gothic trope because the reader does not know who to trust and it also speaks to the stability of the narrator and her reading of reality, "...When I blinked, she blinked. When I scratched my head, she scratched her head. Now she was even aping my own slumped posture and bereft expression. I felt an irrational rage well up inside of me---an urge to go over and slap her until she stopped looking at me" (109).

This scene suggests that white America fears being outnumbered by minorities. In the beginning there is an allusion to the possible paranoia of the narrator but then it slips into the recognition of the white girl that she is not alone. In this narrative she has gone from being taken as possibly Spanish, octoroon, invisibly black, to now white. The only time that she has a non-verbal communication with someone is this encounter with a white girl who feels apprehensive for being around the dark skinned minorities. The white girl is relieved to find out she is not alone, and then feels secure because blackness equals fear, terror and emotional instability to the white observer. She, having found herself among the mostly dark skinned people in the subway car, feels as if she is trapped. The people -to the white girl- are not connected to her by humanity, rather they are something to be feared

The passage also suggests that the narrator might be descending into paranoia. After she acknowledges the recognition between her and the white girl, she then goes into a very disturbing discussion in her head. Her feelings that the girl is mimicking everything she does suggest to the reader that maybe all she says cannot be trusted. The mimicking suggests that the white girl is the double for the narrator. Greta is the mulatto double, Vera is the absent double and the white girl is her white double. However, with this double the narrator seems to possibly become somewhat unhinged.

What keeps the narrator from forming her own identity is her concern for other people's appraisal of her racial heritage. The narrator is continually attracted to people who want to fashion her to their wishes. Sadly, when that does not occur or they are disappointed, they just want to discard her. Instead of trying to fit other people's understanding of her, the narrator clearly needs to have an understanding of herself that respects who she is racially. According to Candice Jenkins: "...the 'truth' of a character's racial identity depends wholly on who is making

the judgment may be all the evidence necessary to demonstrate that character's racial ambiguity, her position in the muddied space between 'black' and 'white'" (132). The ambiguity affects not only how others see the mulatto but also the mulatto character's self-image. The passer is ambivalent about his/her identity because her sense of racial identity is in conflict with society's view of racial identity. A person's racial truth unfortunately, may come from society's view of race. Since society has a rigid view of what is black and white, the mulatto's ambiguity cannot be read correctly. The problem is not the mulatto's blackness but her whiteness.

When the narrator tells Greta about her experience with Claude, the reader clearly gets a sense that Greta's identity issues are extremely complicated. She is in between two worlds and communities in which she feels she can never truly belong or navigate successfully. Greta's tirade reflects the narrator's feelings of negative self-worth but to an extreme, "You fill in the rest, kid,' cause I've tried every variation in the book and let me tell you, girls like us, we don't mix well. The black guys just want to put us down, drag us through the dirt, work out their fucking insecurity complexes on us. And the white ones. Well, sister, I don't have to tell you about the white ones, do I..." (116).

Greta in much more virulent language goes off about why the mulatta can never find someone who does not want to exploit her. First, her use of the word "mix" is interesting because they are mixed already with black and white but according to Greta they do not mix well in relationships. Her discussion about the black guys intimates that they use mulatto women in order to feel good about themselves and that they do not care about the women. Again, there is the idea that mixed raced women are used by other people to learn about who they are and where they fit. Greta and the narrator have been intensely damaged by their experiences. The men are drawn to them because they feed off of the women's insecurities. Hershini Young continues this

line of thought, "Both Greta's and the protagonist's need for someone who looks like them speaks volumes to the injuries of racial construction that police the body in their construction of authentic physicalities" (298).

The desperate need of these two women to find someone who understands their plight calls attention to their isolation. Their otherness makes them separate from society and their interaction with people is on a different plane. With each other they do not have to explain who they are, why they look the way they do, and the hardships that exist for them. To belong to a community is a common human need but these two women have not been given that chance to be in a community because of how people continually read their bodies.

Even though the narrator seems to have slight emotional issues, Greta seems to be becoming more and more irrational. When the narrator talks to her about going out to eat with Ivers, the artist that she is profiling, Greta starts a tirade about black male sexuality. Here Greta seems to be treading the line of instability. Her speech is very vitriolic, indicating she is afraid that the narrator will leave her for Ivers and a connection to the black community. Until now she has not had to compete for her attention but now she realizes that she may not be able to be as close to the narrator if she is dating someone. Her obsession with the narrator is becoming more focused. She even tells the narrator that all men want to use her because of their own lack of self-esteem:

'Well, he might not be your boyfriend now, but he will be. Tomorrow or the next day or the day after that. Mark my words. I can tell. You've got that look. Like you're on the prowl. If it's not him, it'll be somebody else. Not a white boy. You're done with that. It'll be some coon with a hankering for high-yella ass. You'll fall head over heels and next thing I know you'll be doing the jitterbug up in Harlem with Mr. Milky, discovering your black heritage... And I'll be just some sand pile you used to play in. (124)

This tirade of Greta's is very significant in relation to gender politics because Greta illustrates how the mixed race woman is used by both black and white men. Using the women only for their sexual and personal pleasure, the men have no interest in even attempting to understand the problems of the mixed raced woman.

As her insecurity grows, Greta increasingly uses stereotypes, especially when talking about black men. Hershini Young comments upon Greta's stereotypical language: "The belief that the mulatto represents the end of race and racism is definitively revoked in this racist tirade that proves to be the first of many. Greta's vitriolic racism addresses one of Senna's concerns about the mixed-race movement, their 'denial of the persistence of racism" (299). Senna does not want to represent the mulatto as the sort of new messiah to conquer racism; in contrast, she wants to assert the idea that mulatto people themselves can be racist. Greta is written in an extreme way so that the reader may feel offended at the grotesqueness of her language. There is no middle ground in the portrayal of Greta, especially at this point in the narrative. Even though Senna wants to show that this new multiracial movement can have its own problems with race, she does need to illustrate more that their misconceptions about race are due to how they have been treated. Much of the mulatto's conception of race is due to defensiveness based on others' reactions.

More and more Greta intrudes herself into the life of the narrator. She invades her apartment and the narrator, who is now more timid and overwhelmed by Greta's presence, does not know how to tell her to leave. After her whirlwind tour of the apartment, she sits down with the narrator to eat and unleashes her most venomous speech yet. Hershini Young quotes from the novel and discusses the meaning of Greta's vitriolic assault:

Greta's behavior grows increasingly out of control as she stalks the protagonist, mimicking her behavior in grotesque parody and calling her

apartment repeatedly. Her rants get longer and her increasingly more violent language details her hatred for everyone beginning with black men, white men, 'nappy-haired bitches who gave me such hell growing up 'cause I had light skin and long hair and they didn't,' Jews, white people who want to be black, 'ghetto bitches and their endlessly replicating babies' and concluding with 'faggots' responsible for gentrification (*Symptomatic 152-153*). Greta, as she unravels, exposes the painful logic of Othering that marginalizes difference and embraces a sameness that is never she. It can be argued that, for Senna, Greta embodies the stereotype of the tragic mulatto. As stereotype, she is in many ways not a 'real character. I see her as a ghost, a reminder of the past and all these images we have to consume in this culture' (Senna qtd. in Weber). Greta then functions as 'symptom' of Othering, as symptom, she shapes the conflicted landscape of power relations, painfully and irreducibly embodying (and not veiling) regimes of alterity. (299-300)

A gothic trope that Senna uses in the construction of Greta is the use of extremes. Greta's tirade is full of stereotypical and racist words but it is also full of the emotional hurt of the "mulatto." Greta is extreme to the point that she is negated as a real character and Senna herself says that she thought of Greta as a ghost. She is a symbol of what can happen to the tragic mulatta if she buys into the ideas of the culture concerning race. The irrational rant is again meant to illustrate that she has no home or community. She attacks everyone and uses racial stereotypes to describe them but through the attacks the hurt of the tragic mulatta cries out. She has been the other all her life and she is attacking people in terms of their racial groupings. In other words, she is attacking people who have a racial community and have a sense of belonging that she has never had.

Greta gives life to the stereotype that the mulatto has no place in society. According to Sander Gilman, "Interracial marriages were seen as exactly parallel to the barrenness of the prostitute; if they produced children at all, these children were weak and doomed" (256). Greta and the unnamed narrator are the product of interracial marriages and in many ways Greta illustrates that doomed character. The unnamed narrator on the other hand also has the potential

to be doomed if she does not center herself. According to Hazel Carby, "Use of the mulatto figure, as a literary device, has two primary functions: it enables an exploration of the relation between the races while, at the same time, it expresses the relation between the races" (313).

Indirectly, Senna is addressing what many critics get wrong in the relationship with Irene and Clare: the misconstruction of a sexual/love/lesbian relationship that is really one of obsession. Clare and Irene both covet the other's life because of dissatisfaction with their own. In terms of the narrator and Greta, the obsession on Greta's part is a need for belonging and understanding. In her discussion with the narrator, they address the issue of sexuality, "...This isn't some dyke come-on. Yuck Don't you understand? This is about the future. We could build our own reality. Fuck the white boys and the white girls and the niggers and the gooks. Fuck the dykes and the shirtlifters. We don't need them. We're a new race. A new people" (153-154). The intensity of Greta's declaration of love for the narrator is like everything else with Greta, extreme. Her rhetoric is so extreme that one can see it is not about love or sexuality but it is about obsession. Greta and the narrator are mirrors of each other. The narrator sees in Greta what could happen to her if she allows herself to stay so disconnected from society. Greta looks at the narrator and sees what she was and can track how her fatalism about life grew and took shape.

The final doubling in the novel is when it is revealed that Greta is really Vera Cross. A few days later when the narrator returns to her house, a neighbor lets her know that Vera is back unbeknownst to the narrator. After her chat with Flo, she goes into the apartment to see Vera and to get her things. Greta set up this whole scenario. Greta, in her explanation to the narrator, has been running away from her past. The bill collectors, the harassment, the negative opinion which kept people from hiring her were all the reasons that she decided to create another

identity. But in creating this other identity she did not deal with the core issues which made her react to people and situations in a highly problematic way. So even though she created a double for herself, the same issues continued to haunt her. Just as when the mulatto passes for white, he/she cannot run away from the self.

When the narrator realizes that Greta is Vera Cross, she is stunned. She then sees that Greta has written on the walls, taken down her pictures and replaced them with the narrator's family's pictures but with the eyes cut out. Greta starts to ramble in an irrational and incoherent rant about white women and black men. It is as if the narrator has truly stepped into another world, a world totally distanced from reality. Realizing that the narrator now sees her as unstable and possibly insane, Greta starts to turn on her. The narrator realizes that her very life is endangered by her double and remembers when an ex-boyfriend told her something about mulattoes: "In other words, chicks like this? They either end up genius messiahs, or craven hybrid monstrosities. But they'll never be ordinary. No, sir. Bubbling away in this one's blood are the ingredients for something quite extraordinary" (202-203). There was no in-between for the mulatta but just a world of extremes. Greta had gone to the extreme and had become the monstrous symbol of the mulatta. The narrator could look at Greta and wonder if this was her future. Was she looking into a mirror of what she could become?

Greta tells the narrator that when she was a little girl that she used to dream of meeting someone like the narrator who understood her world, "I could see her, lying in a bed on the other side of the country, crying into a pillow because she was all alone. And whenever I felt like a freak---the fucking half-caste misfit that everybody wanted but nobody loved" (203). She feels as if she is a monster because that is the way society sees her. She is the freak because she

cannot fit into either community because of each one's desire to interpret the one drop rule in such a rigid fashion that does not account for her complex racial makeup.

Greta at this point is holding the narrator hostage with a knife at her back and forcing her to try on clothes and model them. Greta wants to stage a suicide/murder with the narrator. Since in Greta's mind there is no place for them in earthly society, the only place where they can find solace is an afterlife together. Greta wants to now kill her double which is also a way of killing herself in imaginary terms and in reality. As they are standing out on the ledge, Greta tries to get the narrator to see how easy it is to just jump, insisting it would solve all of their problems. At this point, Greta has lost all rationality and has gone insane.

The narrator at this point truly feels as if she is in an alternate reality with the woman that she recognized as a part of herself. As Flo is walking on the street, the narrator tries to get her attention but Flo does not see her. Her invisibility again is in play but now her very life is at risk. The narrator realizes that she must get away from Greta even if it means killing her. One way or another, a double must die or both die, "Then, before I could stagger off, she had me in an embrace so tight my arms were pinned to my sides. We were intertwined. My blood was seeping out into the space between us. Onto my dress, onto her dress. The blood felt warm, like somewhere I'd like to be. She was warm, too, A perfume heat that engulfed me" (208). This passage, which partly describes the struggle between the narrator and Greta, illustrates how they are part of the earth. Their struggle is being described as an intimate scene in which both women are one, not separate entities.

The paragraph is full of gothic imagery but the image of the blood fusing together is especially gothic. That is an interesting metaphor because the inadequacies felt by both women are due to the idea of blood, race and mixing. The blood tied them together as well as kept them

isolated from society. The narrator is engulfed by the very essence of Greta who wants to take her away from the world and invites her to go with Greta to this new world in the afterlife. The imagery is also very sexual and that intermittent metaphor of sexuality, obsession and oneness resumes in the end. Since they are doubles of each other, the sexuality could be the sexuality of one, an obsession and love of the self since each represents a part of the self. As Greta falls off the roof to her death, the narrator sees part of herself die and must either reconstitute what is left or for the first time constitute a clear and core identity.

The ending of *Symptomatic* culminates with the realization by the narrator that she could be Greta if she did not deal with reality and start seeing herself as part of the community instead of isolated from it. The ending makes the double distinction much clearer than in *Passing*. The death of Greta frees the narrator but Clare's death only imprisons Irene more. Both Senna and Larsen are trying to talk to both the black and white communities concerning the way they situate the mulatto. The mulatto is caught between both communities and their construction of race exacerbates his/her identity crisis. Because both communities refuse to accept the dichotomy that they represent, the mulatto is situated on the margins.

Senna uses gothic language and symbolism to illustrate the problems of the passer and his/her role in society. She illustrates that the schizophrenia within the mulatto can be heightened to create a person who cannot cope and live well within society. The mulatta is in need of a community to cling to but finds both black and white communities sorely lacking. This is where the need comes for a mixed race movement that Senna criticizes as well.

Senna and Larsen use the double to show the internal battle that is waging within the mulatto. The merging of these two identities does not occur because the mulatto is engaged with society who constantly imprints its own view of the mulatto's identity onto him/her. The double,

whether black or white, will not let go to exist as one within the internal. Senna illustrates that the passer has to come to terms with the internal double or be driven to insanity by the split of the self.

Senna is saying that stereotypes, especially sexual ones, still exists for the mulatta even in a society that says that it does not see race. Through Greta, Senna shows that the mulatta is not the salvation for society because of her hybridity and that she is not a new creation without racial animosity. The unnamed narrator sees what she could become if she does not become grounded in a core identity and by extension society can see what it will create if it does not deal with the mulatta/o and what he/she represents in terms of racial categories. The novel critiques the idea that these "new people" are not capable of racism and will create a world without racism. But Senna shows that in many ways because they are victims of a racist society, they are the ones truly consumed by race.

Chapter 3

William Faulkner's *Light in August*: Joe Christmas, The Blank Slate In Iconic Gothic Dress

³In chapter one I looked at how Mark Twain and Charles Chesnutt used gothic elements to critique racial stereotypes in constructing passing characters whose true racial identification is unknown to them. My focus in chapter two took a decidedly different turn when I centered my analysis on Nella Larsen and Danzy Senna's use of gothic elements to construct passing characters that are caught between racial stereotypes from both black and white communities. Also, to some extent, both Senna and Larsen present their characters from a psychological vantage point, employing gothic elements to delve into their internal thoughts that accompany seemingly inexplicable external behavior.

As I move forward in my argument, I discuss William Faulkner's depiction of Joe Christmas as the most tragic of passers: He does not even have an identity to re-create or a past to escape. In fact, Faulkner deliberately constructs him as a blank slate, enabling him to cast some of the most horrific gothic tropes upon Christmas in order to depict the monstrous and demonic image of the black man who as a passer can invisibly intrude into white society and defile white women.

Faulkner and Mark Twain are two southern white authors who position the race problem at the center of many of their novels. As critiqued in Chapter One, in *Pudd'n'head Wilson* Twain uses gothic symbols and tropes to discuss whether nature or nurture was the dominant character

³ The endnotes for this chapter are on page 259 notes 9-11.

defining issue. Primarily, his construction of Tom Driscoll gives a very confusing argument that ends up giving credence to the nature theory. Twain does not give a very strong internal construction to Tom Driscoll's character. In contrast, Faulkner uses gothic symbols to concretely critique the world surrounding Joe Christmas and gives the passing character a concrete history that illustrates how his character was formed. Faulkner gives Christmas an interiority that Driscoll does not have but also like Twain he construes Christmas as the gothic monster that white southern society fears having in their midst.

William Faulkner is considered one of the most gothic storytellers in American Literature. Emanating from a line of Southern writers who created their own category of the gothic—Southern Gothic Literature—Faulkner might be considered one of the most critically recognized of them all. Having won numerous literary awards, including the Pulitzer, Faulkner's reputation as the premier Southern writer is rarely, if ever, challenged, nor is his literary propensity to pen tales of the gothic that relate to the most ubiquitously haunting legacy of slavery which is miscegenation. Faulkner, along with Twain and Chesnut as Southerners, has most definitely used gothic symbolism to convey the ambivalence that the region has toward issues of race.

Southern Gothic Literature really takes hold in the Twentieth Century as issues of race and blood, and segregation become prime in the imagination and reality of Southern people, black and white. According to Allen Lloyd Smith, Southern Gothic is infused with the history and legacy of the South: "The legacy of the South reaches up into the North in such fictions, but in the South there was a sense of history turning in upon itself as writers evoked a string of distorted figures trapped in structures that had lost their authority but not their power" (121).

Mark Twain and William Faulkner are connected because they tell the racial passing story from the southern view where the demarcation between black and white is much more rigid. Charles Chesnutt is also a southern writer but his novel *Paul Marchand F.M.C* is located in New Orleans where race is more ambivalent. Twain and Faulkner both represent places and times where racial categories are at their most binary. Faulkner, more so than Twain, takes a very visceral and hard look at the South's construction of race and how its past affects both black and white residents. According to literary critic Jeff Abernathy, "Faulkner's black characters are complex and autonomous, informed by his reading of Twain, surely, but by his modernist sensibility as well, by his need to portray black characters largely removed from the minstrel tradition to which Twain remained faithful" (57). Even though this quote is illustrative of the more progressive representation of Faulkner's black characters in comparison to Twain's, Faulkner's blacks are still problematic because they can still reproduce the same or similar racial stereotypes reflected by Twain's [black characters]. Yet Faulkner's work does tend to more overtly cast a critical eye to the South and its problems.

Southern Gothic literature deals with a constantly changing and more modern New South. If one goes back to Mark Twain's *Pudd'n'head Wilson* and Charles Chesnutt's *Paul Marchand F. M. C.*, it is evident that both of these writers are dealing with the world of the Old South, a world dominated by slavery. Additionally, both stories deal with the complexities of race as they directly involve slavery and its ongoing legacy of miscegenation. Although *Light in August* is situated during the beginnings of the New South, the specter of slavery continues as it is clear Faulkner is dealing with the vestiges of the South's slave past, its Jim Crow present and its long extending branches from its tree of miscegenation.

One of the main gothic themes, especially in American Literature, is that the past is being repressed while present society manufactures a superficial and created reality that functions as the present. This is true in Southern Gothic fiction as well; except that the past is complicit with the present in creating the artificial reality. In the twentieth century south, the past is as alive as the present, most often constructed in such a way as to justify the present world. The old plantations and the debutante world of the old South were and are constantly glorified. No doubt one of the most memorably astute characterizations of the past as it relates to the South can be attributed to Faulkner, who succinctly stated: "In the South the past is never really dead, it is not even past." Of course, the thought running through all Gothic American Fiction is that the past is *always* there, repressed, but always lurking, waiting for its cue to manifest itself in the present. Yet in the twentieth century south, the past is not just repressed but is reconstructed and is very much alive. However, as the past emerges in a post bellum south, the issue now is not about slavery; the question instead is: Where do blacks fit in as free people in this new world? Unfortunately, because the South at the time considers blacks as brutal monsters who prey upon white people, especially black men who threaten the virtue of white women, blacks are relegated and confined to the segregated world of Jim Crowism.

But even as he shows the contradictions and the complexities of the South, he is typical of the other authors in this study, bound by his literary and societal intentions which at times create ambivalence, especially when he is dissecting the issue of race. Faulkner's esteem comes from the fact that he shines a light on the South's constructed past. He attempts to show the problematic racial issues in Southern culture. Transforming the South from its "Gone With the Wind" mythology, Faulkner realistically illustrates the oppression and violence that routinely characterizes the lives of black people. . Faulkner is very much ahead of many of his fellow

Southern citizens when discussing race, but he is also a man of the South and at times his desire to fairly critique race relations conflicts with his overwhelming sense of southern pride. In many discussions about race Faulkner is quoted as saying that blacks should attain equal rights but at a gradual, even slow, pace because the South as a region would not tolerate accelerated movement. For example, in discussing school integration, Faulkner was at his most controversial, according to Faulkner biographer Joel Williamson, "In his view, the nation was running to disaster; the solution was to slow things down and give Southerners more time to adjust to the situation. To get his message out, Faulkner needed exposure at the national level. His agent, Harold Ober, managed to sell one of his pieces, 'A Letter to the North' to *Life* for publication on March 5. It was a plea to the immediate integrationists to 'go slow now' and give the white South an opportunity to move upon its own initiative" (306). During the Mississippi integration school crisis, Faulkner's contradictory feelings reflected those of a man who does want the South to progress, but who consistently favors the South no matter what or who the opposition may be.

Similar to Mark Twain, William Faulkner wrote a lot about race, but with much more intensity. At the center of many of his works is the concept of miscegenation, that enduring legacy of slavery that is often considered to be at the root of "Southern discomfort". Faulkner was not dealing with any of the "First Families" of a prospering antebellum South. Instead Faulkner was dealing with a defeated South that was having its own identity crisis in terms of moving from an agricultural to a more modernized world. Along with this identity crisis is the establishment of Jim Crow laws which virtually segregated both white and black communities and kept blacks in the subservient position. This strengthens the white community's identity because its identity comes from knowing that it is superior to blacks. So even though their

identity as citizens of the nation is in flux, their identity as white Southerners is rigidly intact.

According to literary critic Eric Sundquist:

The historically prevalent Southern view that mulattoes were a dying breed, both biologically and culturally, and that the sins of the antebellum fathers were therefore passing from view, had begun to be exposed as a myth in its own right by the early twentieth century, with the result that miscegenation, whether instigated by whites or blacks, came to seem more heinous and the purity of white women more crucial than ever. 'To merge white and black would have been the ultimate holocaust, the absolute damnation of Southern civilization,' Williamson writes, and yet the mulatto made apparent that 'life in the Southern world was not as pure, clean, and clear as white people needed to believe. (24)

Sundquist and Faulkner both are writing about the same thing: the legacy of the sins of slavery which are continually a part of the modern and twentieth century world of the Southern elite. Because of the continual progeny from miscegenation, the past is never completely dead and buried. No matter how much white society might attempt to dismiss or ignore the mixed race products of miscegenation, it cannot. But that did not stop Faulkner from employing all the gothic elements of his literary arsenal, such devices as ambiguity, monstrosity, doubling and haunted pasts to warn of the dangers of the passer.

