Haunted Houses, Haunted Bodies, and Vampires in Black Women's Contemporary Gothic

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April 2025

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

In this thesis, I examine how and why Black women writers, in England and in the US, use the Gothic landscape of haunted houses and haunted bodies, as well as the trope of the monstrous Other to engage with the trauma of slavery, racial discrimination, misogyny, sexuality, and identity. I examine the site of the haunted house, haunted bodies, and the figure of the vampire and vampiric consumption in Helen Oyeyemi's White is for Witching, Octavia E. Butler's Fledgling, and Tananarive Due's The Good House. In all three novels, hauntings are connected to trauma and loss. Additionally, in The Good House and White is for Witching, the site of the haunted house is connected to matrilineal curses. The figure of the vampire, and vampiric consumption, on the other hand, is representative of the fear of miscegenation, and the destabilisation of the binary between the self and the Other. In my introduction, I give an overview of the Gothic genre, tracing why the Gothic is the appropriate mode to engage with trauma of racism and misogyny despite the Gothic's villainization of the Other. In my first chapter, I examine Due's The Good House, arguing that the house, and the surrounding land, becomes a site of struggle for Angela to reclaim her lost history. In my second chapter, I analyse the haunted house in White is for Witching, where the patriarchal and xenophobic Silver House tries to consume the Silver women. Miranda's struggle against the xenophobia of the Silver House highlights her struggle against the legacy of racial discrimination plaguing her familial line. In the third chapter, I discuss haunted bodies and the figure of the vampire in Fledgling. Shori's haunted body and haunted memories are a signifier of her trauma and loss, which are a result of racism. In all three novels, through vampirism, Due, Butler, and Oyeyemi portray complex discourses of power in the novel, destabilising notions of self and Other. Furthermore, through this destabilisation, the authors highlight how certain oppressive systems continue to be enduring institutions in society.

Résumé

Dans cette thèse, j'examine comment et pourquoi les écrivaines noires, en Angleterre et aux États-Unis, mobilisent le paysage gothique des maisons et des corps hantés, ainsi que le trope de l'Autre monstrueux, pour explorer les traumatismes liés à l'esclavage, à la discrimination raciale, au sexisme, à la sexualité et à l'identité. J'analyse ces éléments dans *White is for Witching* de Helen Oyeyemi, *Fledgling* d'Octavia E. Butler, et *The Good House* de Tananarive Due, où les hantises sont systématiquement liées au traumatisme et à la perte. Dans *The Good House* et *White is for Witching*, la maison hantée est également associée à des malédictions matrilinéaires. Le vampire et la consommation vampirique incarnent la peur du métissage et la remise en question du clivage entre soi et Autre. Mon introduction propose un aperçu du genre gothique, en montrant pourquoi ce mode permet d'aborder les traumatismes du racisme et du sexisme, malgré sa tendance à diaboliser l'Autre. Le premier chapitre explore *The Good House*, où la maison et les terres deviennent un lieu de lutte pour Angela, qui cherche à récupérer son histoire perdue. Le deuxième chapitre analyse la maison patriarcale et xénophobe de *White is for Witching*, qui tente de consommer les femmes Silver. La lutte de Miranda incarne son combat contre l'héritage de la discrimination raciale. Le troisième chapitre examine les corps hantés et la figure du vampire dans *Fledgling*, où le corps et les souvenirs de Shori témoignent d'un traumatisme racial profond. Dans ces trois romans, à travers le vampirisme, Due, Butler et Oyeyemi proposent une réflexion sur les rapports de pouvoir et déconstruisent les frontières entre soi et Autre, révélant la persistance des systèmes oppressifs dans la société.

Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude belongs to Professor Camille Owens for her guidance, support, helpful feedback, and supervision. This thesis would not have been possible without her mentorship, endless patience, and kindness. Thank you for everything you have done, for your never-ending encouragement, and for believing in me throughout this process.

My sincere thanks to Professor Alexander Manshel for taking the time to read my thesis, and for providing constructive and insightful feedback on my work.

I would like to thank Professors Tabitha Sparks, Sandeep Banerjee, Sean Carney, and Peter Gibian for their wonderful seminars and for expanding my literary horizons.

I thank the English Department, specifically Professors Eli MacLaren and Fiona Ritchie, and Ms. Maria Vasile for their continued support throughout the degree and for making life easier for all of us.