As mentioned earlier, Faulkner writes about race with an intensity not represented by a white Southerner before him. After the Civil War and Reconstruction, Faulkner's South is a shadow of its former self but the need to hold onto the Southern aristocratic past is still important and to do this, it is imperative to keep blacks subjugated. Even poor white Southerners in Faulkner's world consider themselves better than blacks so the belief in the one drop rule is vitally connected to white Southern identity, whether rich or poor.

The difference between the two Souths, Faulkner's vs. Twain's, is that in Twain's South the artificial constructions are not as obvious because the South is still a prosperous region. However, Twain's South in *Pudd'n'head Wilson* is pre-Civil War. Therefore, slavery and all of

its economical and material benefits are still intact. On the other hand, Faulkner's South is full of constructed realities because many of its once wealthy families are now poor and destitute, but they still fancy themselves as the once aristocratic, prosperous Southerners of the antebellum South, regardless of the physical decay, economical losses and emotional anguish that constitute their present world. Faulkner's South has the gothic symbolism of blackness as horror, and the constant need to keep the past as part of the present. The people in Faulkner's world are not only at war with their own identity, but with their place in the nation as well.

In many Southern novels of the late nineteenth century and early-mid twentieth century there are two sets of gothic doubles: black/white and North/South. Just as white identity is dependent on black identity, so is Southern identity dependent on Northern identity. During the time of Faulkner, the South viewed itself as oppositional to the North and federal government and always balked at their interference. The Civil War most definitely was about slavery but not just the need to continue slavery, but resisting the north/federal government telling them what they were or were not going to do in regards to slavery. This defiant attitude of the South continues to this day and most certainly was in full swing at the time of Faulkner's writing of *Light in August*. The world Faulkner is dealing with is not necessarily more complex than Twain's world, but most certainly is different. Faulkner's South is concerned with dealing with the many changes that have disrupted its way of life since the Civil War.

Light in August is a novel about a man, Joe Christmas, who looks white or Mexican but neither he nor anyone else knows what his true racial heritage is, which creates an even more ambivalent situation than exists in most other passing novels. The fact that no one knows who Christmas is means he is the ultimate blank slate. The assumption that people make that he is indeed black or partly black is due to rumors; there is no real proof offered by Faulkner that he is

or is not black. In fact, as the story evolves, Faulkner deliberately skirts around the issue of Christmas' actual race. Faulkner is looking more at how a person's limited perceptions and false assumptions can categorically define someone. Society's presumptions about Christmas' race affect how people react to him, how he reacts to others and how he defines himself.

I contend that through his depiction of Joe Christmas as the passing figure, Faulkner simultaneously uses gothic symbolism to illuminate the internal conflicts of this character while also critiquing the South's hypocritical stance on race and its stereotypical construction of blackness. In conjunction with his use of the one drop rule and gothic symbols such as monstrosity, alienation, isolation, familial secrets, doubles, ambiguity and invisibility, Faulkner creates a narrative that vacillates between deconstructing racial stereotypes and constructing racial stereotypes in the character of Joe Christmas. Faulkner also can continue stereotypes in his use of gothic symbols to construct the black male passing figure as a predatory and dangerous individual.

As Faulkner deals much more directly with the construction of the black/mulatto man as the monster and the attacker/rapist of white women, he uses gothic symbolism to create and attack the stereotypes involving "the racial other". Once society decides that Christmas is black, he is now viewed as a gothic predator who can go amongst whites unnoticed because he can pass according to the white community. To some degree, Faulkner does critique this image of the white woman as the victim but he also substantiates the myth at the same time. Along with the blood ideology, the need to protect the white woman from the black rapist has been at the heart of racial stereotypes, especially in the South. The safety of the white woman has been the pretext for many lynchings in the South after Emancipation. It was now put forth that not only were blacks inferior to whites but that white women were now in danger of being raped and

killed by them. This helped the South justify even more so the separation between the races. According to Felipe Smith, "Enactments of the 'brute' stereotype validated white nationalism, confirming the allochronistic distance between white and black" (144).

By keeping blacks not only in an inferior position but in a state of fear, those in power would make sure there would be no uprising and challenge to their authority. Faulkner vividly illustrates this virulent racism at work and deconstructs the myth of the Southern white woman on the pedestal who needs to be protected. So under the guise of seeking justice for Joanna Burden's death, the townspeople relentlessly pursue Christmas. Her death provides an excuse to garner revenge for Christmas' real and most vile crime, deceiving them and making them believe that he was white.

The passer is symbolically connected to the vampire trope through the concept of the bad blood and predation of white women. The issue of miscegenation comes down to the blood, black and white. Society uses all of its forces to keep the blood separate and keep black blood from tainting the purity of white blood. But the passer does unnoticeably taint white purity because he/she can assimilate into whiteness. So maintaining laws against miscegenation gives the Southern white populace a false sense of protection from the predation of black men against pure white women. The white South is not just afraid of predation. Its fear is of the ultimate eradication of blackness as it blends into whiteness. When this happens, the black and white bloods are amalgamated and there is no distinguishing between the two. This is the ultimate fear of white society.

Just as the vampire is seen as threatening to the virtuous white woman, Christmas is likened to him. Christmas as the black male passer represents a threatening vampire figure to society. The blood mixture provides the means of contamination of the purity of white blood

and the product of that contamination is again someone who can pass and continue the predation on white society. According to Eric Lott, "The vampire is a one man miscegenation machine" (39) because he is invisible to his victims and preys upon white women, mixing his foreign monstrous blood with their blood. Often the black person is characterized in the same vein as the vampire: immoral, monstrous and alien ("the evil" incarnate). This negative characterization propelled white society to incorporate all of its constraints to prevent the two races (black and white) from mixing. Just as the vampire is the only monster who looks like humans, the passer looks like his/her white oppressors. Because of this physical likeness, he is welcomed into their homes and their lives. Since the passer is already seen as the gothic monster, he can also be seen as a violent sexual predator. Specifically, this aspect of the passer is depicted in the character of Joe Christmas. Because he has been crossing society's lines of racial purity unnoticed, he must be caught and killed in order to restore social order to their community.

In making Joe Christmas the center of his story instead of Lena Grove^{xiv}, Faulkner validates race, miscegenation and blood as core elements of Southern society. According to literary critic Abdur-Rahman, "The fact of miscegenation----of mixed-race bodies that could evade or straddle the color line and in their very embodiment recall the intimate and violent history of institutional slavery---provided Faulkner with a viable, living metaphor for the gruesome history, tumultuous present, and uncertain future of black-white relations in the post-Emancipation South" (17).

The mixed raced person is a constant reminder of the repressed origins of the South and how its development was due to the misery and oppression of black people. Despite the ending of slavery, Southerners are still confronted with this never ending progeny as it insinuates itself into the Twentieth Century, lurking menacingly as a horror beneath their beautiful Southern

façade. Faulkner's obsession with miscegenation originates from the concept that within the body of the mixed raced person are the past, present, and future of the South. Faulkner knows that he cannot discuss Southern white identity without dealing with blacks because the identity of the region is tied to the history of the people. The South is attempting to transform its identity, hoping to extricate itself from the stain of slavery.

Similarly, because Joe Christmas does not know his racial identity and is not purposely driven to seek any answers about his identity, he is more of a blank slate than the average passing character; he is the ultimate metaphor of the progeny of miscegenation. His identity is in development just as the region's identity is at a crossroads. As the story progresses, not only does Faulkner permit characters to project their self- images onto Joe Christmas, he also uses this wretchedly displaced person as a warning bell against miscegenation.

The ambivalent feelings varied and conflicted, are reflected when Christmas is introduced in the novel. At Christmas' workplace his co-workers talk about him extensively before he is introduced to the reader. Faulkner creates a lot of mystery from the discussion between his co-workers. They do not know much about him because he does not really socialize and they question his relationship with Joe Brown with whom he lives, "He still had nothing to say to anyone, even after six months. No one knew what he did between mill hours. Now and then one of his fellow workers would pass him on the square down town after supper, and it would be as though Christmas had never seen the other before...No one knew where he lived, slept at night, save that now and then someone would see him following a path that came up through the woods on the edge of town as if he might live out that way somewhere" (35-36). This passage illustrates how Christmas is very much seen as a gothic ghostly entity instead of a real person. Whether he is actually passing has not been determined, but like a mirage, he is

passing in and out of his co-workers' lives. Each day it is as if he magically appears for work and magically disappears after work.

Because of his refusal to socialize (not allowing people to know him) and his unknown identity, Christmas is vulnerable to any back story that the town might ascribe to him in order to validate its own prejudices. His name even befuddles them because they cannot understand why a white man would be named Christmas. At the beginning of the text, he is assumed to be white. Although his race is not questioned, other things about him are.

In many ways Joe Christmas is likened to the unnamed narrator in Danzy Senna's *Symptomatic* in the sense that his character is not fully fleshed out but someone Faulkner uses in order to discuss his issues concerning miscegenation and passing. From the moment he is discussed in the narrative, others seem to be given the power to construct a past for him, thereby ordaining his present and future. Also, the other characters use him to inscribe their identity issues and resolve their peculiar conflicts. Since Christmas' racial identity is hidden even from himself, he is the epitome of the ambivalent passing character who can never find closure but will ultimately have closure visited upon him by the community. The unknown racial element in Christmas is the basis for his isolation. According to Faulkner biographer Joel Williamson, "Joe's not knowing his color was tragic, not ever being able to know was tragedy doubled; not ever being able to know in a universe in which everyone else knew his and her own color----even inevitably knew because it was prescribed by the community to which he or she had been born and in which he or she lived-----was tragedy squared" (406).

Williams places the responsibility of Christmas' tragic character completely on Faulkner. According to Williams, Faulkner stacks the deck against Christmas by refusing to give him an identity, placing him in the South where racial roles were very rigid and where everyone knows

what race she/he is and where he/she fits in the hierarchy. The Southern racial roles are important to understanding the intense Gothic quality of Faulkner's work. Since Christmas does not fit neatly in these roles, he becomes either invisible or dangerous to society. Because of these prescribed social and racial roles, it is hard for Christmas, who does not know his race, to assimilate. Instead, he is now an object of scorn and suspicion. If he does not belong, he must be an evil or satanic force that must be driven out to maintain the existing racial structure.

Joe Christmas is clearly an outsider (gothic trope) to the community and that makes him an undeniable threat. The more Christmas does not conform and socialize, the more suspicious he becomes to the community. The community's belief is that Christmas and his roommate, Joe Brown, are involved in some type of criminal enterprise.

Not only is Joe Christmas seen as an outsider but so are Brown and the woman whose cabin they stay in, Joanna Burden. Joanna Burden is middle age and was born in the South but because her family came from the North she is still considered foreign. There is resentment from the town because her grandfather and brother died over questioning why blacks did not have the right to vote. Even though the town is concerned with the nature of Christmas and Brown's relationship because they live together in a cabin on Joanna Burden's property, no one knows that the three are living an emotionally threadbare existence. As I will explain, Faulkner presents an image of these three living with each other's ghost, reflecting an emotionally dead existence that is void of any real feelings.

Christmas and Brown start off together as a couple living in the cabin on Burden's property and Faulkner's language and description make it seem as if there could possibly be a homosexual relationship between the two men, "They had been watching the two down there from the day when Brown went to work... And they would be seen together down town on

Saturday evening sometime...[Brown] his voice heard clear across the square and back again in echo...Like he aimed for everybody to see how he and Christmas were buddies, Byron thought" (40-41). The homosexual rumors further isolate both Brown and Christmas from ties to the community and leads some people in the town to figure that if he could be involved in a homosexual relationship, an interracial one is not out of the question. Both types of relationships would have been seen as dark, threatening, dangerous and abnormal. By putting Christmas doubly on the outside, the position of the white southern male is reified. White masculinity is dependent on the inferiority of the black man and if Christmas is seen as a homosexual, he is cast as even more inferior. This just continues to substantiate white male masculinity by keeping black men as the threatening and unnatural other.

Once Brown is aware of Christmas' supposed racial truth, that Christmas is black passing as white, the relationship between the two changes. Christmas then becomes violent towards Brown and their close bond is broken because of Brown's racism and Christmas' response. Whereas the reader might wonder what Christmas' racial makeup is, there is no doubting the violence that he inflicts upon others. At this stage in the narrative, Faulkner is reinforcing the gothic racial stereotype of the bad gothic monstrous black via Christmas roughing up of Brown and his eventual murdering of Joanna Burden.

Until this point, the reader could have felt that Brown was lying about Christmas murdering Joanna Burden and possibly covering up his own crimes. But instead Faulkner lets the reader know without any doubt that Christmas is guilty. As will be further developed, because his racial identity is unknown, there is major ambiguity in Faulkner's construction of Joe Christmas, but unlike Twain, he does show the complicity of the white community and their racially motivated behavior and hatred. But the first incident of violence emanates from the

hands of Christmas, occurring when Christmas drags Brown across the apartment, hitting him repeatedly in an attempt to quell his accusations:

Brown struggled again. 'Take you black hand off of me, you damn niggerblooded-----' Again Christmas struck him with the other hand upon the face. Brown ceased and lay still again. Christmas slacked his hand. After a moment Brown spoke, in tone cunning, not loud: 'You're a nigger, see? You said so yourself. You told me. But I'm white. I'm a wh-----' The hand shut down. Again Brown struggled, making a choked whimpering sound beneath the hand, drooling upon the fingers. When he stopped struggling, the hand slacked. Then he lay still, breathing hard. (103-104)

Interestingly, through this confrontation between Brown and Christmas, Faulkner illustrates two aspects of the issue of mixed blood and passing. First, Faulkner depicts Christmas as a completely irrational and violent person as he attacks Brown. The gothic symbol of the bad monstrous black is at play in this scene as it darkly dramatizes every element of this stereotype. Christmas is now seen as the devil incarnate, inciting fear at every turn and in the process substantiating white Southern mythology about blacks.

Secondly, through Brown's ramblings one can see that he is most upset at being fooled. The worst thing that Christmas could do is say that he is white when he is, according to Brown, not white. The sin of racial masquerade is the intolerable sin for the community. Since the whole region is sustained and upheld by this racist mythology, the white community cannot ignore it and instead of reevaluating its whole thought process concerning race, it must instead turn against the passer. They must blame the passer for not being racially honest so that they can continue their limited views on race and blood. Instead of acknowledging that blackness cannot be so easily defined or categorized, they bury their heads in the sand in order to maintain their belief system.

As mentioned in the beginning, the vampire trope is used in this narrative to illustrate the passing character as a predator. One of the interesting aspects of this idea is that the passer is slowly found out to be non-white or supposedly non-white. Because he/she can blend in so well, it is not something that is readily seen or even thought about as a possibility and this relates to the vampire as well who needs to be unveiled as not human. Ken Gelder connects this idea of discovery of the vampire to discovery of someone's sexual orientation, "...The fact that a character is a vampire is only gradually discovered - it is a secret that has to be discovered....On the one hand, the point about sexual orientation is that it does not 'show', you can't tell who is and who isn't just by looking; but on the other hand, there is also a widespread discourse that there are tell-tale signs that someone 'is'. The vampire myth reproduces this double view in its very structure of suspense" (63). This corresponds with the passer because again one cannot tell if the passer is non-white but there is the myth that one can tell who is and who is not black. Of course, this is a myth that parallels the vampire myth. Vampire can go between society's boundaries unnoticed, paralleling the passer's ability to transcend these same boundaries.

Continuing his use of gothic tropes, Faulkner positions Joanna and Joe as doubles of each other, making a point of this by assigning a female version of Joe's name to Joanna. Joanna was born in the South but because her family was from the North, she will always seem foreign and strange. Joe was born in the South as well, but because either he has no definitive race or the others around him decide that he is black, he too will always seem a stranger. Not only is it Joanna's lineage that makes her problematic by the town's standards but it is also that she has not tried to assimilate. She clearly has not adopted the South's views on race relations which again makes her suspect as far as the community is concerned. But the role of Joanna Burden is really two fold because after she is raped and murdered by Christmas, she then becomes an icon

of white Southern womanhood. However, at this point in the narrative she is living on the fringes of the community and seen as a dangerous outsider.

Their dislike and fear of Joanna comes from two things, first her family lineage of feeling sympathy for blacks. So not only is Joanna the double of Joe Christmas, she is also the double of the whole community because she and her family represent the North which is twinned with the South.^{xv} She is seen as an interloper in the community and no matter how many of her family generations make their home in the South, she will always be seen in this way.

Secondly, the constant rumor that Joanna Burden is having sexual relations with blacks relates to one of the core themes of Faulkner's novel, miscegenation. The South's primary goal is to enforce the segregation of the races. Joanna Burden's disregard of this mandate and the perpetuation of this evil are seen as irredeemable.

Also, the fact that a black man was doing a white man's job was inexcusable, which led the community to think of Christmas as a threatening force. The subsequent fire, death of Joanna Burden and disappearance of Joe Christmas inflame the passions of the community. Joe Brown returns and lets everyone know that it was Christmas who killed Joanna Burden; he also informs the populace that they had been living together as man and wife before Joe moved out of the cabin and most importantly that he is black. At first, instead of believing him, the sheriff immediately accuses Brown of the crime, "The man that killed that white woman after he had done lived with her in plain sight of this whole town, ...He's got nigger blood in him. I knowed it when I first saw him. But you folks, you smart sheriffs and such. One time he even admitted it, told me he was part nigger" (97-98). Here Faulkner illustrates how invisible blackness is threatening to the white community. The sheriff, representing the community, cannot believe that they could not recognize Christmas as black.

Joe Brown is a double to the character of Joe Christmas because they are clearly positioned together in the eyes of the community at the beginning, and there is the mystery surrounding the relationship between the two. Since they both have dark looks, Brown can be seen even more so as Christmas' double. In fact, Brown could possibly be the one who is consciously passing, instead of Christmas who does not really know his race. Brown's need to put the community onto Christmas is not just to get the heat off him as a co-conspirator because he lived with Christmas, but because he might be eluding the possibility of being racially outed as well. Brown needs to eject Christmas out of his world for his own benefit and project Brown's issues onto Christmas. Brown sets Christmas on the path to become prey but in the same instance Christmas also becomes a predator.

Again, Faulkner plays with the gothic trope of ambiguity in constructing not only the character of Christmas but also those that surround him as well. If their actions are kept in the shadow of ambiguity, readers are perplexed as to why they react to Christmas in the way that they do and that in turn leaves Christmas' actions and identity further undefined. Subsequently, the cloud of ambiguity hangs ominously over the novel even more as it extends to the readers. Their connection with Christmas is ambivalent because as soon as Faulkner scripts an incident in which one might sympathize or empathize with him, Faulkner counters it with one in which Christmas is fiercely violent, validating the reader's sense of gothic fear and trepidation of the black male. As Faulkner depicts him in this manner, it can be very difficult to connect with Christmas because he is an elusive and emotionally unstable character, which makes identification problematic.

Christmas can be seen as preying upon the white woman as well, even if she is a "Northern" transplant. Christmas becomes the evil that must be stopped by death. Now the

whole community has to avenge the death of the "Northern" white woman who is a substitute for Southern white womanhood.

Of note is that when Joe is thought to be a foreigner, he is more accepted than as a black man who is native to the region. The foreigner is not seen as assimilated into the community but he/she is seen as preferable to the real evil which is the black person, whether he is passing or not. Whether it is true or not, Brown (a white man) has categorized Christmas as black and now he will be treated as such.

In addition to depicting Christmas as alienated from the community, he is also seen as threatening to its carefully constructed view of race. He is seen not just as different but as something evil. The community is dealing with the fact that what they thought was reality was not and now they have to make the world conform to what they believe, "Signifying the alienation of the human subject from the culture and language in which s/he was located, these devices [doubles, alter egos, mirrors] increasingly destabilized the boundaries between psyche and reality, opening up an indeterminate zone in which the differences between fantasy and actuality were no longer secure" (Botting 11-12). Faulkner writes that Christmas has no home or community because for him Christmas stands for this indeterminate zone involving race that America cannot deal with or recognize. The double and alter ego contribute in alienating Christmas from humanity. Faulkner is not only showing how the community has now christened Christmas as "other" and alien; he also depicts them as becoming alienated from what they know about black and white. The revelation that Christmas is black reveals a crack in the cemented wall that represents the boundaries not to be crossed. Capturing and punishing Christmas symbolize the reinstatement and validation of the racial boundaries, at least in society's mind.

When Brown goes to the sheriff to tell about Christmas, he is disentangling himself from his association with Joe. From the beginning of the story, Christmas and Brown had always been mentioned together. Even though the town was more suspicious of Christmas, they also had their issues with Brown because of his and Christmas' close relationship. However, in the scene with the sheriff, Brown tries to get rid of his black twin. According to literary critic Abdur-Rahman, "The doubling of Joe Christmas and Joe Brown, with its insinuation of homoerotic desire, makes clear not only the extent to which black male identity has been freed from some of its traditional markers but also the extent to which white masculinity has depended on these exact markers of black male inferiority to secure its own ascendancy and legitimacy...." (184). Once the community knows that Christmas is black, they no longer need to say he is a possible homosexual in order to situate him as an outsider. This doubling of Christmas and Brown illustrates the way in which Faulkner uses gothic tropes to link issues of racism, gender and sexuality in relation to community. The linkages ascribe negative and/or inferior characteristics to the outsiders.

Faulkner's shift to Christmas' beginnings does not illuminate much in terms of Christmas' background in the beginning of the text. However, one intriguing aspect occurs when Christmas is five years old and living in an orphanage; he disappears into the dietician's room. Unnoticed at first, he watches as the dietician is sexually assaulted. After the attack is over and she realizes that the young boy has seen it, the dietician feels even more violated because the boy was watching her being sexually exploited. She finds out from the janitor of his possible biracial heritage and threatens to take him to the colored orphanage. This situation influences Joe Christmas' antipathy for women in general which mushrooms into the death of Joanna Burden. According to Abdur Rahman, "The dietitian displaces her outrage and terror onto Christmas. As

his identity is radically unstable, both racially and sexually ambiguous, he alternately inhabits the position of violated (white) womanhood and of (now radicalized) violating manhood..." (187).

Possibly, the situation between the dietician and Joe Christmas was the first instance of Christmas being used by others to project their own fears and illusions. Feeling violated with no way to report the attack, the dietician realizes the young boy is there without permission. Instead of setting her wrath on the man, she misplaces it on the young boy. For him to have seen her, a white woman, as she was being sexually violated would have been seen as another violation of the laws of the south and one that crossed racial lines.

This antipathy towards women continues in his relationship with Joanna Burden.

Faulkner also illustrates Christmas' internal confusion that precipitates his violence, "

'Perhaps that is where the outrage lies. Perhaps I believe that I have been tricked, fooled. That she lied to me about her age, about what happens to women at a certain age.' He said, aloud, solitary in the darkness beneath the dark window: 'She ought not to started praying over me. It was not her fault that she got too old to be any good anymore. But she ought to have had better sense than to pray over me' " (106).

In this passage, Faulkner provides the audience with a peephole into Christmas' reasons for killing Joanna Burden, though his reasoning does not make much sense, nor does it validate murder. Christmas just seems even more irrational. The actual murder of Joanna Burden is also ambiguous, suggesting that her death might have not been cold blooded murder but an act of self-defense by Christmas. Interestingly, right after Brown and the sheriff discuss about being tricked and fooled concerning Christmas' race, Joe Christmas uses the same language to discuss his relationship with Joanna Burden. He says that she tricked him about her age and that she was possibly menopausal. From this passage the reader realizes that he has a problem with religion

and women. These are given reasons as to why Christmas might be incensed to the point of murder. Unfortunately, for Christmas God and religion are not seen as paths to salvation, hope and redemption but instead as abusive, controlling, and negative. These notions have been established since Christmas' childhood when his devoutly religious adoptive father used to beat him and force him to say Christian prayers. Therefore, an invocation to pray might be perceived as a threatening gesture to Christmas.

In addition, Christmas feels as if he is being dominated by Burden and that he needs to assert his dominance and put her in her place as a woman. The two had a consensual relationship which at one point became violent after Christmas analyzed his position with Burden, "...But he did not desist; though his hands were hard and urgent it was with rage alone. 'At least I have made a woman of her at last,' he thought. 'Now she hates me'" (235-236). This violent act towards Burden shows the confusion within Christmas. He is dominated by white society but his supposed domination by Burden is one in which he thinks he can fix. He is so conflicted with his identity issues that he wants her to hate him the way everyone else does, "I have taught her that, at least"(235-236).

Moreover, Faulkner problematizes Joanna's character by showing that before the rape; she had set up rape scenario scenes with Christmas. The sexual scenes that she initiates with Joe Christmas seem to be a parody of some type of animalist behavior. She would start off by leaving him notes. This sexual construct is clearly an example of racial performance of black stereotypes. They are each enacting the sexual stereotypical roles of the white woman and the animalist black man, "Now and then she appointed trysts beneath certain shrubs about the grounds, where he would find her naked, or with her clothing half torn to ribbons upon her, in the wild throes of nymphomania, her body gleaming....she would be wild then, in the close,

breathing half dark without walls, with her wild hair, each strand of which would seem to come alive like octopus tentacles, and her wild hands and her breathing: 'Negro! Negro! Negro' "

(259-260)! In this passage Faulkner has successfully maligned Joanna's character. He has cast her as the sexual pursuer of Christmas, a man of a dubious identity which more than likely leans towards being black. Fully aware of his readers' antipathy toward black/white sexual relationships, Faulkner has depicted Joanna as, if not the originator of their sexual trysts, then surely as a very involved participant. This description illustrates Joanna as behaving as a wild animal wanting Joe Christmas to violently take her. The fact that they would sometimes have sex outdoors also constitutes this animalist analogy that Faulkner clearly wanted to depict.

Faulkner's vivid description reinforces gothic stereotypes concerning black male sexuality as being wild and untamed. It further connects Christmas to the supposed "savages of Africa" and also firmly establishes him as pervasively threatening to the innocence of white women. Again, Faulkner has positioned Joanna as inferior in character to the usual Southern white woman. Possibly that is why Faulkner very descriptively tells of her initiated sexual trysts with Christmas. It further positions Joanna Burden as alienated because she is participating in forbidden behavior for any decent white woman. So in one sense, Faulkner is suggesting that Joanna's status as the victim of a brutal rape is suspect because of her behavior with Christmas. So even though their last sexual encounter is clearly brutal, Burden's role as the victim is compromised.

The rape scene is illustrative that Christmas needs to dominate someone and throughout the narrative it seems to be women. According to literary critic Laura Bush:

Unfortunately, this rape scene, which occurs midway in the novel, also comes as no surprise to readers who have followed Joe's escalating equation of sex with violence: as a boy, Joe beats the defenseless 'womanshenegro' in the barn where he and four boys gang raped her...

Then 'without warning,' as a teenager, he hits his waitress girlfriend Bobbie and begins 'calling her his whore'...And finally, as a young man Joe beats an actual prostitute so badly that a policeman thinks she is dead. Such repeated incidences of brutality show that Joe's past, added to his ferocity upon Joanna, is an accumulated desire to rape any woman who confuses, frustrates, or insults him. (483)

Not only is Christmas' violence against women indicative of his complicated relationship with them in regards to his fractured identity, but most significantly, it highlights his propensity for violence in general. Excess is a gothic trope that is used to show the extremes in the narrative or character. Excess is used with great frequency in Southern gothic literature and Faulkner's works are overflowing with it. Joe Christmas' violence is so endemic that the reasons behind some of his violent attacks are submerged underneath the vicious brutality. His violence is not just seen with women but also with men as well but the violence with women is tinged with a sense of an overall misogyny.

So Christmas is shown as this extremely violent character towards women with his violence cresting with the rape of Joanna Burden. Faulkner contributes to the stereotype of the black male predator tainting the white woman. In the rape scene, Christmas is threatening and monstrous and when one runs his violent acts together, they seem to indicate that violence is symptomatic of his nature.

The vacillating text concerning whether Christmas is inherently bad or is a victim of social construction is emblematic of Faulkner's conflicting racial views, "Early on in his public pronouncements on race, Faulkner seemed to hold to the idea that black culture was by nature essentially separate and beautiful...Later, he apparently thought that black culture was essentially bad and would have to be dissolved. At times he seemed to think that the bad in black culture was the 'mark of oppression,' that is, the result of abuse by whites over centuries. At other times, he hinted that the bad was not induced but innate, a function of inheritance"

(Williamson 311). This ambivalence within Faulkner is illustrated through the characterization of Joe Christmas as he simultaneously uses him to critique and explain the South and support and analyze racial stereotypes.

Even though Joe Christmas is discussed among many people in the narrative and there are also those famous interior and stream of consciousness monologues that often characterize Faulkner's work, the reader never really gets to know him. That is indicative of the fact that Christmas never gets to know himself. The ambiguity that is depicted in his character by Faulkner indicates that there is never any definitive identification of Christmas. Doreen Fowler discusses his racial identity problems, "Joe's unique dilemma...-serves to underscore the problematics of a selfhood defined by exclusion. Joe ricochets back and forth between aggressor and victim, master and slave, white and black, but he can never get outside this dialectic: when he rejects one position as untenable, he knows no way to identify a self other than by assuming the opposite role" (8). Joe does reflect the middle position and can ricochet back and forth but many times it is not necessarily due to his will because Faulkner has others make judgments about him. This middle position that Joe maintains is the crux of the problems related to the passer because he does not know whom to please.

The passer, because of his/her white face and either black or biracial ethnicity, is a dichotomy within his/her very being. He or she embodies the dichotomy of the nation's polarization of black and white. Because Christmas does not fit into either of the two groups completely and he has no specific category, he can only be seen as others define him. Since he has no identity or category, in many ways he lives life beyond the rules of society but in the end he will be punished by that same judgmental society that is intent upon ostracizing him. Without a definable race, a known history, or a familial legacy, Christmas is rudderless, without an

anchor and at the mercy of a merciless community. He can only be the opposite of what is expected from him by whomever he is dealing with at the time, mainly because he has no idea of himself or who he is, and his identity is constantly being reshaped by others.

But this identification that the reader may find difficult also is internally conflicting for Christmas. Faulkner illustrates Christmas' desperate attempt to form an emotional connection with the black community even though internally he is void of any feelings for these black people, "Sometimes he would remember how he had once tricked or teased white men into calling him a negro in order to fight them, to beat them or be beaten; now he fought the negro who called him white. He was in the north now...He lived with Negroes,...He now lived as trying to breathe into himself the dark odor, the dark and inscrutable, thinking and being of Negroes" (225-226). Therefore, he is also at odds with the black community because sometimes they see him as white.

Faulkner is very similar to Twain in the sense that both Tom and Joe have violent tendencies and Joe has exhibited violent and monstrous behavior in numerous situations. But through the above quotes, Faulkner does give the reader a way to connect with Christmas' duality as he illustrates his internal war with his two respective identities. Christmas does not know what he actually is, but he seems to discourage people from assuming he is white so he can then engage in hostilities with them. He is at odds with himself and at odds with what his racial identity could be and what society assumes his racial identity is. In many ways Christmas reacts on instinct like a wild animal but there is interiority that Faulkner gives him in order for the reader to understand his racial confusion.

By demonstrating Christmas' different reactions to different groups, Faulkner is providing him with a certain amount of versatility in his negotiations with the particular group of

people that he is with at the time. Literary critic Thaddious Davis says, "In all his endeavors, Joe is an actor who plays to the audience of his choosing. He seeks the greatest possible reaction from that audience; for a white audience he uses the shock value of blackness appearing surreptitiously in their midst; for a black audience, he asserts the superiority of his whiteness" (149-150). Again Christmas is engaging in racial performance as he acts for each audience. Not only is Christmas assuming a role but so does every passer who chooses or does not choose to pass. Paul Marchand, Tom Driscoll, Clare Kendry and the unnamed narrator each take on roles in various ways whether they consciously or unconsciously pass. In order to pass successfully, one has to slip into a role without any one guessing that he/she is acting in any way artificially. This relates to the passer being similar to a ghost because of his invisibility. Since the passer takes on roles in order to successfully pass, whether intentional or not, he/she loses his/her core identity. Because most of the time he/she is spent being someone else or in conflict with who he/she is, the core identity gets usurped and, to some extent, becomes invisible even to the self.

Other aspects of Gothicism emerge when blackness is seen as a shadow connected to fanatical religion and racist northern views of blacks. Attaching the shadow metaphor to the fanatical religious view of the Joanna Burden's grandfather creates a mental stronghold of such magnitude that Joanna becomes obsessed with redeeming her soul through the salvation of Christmas' soul. What solidifies this idea, especially in the mind of a child, is its connection to religion. The fact that black people are innately born sinful and that because of this sin they are doomed to live a cursed and beleaguered life puts the damnation out of the hands of humans. This means that God has decreed this from above and that one's very salvation is at risk.

In the story of Joanna Burden, Faulkner also does a critique on Northerners' attempts to help the black Southern communities. In many ways, they are guilty of believing in the same ideology of inferiority that many Southerners believe. But one of the main differences is that Southerners feel the solution is total isolation, separation and deprivation, other than the exploitation of black labor. The Northern solution is to bring the blacks up from their negative circumstances, but not far enough to become full American citizens. Consistently, her sexual relationship with Joe and mistaken pregnancy also fall under these same circumstances. According to her family's beliefs, the act of miscegenation would make black people more and more white and possibly get rid of the curse by erasing the blackness. Through the character of Joanna Burden, Faulkner is surreptitiously questioning the motivation of some of the Northern abolitionists, insinuating that they are actually no different than Southern whites.

Because people are not just driven by their societal views, but by God's mandate, racism is made more intense. Not only is the racism displayed with more intensity, but the belief that the fate of blacks is decreed by God makes it unchanging and gives credence to the racial stereotyping within the community. When Joanna Burden starts to move from a decadent wildly sexual relationship with Christmas to a more religious and evangelical mode, Christmas begins to feel as though he is losing control over his life to Burden. Race performance is illustrated because Joanna needs Christmas to act the part of the Negro that she recognizes as such so that she can receive redemption. Even though in the process she would be saving Joe's soul as well as hers, she is more concerned with her own salvation. This comes after her mistaking her menopause for pregnancy. Christmas' need to resist someone having control over him or trying to change him causes him to react in very negative and violent ways.

This instinctual violence of Christmas seems to reify the stereotypes of the black man living by instinct and not as a thinking individual. Christmas clearly has a dark side that is motivated to extremes when he feels threatened. But in Christmas' mind what is threatening? His actions substantiate the belief of white southern society that the white woman needs to be protected from the black man because of his lust and violent intentions toward her. Even though Joanna is hated in the community because she is a "Northerner", in her death she becomes a symbol of the idealized white Southern woman.

The idolatry of Southern Womanhood victimized both black and white women. The lust that many of the slave masters had for black women meant they could easily be abused, and mistreated, without any recourse for legal address. The progeny of these forced encounters would also have the stain of being legally part of both groups, but condemned to live in a state of inferiority. The white Southern male elite would either deny that it was occurring or, as Sundquist says, imply that there was no emotional element involved. This ideology kept the Southern white woman on the symbolic pedestal of perfect womanhood. However, this did not always work that well for the white Southern woman either because she was then seen as a symbol and not as a person. This was problematic because many Southern white women were victimized by white Southern men as well (but not on the same level as black women) and had few resources to turn to in order to get help. Joanna Burden is now in the middle of this construct. While she is living, she is not seen as symbolic of white Southern womanhood, but is regarded as lowly as Joe Christmas. But in death she is now seen as the victimized Southern woman who must be avenged by the community.

Although Faulkner deftly illustrates the ambiguity, isolation and pain that resonate throughout Christmas' life, he most consistently demonstrates Christmas' strong propensity for

violence. At every turn, there is an incident of violence and brutality by Christmas, starting with the sadistic beating and rape of the womanshenegro and ending with the rape and murder of Joanna. Yet Faulkner differs from Twain in that he does give context to Christmas' actions in terms of providing illuminating flashbacks that offer some explanation or at least origin of his problems. However, Faulkner falls prey to playing into stereotypes when he depicts Christmas as impulsively violent.

The religious fanaticism, combined with the shrouded ambiguity, heightens the mystery around Joanna's death. Does he maliciously kill Joanna because she asks him to pray or is it a matter of self defense?

'Will you kneel with me?' she said. 'I don't ask it.' 'No,' he said. . . .

'Then he saw her arms unfold and her right hand come forth from beneath the shawl. It held an old style, single action, cap-and-ball revolver almost as long and heavier than a small rifle. . . . But the shadow of it and of her arm and hand on the wall did not waver at all, the shadow of both monstrous, the cocked hammer monstrous, backhooked and viciously poised like the arched head of a snake; it did not waver at all. And her eyes did not waver at all. They were as still as the round black ring of the pistol muzzle. But there was no heat in them, no fury. They were calm and still as all pity and all despair and all conviction. But he was not watching them. He was watching the shadowed pistol on the wall; he was watching when the cocked shadow of the hammer flicked away. (282-283)

Because this scene ends with Joanna Burden's tragic death, it is complicated by the extreme ambiguity that characterizes the whole novel. The reader is not sure if Christmas commits murder or is just defending himself. This incident with Joanna Burden comes after his violence towards Bobbi, the black prostitute and the rape of the womanshenegro^{xvi} and it increases the possibility that Burden's death was indeed murder at the hands of Christmas, instead of being an attempt to keep her from murdering him. So Christmas is more firmly established as violent and as more likely to commit murder than Joanna who has been characterized as a religious woman

who desires to redeem him from the curse of his blackness. Again, the passage starts with religion with Burden asking Christmas to kneel with her. He consistently used the fact that she was praying for him as his excuse to act aggressively towards her. So the actual circumstances of Joanna's death are never truly illuminated.

But still there is the ambiguity concerning the actions of Joe Christmas because many critics do not take Joanna brandishing a gun as evidence that she was a threat. Faulkner does to some degree reify the stereotype of the murderous black man by not giving a clear discussion of the death. However, because he posits the gun in Joanna's possession at first, Faulkner provides Christmas a chance to be seen as defending himself against her attempts to murder him. Literary critic Duvall discusses the controversy, "Just as when Christmas strikes McEachern, isn't he acting in what could be called self-defense, not murder? If Joe's intent seems violent and murderous, surely Joanna in her calm religious insanity is equally murderous, if not more so, since she makes the first deadly move" (142-143).

The reading of Christmas as capable of instinctual violence continues the gothic stereotype of him as a predator. But as Duvall points out, Faulkner does give him provocation. For instance, Christmas kills McEachern (his adopted father) after McEachern was physically attacking him. As for the murder of Joanna, Faulkner clearly situates the plot in such a way that Joanna pulls the gun on Christmas. Of course, even though Faulkner shows provocation and self-defense, murder in either case is not justified. However, in the case of Joanna and Joe, Faulkner does not dwell on Christmas' provocations but instead dwells on Christmas himself saying that Joanna should not have prayed over him and concentrates on the community going after Christmas in order to punish him for the murder.

Also, Duvall talks about how Joanna's descent into religious insanity could be a warning to Joe that she could actually kill him. Because of the toxic effect of religion on his life, Christmas rejects Joanna's appeals for redemption, and begins to think that she is out of control. Thaddious Davis discusses Joanna's insanity, "By her actions, Joanna establishes her basic emotional instability; she is, like Hines and possibly Hightower, mad. It is difficult to dismiss her previous conduct with Joe and accept her final moments as those of a rational individual. . . . Both struggle against, but ultimately succumb to, a power which they attribute to forces outside of themselves. . . ." (145-146). Faulkner depicts both of these characters as locked in internal and external battles. Not only do they have to deal with the dark forces of society on the outside, but they must struggle internally as well. Obviously, the outside forces intrude upon their internal world. They both have to fight what happened in their childhoods that helped to produce their ambivalent and complicated identities.

In the hunt for Christmas there is not going to be a gathering of evidence, an investigation or a trial; instead, it is going to be more like vigilante justice, which is symptomatic of how the South at the time sometimes deals with crimes supposedly committed by black people. The eventual lynching and castration of Joe Christmas are because he passed as white, deceiving and disrupting the social norm of white Southern America. This illustrates that mixing bloodlines cannot occur. According to literary critic Ralph Watkins, "...As a threat to the extant racial order, Christmas must either be contained within a racial category, thus restoring balance to the social system, or he must be destroyed. It is Christmas's ambiguity, placelessness, and situation that emanate danger. . . . 'He never acted like either a nigger or a white man. That was it. That was what made the folks so mad'" (331). Christmas represents the threat that is inherent in passing. The passer makes racial purity basically impossible. He or she is the living

embodiment of the country, a mixture of everyone. This is what makes the act of passing a threat to the community.

Religious fervor is seen in intensity in the last half of the novel when the character of Doc Hines and his story illustrate his connection to Joe. Doc Hines is another religious zealot who preaches about race, purity, God, and blacks as doomed. In another way Joanna and Doc Hines are doubles of each other because they both subscribe to the connecting issues of race, religion and salvation and the belief that they are the ones who hold the key to God's commands.

Doc Hines is not placed in the novel only to represent the religious intensity of the second half of the book; he is strategically there to connect the missing dots concerning Christmas' childhood. These dots are not completely connected by Faulkner in terms of answering the question of Christmas. So the answer to Christmas' racial dilemma is still not solved and he continues to be in a state of ambiguity. Literary critic Ralph Watkins discusses the characters of Doc Hines and Percy Grimm, "...both Doc Hines and Percy Grimm are instruments through which the orderliness of the South's fiction about race purity is protected from the threat and contagion of Joe Christmas's anomalous condition" (16).

Doc Hines is truly the monster of the narrative because he charted the eventual doomed road on which Christmas travels. Well aware that Christmas is his grandson, he still continues to say that Christmas should be lynched. Christmas is a monster to the community because just by his very being he violates sacred laws of blood separation.

In opposition to her husband, Mrs. Hines did go to see her grandson before he was savagely killed. Faulkner wanted to maintain the theme of Christmas' isolation to the point that the reader is not privy to their conversation. If Faulkner had given the reader access to the scene,

Christmas' character might have been more fully fleshed out instead of still simply reifying the black stereotype.

One of the last images of Christmas depicts him as committing a violent act, not an act that offers the possibility of his redemption. Gavin Stevens, who details the story about Mrs. Hines, also alludes to the fact that she might have helped or at least put the idea in Christmas' head that he should break out of prison. She suggests that he should go to Gail Hightower, a disgraced minister, to receive salvation. Even though Mrs. Hines seems to be twinned with Burden in that they both want to save Joe, there is a distinct difference in that Mrs. Hines wants salvation for him, not for herself.

Gail Hightower also doubles for Joe Christmas because like Christmas he is also ostracized by the community because of lurid tales concerning his dead wife and his possible relationship with his black cook. Also, Hightower like Joe is talked about in the town and is seen as someone who is transgressing the boundaries of behavior for southern society. Hightower, like Burden is looking for some sense of salvation but not in the racial sense. Instead Hightower is committed to staying in the community even in the face of extreme opposition. Unlike Christmas who resents any religious sentiment, Hightower is grounded in his religion and uses it to enable him to endure an otherwise unendurable situation.

Hightower represents another aspect of Gothicism and religion in relation to the community. The same community that feels such a moral outrage over Joe Christmas' relationship with Joanna Burden can through the same innuendo and gossip leave their minister disgraced and alone. The congregation slowly would leave, one after another but he still continued preaching as if he was possessed, "So he preached to them, as he had always preached: with that rapt fury which they had considered sacrilege and which those from the other churches

believed to be out and out insanity" (69). Hightower preached the same as he always had but the community had changed toward him and did not see him as a true representative of God.

The interracial connection between the two men is another clear indication of the connection between their stories. The rumors of his wife's extramarital activities and suicide are said to be Hightower's fault because he supposedly had been involved with a black woman. Because of his own failings in his life and ostracism by the Jefferson community, he could understand Christmas, " 'When Hightower is told that Christmas has 'black blood, 'which strongly suggests that he will be lynched, Hightower responds differently from the rest of the community. His comment, 'Think, Byron; what it will mean when the people — if they catch . . . Poor man. Poor mankind'" (77), suggests his disapproval of lynching and, more importantly, his inability to do anything to change this seeming unalterable fate" (Al-Barhow 64).

Later, Gavin Stevens' provides a lengthy and biased supposition as to the warring identities within Christmas' soul, "It was the white blood which sent him to the minister, . . . Then I believe that the white blood deserted him for the moment. Just a second, a flicker, allowing the black to rise in its final moment and make him turn upon that on which he had postulated his hope of salvation. It was the black blood which swept him by his own desire beyond the aid of any man swept him up into that ecstasy out of a black jungle where life has already ceased. . . ." (448-449).

This passage is reminiscent of a passage in Mark Twain's *Puddn'head Wilson* in which Tom Driscoll is behaving in two different manners. When he finds out that he is part black, he begins acting in a defeated and vulnerable manner because he thinks people can see the stain. When Tom remembers that he is still visually white and that no one else knows his true identity, he goes back to his original personality of the ne'er do well. In some sense, Gavin Stevens'

vivid description of the battle between Christmas' white blood vs. his black blood resembles Roxy's accusation that Tom's criminal and immoral activities are the result of ". . .the nigger in you". Steven mostly attributes Christmas' positive actions to the white blood and the negative actions to the black blood when he tells his version of Christmas' final actions leading up to and including his death. For example, Stevens says that, ". . . Because the black blood drove him first to the negro cabin. And then the white blood drove him out of there, as it was the black blood which snatched up the pistol and the white blood which would not let him fire it" (449). These words emphasize Faulkner's desire to allow the triumph of the white blood over the black blood in matters of morality. Ultimately, both Twain and Faulkner permit their mixed blood characters to fall prey to their black blood.

Similarly, in both of these narratives there is a personification of blood in a war with itself. Gavin Stevens is right that the war between the two conflicting sides of Christmas (depicted as the war between the bloods) was the cause of his death but not because there actually was an evil side and a good side, but more because society felt threatened by the mixture of the bloods which as Thaddious Davis said made him both black and white.

These warring identities are constantly staging internal battles within Christmas. Because he does not have a concrete identity, he is vulnerable to morphing into anything or anyone in order to escape his anchorless and groundless world. And because of this lack of grounding and society's view of his race, he is a victim of society. Secondly, a reader could conclude from Stevens' speech that Christmas' victimhood and death were inevitable because he had a moral defect caused by his black blood. According to literary critic Bethany Lam, "Stevens correctly diagnoses Joe's struggle as a lifelong contest between the two warring races within him, but as a white man and a part of the white-biased society that killed Joe, he assigns moral values to the

two bloods"(13). Even though readers might have empathized or felt sympathy for Joe as they realized that this marginalization by society might have victimized him, the stereotypes are so securely intact that they might still view him as the inherently threatening black man, paralleling the vampire image. As the vampire is the one that is isolated from society and also pursued as the evil scourge to be destroyed, so is Joe because he can pass and threaten the rules of society. Percy Grimm and the community are after him for his supposed continued pursuit of white women. They will kill to insure that the laws of blood are not violated. Since Faulkner does not have anyone else go against Gavin Stevens' nonsensical tirade about blood, it stands as the last word on Christmas.