To my mother and father, thank you for always having my back every step of the way, regardless of where my feet took me. Your prayers, sacrifices, love, support, and kindness are precious to me. I love you.

To my sister, thank you for making me laugh and act silly, even on days when it felt like there was nothing to laugh about at all. I love you.

To all my friends, but especially to Afraim and Denise, who often sat with me as I worked, thank you for your love and encouragement.

To my roommates: Claire and Abi. Thank you for the hugs, for the food, for the support, and for tolerating my nocturnal writing hours.

Most importantly, thank you to the Almighty for letting me have a network of support, love, and kindness throughout this journey, and for every blessing in my life. Alhamdulillah.

Introduction: Formations and Reformations of the Gothic

"What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face."
– Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*

"He was not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but a European."
– Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

"'Fancy a man that has fought grizzlies an' Injuns bein' careful of bein' murdered by a cat!'"
– Bram Stoker, *The Squaw*

"She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress."
– Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

One would imagine that writers of colour, especially women-identifying writers of colour, would be fervently against the Gothic genre. Afterall, historically, the villainized Other within the Gothic was often situated at the intersections of racialized and gendered bodies. As noted by Jack Halberstam in his discussion regarding representations of monsters across 19th-century Gothic literature, monstrous bodies were "pieced together out of the fabric of race, class, gender, and sexuality" (3). In a similar strain, Jarrold E. Hogle, discussing the resurgence of the Gothic at the turn of the twentieth century, argues that the revival of the Gothic was used to reestablish the narrative of "human as white, male, middle class, and heterosexual" (205) during a time of social upheaval where the hegemony of the straight white man was endangered and under questioning. Therefore, bodies of colour, especially queer bodies of colour and women's bodies of colour, have always existed at the intersections of Otherness under the Gothic genre and tropes, as exemplified in the quotes mentioned above.

In three out of the four quotes written above, indigenous and black women's bodies are Othered through the lens of race and gender, their subjecthood is stripped away and

reduced to animalism and savagery. In Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason, Rochester's white Creole wife, is described as existing in an indeterminate state between "beast or human being". She is referred to as an 'it', which inscribes Otherness and objecthood onto her because she is less than Jane, who is white, British, and therefore the ideal woman, and human, out of the two. In Bram Stoker's *The Squaw*, indigenous people are compared to grizzly bears while the black cat and the Apache woman are forced to inhabit the same subjectivity, that of the violent and savage Other. Similarly, in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the Kurtz's native mistress is described as "savage" and "wild-eyed", which imbues her with a sense of animalistic grace and power while reducing her subjectivity to less than the white observer and subject, Marlow.

Yet, despite the Gothic's racist origins and undertones, whereby Blackness was often equated with "moral degeneration and dread" (Goddu, "Slave Narrative" 79) countless notable women writers of colour, including numerous distinguished Black women writers from Britain and America, engage with the Gothic genre consistently and frequently in their work. Toni Morrison, a revered figure of African American literary tradition, has consistently utilised the Gothic mode in her novels to emphasise the traumas of racial discrimination and the horrors of slavery. Often considered to be Morrison's magnum opus, *Beloved* (1987) is a quintessentially Gothic novel with a haunted house and ghosts who represent generational trauma from slavery. Helen Oyeyemi, a contemporary award-winning British Nigerian novelist, frequently engages with aspects of the Gothic, as well as fairy tales, in her oeuvre. However, arguably, the Gothic is most prevalent in her novel *White is for Witching* (2009). A highly influential voice of African American literature, Octavia E. Butler, while primarily writing in the science fiction genre, routinely engages with the Gothic mode in her novels, especially in *Kindred* (1979), *Fledgling* (2005), and her *Xenogenesis* series (1987-1989). Tananarive Due, predominantly writing Black horror, uses Gothic tropes in some of her

works. The Gothic is most notably present in *The Good House* (2003), *Ghost in Summer* (2015), the *African Immortals* series (1997-2009), and in her most recent novel, *The Reformatory* (2023). Similarly, Zora Neale Hurston, Nola Hopkinson, Jesmyn Ward, N.K. Jemisin, Gloria Naylor, and Gayl Jones are some notable authors amongst countless others who have used the Gothic mode in their writing.