Faulkner makes sure that the reader understands that Christmas' worst sin was treading the racial lines and being with a white woman. As the vampire is killed by a stake through the heart by the men of society for defiling white women, Christmas is castrated, symbolizing society's determination to halt any further progeny from Christmas, the passer. As Percy Grimm, who hunts Christmas down after his jailbreak and kills him, exclaims, " 'Now you'll let white women alone, even in hell,' he said. But the man on the floor had not moved. He just lay there, with his eyes open and empty of everything save consciousness, and with something, a shadow, about his mouth. For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eye" (464-465). Christmas in death is able to find a peace and a freedom that the community will never find because they are trapped by their social and racial rules. Christmas becomes the sacrifice needed in order to restore order and normality to their world.

Faulkner, as stated earlier, simultaneously promotes and combats racial stereotypes. All of the gothic tropes that he uses are critiquing race, Christmas, and the South. Christmas is

clearly seen in the novel as a doomed character who has been victimized by society and, as the reader finds out later, by his own family. Faulkner does give context to Christmas' angst which is sorely missing from Twain's *Pudd'n'head Wilson*. By creating Christmas as an ambiguous character not just to society, but also to himself, Faulkner made him unpredictable. His illustration of Christmas' isolation and disconnect from the community somewhat counters the stereotype that he was a black predator preying on the white community.

However, Faulkner, committed to demonstrating the problematic and angst ridden life of a product of miscegenation eventually continues the portrayal of the negative stereotypes. Whereas Twain dealt with the issue of property, Faulkner goes to the heart of the other half of the racial laws which is miscegenation. However, he complicates the construct of tainting the purity of the white woman by his use of a Northern white woman. Faulkner illustrates the rage and anger of the community when it discovers that the man they assumed was white is really black. They are furious that they have allowed this black man in their midst and treated him as a white man. Through the use of gothic tropes such as ambiguity, isolation and confusion, Faulkner provides a context for Christmas' actions. He does not consider Christmas as bad, but instead as an extremely tragic figure, "...I don't think he was bad, I think he was tragic. And his tragedy was that he didn't know what he was and would never know, and that to me is the most tragic condition that an individual can have---to not know who he was"(118).

An interpretation of Faulkner's words: I do not think he is bad, but because he is the victim of man's poor choice to indulge in mixed blood relationships, he tragically exists. In other words, Faulkner wants his readers to be forewarned about the danger, the threat and the tragic inevitability of miscegenation. Once the child exists, there is nothing in life that can save

him, he is doomed from birth to a life of immeasurable tragedy because the white society has deemed him neither black nor white, a mistake that should never be.

In validation of this view, Faulkner persists in depicting certain black male predator stereotypes by continuing to have Christmas act in a violent manner, giving the reader an ambiguous rendering of the death of Joanna Burden and refusing to offer him redemption by showing the scene with his grandmother. Although Faulkner finally gives context to Christmas' life through the inclusion of his grandfather and grandmother in the story, he still ends the novel with the words and ideas of the white community who clamors for his death. The reader never gets to see that emotional moment with his blood family to construct a better whole picture of Joe Christmas.

Faulkner also uses gothic symbols of excess to show how religious fervor can be used to justify racism and murder. The images and ideas of damnation, hell and God's retribution are used to further convict Christmas in the eyes of white society. Throughout the novel, Faulkner employs gothic tropes of ambiguity, excess, fanaticism, darkness, and violence to ring the bell against miscegenation. These gothic tropes give unique context to the passing figure as Faulkner illustrates the South as culpable in its treatment of race, but at the same time he does not completely tear down these stereotypes. Joe Christmas, denied the right to know his true self and disallowed the natural and basic love of family, is caught in the web of white society's fear of the mixing of black and white blood. He is the living product that must be destroyed. Faulkner clearly believes that Christmas is not bad, but he is worse than that, he is tragic. Ultimately Faulkner, through the creation of Joe Christmas, has symbolized the quintessential tragic mulatto.

Chapter 4

*Imitation of Life:
Delilah and Annie:
Mothers of Gothic Darkness*

⁴The construct of the passing character in literature leaves the visual to the imagination of the reader but once the passing character becomes cinematic, the entire image of the passer is in the hands of the director who provides the viewer with a visual image that reflects his/her interpretation. Definitively, film brings the visibility of the passer into place, encouraging the audience, depending upon whether it is black or white, to reflect the norm of its racial group. Often well aware of a black who passes, blacks often eschew the passer, labeling him/her as a traitor to the black race. Therefore, the visual often empowers the black viewers to mount a battle against the passer, calling for a "return to blackness" conclusion. In this case, the white audience, because the visual of the passer's ability to "pass as Caucasian calls a white person's own seemingly unblemished whiteness into question," (Schlossberg, 6) actually joins forces with the black audience in rooting for the "return to blackness" ending.

Both groups are threatened by the passer's ability to assume the white identity and, therefore, to re-write his/her story. Because of this powerful dynamic of the visual, the depiction of the passer is brought more clearly into focus, aided and abetted by all the visual resources of film, such as design, lighting, and, often music. When film is the vehicle for the passer's narrative, gothic features are heightened through the visually precise and insightful

⁴ The endnotes are on page 258, note 12

shades of color and lighting and the optical tension of repression and excess. I contend that Stahl and Sirk challenge racial stereotypes through the predominant use of visual gothic tropes or symbols in constructing the passing figure. Through film, Stahl and Sirk enhance the innately gothic symbols and tropes of alienation, doubles, entrapment, invisibility and repression.

Even though issues of race have been seen in films for decades, there are only a handful of films that have ever dealt with passing as a story line. Hence, there are two films that have significantly impacted the visionary lens through which racial and identity issues are viewed. They are both based on the Fannie Hurst novel *Imitation of Life*: the 1934 version by John Stahl and the Donald Sirk's 1959 depiction.

The movie is about two women, one white and one black, who meet accidentally. They each have a little girl and decide to move in together to help each other out financially, and both versions depict mother and daughter conflicts. In both films, the white mother becomes the actual doer, the outward instrument from which the financial success stems. However, in the 1934 version the monetary success is based on the pancake mix of Delilah's (the black woman) family recipe. Whereas in the 1958 version the white woman's acting career provides the money. Subsequently, the black mother assumes the domestic position, the housekeeper and ultimately, because of her race, she is likened to the mammy. Unfortunately, there were few job opportunities for black women. Accordingly, Dr. Ann E. Kaplan comments on the disparity of occupational choices for women such as Delilah and Annie: "Whether or not she was working - and the black woman usually was working - she occupied the "maternal", taking care of white people's children, bodies, and houses as well as her own. What else was there for the black woman to be in the 1930s and beyond" (168)?

In both films, the white/mother daughter relationship is ultimately complicated because the daughter develops feelings for the man in her mother's life. And, of course, the black mother/daughter relationship in both versions is fraught with the issue of the white-looking daughter's attempt to pass as white. Unable to accept the narrowly restrictive life of blackness, she eventually denies her mother and her black heritage.

Although the main plots of both versions are almost identical, Stahl and Sirk imaged certain elements of the film in distinctly different ways due to the times and each director's choices for his film. One main distinction, of course, is that the 1934 version is in black and white and the 1959 film is in color. This distinction allowed Sirk the advantage of using color to influence the audience in a vibrant and boldly dramatic way or to use it in a subtle and implied manner. Of course, since this paper analyses the use of gothic tropes, the impact of the dark shadows and silhouettes cast prominently by the use of black and white film is critiqued along with the use of color as effectively generating a particular response or reaction from the audience. Therefore, both films employ gothic symbolism to critique the construction of race as a thruway to racial stereotyping. They both use the gothic idea of the passing figure as alienated from society and blackness as evil.

Similarly, both films divert from Hurst's novel by depicting the passing character as returning to blackness when she attends the hugely excessive funeral for her mother. This scene accents the efforts of both directors to illustrate the return to blackness element that is often associated with "passing" stories of that time period and to also compensate for some racial issues unaddressed by Hurst in the novel, "Her remorse at her mother's funeral was invented (in the novel, she moves with her husband to Bolivia and never learns about her mother's death. . . . Even Hurst herself admitted to readers of *Opportunity* that 'there are many aspects of

[the film adaptation] that fall short or deviate or even malign my original theme...." (Bemstein 156).

This was a boldly daring storyline, especially when the 1934 version was playing in the theaters. At that time, no matter how covertly couched, the subject of miscegenation was taboo and universally banned from filmdom by the Production Code Administration of 1934 which was formed to monitor the making of Hollywood films. When bringing this novel to the screen, considerable thought was given as to how the white public would embrace these controversial film scenes while simultaneously attempting to avoid censorship or total halting of the film by the Production Code Administration.

This commentary about the difference between the film and novel illustrates the differences between the two mediums. In the novel, the words are tempered or heightened according to the reader's sensitivities. But the stark visuals of film must be handled by the director as he incorporates the artisan of lighting, design, and special effects. These visuals help to create the gothic atmosphere that surrounds both films as they depict the psychological terror and confusion going on with the passing characters. Therefore, the funeral is added to the film, although it was not in the book, as the ultimate concession to the audience. It visually confirms the fact that the passer cannot be seen as successful in her assumed life; she must return to her black roots in order to allay the fears of white society and to avoid alienating herself from the black community.

The passing figure has always been seen as tragic. Because she/he looked white but was deemed black, this figure was cast as the tragic mulatto/a. Especially in the movies, the tragic mulatta was one of the standard/major stereotypes of blacks along with the mammy, the coon and the black buck. According to the black film historian Donald Bogle, "usually the mulatto is

made likeable---even sympathetic ...and the audience believes that the girl's life could have been productive and happy had she not been a 'victim of divided racial inheritance' " (9). In the film this character became the living embodiment of the war between the bloods because her mind is forever conflicted because of innate racial division. The tragic mulatta has an inherent gothic sense because in many ways the mulatto resembles the film noir protagonist because the character is "a tragic hero with a tragic flaw, a character usually beset by hasty decisions, [and] obsessive behavior..." (Meehan 8). The tragic mulatta character's innate flaw stems from the confusion and ambiguity of her mixed blood lines and subsequent split identities of black and white. Torn between her desire to access the world of white opportunities and her need to maintain loyalty to her birth race, she often acts impulsively and carelessly. This construct of the tragic mulatta helps to reinforce the thought that the product of interracial relationships is doomed from birth and might serve as a possible warning as a deterrent to black/white interaction.

The Casting of Peola

Stahl was the first director that wanted to turn Fannie Hurst's novel into a film. However, 1934 was a particularly racially tense time in American history, a time also characterized by the beginning of real black empowerment and black media. A black elite and educated class was growing and many black leaders were beginning to be strongly concerned with the image that was being put forth of blacks in the movies. John Stahl, unlike Donald Sirk, was under heavy scrutiny by civil rights organizations such as the NAACP.

One of the first things that Stahl did was advertise for an African American actress who could play a passing character. He advertised in many of the black newspapers. One of the announcements said, "Universal Still Looks for White-Negro Girl: Director John Stahl conducts Strange Search for *Imitation of Life*'---the paper reported, 'Director John M. Stahl requires in the leading role a young girl who must be of Negro blood but must be absolutely white, a 'throwback' of several generations to which there has at some time been a white father' " (128)! This advertisement indicates two significant issues concerning the representation of racial passing on celluloid. First, the title of the advertisement refers to the character as a white-negro and calls the search "strange", simultaneously revealing and condoning the mulatto as being seen by society as alien and unreal. The advertisement illustrates the gothic at work within a society that sees the mulatto/a as something foreign and tainted.

Secondly, the comment, "a 'throwback' of several generations to which there has at some time been a white father" indicates that any supposedly black person who is light enough to pass is the byproduct of the ongoing practice of miscegenation. Obviously, Stahl and Universal are fully aware that any black person who can pass fully as white does have to some degree white relatives somewhere prominently in the family. Even though both films readily at the beginning, established a denial of Peola's/Sara Jane's father being white, Stahl instead counted on the visual of Peola "looking white". In other words, he knew at that time and period, the white audience would never accept Peola's father being white; he could again only "look white".

So the casting of Peola reflected the dichotomous situation of race and miscegenation in the country during 1934: racial authenticity vs. societal denial. In the following quote, Stahl discusses his dilemma, "This girl is the daughter of a colored mammy and this point obviously makes it impossible to use an established screen player or, in fact, any Girl of Caucasian birth...

the actress... 'though of colored birth' had to look so 'Caucasian' that even her own lover would not realize the secret of her birth' " (129).

The movie ad and John Stahl's interview illustrate defining points about the stereotype of blackness and miscegenation. For instance, in the 1930's at the height of Jim Crow laws in the south and racial friction in the north, clearly Stahl, a white director, knew that miscegenation laws were being broken. By asserting confidence that there is such an actress of "colored birth" who could totally deceive her lover of her true racial identity, Stahl implicates himself as a co-conspirator with the rest of white America who knew that these racial lines, no matter how rigidly enforced, were being crossed every day.

Eventually, he ended up casting a black actress by the name of Fredi Washington. This was very important in terms of the depiction of the mulatta because Stahl actually allowed Washington to help create her character so she would not be drawn so stereotypically. Fredi Washington shared Peola's sense of an identity crisis but not in the same way, "In some respects, Washington had been Peola but without the angst or the self-loathing. 'She looked like *white*. She had skin like Dresden china and blue eyes,' recalled New York actress Maude Russell. Once, when Washington had gone on a call for a role, the producer told her, 'I expected to see a colored girl. You look like Joan Crawford' " (Boyle 129-130).

Delilah/Bea: The Two Working Women

The movie opens with the immediate introduction of the two main characters, two women whose basic and shared need to make a living overwhelms their most obvious difference: one is white and the other is black. Bea Pullman, played by Claudette Colbert, is a young widow

who has taken over her husband's pancake syrup selling business and hires Delilah, played by Louise Beavers, as a maid.

Throughout Delilah and Bea's first conversation, Peola has been standing outside the house at the door totally unnoticed. This begins her depiction as literally the outsider looking in. Peola, as the ugly secret, is left on the doorstep while Delilah feels Bea out to see if she would take her and her daughter. When Delilah introduces Peola to Bea, she immediately explains Peola's light skin by telling her that Peola's father was real light and it was the bane of his existence. From the beginning, Peola is cast as not only an outsider but also as an albatross around Delilah's neck because she contends that Peola is the reason that some people will not hire her. Peola is a problem for Delilah because of her white skin. Because the visual of Peola looms prominently, Delilah feels compelled to make sure that Bea knows that Peola's father was not white.

The problem of race and her place plague Peola from the moment that she is in introduced. Here the first sense of the gothic appears as it is reflected in the lack of place and ambiguous race that haunt Peola's childhood. This is also a gothic effect because in many gothic texts children do not feel safe or comfortable in their world. The gothic can illustrate that the world and childhood are problematic terrain. According to David Punter, "childhood is not a pretty sight: it is the locale of the first traumatic encounters with experience, the place from which one is born into the world screaming. And there are really no ways out: the search for the true self... is a quixotic journey towards a greater devastation. Any perception of truth comes too late and usually all it demonstrates is the misguidedness of past action..." (143).

As mentioned, because of societal issues with miscegenation, Stahl and the screenwriters insisted that Peola's father was not white (insuring that no miscegenation was involved, at least

none in this generation). Even though in reality the parents were not white, there still must be a significant amount of white ancestry in her lineage. But this cannot be publicly acknowledged because, as previously mentioned, Stahl and Universal had to comply with strict codes that banned the depiction of miscegenation in films. Concerning Peola's immediate outsider status, literary critic Adrienne Johnson Gosselin says, "...Peola bears the mark of sexual taboo.

Delilah defines her daughter immediately, explaining to Bea that Peola's father was a light-skinned coloured man, who, we learn later, was driven to 'misery' by his light complexion. It is Delilah's definition that legitimizes Peola, as well as intimates that, like Delilah, Peola knows her place" (53).

Delilah's Nativity/Peola's Struggle

After Delilah is hired she becomes the symbol of the mammy. Bea decides to go into business selling her syrup with Delilah's pancakes. However, Bea does not discuss this decision with Delilah; she just informs Delilah, indicating that Bea does not consider Delilah as an actual person who has the right to participate in the decision making process. A defining incident of Delilah's compliance as the mammy figure occurs when she eagerly accommodates Bea's command to smile in order for Bea to illustrate the obliging mammy figure on a billboard for her business. Delilah is so used to acting only on instructions that she continues to smile long after Bea finishes discussing the billboard. She only stops smiling after Bea notices that she is still smiling and laughingly tells her that she can stop smiling.

First, Bea's decision to frame Delilah in the advertisement as an Aunt Jemima stereotype conjures up an image of a smiling black mammy face with no other reason for being than to

serve. Calling her Aunt Delilah harkens back to the southern racist tradition of whites conveniently and without true sentiment referring to older black women as Aunt or Auntie. Referring to them this way requires no personalization or real sense of humanity, yet it presents a false sense of endearment. Immediately the tag of aunt is added to Delilah's name as she becomes the visual image of Bea's restaurant, standing there smiling and cooking pancakes. Eventually, Delilah becomes the living persona of the Aunt Jemima caricature. As Delilah successfully inhabits this non-existent person, she also becomes the gothic image of the double hauntingly depicting a fictional creation more so than her own true self. She is standing at the window trying to look like the woman on the sign. The person and the image merge, resulting in the two identities becoming one so blended that Delilah becomes subsumed under the fake one.

As much as Peola symbolizes the desire to go beyond racial categories in order to create her identity in defiance of society, Delilah tends to want to stay mired in the stereotypical mammy image. After Bea's success with the restaurant, Bea offers Delilah 20% of the profits. However, Delilah's response is a caricature of the mammy whose only goal is to care for her white family. She refuses the money and when Bea questions her about her refusal, citing that this money would enable her to buy a home of her own, Delilah adamantly insists that she prefers to live with Miss Bea and take care of Bea and Jessie instead.

Not only is Delilah excessively devoted and committed to Bea and Jessie, she is also neglectful of her own child. The black domestic has often been accused of neglecting her own children for her white charges. Delilah seems to definitively fit that image. She gives no thought to Peola, her needs or desires. The chance to own one's home is considered one of the most desired features of the American Dream. Most people work and struggle throughout their lives to realize their dream of home ownership. Yet in compliance with her prototypical role of the

mammy, Delilah is separated from mainstream society. Instead, Delilah wants to play the ever present black servant, constantly fixated on serving Bea and Jessie. Not only does this play into the stereotypical image of the mammy but also that of the black person as being less intelligent. What reasonably intelligent person would refuse monetary profits in lieu of being a maid with no life of her own?

Instead Delilah tells her to put it aside for the grand funeral she has always wanted. Here again is a stereotypical image of blacks not desiring or needing anything on this earthly world but instead are content to wait patiently for their heavenly reward. So often Blacks are seen as being content with believing that there are no earthly pleasures or rewards for them so they adopt the "pie in the sky" attitude which means they feel that earthly injustices must be endured because they will gain recompense through death. Death in this instance takes on a gothic significance because Delilah inverts its usual meaning. For her, it is something to look forward to and to plan.

But Delilah's refusal of her own home is also a denial of a home for Peola. Delilah never considers that establishing a home in a black neighborhood might at this point in Peola's formative years help her deal with her identity issues. Delilah's choice to continue living with Bea insures that Peola is not just an outsider in the outside world but is also an outsider in her mother's life. Here is the gothic trope of alienation and isolation. Her concerns, wants and needs are secondary to Miss Bea and Jessie. Stahl made sure that Delilah had money whether she wanted it or not. She was committed to Bea by choice.

The Threat of Blackness/Mother

Peola's first issues with the complexities of her racial identity are seen after the two women bond over their children. Peola and Jesse enter the restaurant with Peola yelling, "I'm not black, I'm not Black, I won't be black. She called me black. Jesse called me Black." Delilah goes to Peola and carries her in her arms and Bea scolds Jesse and tells her to apologize to Peola. Delilah's response to Peola is "You gotta learn to take it, might just as well begin now." Delilah also does not want Jesse to apologize, "Ain't no good in that." Peola's response is to blame her mother, "You, you, it's cause you're black. You make me black. I won't be black" (Stahl). In this scene, the use of gothic symbolism makes a dramatic entrance and denotes a significance to the passer in this scene when Peola situates blackness as a gothic horror that she does not want connected to her. In her mind her mother embodies this horror which threatens her wellbeing. She feels that she is connected to blackness through her mother so if she distances herself from her mother, she can erase the stain of blackness in her life.

At this young age Peola realizes that the only obstacle to her having Jesse's life is her mother. She is the only reason blackness is attached to her. The film does not let Peola directly state why she wants to run away from blackness. According to literary scholar E. Ann Kaplan: "Peola's intense desire to be white exposes, by implication, how terrible it is to be black in North America. But this 'terribleness' is something that the film refuses to confront directly (166). In her tirade Peola keeps repeating the phrase, "I don't want to be black" because she feels that she has a choice in the matter. Because of her white skin somewhere deep down she knows that she does not have to accept blackness and that she can choose to be white. But the film never lets

her verbalize why blackness is such a problem. At this early age, she realizes to a small degree that race and identity for some people can be malleable. The only barrier is her mother whose visual blackness becomes Peola's gothic horror. As she tries to escape blackness, it hauntingly pursues her in the shape and form of her black mother.

Within passing texts is the criticism of how societies see race. Henry Louis Gates, in discussing Todorov's behavioral definition, says, "His definition depends upon *physical characteristics* rather than upon the purported nature of a transcendent 'metaphysical' *character*. The racist's error is one of *thought*, not merely, or only, of behavior" (404). The reason that passing succeeds and can even be performed by a young child is the importance that society gives to physical characteristics. If one fits the physical characteristics of a particular race, then one is that race.

Because of these racial categories, passers can remake themselves within these constructs. According to Carlyle Van Thompson, "Passing embracing whiteness and denies blackness. Passing embraces possibilities of advancement and allows movement away from racial socioeconomic restrictions. Passing fulfills the desire for the power and possibility of blackness being cast in a predominant white role. Consequently, passing epitomizes the paradox between the reality of blackness and the appearance of whiteness; passing is the trick or the joke of illusion" (3-4). So because of the dichotomy between what someone appears to be and what he/she is, the passer assumes more power from this construction.

Actually, as far as the film depicts, Delilah is the only form of blackness in Peola's world. Inclusive to and surrounding her life is mostly whiteness. She lives in a house that is in a white neighborhood, a house that has a three to one ratio of white looking people to black looking people. Growing up in an environment in which she looks like the majority, Peola has

naturally assumed a sense of proprietary to the same kind of life that she has been exposed to on a daily and intimate basis. So instead of attempting to conform to the alien and less-than world of blackness, Peola claims the familiar and opportunistic world of whiteness.

Likewise, in the next scene the audience learns that Peola has been passing at school. Unaware that Peola, whether deliberately or unintentionally, is considered white at school, Delilah goes to the school to bring Peola her raincoat so that she will not get wet in a heavy rainstorm. The following scenario takes place: Delilah approaches a principle first to find out the right room. Through the window of the classroom the camera focuses on Delilah talking to the principle. She then goes into the classroom to tell the teacher that she is looking for her daughter. Believing that there are no black students at the school, the teacher denies that Delilah's daughter is there. The teacher obviously cannot reconcile the two visually opposing images: black Delilah as the mother of seemingly white Peola. She has been strongly inculcated by society to accept the visual, and, therefore, immediately rejects Delilah's claim of being Peola's mother.

Therefore, if the teacher is having issues, then it is obvious that Peola would also have problems. Peola sees Delilah in the window and immediately registers the fear of being outed. She quickly picks up a book and tries to hide her face. Again, as the mother comes to the door, the image of gothic horror is personified. According to Jeremy Butler, "the rectangular shapes: the classroom windows and the blackboard and map...create a conventional stasis or equilibrium" (Jump cut). This conventional status is where Peola experiences the fear of being outed as black and symbolizes also her trapped status. The visual medium of film can create this sense of terror and entrapment more so than the literary. As stated earlier in this study, one of

the major gothic symbols is the idea of inversion, when good is portrayed as evil. For Peola, the mother now symbolizes fear and terror, instead of love and support.

As the classroom scene continues, Peola runs out of the classroom with her head down. Delilah's lack of sensitivity for her daughter's feelings is clearly apparent but when they return home, Delilah tries to comfort her. Significantly, this scene outwardly acknowledges "passing" for the first time in the film. Peola is engaging in active passing and is now deliberately separating herself from her mother. Even though Peola believes that she needs distance from her mother, she cannot help but feel ashamed about her attempt to pass. As a child she knows that as she pushes blackness away, simultaneously she is pushing her mother away as well. Peola does not want Bea to know that she is passing because she is ashamed of what she is doing even though she feels compelled to do so. She is compelled to find balance between her white appearance and her black limitations.^{xvii}

Yet Peola's admonishment to her mother to not tell Bea about her passing illustrates Peola's conflicted feelings: on one hand, she desperately needs to establish her white identity yet she is also embarrassed that she might be judged negatively by Bea. Not only is she having problems situating herself racially, but she is still experiencing the feelings of a child who wants to belong. She is still the outsider who stood on Bea Pullman's doorstep. Delilah says she would not have "done it" on purpose but common sense should have told her this was a mistake to embarrass Peola at school. Again, this is a hint towards Delilah's inability, whether intentional or not, to understand Peola's identity issues.

Peola's Adulthood and her Racial Doubles

Because of the successful sales of Delilah's pancake mix and Bea's business acumen, she and Delilah are now financially well off, but Peola's doubles are still following her. When Bea has a very fancy dinner party and even though Delilah and Peola are dressed up, they do not attend the party. No one has told them that they cannot attend but they instinctively know that it is not their place. Again, Delilah does not seem to care about her second place status and how it affects Peola's identity issues. Attempting to distract Peola from the party upstairs, Delilah attempts to coax Peola to dance with her. However, Peola can't get her mind off her problems and they glaringly gloom at her as she stands in the mirror and looks at her double, "Peola: "Look at me. Aren't I not white? Isn't there a white girl there" (Stahl)? Again, Delilah approaches Peola in her extreme naiveté, wondering what is wrong with her daughter when she is fully aware of Peola's frustration about her blackness. Peola is restless because she is near a party that she knows she cannot attend because of her race. Her intellectualism refuses to allow her to benignly accept her relegated inferior position as a black person. Her strong inclination to challenge the status quo of her life is in direct contrast to her mother's acceptance of black inferiority. Delilah mistakenly thinks that not confronting the issue of race will enable Peola to eventually reconcile herself to her black identity.

Doubling is the gothic trope that Stahl uses in this scene by way of the mirror. When Peola looks in the mirror and the image of a white girl stares back at her, she is facing one of her doubles within. As her mother is in the room near her, Peola is caught visibly between her white and black doubles. On one side is her mother who represents the living manifestation of her

internal blackness but in the mirror she sees the other half of her identity. In the mirror she sees her white twin. She is trapped by her two reflections that illustrate her image in two vastly different ways. Peola's need to construct an identity for herself which parallels her facial features and skin color is a challenge to the racial hierarchy system. If she can identify herself with whiteness, she can achieve opportunities that are denied her as black.

When Peola looks into the mirror, she sees who she wants to be and does not accept from Delilah that she cannot be the white girl in the mirror. According to literary critic Miriam Thaggert, "Peola is black, but cannot reconcile her black self, with the white image in the mirror or on the screen" (487). Thaggert is accurate; there is a problem with reconciling the two images, but her definition of Peola as black is based on society's view of Peola and its definition of blackness.

Peola is fighting against this because she wants the right to create her own self. Her conflict is that she does not want other people's construction of race to define her. This scene caused conflict with Fredi Washington because she felt that it should be clearly delineated that society's view of blackness contributed to Peola's problem, not that she wanted to be white for the sake of whiteness itself, but for the opportunities that it would afford her, " 'I always felt,' said Washington, 'that Peola didn't want to be white. She wanted white opportunities, the very same chance at life that her white friend Jesse, who she had grown up with, will now have as an adult.' That's the way Washington wanted to play the scene" (Bogle 137).

Washington felt these words in the mirror scene were too close to home because she has lived in Peola's world. She understood Peola's confusion and struggle. Her feelings about the mirror scene point to Peola's desire for white opportunities, clearly establishing that Peola truly believes that claiming her white identity is the only means for attaining these opportunities. As

depicted in Senna's text, even in a more equal world, (certainly not completely) there are still identity issues because of the fact that society wants to categorize people based on what it sees. So Peola's issues could still be present even in current society. However, there is an unconsciousness to Washington's words when she says this is too close to home. Does Washington have feelings that go beyond just being denied the same opportunities, such as conflicts concerning the dichotomy between her visual appearance and her racial categorization?

In response to Peola's identity issues, Delilah also tells Peola that she needs to let go and stop battling with herself. Of course, again is the gothic trope of doubleness and the struggle with an internal "other". Delilah does describe Peola's struggle correctly but still does not realize that Peola cannot stop the struggle until she makes the choice that defines her. Since the struggle is internal, external changes like going to a black school and being amongst her so-called own are not necessarily going to help. Her whiteness will always be there every time she sees herself in the mirror. As much as she cannot run away from blackness, neither can she run away from whiteness.

Images and Construction of Blackness/Darkness

In the scenes right after the party the construct of race and its interpretation by others in society are intensely palpable. At first, Delilah and Bea discuss her male suitor; then the conversation turns to Peola and Delilah tells Bea about her continued identity issues. Bea suggests that Peola should go to an all black college down South where she will not have to deal "with the problem of white all the time" (Stahl). This suggests that Peola's problem is totally

external versus internal. However, that is not the case and her problem cannot be solved by just being around more people who look like her mother.

Since Peola looks white, she does not see herself as black. Her double in the mirror validates her whiteness, not her blackness. Yet when Delilah goes to her room to convince her to go to the black college, the change in lighting is obvious. When Delilah is talking to Bea, there is brightness to the lighting but when Delilah enters Peola's room, she is lying on the bed staring into darkness, contributing to the gothic ambience. Darkness gives the audience a sense of foreboding and uneasiness as we see Peola staring into nothingness, "Delilah: 'Ain't nothin' to be ashamed of ...Meet your cross halfway won't be near so heavy. Go amongst your own. Quit battling your little head....Open up and say Lord I's bowed my head. He made you black, honey. Don't be telling him his business. Accept it honey...for your mammy, your mother dear" (Stahl).

Immediately Delilah situates herself as the mammy. Again, she accommodates this stereotype, while she does not seem to recognize the distinction in her two roles. She is a mammy to Jessie but is a mother to Peola. By calling herself a mammy, she is illustrating her difference from Bea. Peola, again representing resistance to the black stereotype, does not want her to use the word mammy. She knows how this defines her and Delilah within racial stereotyping of society. Delilah is also confusing her roles with Jesse and Peola. To Peola, she is her mother; therefore, she is irritated when Delilah refers to herself as her mammy. Peola does not want to call her mother by the name of mammy. Mammy is a name given by white people to black women who cared for white children. Delilah and Peola share a mother/daughter bond, not a mammy/child bond.

The final point concerning this scene is linked similarly to Faulkner. Just as Faulkner links God to the racial construction of blackness, so does Delilah, albeit differently. In contrast, Delilah interprets the comparison of Peola running away from blackness as running away from God. She tells Peola that she has to accept that she is black because God made her that way. In actuality God made her white and society has constructed her as black. As Peola matures, she realizes that the only way that she can escape from the hauntingly ubiquitous dark shadow of blackness is to proclaim her white identity, not continually embroil herself in blackness.

Trying to Define Her Identity/Haunting of Blackness

To please her mother, Peola does go to the black college but eventually runs away because her identity issues are still vexing her. Stahl clearly illustrates that it is not because of grades that she left because the principle sends a note affirming that Peola is an excellent student. In contrast, Jessie hates school and is not doing well in her classes. Stahl is challenging stereotypes about race and intellect so he clearly informs the audience of Peola's academic success at the school. But no matter how well Peola performs intellectually, this new environment of more blackness offers her little comfort; instead, she is still so frustrated by her identity that blackness continues to haunt her to the point that she feels she must assert her white identity. Accordingly, she attempts another foray into "passing".

After learning that Peola has left the school, Bea and Delia track her to a restaurant where she is working as a cashier, and again Peola is faced with the fear of blackness rearing its sinister head in the guise of her mother. When they confront her, Peola denies Delilah is her mother and

feigns ignorance to her boss, (Peola) "'Why, that's ridiculous. I never saw you before in my life.' Peola's boss comes up to the register to inquire about the problem. (Peola) 'This woman doesn't know what she's talking about. Do I look like her daughter? Do I look like I could be her daughter? Well, she must be crazy.' With a trapped look on her face, Peola walks out of the restaurant" (Stahl).

Peola turns against her mother in this scene and deliberately openly denies her. Feeling trapped when her mother finds her, Peola realizes that she is unable to escape the omnipresent shadow of darkness that follows her. She is the proverbial deer caught in the headlights, so stunned that she feels her only recourse is to disown her mother. Again, there is the construct of Delilah barging into Peola's life, without the restraint or sensitivity to not confront Peola at her job. Instead she shows up at her job and the audience again feels the same sense of terror and uneasiness that was illustrated during the classroom scene. Even though Peola is now an adult, she is still that scared and trapped little girl who is faced with the terror of blackness.

When Peola is passing she is engaging in performance consciousness, which is the "reflexive awareness of oneself as performing" (Bell 43). Every time Peola passes she is aware that she is inhabiting another persona, a white one. She is performing to her audience to be considered white; when Delilah shows up she stops the performance.

Complete Denial of Blackness

Peola's confrontation with her mother is her complete denial of blackness. In an attempt to deal with her dilemma, Peola meets Delilah and Bea back at the house to tell them of her startling decision:

Peola. "I mean, by that I mean I want to go away and you mustn't see me, own me, or claim me or anything. I mean even if you pass me on the street, you'll have to pass me by."

Bea. "Oh, Peola."

Peola. "I know it's terrible Miss Bea, but you don't know what it is to look white and be black. You don't know. I can't go on this way any longer."

Delilah. "I can't give up my baby. I born you...I love you...you can't ask your mammy to do this...you got to promise your mother. I'm your mammy, child. I ain't no white mother. It's too much to ask of me. I ain't got the spiritual strength...You can't ask me to unborn my own child."

Peola. "I'm sorry. I know it's asking a lot. I've got to live my own life. After Peola runs out crying, Bea goes and comforts Delilah who is also crying."

Delilah. "I lost my baby. She won't ever come back." (Stahl)

In this final scene between Peola and Delilah, Peola stakes her independence by honestly voicing her need to totally distance herself from the shadow that keeps darkening her life. Peola feels that in order for her to have a complete life and to avail herself of everything that she feels she is entitled; she must sever all ties with her mother. For this reason, it is an emotionally charged scene that tears at the audience's heart and, ultimately, is a precursor of the heartbreaking scenes of Delilah's death and funeral.

Furthermore, in these scenes Peola wants Miss Bea to hear what she has to say, unlike when it was first revealed that Peola was passing; then she did not want Delilah to tell Miss Bea of her attempt to pass. This time she plainly tells Miss Bea of the hardships of looking white but being black. Peola wants someone to understand her plight. When Peola tells Miss Bea that she does not understand, she is singing the song of the tragic mulatto. Really no one understands the battle that rages within Peola, the two identities constantly and directly conflicting with each other. She continually sees her double every time she looks in the mirror but also every time she

looks at her mother. Everywhere she turns is a reminder that she is in this conflict. It is as if she resides daily in a house of mirrors. Which mirror reflects the real her? When she finally escapes, the blackness is there to ruin her life. The mirror scene illustrated this battle so well that this final supposed resolution would have been the only outcome.

Death of Mother/Blackness

After this final goodbye, Delilah is emotionally spent; she no longer has the will or the strength to keep going on and fighting Peola. It is meant for the audience to believe that Peola's final goodbye is an emotional death for Delilah that precedes her physical death.

Delilah declines rapidly after this moment and it is quite clear that she is not going to get better. In Delilah's final scene the walls of the bedroom reflect gothic dark shadows to illustrate her imminent death. Her final thoughts, as she dies with Bea, Jessie and the doctor surrounding her, are of her daughter. She wants someone to find Peola and tell her the goodbye that she now will be incapable of telling her.

The funeral scene is impressive. On her death bed Delilah talked explicitly about the funeral that she wanted. According to her wishes, the funeral is elaborate and excessive with horse drawn carriages, and with men lined in uniforms with swords turned out as the casket leaves the church. This huge funeral represents excess which is a major gothic trope. Fred Botting describes excess as transgressing "the proper limits of aesthetic as well as social order in the overflow of emotions that undermined boundaries of life and fiction, fantasy and reality" (4). The funeral scene is one in which there is an overflow of emotion which is represented by the

style of the funeral and by Peola's passionate reaction to her mother's death. The crowd's reaction to Peola illustrates how her character exceeded the so-called normal expressive boundaries for a funeral. Again, the visual of Peola is conflicting with societal norms. The crowd cannot reconcile the visual of the passionately grief stricken white Peola with the image of the black woman known as Aunt Delilah. One can see the melodramatic genre giving way to excess because Peola cannot channel her emotions in a respected conventional way.

As the casket is brought out of the church, Peola rushes through the crowd; she stands next to two white women bystanders. One of them asks Peola if she knew Delilah and she responds "yes". Peola is summoning the courage to own up to Delilah as her mother. In a torrent of emotion, Peola runs to the casket, declares her love for her mother and apologizes for denying her. Again, the demonstrative excess of the scene illustrates Peola's emotional return not just to her mother but also to blackness as well. As Peola gets into the car with Miss Bea and Jesse, she talks about how she killed her mother. Peola's declaration of killing her mother equates with her killing her black self. Her black double was manifested in the image of her mother. According to literary critic Susan Courtney, "...it is the black mother's visible blackness that repeatedly enforces Peola's 'true' racial identity...The 'truth' of Delilah's visible blackness, and the blackness it holds out for her child, is further guaranteed in such scenes by the affective saturation of the black maternal image" (164).

Throughout the film the gothic trope of blackness is depicted as evil, horror and terror embodied in the form of Delilah. Yet during that time period within the throes of segregation and discrimination, what kind of mother would Delilah have been to advocate that Peola pursue her life as her white identity? Unfortunately, Delilah is not just the caring mother but is also the carrier of Peola's despair. Her constant presence keeps Peola from trying to attain a certain

measure of freedom from a blackness that has entrapped her. Again, the mother is both represented as evil and good due to the passer trying to run away from societal hampering racial definitions.

For Peola, the doubles of the white mirror image and black mother will always haunt her whether her mother is alive or not because her mother only represented one half of the struggle going on within Peola. The other half of the struggle within Peola is represented by white society and its refusal to accept her because she visually symbolizes the stain of miscegenation, the most enduring and persistent legacy of slavery. The war between her two identities can only end with one victor because of the strict racial hierarchy system for black and white, a system that Peola feels forces her to pass as white in order to obtain the same opportunities as whites.

When Peola left home admonishing her mother to forget about her as her daughter, she was choosing her white identity as the winner in the battle. However, when her mother dies, Peola is overcome with guilt and grief. So much so that at the end of the movie Bea tells Jesse that Peola has agreed to return to the black college down south. Stahl has neatly packaged away Peola and all of her identity issues by sending her to be with other blacks. Therefore, Stahl has capitulated to mainstream society by situating Peola away from Bea and Jesse, thereby completely cutting off the strings to Peola's white identity. Now Peola's white identity has been subsumed by the black identity. However, there is no scene with Peola declaring her allegiance to her blackness. One wonders just how complete is Peola's return to blackness. The question looms: Which of her doubles will ultimately reign supreme, her mother or her white mirror image?

Imitation of Life

Donald Sirk

The 1959 version of *Imitation of Life* kept the basic structure of the plot. Two single mothers come together in the interest of economic survival and form a lasting friendship. The white woman becomes successful and is the major/dominant source of income. As in the 1934 version, both mothers have issues with their daughters. In the 1959 version the white mother is so consumed with achieving stardom as an actress, she neglects her daughter and virtually leaves her to the care of the black mother. Again, the black mother/daughter issues emanate from the racial and identity conflicts evolving around the daughter who is considered black but looks white enough to pass.

However, just as the other authors in this study had their specific means of interpreting the "passing" character in a literary fashion, so did Stahl and Sirk have their own particular way of cinematically depicting the passer. Although each director remained true to the original plot of the novel, there were distinct differences as there were overall similarities. One particular difference was the depiction of the racial stereotypes. Particularly, Stahl handled the racial stereotypes a bit more gingerly than Sirk and seemed to eradicate some of the long held prejudices and biases that cast blacks as inferior. Whereas, Sirk seemed to depict the stereotypes more stridently, with a sharp punch; for example, he installed the scene in which Sarah Jane's white boyfriend called her a nigger and savagely beat her up. This takes the gothic atmosphere into the realm of true darkness and violence.

Using gothic symbolism to critique the issue of race, both of these white directors at times played heavily into stereotypes. Yet they both made concerted efforts to insure that their renderings of the novel reflected the racial, cultural and political landscapes of the respective time period. Both directors were aware that his particular film would reap audience attendance from white as well as black viewers so they each strove for balance in a concerted effort to appease and entertain both groups.

Donald Sirk's version of the film came at a time when blacks were no longer playing just mammies and servants in film. In fact, the black mammy role was gradually leaving the scene. So there was no need for black actresses to maintain an obese figure in order to get work in Hollywood as mammies. Formerly, studio executives had actually told black actresses such as Hattie McDaniels and Louise Beavers not to lose weight. On a par with glamorous actresses such as Lana Turner and Rita Hayworth, Lena Horne and Dorothy Dandridge illustrated the new style black female image. Although Hollywood was not motivated to promote the black actress on the same level as the white actress, there was no denying that significant changes were occurring. In an interview, Donald Sirk addresses the issue of defining Annie, "Maybe it would have been all right for Stahl's time, but nowadays a Negro woman who got rich *could* buy a house, and wouldn't be dependent to such a degree on the white woman....So I had to change the axis of the film and make the Negro woman just the typical Negro, a servant, without much she could call her own but the friendship, love, and charity of a white mistress" (25).

As Sirk clearly states, in order to accommodate his version of *Imitation of Life*, he demoted Annie's economic status so that she would be totally dependent upon the white woman. Because of his choice to "change the axis of the film", Sirk actually changes the relationship from a friendship based relationship (as it started on the beach) to an employer/employee

relationship. Having Annie assume mannerisms that reflected the southern black/white relationship, such as having her address Lora and Steve as Miss and Mr. respectively, enabled Sirk to establish a less than equal relationship between Lora and Annie when clearly at the beginning of the film, there was no basis for Annie to preface her addressing Lora and Steve in such a manner. Having provided no other basis for Annie to superiorly address Lora and Steve, the audience can only assume that Sirk is again playing on racial stereotypes.

Obviously, Sirk realized that the passage of time made it impossible to depict Annie as Stahl had cast Delilah because blacks were now situated differently in reality and in Hollywood. So although Sirk dropped the supposed black dialect and poor grammar of Delilah, Sirk still felt the need to place Annie in the role of the black servant, while simultaneously creating an even more superior/inferior relationship between Lora and Annie. More than a hint of racism is working in his comment in which he references the "typical Negro", (25) especially in New York, the location of the film, where blacks are teachers, factory workers, nurses and all manner of professionals. Indeed, Sirk might have created Annie as a dependent servant, but she was not the "typical Negro" (25).

As a result, Sirk faced the problem of re-imagining a film that for all purposes exalts the black mammy figure during a period that is on the threshold of the Civil Rights Movement, without alienating either the black or white audience. So Sirk casts Juanita Moore as Annie, the parallel character of Delilah. Juanita Moore did not have the girth of a Louise Beavers or Hattie McDaniel and actually had stylish photo stills in her publicity package. Also, he positions Lana Turner in the role originally played by Claudette Colbert, Bea. He changes the character's name from Bea to Lora and depicts her as a struggling actress who eventually achieves fame, success and wealth.

One of the most significant changes occurs with the passing character. In the John Stahl's version Peola is played by a black actress who can pass, but in Donald Sirk's version she is played by Susan Kohner, who is of Jewish and Mexican descent. In many criticisms of the movie Kohner has been described as a white actress but in reality her mother was Mexican. This gave her an ethnic identity that the movie clearly did not want to play up in advertising. However, unlike Stahl, Sirk preferred an actress who would appear white to the audiences, and did not want the authenticity that a black actress afforded him. In many ways with Kohner in the role the white audience could believe that this film is a fiction of Hollywood, promoting the belief that no one could actually pull this deceit off in real life. Yet Stahl's insistence in casting Fredi Washington, an authentic yet white looking black in the role of Peola, dismissed any possible refutation of the white audience that miscegenation was indeed a continued occurrence in American society. Therefore, in the area of casting, Stahl was bolder than Sirk, who did not continue his racial critique in terms of casting.

Also, the different actresses represent the two very different styles of the movies. In the 1934 version the film was a more realistic interpretation of the time period. It was released during the depression at a time when the fantasy machine of Hollywood added a dose of realism, which is why Bea and Delilah earn money in a more realistic way. So the addition of an actual black actress playing the part of Peola helped to add to the realism that was already somewhat predominate in at least the early part of the movie. On the other hand, Sirk's film was about the belief that all life is simulated to reflect what is perceived to be normal. Everyone is playing a role, imitating life. Lora is a struggling actress instead of a widow starting a business. Her daughter Suzy pretends to be the contented normal teenager to her mother, yet she drops the pretense when she confides her true feelings of abandonment concerning her mother to Annie.

Having Susan Kohner, a Jewish/Mexican actress, portray a black girl who looks white and wants to pass follows the theme of imitation. As with the 1934 version, the black maternal figure represents the only "real" person in the movie, but she too has to play a role, the subservient mammy to survive.

Two Mothers and Daughters Meet

Sirk's version of *Imitation of Life* starts off on the beach where Lora has lost track of her daughter Suzy. She is frantically searching all over the beach for her and finally finds her playing with Sarah Jane (Peola) and her mother, Annie (Delilah). Immediately, Lora assumes that Annie is the caretaker for Sarah Jane. At this point, Sirk establishes Lora as an irresponsible mother and Annie as the caregiver to both children, roles that they both keep throughout the film. In addition, again it is established from the beginning that Sarah Jane's father is not white but a very light skinned black man, so that the white audience does not have to deal with the issue of miscegenation.