In an interview with Niall Harrison, Helen Oyeyemi said the following regarding the Gothic in connection to her novel, *White is for Witching*:

> "It was important to me to make room within the gothic genre for stories that make some of its themes explicit. Old-school vampire tales are rooted in a horror of otherness, the monsters being visible minorities with 'strange' accents invading 'our' communities and consuming resources. I took a grim pleasure in twisting the lens around so that the host environment became the source of the horror." (Oyeyemi *Strange Horizons*)

In her interview, Oyeyemi notes a conflicting duality within the Gothic. She points to the Gothic's troubling origins and the way the genre has vilified the Other in the past, especially often through the figure of the vampire, who is almost always foreign. However, she also notes that she was able to "make room within the Gothic genre" for herself by appropriating the Gothic to her needs, referring to the malleable and pliant nature of the genre. The porous nature of the Gothic is part of the reason why it continues to thrive, and also part of the reason why writers like Butler, Due, and Oyeyemi continue to return to it.

As a result, I am interested in how Black women writers use Gothic tropes and monsters to expose racial and gendered violence. This thesis analyses the role of the Gothic in Helen Oyeyemi's *White is for Witching*, Octavia E. Butler's *Fledgling*, and Tananarive Due's *The Good House* in relation to the exploration of race, identity, and gender in the novels. Specifically, I am invested in the trope of the haunted space in relation to curses, trauma, and

maternal legacies borne out of colonial and racist oppression and violence. Secondly, I am interested in the figure and idea of the monstrous Other, especially as it is represented through the figure of the vampire and vampiric consumption in relation to power dynamics, bodily autonomy, and sexuality. I argue that reappropriating and utilising the Gothic allows Oyeyemi, Due, and Butler to present a nuanced relationship between the self and the Other by destabilising the binaries between the two. Subsequently, the binaries between what is considered to be good and evil is also fractured. As a result, the discourse of power and the relations between power and autonomy become highly complex in the texts. Through this destabilisation, by doing away with thinking and conceptualising in binaries, writers speak back to the Othering of Black peoples and their bodies, specifically Black women's bodies, that has been rampant in traditional Gothic literature. Additionally, I am interested in how the Gothic, through hauntings, allows writers to address the traumas of imperial and colonial history within Britain and America through this destabilisation. Indeed, the Gothic's inherent obsession with the past allows Oyeyemi, Due, and Butler to draw parallels between the past and present oppressions, highlighting how systems of oppression, once put in place, are sometimes impossible to break apart.

In the context of this thesis, the words "Other", "Othering", "Otherness" and "Othered" refer to a person or group that is deemed to be part of the out-group. The out-group is a collective of people that have been marginalised and have had differences, stereotypes, and inferiority imposed upon them by the in-group, or the dominant collective. Therefore, the words "Other" and "self" are predisposed with unequal relations of power and meaning-making between the self (the dominant group/person) and the Other (the less dominant/marginalised group or person).[1] Toni Morrison, analysing the fervour with which Black bodies have been constructed as an Other in America, both in fiction and in non-

[1] See pages 248-251 of Stuart Hall's *Representation* for a detailed discussion on in and out groups.

fiction, contemplates that, "One purpose of scientific racism is to identify an outsider in order to define one's self. Another possibility is to maintain (even enjoy) one's own difference without contempt for the categorized difference of the Othered" ("Romancing Slavery" 6). The construction of bodies of colour as Other is rooted in European colonialism and exploitation; by viewing the subject of colour as not-as-human as the white subject, the colonial project of exploiting, oppressing, and degrading persons of colour becomes a morally justifiable cause. This justification of 'civilising' the savage Other, which joins the with the project of uplifting the supposedly helpless African slave ties European colonialism and American slavery together, and the spectre of this Othering haunts characters in all three of the novels I am interested in.

While there is a host of scholarship on *Fledgling* and *White is for Witching*, there is a distinct lack of scholarship on *The Good House*. Scholars of Black feminist speculative fiction and the horror genre have often mentioned Tananarive Due's work, especially in conjunction with Octavia E. Butler's works, while her *African Immortals* series has received some scholarly attention. However, *The Good House* has largely escaped scholarly observation. By applying the framework of the Gothic to the text, and by putting it into conversation with *Fledgling* and *White is for Witching*, I intend to bridge this gap in scholarship. Additionally, despite the breadth of scholarship on *Fledgling*, most scholars have not developed a sustained examination of the Gothic within the text. However, there are undeniably Gothic elements in the novel, and while scholars have talked about the figure of the vampire in *Fledgling* extensively, they have rarely applied the concept of haunting in analysis of haunted spaces in the novel. I intend to apply the concept of hauntology to the novel, analysing Shori's physicality as being marked by the haunting of loss and trauma. Through the framework of the Gothic, I intend to further the existing scholarship on *Fledgling*. Lastly, scholars tend to discuss *White is for Witching* singularly, or, in comparison