Instead of seeking employment as Delilah did, Annie beseeches Lora to offer them shelter for a night because it is obvious that they are homeless. So the relationship does not immediately start off with Annie working for Lora but there is a sense of inequality. According to literary critic Jeremy Butler, "By 1959 the cinema's attitude toward blacks had shifted considerably, but Annie is still recognizable as a mammy/Aunt Jemima figure. She is much less conventionally 'black' than Delilah (gone is the dialect, for example), but she has essentially the same function in the narrative as did her earlier counterpart. She remains the woman who must sell her special nurturing talents in order to survive" (12). Although Annie does not have the

obvious racial stereotyping that Delilah had in terms of her facial expressions and dialect, she does immediately project a nurturing ability with the children and with her relationship with the egg man. Since Sirk offers no background of Annie's life or any explanation of any previous means of income, the audience must accept that she has no other choice but to assume the mammy/surrogate mother role. From the beginning, Annie and Sarah Jane explicitly depict the inferior half of the quadruple relationship, living at the behest of Lora.

Conversely, the connection between Sarah Jane and Suzy is given much more time in the movie than the relationship between Peola and Jessie. The movie does show their bond but there is still the schism between the two with Sarah Jane shown from the beginning as wanting to be white. Sarah Jane's issues with her racial identity are illustrated pretty soon as they move into Lora's flat. Lora is a struggling actress so her apartment is very cramped but she does make room for Annie and her daughter.

From the beginning, Sirk constructs Sarah Jane and Suzy as doubles. The two girls are constructed as opposites of black and white and this can be seen in an early scene when they are playing with two dolls; Suzy wants the white doll and gives the black doll to Sarah Jane. Sarah Jane throws the doll aside and tells Suzy that she wants the white doll. This is a preview of Sarah Jane's issues. Sarah Jane and Suzy are, of course, one set of gothic doubles in the film. Sarah Jane wants to be what Suzy is, which is not just seen as white but being white, so she is not brought down by society's views of race. Suzy is Sarah Jane's double because she is a reflection of Sarah Jane's white self. In stark contrast to the darkly brunette hair coloring of Bea and her daughter Jessie, Sirk casts famously blond actresses Lana Turner and Sandra Dee to play the white mother and daughter roles. By doing so, Sirk is implicitly underscoring the visual image of the white blond woman as the most idealized and beautiful in American culture at this

time. And, of course, with Annie and Sarah Jane depicted as naturally dark haired, the dichotomy of the mother/daughter duos is even more visual with the contrast of light/dark especially highlighting the ethnicity of Sarah Jane.

This theme of racial passing has superseded the storyline of Lora and Suzy. This happened with time but also may have been what Sirk wanted, according to the film historian Foster Hirsch who did the commentary on the DVD release, Douglass Sirk told Juanita Moore that "If you are good, the film is good; if you are bad, the film will be bad" (Sirk.) This is a nod to the fact that he knew where the real drama of the story lay. Even though Lana Turner and Sandra Dee, who played the teenage Suzy, were the big name stars of the movie, Sirk wisely fronted the black storyline, fully aware that the melodrama of the passing daughter denying her black mother would draw huge crowds to the theaters.

Also, Sirk directly critiqued the idea that was the under pinning of racial segregation, which was the blood. Sirk was bolder in his critique on racial assumptions than Stahl, daring to illuminate the gothic metaphor of race and blood. When Lora comes home after an audition, she notices Suzy's wrist bandaged and immediately asks Annie for an explanation. Annie responds that "It was a little experiment. Some of the classmates said that Negro blood is different. Sarah Jane wanted to compare her blood with Suzy's" (Fisher 72). Here Sirk is drawing attention to the racial construction that is built around the misconception that black blood is different from white blood. Since slavery and the onset of miscegenation in America, many whites invested in the belief that there was an essential difference between blacks and whites constituted by the inferiority of the black blood. By illustrating this scene, Sirk boldly draws a considerably strong critique of this ideology.

Denial of Blackness

Sarah Jane does not overtly deny blackness until she goes to school and is around other white children and decides to assume the mantle of whiteness. But her mother who is the harbinger of her blackness comes to the school and shatters her fictive identity. Reminiscent of the 1934 version, these school room scenes are closely conjoined in that they both inform the audience of Peola/Sarah Jane's first outside attempt at passing. Annie comes to the classroom and goes directly to the teacher. Sarah Jane sees her and just as Peola did, hides behind her book. In this version, Annie walks up to Sarah Jane to give her the raincoat and Sarah Jane leaves the classroom, runs out, and Annie catches up with her in the rain:

Sarah Jane. "I hope I die".

Annie. "...You shouldn't have let them think..."

Sarah Jane. "They didn't ask me! Why should I tell them"?

Annie. "...that's what you are and it's nothin' to be ashamed of".

Sarah Jane. Why do you have to be my mother? Why? (Script Fisher ed 75)

When Annie and Sarah Jane return home, Lora and Suzy notice that something is wrong and anxiously inquire about the situation. Annie tells them that Sara Jane has been passing. Sarah Jane defiantly defends her actions:

Sarah Jane. "But I am white! I'm as white as Susie!..."

Annie. How do you explain to your child, she was born to be hurt?
(Fisher, 76-77)

Firstly, these scenes acquaint the audience with the perception of the black mother as Sarah Jane's double, the visual manifestation of her internal blackness, and as the representative of

blackness as gothic horror. Sarah Jane does not want Annie to be her mother because her secret will always be revealed in the body of the mother. Secondly, Sarah Jane sharply asks why should she just volunteer to tell the other students about her race. Why is this Sarah Jane's burden? Why should the passer be responsible for the ills and ails of society?

Sarah Jane does consciously perform race in a more definitively clear fashion than Peola. According to Elizabeth Bell, performance consciousness is being "(1) aware of ourselves as 'on' and work to control that 'talking voice,' (2) aware of the audience and its power of evaluation, (3) aware of the frame that creates the relationship..." (45). Sarah Jane, as any passer, is consciously aware that she is performing a role and controls how she is seen and behaving in the outside world. The passer knows that the audience also has power because its evaluation could reveal the racial truth. In order for this performance to become authentic, Sarah Jane and the audience must both participate.

Sarah Jane's declaration that she is as white as Suzy illustrates her pain while it also demonstrates her fighting spirit. In a sense, she is critiquing this unjust racial system that classifies people by visibility until they know the true racial linkages. She is right that she is as white as Suzy and, unfortunately, she is also correct in declaring that her mother's position by her side precludes society from allowing her to identify herself as white.

Another incident occurs in which Sarah Jane asserts her to claim to whiteness when Sirk links the issues of race and religion. Annie is telling the girls a story about Jesus and Sarah Jane asks what color is he. Lora says it does not matter but Sarah Jane firmly says "He is white, like me" (Fisher, 85). Sarah Jane is resolutely declaring that she is white. To Sarah Jane, proclaiming her likeness to Jesus ensures that she is irrefutably white.

Suzy and Sarah Jane as Adult Double

Sarah Jane is a deceptive character because the essence of the act of passing requires secrecy and deception, being deceptive to those who are closest to her. Illustrative of this is a scene in which Suzy catches Sarah Jane trying to sneak into the house and into her room without being seen. As film critic Hirsch says, "Sarah Jane is always hiding out. We see her through windows and doors. She always has a secret" (DVD). Deception and secrecy are gothic tropes. Passing is high maintenance for Sarah Jane because in one way or another, she is keeping a secret from everyone, whether it is her white boyfriend, her mother or Lora and Suzy. Sarah Jane is keeping multiple secrets in order to situate herself as white. She is committed to creating her own version of reality. Therefore, her only choice is to become a keeper of secrets.

As Sarah Jane matures into a young adult, played by Susan Kohner and Sandra Dee assumes the role of the teenage Suzy, they continue to have a close, secret sharing relationship. She brings Suzy into her web of deception. Sarah Jane admits to Suzy that she has a boyfriend. When Suzy asks innocently if he is "a colored boy", Sarah Jane defiantly admits that he is white:

Sarah Jane. Because I'm white, too, and if I have to be colored then I want to die. I want a chance in life. I don't want to have to come... through back doors, or to feel lower than other people,... or apologize for my mother's color...She can't help her color...but I can...and I will....!"

Susie. ...we've always talked things over, and...you never told me this before.

Sarah Jane. Because I never had a boyfriend before. Because he wants to marry me someday...How do you think he'd feel, or his folks, with a black in-law? What do you think people would say where we'd live, if they knew my mother? They'd spit at me! And my children!... he musn't know her. I don't want anybody to know her...He does not even know where I live. I pretend...I'm a rich girl with strict parents." (Fisher 112)

Sarah Jane is hostile to anyone, including Suzy, who assumes she is dating a black boy because she knows that this assumption is just being made because those around her know that she is black. Sarah Jane adamantly declares that she would choose death over the inferior life of blackness. Comparing life as a black person with death is illustrative of the gothic imagery of the film. According to Elisabeth Bronfen:

In one and the same gesture she claims to be white, while she is acknowledging that this is not all that can be said about her racial origins. She must deny this troubling hybridity in order to hold on to the simple identity of 'whiteness' that she has fashioned for herself. In so doing she gives voice to the fact that racial identity is nothing natural but rather the result of a symbolic allocation within a cultural community shaped by the simple opposition between black and white....Sarah Jane quite explicitly conceives of her ambition to pass successfully as a performance. (217)

She believes that by passing as white, she can aspire to and attain the same goals as Suzy. Consistent with Stahl's depiction of Peola, Sirk emphasizes that Sarah Jane does not want to be white for the appearance's sake; she simply wants the opportunities of whiteness. This is true for the time period because blacks did not have the same basic rights and opportunities of whites, claiming whiteness as her identity would provide Peola/Sarah Jane with equal access to equality.

Yet as Danzy Senna depicted in her novel, living in a white world could also be a double edged sword for Sarah Jane because she would have to endure the disparaging and insulting comments of whites about blacks. Even black people might view her negatively because of her perceived privilege; the issues that she is experiencing do not just evaporate with more doors opening for black Americans. Even though the one drop rule is not really in practice anymore, it implicitly continues to vex her identity. Again, as in Stahl's version, blackness follows Sarah Jane as her gothic double in the form of her mother. All of her issues with blackness emanate

from her mother causing Sarah Jane to feel that without her mother as a constant presence, her life would improve.

Sirk depicts Sarah Jane as caged, mimicking her emotional state by surrounding her with white railings, trimmed in black. These railings reflect the prison of her identity: physically white but considered to be black by society. Sirk is illustrating that Sarah Jane is trapped by her predicament and society's perception of her. Paralleling her physical state with her gothic mental state of entrapment, Sirk symbolically situates Sarah Jane at times through windows and railings. This will be seen later in her final confrontation with her mother.

In the meantime, Sirk installs a scene in which Sarah Jane critiques the mammy image at a dinner party Lora has for her friends. Lora notices Sarah Jane and asks if she could help her mother serve. Evidently, Lora, for all her pretense of considering Sarah Jane and Annie as family, really does not equate Suzy and Sarah Jane equally, although they have grown up together side by side. She is not asking Suzy to help her with the dinner party but she has no qualms about asking Sarah Jane, the maid's daughter. Yet Sarah Jane obediently goes into the kitchen to help her mother. When Annie asks her to go in and serve a platter to Lora and her friends, Sarah Jane brings the platter in on her head, caricaturing the mammy:

Sarah Jane. Why certainly! Anything at all for Miss Lora and her friends.

Sarah Jane goes into the living with the tray on her head.

Sarah Jane (talking in an exaggerated southern drawl). Fetched you-all a mess o' crawdads. Miss Lora, for you an' your friends.

Lora. ...That's quite a trick... Sarah Jane! Where did you learn it?

Sarah Jane. ...No trick to totin' Miss Lora. Ah I l'arned it from my mammy... and she l'arned it from old Massa... 'fo she belonged to you!...

Sarah Jane leaves to go into the kitchen and Lora follows behind her and in the kitchen asks Sarah Jane why she did it.

Sarah Jane. You and my mother are so anxious for me to be colored...I was going to show you I could be. (Fisher 116-117)

By speaking in black dialect and referring to her mother as "my mammy", Sarah Jane proves that she can perform blackness just as well as she can perform whiteness when she is with her white boyfriend. She is adept at performing both identities based on superficial characteristics of both races. Right before this scene she basically admits to Suzy that she is performing whiteness so that she can have a white boyfriend. Now Sarah Jane is performing blackness in order to critique her position in Lora's household. As Sarah Jane realizes that race is a mask one puts on and takes off according to the audience, she vacillates from performing stereotypically black to performing stereotypically white. However, society and those around Sarah Jane do not want to accept her hybridity. As previously stated, Sarah Jane is the outsider because no one understands her and in her mind no one even tries to understand her. The gothic element of outsiderhood is represented in Sarah Jane's position.

This scene also harkens back to when Sarah Jane was talking to Suzy and Suzy said her mother would not stand for Sarah Jane passing. Sarah Jane's response was that Lora does not own her. Again in her performance of blackness, she talks about her mother belonging to Lora. Sarah Jane is critiquing the unequal relationship between blacks and whites even though there is false acceptance. She puts on the gothic mask of the black slave in order to satirize what Sarah Jane feels is Lora's condescending attitude towards her and her mother. But as soon as Lora reacts as the "the white mistress", Sarah Jane's timidly, immediately resuming her place and becoming contrite in her conversation with Lora. Lora's response to the incident is that no one has treated Sarah Jane differently in their family but that is not so because Sarah Jane is treated as the maid's daughter. She is still the outsider even in her own home.

When Sarah Jane has the discussion with her mother, Annie tries to understand what Sarah Jane is going through. Annie thinks if she just goes out and socializes with other blacks, she will be fine. But her mother does not understand the battle going on within her that forces Sarah Jane to resist society's inferior categorizing of her while she still tries to safeguard the only place she has ever known love, her relationship with her mother. Yet despite her efforts to achieve some kind of balance, she is divided between a love and a hatred of what her mother represents. Here the gothic emerges in the depiction of the dichotomous relationship of love and hate for the mother. Even though Sarah Jane hates her life as a white looking daughter of a black mother, she truly loves her mother. However, there are times when Sarah Jane also feels resentment towards her mother because again she represents the boundaries that Sarah Jane cannot cross. According to Elizabeth Bell, "This doing of gender is very much about the interplay between historical conventions that create room for play as well as create boundaries. We are rewarded for observing these boundaries and punished for crossing them" (179-180). Substituting race for gender this comment relates to Sarah Jane because she is punished for crossing racial boundaries.

Sarah Jane and White Boyfriend

Sarah Jane secretly leaves and goes to a very dark alleyway to meet her boyfriend. Shadowy and desolate, the alleyway is symbolic of Sarah Jane's deceit. There is a sign in front of Sarah Jane which says "liberty". Ironically, it symbolizes Sarah Jane's search for a sense of freedom from racial stereotypes. The gothic darkness and the desolation foretell the probability that she is not going to meet anything good in this alleyway. Sirk is using this dark setting to give

the viewer a sense of foreboding and fear for Sarah Jane. Here gothic symbolism is impactful in strengthening the visual image of the scene.

Then suddenly her boyfriend shows up and again he is a blond man symbolizing the ultimate in whiteness. Immediately, one sees that he does not want to be next to Sarah Jane. She is trying to engage him in conversation but he is clearly keeping his distance from her. He is acting as if his girlfriend is now an alien or foreigner to him, someone whose very presence will taint him with her stain of blackness. Finally, he confronts Sarah Jane:

Frankie. Is it true?..As he says this to Sarah Jane, she is moving back against a store front where her reflection can be seen from the glass.

Sarah Jane. Is what true?

Frankie. Is your mother a nigger? Tell me. TELL ME... All the kids talking behind my back! Is it true?

Sarah Jane: No, I'm as white as you! (Fisher 119)

Suddenly, this scene turns incredibly and excessively violent as her boyfriend physically attacks Sarah Jane. As he brutally hits Sarah Jane repeatedly, Sirk depicts the scene with all its gothic cruelty. She is left crying on the ground with her face bruised. Sarah Jane's boyfriend is obviously concerned with what others will say about him if he is known to have crossed racial lines. The taint of the stain will now infect him unless he upholds his whiteness by brutalizing Sarah Jane.

When Sarah Jane's reflection is seen through the glass, it appears as though she is trapped between the reflection of her double and the boyfriend who now knows the truth about her identity.^{xviii} Also, in another interview Sirk declares that "...we have to get the feeling that this is not just the boy knocking her down, but society. This is another race, this is another power, you have to represent 'Whitey' here. Yes, I was only doubtful it wouldn't be extreme enough"

(Fisher 225). The actual physical danger of passing and being outed is illustrated here. In many ways, passing is flirting with death. The scene is brutal and ugly and is the only time the viewer hears the word "nigger". Since it is used at this point in the narrative, it really carries the weight of racial oppression and violence. All Sarah Jane can do is deny and continually assert her whiteness but that does not stop the brutal attack.

Sirk's view that the film is too pretty confirms his intention to use the movie as a subtle way to inform the audience of the real and violent consequences of Sarah Jane's life as a passer. Using the boyfriend as a representative of white society, Sirk wants the audience to understand that this violence emanates from an America that refuses to allow Sarah Jane to cross the racial lines. After the boyfriend leaves her, she is situated on the ground with her hair in a mess with a tearstained and bruised face. Sarah Jane is on the ground in the bright yellow dress and the gothic darkness all around her as she is alone in the alleyway, signifying her aloneness in life. The darkness and the alleyway represent her position in society and her soul. She is isolated and alone in the darkness of the world, and in her own mind, which is battling between her two identities. The darkness that surrounds her in this scene mimics the invisible darkness and shadows that follow her. Following this darkly brutal scene, Lora and Annie are talking, having a very light conversation in Lora's well lit house. Cleverly, juxtaposing light and dark, Sirk illustrates the dichotomy between the world of Sarah Jane and the world of Lora and Suzy.

Sirk stages the next scene, between Lora and Annie, to further accent the theme of imitation as it relates particularly to Lora and Annie's relationship. Throughout the years, Lora has prided herself on her true friendship with Annie. Yet as the conversation evolves with Annie discussing her wishes for her funeral and the friends she wants to attend it, Lora is surprised to hear that Annie has friends.

Lora. It never occurred to me that you had many friends. You never have any visit you...

Annie. Miss Lora, you never asked. (121)

Even though these two women have been together supposedly as caring friends for years, this dialogue illustrates a telling gulf between them. There is still a cutoff in terms of what part of Annie's life is known to Lora. Any aspect of Annie's life that does not impact Lora directly does not seem to matter to her. Annie is invisible to Lora in terms of having a life outside of Suzy, Lora and Sarah Jane. Sirk is doing a light critique of the mammy image that had been depicted throughout early Hollywood in terms of the black female domestic. Even though Sirk has cast Annie as the mammy, he does not hesitate to critique this stereotype that negatively impacted the black community.

As the scene continues, Suzy finds Sarah Jane at the door. Immediately, everyone is dealing with the beaten and bruised woman. Sarah Jane is enclosed towards the bottom of the staircase. She is encircled by the walls and staircase and again she is trapped by her surroundings. She is internally trapped by the dichotomy between her white/black identities that are viewed externally by her enclosed settings. When everyone questions her, Sarah Jane confesses that she was passing. This scene is reflective of the `cinematic use of gothic tropes:

Sarah Jane. Yes, he found out, I'm not white...because you keep telling the world I'm your daughter. Anything you can spoil you spoil!"

Lora. ...Don't you talk to your mother like that!

Annie. I told you! Lies don't help none!...This always happens when you lie!

Sarah Jane: It wouldn't if you weren't always around! (121-122)

Again, Sarah Jane does not blame white America for her predicament but instead she casts the blame on her mother. Because the boyfriend mentioned that "the talk" had been going around

about her, Sarah Jane immediately connects this to Annie wanting her recognized as her daughter. Again, the shadow of blackness is constantly following her and impeding upon the self she is trying to remake. The response to Sarah Jane's pain from Lora and Annie is again not to understand or validate her feelings. Lora immediately chastises Sarah Jane for speaking to her mother disrespectfully and Annie starts chiding her for lying. Possibly, in order to mitigate their sense of helplessness, realizing there is no real recourse for punishing the perpetrator of this heinous act, Lora and Annie cast the blame on Sarah Jane. They accept the futility of blaming white society for its racial prejudice.

Right after this emotional scene concerning Sarah Jane's beating, Sirk switches to Suzy's graduation. Again, he juxtaposes the superficiality of Suzy's life with the emotional gravity that Sarah Jane is experiencing, dramatically illustrating how each life is separated even though all participants live in the same house. Annie attends Suzy's graduation, but Sarah Jane does not.

Later, after Annie realizes that Sarah Jane has lied to her about working at the public library, she finally tracks Sarah Jane down in a club where she is performing on stage, in a highly sexualized dance. This image of a highly sexualized Sarah Jane continues to make her the outsider as opposed to the "all American girl" image of Suzy. In addition, this is very different from Peola's job as a cashier in a restaurant. According to literary critic Rainer Spencer: "...In terms of her subsequent occupation as an exotic dancer, [this image] harkens back to the mulatto, most especially the female mulatto, as representing the physical embodiment of illicit sexuality" (95). Sirk has chosen to accentuate the stereotype of the highly sexualized mulatta instead of breaking down the myth of the non-intelligent mulatta as Stahl did with Peola. In stark contrast, Sirk perpetuates this negative image of the mulatta by visually imprinting the image of Sarah Jane dancing sexily in a seedy club. Black theorist bell hooks discusses this image as well,

"There was something scary in this image of a young sexual sensual black beauty betrayed--- that daughter who did not want to be confined by blackness, that 'tragic mulatto' who did not want to be negated. 'Just let me escape this image forever,' she could have said. I will always remember that image" (122).

Again, from the moment that Annie is outside the club, Sirk creates the dark alienating gothic atmosphere that is so much a part of Sarah Jane's landscape. Accentuating this atmosphere, the camera shifts to Sarah Jane first performing on stage and then leaving the stage to perform closely in front of individual patrons. Indeed, Sarah Jane is performing the role of the sexy white girl with abandonment, but Sarah Jane's double, which is the physical manifestation of her internal black double, is right there in the form of her mother. Obviously, Sirk is reproducing the concept of performing on a stage in the storyline of the black mother and daughter as well. One could say that Sarah Jane is trying to perform in a lesser way the role of her white mistress, who is a celebrated actress. Sarah Jane, albeit in a less approved way, is evidently following in the footsteps of Lora. At this point, Sirk interweaves the theme of imitation into the act of performance.

Annie waits until Sarah Jane is through talking to a young suitor, then goes up to her and again outs her to everyone. Sarah Jane is fired by the manager and runs out of the establishment and Annie follows her:

Annie (in a very desperate tone). . .Honey, nobody's all right about anything. And nobody's all wrong. Now, you don't want to be a teacher all right. We'll talk about what you want to be. Honey. . . Miss Lora gets home from Italy in the mornin' and I'm sure. . .Sarah Jane, Sarah Jane.

Sarah Jane continues to walk quickly and determinedly away from Annie. Annie out of breath and tired can no longer keep up with her daughter and falls on one of the steps and is framed by the step rails as she watches her daughter disappear into the night. (Fisher 132-133)

At this point, it is obvious that the relationship between mother and daughter is deteriorating and Annie is now firmly implanted as the black double to Sarah Jane. Each time Sarah Jane attempts to establish her white identity, she is foiled by the intrusion of her black double, none other than her mother. Again, the mother represents the darkness of Sarah Jane's life and, of course, the shadows and rails denote her seemingly endless state of entrapment.

Annie's desperation to get through to her daughter and Sarah Jane's desperation to get away are heightened by the intensity of the music. Everything in this scene illustrates the gothic excess that is symbolic of Sirkian melodrama. The intensity of the emotion, music and the foreboding darkness of the scene are equal to the turmoil that the characters are experiencing internally.

With Annie running after Sarah Jane who is further and further ahead of her, Sirk illustrates the emotional dichotomy within Sarah Jane. Sarah Jane, walking forward, represents her belief that only by distancing herself from her mother can she attain and solidify a life of whiteness. Annie, running after Sarah Jane, illustrates the idea of blackness constantly following her and never allowing her to define herself as white. Annie, of course, symbolically illustrates that no matter how far she goes, Sarah Jane can never outrun blackness. According to Marina Heung. "...Sarah Jane's view of her connection to Annie as her curse, and her resulting refusal to identify with her mother, signify her unspoken recognition of the root of Annie's powerlessness. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has concluded, the cause of women's 'suffering and impotence' in melodrama is 'the failure to be male'----only here in Annie's case, hers is the failure to be both male and white. Sarah Jane's problem of identity is, as D.N. Rodowick suggests, typical of how the domestic melodrama portrays social conflict as 'cris(es) of identification'" (32).

As Sarah Jane attempts to flee from blackness, she is simultaneously trying to escape from her powerlessness and her inability to define her own destiny. But it is also because neither Annie nor Lora or Suzy has her unique problems so that even if she embraced Annie and blackness, she would still be at odds with the world because she looks white but is considered black. She would either be subjected to an inferior position regardless as to how she looked or she would have to voluntarily admit that she is part of the inferior race.

Even though identity issues are at the heart of the melodrama, reconciliation with her black and white identities requires more than just accepting blackness as Greta and the narrator prove in *Symptomatic*. Melodrama is defined by excess, internal conflicts that cannot be resolved and the confusing relationship between identity and social roles. Sarah Jane's internal conflict and everyone's response to her are symbolic of heightened emotion and as her situation is depicted in this melodramatic fashion, the viewers do respond empathetically. bell hooks explains this when she says, "I remembered how we cried for her, for our unrealized desiring selves. She was tragic because there was no place in the cinema for her, no loving pictures. She too was an absent image. It was better then, that we were absent, for when we were there it was humiliating, strange, sad. We cried all night for you, for the cinema that had no place for you. And like you, we stopped thinking it would one day be different" (122).

According to film critics John Mercer and Martin Shingler, there are still no viable solutions to Sarah Jane's identity issues within melodramatic form, "In all cases, the viewer is allowed to understand these motivations and identify with them, only to see them thwarted. The problems posed by the films have not therefore found a satisfactory solution. This suggests that for the characters at the heart of these films, the social order can offer no satisfactory solution to

their problems, their desires being impossible to accommodate fully within the existing social system" (19).

After this extremely emotional scene between Annie and Sarah Jane, Annie's health seems to have been affected negatively. She seems to gradually become more tired and she lacks the energy just to walk and talk. In the meantime, Sarah Jane sends Annie a letter asking her not to find her. Lora gets Steve to hire a detective to find out where Sarah Jane is and to bring her back. Of course, Lora's concern is seen as acting, not as if she is showing true emotion for Annie's plight. In contrast, Bea's sense of caring and concern for Peola and Delilah are depicted as real and sincere, not as an acting overture.

Ultimately, Annie ends up making the journey herself to find Sarah Jane at the more upscale club, Moulin Rouge, but again Sarah Jane performs as a pale imitation of her mistress, Lora. Annie finally makes her way backstage to Sarah Jane's dressing room and Sarah Jane explains to her why she will keep running if Annie gets her fired:

Sarah Jane (looking into the mirror). I'm somebody else. I'm white!
White! WHITE... (yelling, crying)... Please mama, will you go? And never do this again!
And if--- by accident--- we should ever pass on the street, please don't recognize me!

Annie. I won't, Sarah Jane. I promise, I settled all that in my mind... There's just one thing I wish from you.

Sarah Jane. What?

Annie. If you ever have trouble---- or need anything at all---If you ever want to come home, and you should not be able to----get in touch with me...will you let Miss Lora know?....

Annie. I'd like to hold you in my arms once more----like you were still my baby.

Sarah Jane. All right, Mama. All right!

Annie. ...My beautiful baby! I love you so much. Nothin' you ever do can stop that. (Fisher 139-140)

This final scene between mother and daughter is full of the poignancy, excess and conflict of identity that characterizes the film. When Sarah Jane is confronted with her mother, again her instinct is to run away, run away from the blackness that continually haunts her in the shape of her mother. When Sarah Jane looks into the mirror and says that she is somebody else who is white, she is again looking at her double.

For Sarah Jane, the face in the mirror is the girl she wants to be and who she actually feels she is. In many ways, the scene in which she looks into the mirror reveals that she is trapped by both of her identities and is reminiscent of the scene that occurred with Peola after the dinner party. Like Peola, Sarah Jane is looking at the two reflections that have denied her a sense of unity of her identities. Her mother is representing the black identity and the white image in the mirror represents the white identity. Film critic James Harvey discusses how the camera contributes to Sarah Jane's trapped feelings: "...As Annie's emotion bears down on her more and more, so does the camera trapping both of them, as it were, together and separately, almost unbearably it seems at time, in a series of tighter and tighter shots" (400). The mirrors are used quite often in Sirk's work and give off the ultimate gothic effect by having the character come face to face with his/her own double. Every time the passer looks into the mirror, he/she is confronted with his/her inescapably haunting double.

According to film critic Elisabeth Bronfen, Sirk was fascinated with mirrors because they, "allowed him to represent most poignantly the uncanniness of human existence" (206), the familiarity and the unfamiliarity seem to conjoin in most people's identities, creating a double for many, just not as distinct and pervasive as in the passer's identity. Bronfen quotes Sirk in talking about the function of mirrors in his films, 'What is interesting about a mirror is that it

does not show you yourself as you are, it shows you your own opposite.' (207) Bronfen continues with, "We recognize ourselves only through reflections, notably the images we fashion for ourselves, or the way we see ourselves reflected in the eyes of others." (207) Again, the issue of the mirror image illustrates the difficulty of achieving emotional and mental stability because of the dichotomy between the reflected image and the person in front of the mirror.

In discussing Lora's mirror image scenes, Bronfen says:

Once more Sirk shows his protagonist split in two---the persona of the ' glamorous actress, framed by the mirror and thus arrested as an illusory image, and the woman facing the self-creation she chose to privilege over wifedom and motherhood. By visually performing his protagonist's self-fashionings are mere illusory reflections, Sirk repeatedly foregrounds the idea that, in contrast to the theme song of his film, an authentic life and its imitation are uncanny mirror images of each other, both constantly threatening to collapse (206).

Many of these same concepts are seen in Sirk's depiction of the double and mirror reflection in regards to Sarah Jane. Sarah Jane is also a character who is split in two and is never able to become her true mirror image. Yet throughout the movie she is framed by fake mirrors such as windows and railings, preventing Sarah Jane from assuming her white identity. Finally, in her final scene with Annie, Sarah Jane faces her white double and chooses it over her mother, her black double. Just as Lora chooses her self-created identity over being a wife and mother, Sarah Jane also wants her created identity as a white woman to supersede her black identity. As Bronfen mentions, one of the things Sirk is asking is what is real: the authentic or created identity? Since all identity is created to some extent from both the society and the self, is there any real or authentic identity to claim? So in actuality what is an authentic identity?

Adapting to the ways and habits of the dominant group in society so that one can become part of that society could mean losing a part of the self. According to Frantz Fanon, "...the oppressed internalize the values and beliefs of the oppressor (mainly white). This

internalization, Fanon argues, creates an Other, who, desiring agency, mimics and masquerades as a white person qtd 13" (Van Thompson 17). That other is manifested in the mirror image.

Another aspect of illusionary or false conceptions is the smiling photograph of Sarah Jane that is constantly visible in Annie's room. Most definitely it is clearly noticeable in Annie's death scene. The picture of a smiling Sarah Jane sharply contradicts her usual countenance in real and ongoing life. Again, this points to the illusionary nature of still photographs and the imitative theme of the film itself. Sarah Jane looks as if she does not have a care in the world but the truth is she has been a haunted person all of her life. The picture also belies the true nature of the relationship between Annie and Sarah Jane. Of course, the picture is reflective of the natural closeness of a mother and daughter which Annie and Sarah Jane do share. However, it is absent of the constant tension between them that is created by Sarah Jane's identity issues. Sirk is evidently demonstrating how a superimposed reality can be constructed over the real situation.

Continuing with the strategic use of gothic elements, Annie's death room is appropriately shadowed and darkened. When Lora enters the room, she finds the doctor, nurse and reverend all morosely standing near Annie's bed, as if waiting expectantly for her last breath.

Annie. ----When my bills are all paid, I want everything that's left to go----- to Sarah Jane ----tell her I know I was selfish----and if I loved her too much, I'm sorry---but I didn't mean to cause her any trouble. She was all I had...

Annie. I hope you are right Miss Lora. I'd like to be standin' with the lambs and not the goats on----Judgment Day. And my funeral Mr. Steve you will find what I want in the drawer--- over there...I wanta go--- the way I planned--- especially the four white horses and a band playin'----.no mourning---but proud, high---stepping,---like I was going to glory! (150-151)

Annie's last words are about Sarah Jane and instructions concerning her funeral. Of course, Annie's thoughts are always about Sarah Jane. As she said, "She was all I had..." However, at the end, Annie is remorseful and apologetic, acknowledging that her presence has often

complicated Sarah Jane's life. In her role as mother she has been loving but also symbolic of repression and oppression. She has wanted Sarah Jane to repress her feelings of identity confusion; unfortunately, Annie mistakenly believed that by constantly asserting herself as Sarah Jane's mother, she would motivate her to claim her black identity. Instead, Sarah Jane sought total distance from her black identity and, particularly, from her mother, who she considered to be the source of her oppression and suffering.

The next scene convenes in the church, with Lora, Suzy and Steve all solemnly gathered among hundreds of other mourners paying their last respects to Annie. As the camera shifts from the mournful faces of Lora, Suzy, and Steve, it pans to the face from which sorrowful music is emanating. Mahalia Jackson, the real and celebrated gospel singer, is performing as a local church singer, thus accentuating again the theme of imitation. Her words in the song say "I will soon be done of my trouble in the world. I'm going home" (Fisher 152). Again, the song lyrics validate that now Annie will have relief through death from the agonies of her earthly life.

The church is huge and the number of people who have come to pay respect to Annie is endless. So many people have come to pay their respects to this woman who was mostly known as just a maid to Lora, even the egg man to whom Annie always gave a monetary reward at Christmas. Her casket is draped with tons of flowers to the point that the viewer cannot even see the color of the casket. In contrast, Delilah was nationally known because of the nation-wide success of the pancake mix and so were her face and image. However, Annie was only known as the maid to Lora, the successful actress. Yet the funerals of both women are similarly excessive. The analogy is completely out of range and nonsensical. Marina Heung offers an explanation for this funeral that seems off-balance, "At her funeral, it seems, Annie can enjoy the glory denied her in life. Accordingly, her funeral symbolically reverses the conditions of her working life:

where she labored in anonymity and isolation, she is now honored in public by a community of friends (and it appears, of total strangers as well); where her life-style was humble." (36).

The funeral is meant to equalize the relationship between black and white or even put Annie's blackness as superior to Lora and Suzy's whiteness. For example, the legions of people in attendance confirm that Annie, unbeknown to Lora, knew many people. Actually, Annie has been living a double life because she helped Lora believe the fiction that Annie's world totally revolved around her. But as shown by the funeral and by her brief conversation with Lora after Sarah Jane's beating, Annie did have a full personal life with her community and church. Clearly, Sirk wanted it to be shown that she was beloved by her community in a way that was distinctly different from that of Lora. For Lora, Annie was mostly considered as another symbol of her material success as an actress. But Annie was embraced in her community for herself, not for what she symbolized.

Hueng's other point concerns the blanketing of blackness at the funeral. Of course, blackness is the color of mourning but in this film the color also represents the underlying theme of blackness as a gothic symbol. Blackness has been shadowing the characters, especially Annie and Sarah Jane, to showcase the problems of Sarah Jane's identity issues; particularly, blackness has been in the middle of Sarah Jane's relationship with her mother. It has symbolically meant darkness and foreboding to Sarah Jane. But at the funeral blackness assumes a positive image. Instead of lurking in the shadows denoting oppression, sorrow and suffering, it now takes center stage, signifying Annie as no longer melancholy, but joyful in death. Blackness and the funeral situate Annie as superior to the whiteness of Lora, who is now playing second fiddle to Annie. All in all, the funeral confirms to the audience that Annie will be "standin with the lambs and not the goats on . . . Judgment Day" (Fisher 151).

As the deacons bring the casket out of the church, the viewers see that people are lined up and down the street in Annie's honor; it is symbolic that the excess of the funeral extends to the outside of the church. Everything about the funeral is visually and symbolically excessive---the bountiful flowers that drape the coffin, the ornate horse driven carriage, and, of course, the huge crowd of mourners and spectators. As the casket is being taken into the carriage that will be led by four horses, Sarah Jane rushes through the crowd to get near the casket. She is first stopped by the police and then the usher as she cries out, "...Let me through! Please, let me through! But it's my mother" (154)! Sara Jane's emotional intensity is not just visible, but is palpable as she grabs her mother's casket and passionately sobs:

Sarah Jane: 'Mama! Mama! I didn't mean it! I didn't mean it, mama.
Do you really hear me! I'm sorry! I'm sorry, Mama! Mama, I did love you!
...Miss Lora, I killed my mother! I killed her! I wanted to come home!
Now she'll never know how much I wanted to come back home! (Fisher 154-155)

Of course, Sarah Jane realizes that her treatment and denial of her mother contributed to her mother's downward decline. In her heart, she actually feels that she is her mother's murderer and that she will be forever haunted by guilt. Instead of Annie's death being a release for Sarah Jane, her death engages her even more. She is going to be haunted by her mother's blackness after her death as she was in life because it was simultaneously the cause of their connection and their disconnection. As Sarah Jane belatedly laments, she wanted to come home but the gulf between them, created by her inability to acknowledge her blackness, prevented her from being with her mother in the end.

The final scene of the film lends itself to a double meeting. Lora pulls Sarah Jane from the casket and takes her into the car. As they sit in the car, Steve is facing both Suzy and Sarah Jane and Lora places her hands on both girls as if implying that she now is mother to both of them. According to film critic Jackie Byars, "...the excessive opulence of the funeral, the

opulence of the funeral procession and the heightened drama of Sara Jane's return serve as commentary on the ambiguities and contradictions that fueled the narrative; they call attention to the artificiality of happy endings" (257). In gothic films, scenes can have an ambivalent sense to the viewer. Lora was depicted throughout the film as self-centered and basically unaware of her own daughter, and Annie was considered Suzy's surrogate mother. But now Lora holds both of her girls and the viewer senses that Lora will stop acting to be a real mother to Suzy and Sarah Jane, Sarah Jane will stop passing and Steve will marry Lora and become head of their family. So for some, this is a happy ending of sorts and a return home for Sarah Jane to hopefully reconnect with the spirit of her mother.

But there is also another side to this scene that is incongruent with a happy ending and alludes to a sense of ambiguity in identity and a continued haunting of blackness. According to director Donald Sirk:

...you don't believe the happy end, and you are not really suppose to. What remains in your memory is the funeral. The pomp of the dead, anyway the funeral. You sense it's hopeless, even though in a very bare and brief little scene afterwards the happy turn is being indicated. Everything seems to be OK, but you well know it isn't. By just drawing out the characters you certainly could get a story - along the lines of hopelessness, of course. You could just go on. They're all sitting in the limousine together - until everything starts to go wrong again, which it would for sure. Lana will forget about her daughter again, and go back to the theatre and continue as the kind of actress she has been before. Gavin will go off with another woman. Susan Kohner will go back to the escape world of vaudeville. Sandra Dee will marry a decent guy. This circle will be closed. But the point is you don't have to do this. (Haliday 151-152)

Evidently, Sirk wanted an ambiguous ending in lieu of the regular studio happy ending. Actually, there is really no way a happy ending could occur since Annie does die without reconciling with Sarah Jane. But one could momentarily contend that Sarah Jane is returning home to a pseudo mother and family consisting of Lora, Suzy, and Steve. But the ending is

really a continuation of the illusion that has permeated throughout the entire film. Unable to deal with reality, all of the film's participants, especially Sarah Jane and Lora, will continue to imitate life. After the mourning of Annie is over and the specter of death no longer hovers menacingly, the mourners will slowly assume their former imitative roles. Sirk's comments that the funeral is the final memory of the viewer and his referring to it as the "pomp of the dead" (Bronfen 151-152) also connect the film to Gothicism. Again, the funeral is a celebration of Annie's death and her going to glory but it also celebrates her humanity on earth. Yet the tragic irony of Sarah Jane wanting to come home but still not seeing her mother before her death is immense. Here, in true melodramatic form, the audience can relate to the commonality of unresolved relationships.

By the audience remembering the funeral, Annie's storyline truly reigns as the focus of the film. According to the film critic Huang "...the sheer emotional power of its final scene, along with the symbolic weight of its *mise-en-scene*, finally operates to lay to rest the subversive energy of Sarah Jane and to reinstate Annie, in her death, as the emotional and ideological center of the film". (36). In a way Sirk played a joke on his audience that thought the movie was about Lora, played by the movie star Lana Turner, but then realized by the end that it focused on the black servant and her daughter. He subtly hid his true intention of making Annie and Sarah Jane the focus instead of Lora and Suzy. In America at a time of true racial segregation and discrimination, this was quite an accomplishment for Sirk.

Both films illustrate the complicated relationship that both directors and the country have with race and passing. Sirk and Stahl both use gothic elements to convey the conflict within the passer but they are also susceptible themselves to using them to continue some of these same racial stereotypes, even while they attempt to be progressive. Yet unlike Stahl who precisely

declares Sarah Jane's future, (she decides to attend a black college down south) Sirk ambiguously concludes the film. Leaving all conjecture to the imagination of the viewer, Sirk, a final time, indulges the audience by allowing it to choose its own ending.

Conclusion

This has been an investigation of the study of specific authors' use of gothic tropes to reify and/or deconstruct racial stereotypes related to the passing figure. In many ways, the manner in which the writers employed the use of these gothic tropes was consciously and subconsciously influenced by not only their own personal agenda but the society in which they lived.

White and black authors use the passing figure to talk about the conundrum of race and how it has affected each community, individual and society as a whole. These writers use gothic elements to show society's entrapment by the very racial stereotypes it has created and for them it is futile to search for a way out, either for society or for the passer. Even without their knowledge many of these writers continue to reinforce these racial categories and stereotypes. In looking back at these writers, one can conclude that they all share the commonality of living in a race conscious society which includes their own internal and societal conflicts.

In the beginning of this study I looked at the nineteenth century and early twentieth century racial mores in the works of Mark Twain, Charles Chesnutt and Nella Larsen. Mark Twain is concerned with critiquing the theme of race as a visible marker but in his characterization of Tom Driscoll, he has a habit of falling into stereotype. Without addressing fully Driscoll's internal double but instead continuing to present the stereotype of the violent and monstrous black male, Twain's overt agenda to write a narrative that critiques race and race laws conflicts with his need to pander his book to the oppressors of blacks. Hence, this creates a

complicated and problematic depiction of passing and of racial construction to the post-bellum world. In *Pudd'n'head Wilson*, Twain's view of the passing figure is often viewed by some as a veiled negative critique of slavery and its most enduring legacy, miscegenation. Yet some argue that Twain's lofty intentions were compromised and heavily influenced by his personal and financial situations

However, many literary scholars consider Chesnutt's passing narrative, *Paul Marchand, F.M.C.*, to be a reversal of Twain's depiction of Tom Driscoll: Tom is really a slave passing as a white man whereas Paul is believed to be a Creole but is actually a white man. In accordance with his goal to use his writing as a literary tool to uplift the status of blacks by educating and informing whites of their humanity, Chesnutt created the character of Paul, a man of honor and integrity. Charles Chesnutt's characterization of Paul Marchand illustrates the importance of his doubles, both the external and internal ones. First, Chesnutt illustrates how society can be brainwashed into believing in racial categories even when the truth is obvious. Secondly, unlike Twain with Tom, Chesnutt provides Marchand with internal doubles to show his conflicted struggle after he learns of his true identity. Marchand cannot reconcile going from the oppressed class to the class of the oppressors.

In her depiction of the passing character, Nella Larsen works within the early twentieth century constraints concerning racial identity. Larsen uses two women who pass to illustrate the complexities of race, gender and class. These two women, Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield, are depicted as doubles of each other. Because *Passing* is set during the Harlem Renaissance because it is a period in which many elitist blacks were concerned with uplifting the race, Larsen's narrative offers a critique as well of the passer within the black community. She also critiques the gender issue, and motherhood, as they relates to the female passer. Larsen provides

dialogue and thoughts concerning the possibility that children and/or grandchildren from the passer might visibly reveal the passer's secret identity. Through the frank and candid conversation of Clare, Irene and Geraldine, Larsen graphically communicates the sense of gothic fear and terror that overwhelms the passer as she awaits the birth of a child that could ultimately reveal the secret of her black identity.

Nella Larsen deals with the complexities of her own mixed racial ancestry and her place in a socially conscious Harlem Renaissance world. Therefore, through her creation of Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield, Larsen literarily addressed the constant fears and anxieties of the passer as she attempts to balance her conflicting, and often vacillating, identities in both the black and white world. She uses to confront stereotypical characterizations of the passer.

Moving beyond the mid-point of the twentieth century, Danzy Senna's *Symptomatic* forecasts a continued focus on race, yet it depicts the modern day passing figure as more ambiguous and less deliberate when choosing to pass than the pre-Civil Rights Movement passer who strived for utter survival. Even though it is clearly an updating of *Passing*, it is also a critique of racial roles within the future American society. Senna boldly critiques the complexity of modern day bi-racial and multi-racial life in a so-called post-racial America and places the blame for the confusion and isolation of the mixed-race person on the black and white communities. Also, Senna illustrates that society's racial categories are instrumental in causing many of the conflicts among the mixed-race person, the passer and the community at large. Skillfully, Senna illustrates that language creates and un-creates identities. In both *Passing* and *Symptomatic* language is employed to make things real that have no basis and to make the real unreal. The unnamed narrator and Greta show the power of isolation from both communities but also the power of words to destroy a person's mental state as in the case of Greta. Often

language has the power to dictate whether one is part of a community or not and to define a person's place in society. Greta cannot escape the racial categories and stereotypes; nor can she escape the language that imposes these rules.

Likened in many ways to her unknown narrator, Senna vicariously uses her to deal with her own racial issues and also the complexities of race in a modern world. Senna depicts her passer as vacillating between the two communities of black and white, never fully claiming one identity nor completely denying the other. Due to this newly diverse and supposedly enlightened society, the biracial person now seems to have more freedom and less restriction but Senna illustrates the innate entrapments and complexities of someone of mixed race, no matter how racially and culturally progressive the world becomes. So even though this new world of seemingly multi-racial acceptance exists--the confusion, the torment, the uncertainty, and the fear all lurk, waiting for the least spark of racial animosity to dismantle the fragmented, fragile world of the passer.

Similarly, William Faulkner and Mark Twain reify and attempt to deconstruct racial stereotypes at the same time. William Faulkner's depiction of Joe Christmas critiques the tragic and enduring legacy of slavery and miscegenation in his novel, *Light in August*. Joe Christmas is a passer with no known identity to re-create, no past to escape, no future to chart and, saddest of all, no place to belong. In *Light in August* Faulkner engages the stereotype of the monstrous black who is a threat to white women while he simultaneously targets the community for its usage of and belief in racial stereotypes. Possibly, Faulkner is also the most unique of the studied authors/directors because he is so controlling of his passing character that he withholds Christmas' identity even from himself. He is challenging the function and creation of racial categories but he is also continuing the idea of the black monster by the enactment of Christmas'

rape and murder of Joanna Burden. So in the end, Christmas' truly ambiguous identity could arguably make his situation worse than any of the other passing characters in this study. Christmas does not choose to pass in order to attain a better life. Instead, he passes according to whatever identity, black or white, seems at the time most advantageous for his survival.

Faulkner, seemingly intent on warning white society of the inherently evil consequences of mixing black and white blood, portrays Christmas as consummately monstrous, horrific, and, most of all, inhuman. The message to white society is clear: Beware of the progeny of mixed blood; its stain is pervasive, indelible and never ending.

The films *Imitation of Life* both represent the passing narrative transferred to the screen. As these stories morphed into visual versions, the inherent gothic elements of doubles, darkness, alienation and isolation hover through racial stereotyping of the passing figure.

Both the 1934 and 1959 versions show the conflicted identity of a young girl who has the desire to pass as white to create her own self. Likewise, Peola and Sarah Jane have the black mother that must be denied in order for the charade to be successful.

Also, in several of these passing narratives, death emerges as the ultimate gothic trope. However, as the specter of death often haunts, so it does in both *Imitation of Life* films. Both Peola and Sarah Jane carry the guilt of their mothers' death, continually living in racially and socially constructed traps. So death does not pass the final verdict. However, death for Joe Christmas seems to provide the peace that eluded him in life.

Just as representative of the each author's unique view of the passer is the director's conception of the character in film. Particularly, John Stahl and Donald Sirk, directors of the 1934 film version of *Imitation of Life* and the 1959 adaptation, respectively, depict the character of Peola/Sarah Jane as she relates to the struggle of claiming her white identity over her black

identity to gain access to the opportunities of whiteness. Both Stahl and Sirk illustrate the black mother as the haunting specter of blackness that foils any and all attempts for Peola/Sarah Jane to successfully pass. Also, both directors choose a "return to blackness" ending to the movie in order to please the white audience as well as the black audience.

Passing is still a subject that writers find interesting and compelling. In 2004 Philip Roth wrote *The Human Stain* which along with Danzy Senna's *Symptomatic* is a post racial look at passing. Through this novel Roth connects racial passing to issues of class, the idea of transforming identities, and the ability of language to create identities, even after death.

For future study, I will connect the concepts of racial passing to gays passing as straight. Also, I will look at the enhanced scope of gender passing. The idea of passing in our society has not ended, just expanded in various ways. As races diversify, and sexuality becomes more and more prominent in American culture, passing morphs into contradictory and expanded notions. As long as we are a society of defined categories, we will always have people who rebel against those imposed restrictions.

Notes

ⁱ In 2003 it was discovered that Strom Thurmond a United States Senator from North Carolina had fathered a black child, Essie Mae Washington, with the family's housekeeper. Thurmond was a virulent racist who at one time was a member of the Dixiecrats, a political party that was opposed to integration. Washington was born in 1922 when her mother, Carrie Butler was 16 and Thurmond was 22. (Koch)

ⁱⁱ The distinction between Tom and Jim is very important in illustrating the different perceptions of race. Committed to disregarding the visible blackness of Jim, Huck must humanize Jim and the only way he can do that is to convince himself that Jim is really "white inside" (279). This is a common construction that today can be seen in the sense of colorblindness. There must be an internal whiteness conferred upon the black subject in order for some whites to feel comfortable and safe in the face of the external blackness that visibly confronts them. As a result, for Huck there is also a sense of comfort derived from Jim's visible mark of blackness because it assures Huck of his own superior position in the world. Opposites often validate each other. There is no white without black. In contrast, Tom's mere presence, as Cox states, is symbolic of the miscegenation that has occurred since Africans were brought to these shores.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Sentimental novel**, broadly, any [novel](#) that exploits the reader's capacity for tenderness, compassion, or sympathy to a disproportionate degree by presenting a beclouded or unrealistic view of its subject. In a restricted sense the term refers to a widespread European novelistic development of the 18th century, which arose partly in reaction to the austerity and rationalism of the [Neoclassical period](#). The sentimental novel exalted feeling above reason and raised the analysis of emotion to a fine art. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

^{iv} Two real cases that show the extent to which slave mothers would go in order to protect their children from the horrors of slavery are those of Margaret Garner and Harriet Jacobs. Margaret Garner ran away from her slave master with her three children. When she realized that she probably faced recapture, she tried to kill her three children but was only successful with killing her two year old daughter, in order to prevent the children from being enslaved. (Ohio History Central)

Harriet Jacobs was a slave trying to get away from her master's sexual advances. She had two children with a white man who was not her master and she was trying to sell her children to their father so they would not grow up as slaves. When she realized that she could not keep herself out of the hands of her master, she lived in her grandmother's attic for seven years and kept watch over her children until she could escape. (HarrietJacobs.org)

^v Paul Marchand is in jail because he wanted to retrieve his sister-in-law from the quadroon balls. The quadroon balls were events in which Creole young women were invited to be chosen by wealthy white men to be their mistresses. The white man's duty to the Creole woman is to keep

her in some sense of financial security. But there is no law that legally forces the white men to keep the women financially secure and in many ways this situation is akin to prostitution. They function mostly as mistresses to service the white men sexually and provide opportunities for them to live society sanctioned double lives. Many of these women had children with these men, but the women and the children had to be segregated from the men's legal families, known as "the other family"; these mistresses and their children were never legally recognized by the men or society. They are simply kept women whose children are never considered to be legitimate.

Furthermore, Creole women were seen as superior to black women but they were still used and abused by white men just as black women were at that time. These women do have some choices that elude black women who are slaves but still they were treated as sexual property by the white elite men. Because of the sanctioning of the racial system against Creoles, it was considered unlawful and dangerous for Creole men to even attempt to protect their women from the exploitation of these white men.

^{vi} The darkness of the double both fascinates and repels the audience and as Tropp explains, part of the reason for the audience's reaction is that they can see a reflection of themselves projected on their connotation of evil.

^{vii} In Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janey is another example of racial invisibility. She is a biracial character who is very light-skinned and with long hair. She is seen from the very beginning of the novel as on the fringes of the community. Many of the black women are jealous of her, even those she would consider her friends. When she has to defend herself in court over the murder of her husband, it is the white women who comfort her while the black women leave in disgust that she is not going to jail. So Janey is another example of a character caught between two worlds.

^{viii} Academic scholar Wendy Ann Gaudin discusses the risks of passing and interviews a man who passed to discuss the pertinent issues: While most people assumed that a white person would not 'accuse them of really being colored' because doing so would embarrass the accuser if he or she were wrong, many worried, nonetheless, that a white person would challenge their status. Another risk discouraging many from passing was the possibility of being 'outed' by a person of color who witnessed someone masquerading as a white man or woman. Perhaps, the greatest risk was the damaging effect that passing had on the family. (Mixed Heritage .org)

^{ix} Two gothic texts that also deal with familial bloodlines are *Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and *The Fall of the House of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe.

^x Examples of this can be seen in the movie *Imitation of Life* (1958) in which Sarah Jane is found out to be black by her white boyfriend and is savagely beaten. Another example is Charles Chesnut's *House Behind the Cedars* in which the character of Rena Walcott is revealed to be white and her finance leaves her. Within his mind his image of her changes from a genteel white woman to a dark vampire.

^{xi} According to sociologist Frank Wu, "The principle claim of the mixed race movement is that individuals should be allowed to define themselves, either by designating themselves as

belonging to as many official classifications as each person wishes or by refusing to participate in the classificatory scheme all together. (7)

^{xii} According to literary critic Sinead Moynihan the "L. Word" has explored the issues of Jennifer Beals' character's biracialism: Bette (Jennifer Beals), who is of mixed race, and her partner, Tina (Laurel Holloman), who is white and is carrying their child, attend a support group in which the couple discusses their impending parenthood. An African American member of the group, Yolanda, takes issue with the couple over (what she mistakes for) their decision to use a white sperm donor in order that Tina will give birth to a white child. Bette: I would never define myself exclusively as being white any more than I would define myself exclusively as being black. I mean, really, why is it so ...wrong for me...to move freely in the world just because my appearance doesn't automatically announce who I am?

Yolanda: Because it is a lie.

At a subsequent meeting, Bette turns Yolanda's own critique against her, observing that *she* didn't realize Yolanda was a lesbian until she read a poem written by her. As Bette puts it, 'You're not exactly readable as a lesbian and you didn't come out and declare yourself.' (1) Clearly, the show wanted to parallel being biracial and looking white to being in the closet. In both instances one is not readable by sight but has to declare oneself to become visible.

^{xiii} Rebecca Walker is an example of a biracial person caught between both groups. In her first memoir *Black, White, Jewish* she discussed the change of her name from Rebecca Leventhal to Rebecca Leventhal Walker: "When I change my name I do so because I do not feel an affinity with whiteness, with what Jewishness has become, and I do feel an affinity with blackness, with an experience of living in the world with non-white skin" (Kahn 32). This quote explains her internal need to identify with blackness. But in her newest memoir *Baby Love* she seems to be more open to Jewishness than she previously had been, "...I was raised more culturally Jewish. In this country at least, a lot of what we consider being Jewish is really shaped by being Eastern European, and I am culturally linked to the 'old country' (Kasriel ejc.com) These two statements illustrate how her identity has changed in a span of a few years and illustrates the ambiguity that is represented when caught between two cultures.

^{xiv} Concurrently with Joe Christmas' identity problems is the story of Lena Grove, an unwed mother looking for the father of her baby.

^{xv} The South and the North create their identities from the way the other is defined.

^{xvi} Faulkner's use of this term could possibly be Joe's degrading description of black women.

^{xvii} In *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* by James Weldon Johnson there is a school scene in which the school children taunt him after he is outed by a school principal. This scene is a little different because for the narrator this outside label is what gives him the recognition that he is black. He is not consciously trying to pass because the school is where he sees and understands how the outside world sees him.

^{xviii} Reflecting on this scene in an interview, Donald Sirk said the scene was needed because otherwise the movie was too pretty. (Hirsch DVD)

Bibliography

- Abernathy, Jeff. *To Hell and Back: Race and Betrayal in the Southern Novel*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003. Print
- Ahmed, Sara. "'She'll Wake Up One of These Days and Find She's Turned Into a 'Nigger' Passing through Hybridity" *Theory, Culture and Society* 16.2 (April 1999): 87- 106. Print.
- Al-Barhow, Abdul-Razzack. "Focusing on the Margins: *Light in August* and Social *Southern Literary Journal* xlii.2 (Spring 2010): 52-72. Print
- Andrews, William L. "Miscegenation in the Late Nineteenth-Century Novel." *Southern Humanities Review* 13 (1979): 1-18. Print
- Beals, Jennifer. Realityworld.com 18 April 2012. Web.
- Bell, Elizabeth. *Theories of Performance*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008. Print
- Belluscio, Stephen. *To Be Suddenly White: Racial Passing and Literary Realism*. Columbia: University of Missouri, 1996. Print
- Bennett, Juda. *The Passing Figure: Racial Confusion in Modern American Literature*. New York: Peter Lang, 1996. Print
- Bernstein, Matthew and Dana F. White. "Imitation of Life (1934 in a Segregated Atlanta: Its Promotion, Distribution and Reception." *Film History* 19.2 (2007): 152-178 Print.
- Berzon, Judith. *Neither White nor Black: The Mulatto Character in American Fiction*. New York: New York University Press, 1979. Print
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print
- Bogle, Donald. *Bright Boulevards, Bold Dreams: The Story of Black Hollywood*. New York: Ballantine Press, 2006. Print.
- Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Brogan, Kathleen. *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American*

- Literature*. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1998. Print
- Bronfen, Elisabeth. *Home in Hollywood*. New York: Columbia University, 2004. Print
- Brown, William Wells. *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*. (1853). In *Three Classic Novels*. Ed. William L. Andrews. New York: Mentor, 1990. 71-283. Print.
- Bush, Laura. "A Very American Power Struggle: The Color of Rape in Light in August." *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Culture* 51.3 (Summer 1998), 483-501. Print.
- Butler, Jeremy. "Imitation of Life, John Stahl (1934) and Donald Sirk (1959) Style and Melodrama" *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 32 (1987) pgs. 25-38. Web. 12 April 2012. Web.
- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology And Feminist Theory." *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theory*. Ed. Sue Ellen Case. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Byars, Jackie. *All That Hollywood Allows: Re-Reading Gender in 1950's Melodrama*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. Print.
- Carby, Hazel. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelists*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987. Print.
- Cash, W.J. *The Mind of the South*. 1941. New York: Vintage, 1968. Print.
- Cooper, Anna Julia. *A Voice from the South*. 1892. Rpt. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. Print.
- Courtney, Susan. *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation: Spectacular Narratives of Gender and Race*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004. Print.
- Cox, James M. "Pudd'nhead Wilson Revisited." *Dark Twin: Imposture and Identity in Mark Twain's America*. Susan Gilman and Forest G. Robinson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. Print.
- Davis, James P. *Who is Black? One Nation's Definition*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1991. Print.

- Davis, Thaddious. *Faulkner's Negro: Art and the Southern Context*. Louisiana, Louisiana State University, 1983. Print.
- D'Souza, Dinesh. www.dineshdsouza.com/books/endracism-intro.html. Web.
- Day, William Patrick. *In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. Print.
- Dickens, Homer. *What a Drag: Men as Women and Women as Men in the Movies*. New York: Quill, 1984. Print.
- Dubois, W.E.B. *Souls of Black Folks*. [Http// etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DubSoul.html](http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DubSoul.html). Web.
- Dubois, W.E.B. *The Oxford W.E.B. Dubois Reader*. Ed. Eric J. Sundquist. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.
- Dubois, W.E.B. *W.E.B. Dubois: Writings: The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade, The Souls of Black Folks, Dusk of Dawn, Essays and Articles*. New York: Library Of America, 1987. Print
- Duvall, John M. *Race and White Identity in Southern Fiction from Faulkner to Morrison*. New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2008. Print
- Edwards, Justin D. *Gothic Passages: Racial Ambiguity and the American Gothic*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2002. Print
- Ellis, Markham. *The History of Gothic Fiction*. Scotland: Edinburgh, 2001. Print.
- Ellison, Ralph. "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke." *Shadow and Act*. New York: Random House, 1964. Print
- Fabi, M. Giulia. *Passing and the Rise of the African American Novel*. Chicago: University of Illinois, 2004. Print
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 1952. Print.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 2005. Print
- Fielder, Leslie. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. Chicago: Dalkey Press, 1996. Print.
- Fisher, Lucy. *Imitation of Life*. Ed. Lucy Fisher. *Imitation of Life: Rutgers Films in Print*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1991. Print

- Fowler, Doreen. *The Return of the Repressed*. Virginia: University of Virginia Press 1979. Print
- Frederickson, George W. *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*. Middletown, Ct: Wesleyan UP, 1987. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The Uncanny." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. 17. Trans. James Strachey et al. London: Hogarth Press, 1955. Rpt. 1991, 219-252. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud: Psychopathology of Everyday Life, The Interpretation of Dreams, and Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*. Trans. A. A. Brill. New York: Modern Library, 1995. Print
- Gates, Henry Louis. "Introduction: Writing "Race" and the Difference it Makes." Ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. *"Race" Writing, and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. Print.
- Gates, Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford, 1988. Print.
- Gelder, Ken. *Reading the Vampire*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print
- Gaudin, Wendy Ann. "Passing for White in Jim Crow America" Mixed Heritage Center. Mixed Heritage Center.org. Web
- Garber, Marjorie. *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. New York: Knoph, 1970. Print.
- Gilman, Sander. "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality In Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine and Literature." Ed. Henry Louis Gates. *"Race" Writing, and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago P Press, 1985. Print.
- Gilman, Sander. *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1988. Print.
- Ginsberg, Elaine. *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996. Print
- Goddu, Teresa. *Gothic America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. Print

- Gosselin, Adrienne Johnson. "Racial Etiquette and the (White) Plot of Passing Place in (Re)Inscribing John Stahl's *Imitation of Life*." *Canadian Review of American Studies* 28.3 (1998): 47-68. Print.
- Gross, Louis S. *Redefining the American Gothic: From Wieland to the Day of the Dead*. Ann Arbor: Umi Research Press, 1989.
- Harvey, James. *Movie Love in the Fifties*. New York: Da Capo Press, 2001. Print.
- Harriet Jacobs Biography. *Harrietjacobs.org*. Web.
- Harrison-Kahn, Lori. "Her 'Nig': Returning the Gaze of Nella Larsen's Passing." *Modern Language Studies* 32.2 (2002): 109-138. Print.
- ... "Passing for White, Passing for Jewish: Mixed Race Identity in Danzy Senna and Rebecca Walker." *Melus* 30.1 (Spring 2005): 19-48. Print
- Henderson, Mae. "Critical Foreword" Nella Larsen *Passing*. New York: Modern Library 202, xvii-lxxxii. Print
- Hogle, Jeff. *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Literature*. Oxford: Cambridge, 2002.
- Horton, Merrill. "Blackness, Betrayal and Childhood: Race and Identity in Nella Larsen's *Passing*." *Cla Journal* 39 (1994): 31-45. Print
- Heung, Marina. "What's the Matter with Sara Jane?: Daughters and Mothers in Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life*." *Cinema Journal* 26.3 (Spring 1987): 21-43. Print.
- hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992. Print.
- Howe, Lawrence. "Race, Genealogy and Genre in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*." *American Literary History* 2.1 (Spring 1990) 39-55. Print
- Hutchinson, George. *In Search of Nella Larsen: A Biography of the Color-line*. New York: Belknap Press, 2006. Print.
- Ibrahim, H. "Canary in a Coal Mine: Performing Biracial Difference in *Caucasia*." *Literature Interpretation Theory*. 18.2 (April-June 2007), 155-172.
- Johnson, James Weldon. *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1995. Print.
- Johnson, E. Patrick. "Black Performance Studies: Genealogies, Politics, Futures." Ed. D. Soyini Madison and Judith Hamera. *The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2006. Print

- Kaplan, E. Ann. *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print
- Kasriel, Alex. "Being A Black Jew Means Ordered Spontaneity" The JC.Com. www.thejc.com/arts/books/961/being-a-black-jew-means. 18 April 2012. Web.
- Kilgour, Maggie. *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Klinger, Barbara. *Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture, and the Films of Donald Sirk*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. Print.
- Koch, Wendy. "Strom Thurmond's Biracial Daughter Sheds Life of Secrecy." *USA Today Online* 18 April 2012.
- Kroeger, Brooke. *Passing: When People Can't be Who They Really Are*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004. Print.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage" *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007. Print
- Lam, Bethany. "Light in August in Light of Foucault: Reexamining the Biracial Experience." *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature Culture and Theory*. 64.4 (Winter 2008), 49-68. Print
- Lott, Eric. 1993. "Whiteness: A Glossary." *Village Voice* 39 (20): 38-39. Print
- Martin, Robert K. and Eric Savoy. *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009. Print.
- McKee, Patricia. *Producing American Races: Henry James, William Faulkner, Toni Morrison*. North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999. Print.
- McWilliams, Dean. *Charles W. Chesnut and the Fictions of Race*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002. Print.
- Mercer, John and Martin Shingle. *Melodrama: Genre, Style and Sensibility*. New York: Wallflower Press, 2005. Print.
- Milian-Arias, Claudia M. "An Interview with Danzy Senna." *Callaloo*. 25.2 (Spring2002); 447-452.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness in the Literary Imagination*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993. Print.

- Moynihan, Sinead. *Passing into the Present: Contemporary American Fiction of Racial and Gender Passing*. London: University of Manchester Press, 2011. Print.
- Ohio History Central. "Margaret Garner." *Ohiohistorycentral.org.entry.php?rec=168*.
Web.
- Powers, Ron. "Introduction: Out of Slapstick, Genius: Mark Twain Meet Dr. Hackenbush" *Puddn'head Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*. Mark Twain. New York: Modern Library Association, 2002. Print.
- Punter, David. *Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. Print
- ... *A Companion to the Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001. Print
- Rahman, Abdur. "White Disavowal, Black Enfranchisement, and the Homoerotic in William Faulkner's *Light in August*." Ed. Jay Watson. *Faulkner and Whiteness* Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2011. 170-188. Print
- Piggford, George. "Looking into Black Skulls: American Gothic, the Revolutionary Theatre, And Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*" Ed. Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy. *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. Print.
- Sanchez, Maria and Linda Schlossberg. *Passing: Identity and Interpretation in Sexuality, Race and Religion*. New York: NY Press, 2001. Print.
- Savoy, Eric. "The Face of the Tenant: A Theory of American Gothic." Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy. *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*. Iowa City: Iowa Press, 1998. Print
- Saulny, Susan. "Black? White? Asian? More Young Americans Choose All of the Above." *New York Times Online*. January 29, 2011 Accessed 18 April 2012 Web.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*. Routledge Keegan & Paul: New York, 1986. Print.
- Senna, Danzy. "The Mulatto Millennium: Rethinking Blackness in a Multiracial World." Web.
- Shostak, Debra. *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, Human Stain and the Plot Against America*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011. Print.
- Smith, Felipe. *American Body Politic: Race, Gender and Black Literary Renaissance*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998. Print.

- Smith, Allan Lloyd. *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction*. New York: Continuum Press, 2004. Print
- Song, Miri. "Introduction: Who's at the Bottom? Examining Claims of Racial Hierarchy" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 27.6 (November 2004): 859-877. Print
- Spencer, Rainer. *Reproducing Race: The Paradox of Generation Mix*. New York: Lynne Rienner, 2010.
- Sundquist, Eric. "Mark Twain and Homer Plessy." *Representations*. 24 (Autumn 1988): 102-128. Print
- ... *Faulkner: A House Divided*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.
- Thaggert, Miriam. "Divided Images: Black Female Spectatorship and John Stahl's Imitation of Life ." *African American Review*. 32.3 (Autumn 1998): 481-491. Print.
- Toth, Josh. "Deauthenticating Community: the Passing Intrusion of Clare Kendry in Nella Larsen's Passing." *Melus* 33.1 (Spring 2008): 55-73.
- Tropp, Martin. *Images of Fear: How Horror Stories Helped Shaped Modern Culture (1818-1918)*. New York: McFarland & Company, 1999. Print.
- Van Thompson. *The Tragic Black Buck: Racial Masquerading in the American Literary Imagination*. Peter Lang: New York, 2004.
- Wald, Gayle. *Crossing the Colorline: Racial Passing in Twentieth Century Literature U.S. Literature and Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.
- Watson, Jay. "Overdoing Masculinity in *Light in August*: Or, Joe Christmas and the Guard." *Faulkner Journal* 9.1-2 (Fall 1993-Spring 1994): 149-77. Gender
- Wigger, Anne. "The Composition of Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins: Chronology and Development." *Modern Philology*. 55.2 (Nov. 1957): 93-102.
- Williamson, Joel. *William Faulkner and Southern History*. Jackson: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Wilson, Matthew. *Whiteness in the Novels of Charles Chesnutt*. Jackson: Mississippi, 2009.
- Wright, Susan Prothro. "In the Wake of D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* Chesnutt's Paul Marchand, F.M.C. as Command Performance" *Passing in the Works of*

Charles W. Chesnutt. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2010. Print.

Wu, Frank. *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*. New York: Basic Books, 2003. Print.

Young, Hershini Bhana. "Black 'Like Me', recognition the Racial Gothic and the post - 1967 mixed raced movie in Danzy Senna's *Symptomatic*." *African American Review*. 42.2. (Summer 2008): 287-305.