to Oyeyemi's oeuvre. By situating *White is for Witching* against *Fledgling* and *The Good House*, I am interested in observing transnational applications of the Gothic when analysing racially Othered Black women's bodies, and to discern where postcolonial Gothic and African American Gothic meet and differ in their use of Gothic tropes to destabilise the representations of self and Other.

However, to better understand the roots of postcolonial Gothic and African American Gothic, and how contemporary Black women writers use the Gothic and Gothic tropes to explore the effects of colonialism, slavery, misogyny and racism in regards to identity and gender, it is important to briefly understand and discuss the origins of the Gothic, the changing position of the Other in the Gothic, and the Gothic's many iterations and subgenres, which eventually lead to the formation of Postcolonial and African American Gothic. By historicizing the genre, the racial fears that underlie the formation and perseverance of the Gothic become apparent. In turn, the way Black writers destabilise and reinvent the very notion of boundaries and binaries which have been utilised to suppress non-white selves becomes apparent.

The Origins of the Gothic

The term "Gothic" is relatively new when used in relation to literature. However, historically, the word has been in use for centuries and "was literally, 'to do with the Goths'" (Punter 4). Due to the fall of the Roman empire and the Goth's nomadic existence, they were "presented…as barbarians, primitive peoples who with brute force had overturned the cultural achievements of Roman civilization" (Spooner 13). Thereafter, the word "Gothic" became synonymous with binaries: barbarism versus civilization, and brute force versus reason.

In the seventeenth century, the term "Gothic" was mostly associated with architecture that opposed Classical styles of formation. Many people advocated for a revival of the Gothic

style, rejoicing in its anti-Classical and anti-Catholic values, as well as its connection to Medieval England, which, to the British, signified pure Britishness that had "resisted Roman colonization" (Spooner 14). The Gothic novel was also linked with the Dark Ages and mediaeval Britain, albeit in a different manner than the Gothic architecture. Gothic literature invoked ideals of "the archaic, the pagan, that which was prior to, or was opposed to, or resisted the establishment of civilised values and a well-regulated society" (Punter 5).

Essentially, the Gothic in its heyday was preoccupied with creating a distinction between Britain and British nationhood against what is alien–which, at the time, was often considered to be Catholic and European–and Other. Both Gothic literature and Gothic architecture were invested in the ideal of British exceptionalism and the Medieval past. Furthermore, the popularity of the Gothic novel, ballads, and poetry was also related to the political and economic reality of the time. The Gothic became popular in reaction against the Enlightenment, explained by Maggie Kilgour: "need for the sacred and transcendent in a modem enlightened secular world which denies the existence of supernatural forces" (Kilgour 3). Significantly, the rise of the Gothic novel also coincides with the growth of the middle class in Britain, who were the most avid readers of the Gothic. Tabish Khair argues that the middle class were fascinated by how the Gothic allowed the aristocracy and working class to be portrayed: "aristocrats as powerful and elegant as well as decadent and devilish, by the lower classes as vigorous and oppressed as well as childlike, crude, ludicrous or beastly" (7).

The term Gothic was first used in relation to literature in 1765 by Horace Walpole in the second edition of his novel, *The Castle of Otranto*. Early Gothic literature, such as ballads from *Tales of Terror and Wonder*, were highly invested in delineating a sense of "British nationhood, clearly distinct from an alien, predominantly Catholic Europe" (Townshend 20). Therefore, from the very beginning, the Gothic has been a genre that exists in the binary

between the Self and the Other; it alienates the Other to demarcate the boundaries of the Self. However, through this very demarcation, the precariousness of the self, or the subject, is also brought into light.

Victorian Gothic

Scholars of Victorian Gothic have often struggled to enclose what the exact framework of the subgenre is. Alexandra Warwick, questioning whether the Gothic can be periodized, notes that it is a "form that escapes anything but the loosest of definitions" (1). Similarly, Julian Wolfreys, discussing the characteristics of the Victorian Gothic, notes that "the very identity [of Victorian Gothic].is fraught from the beginning" (1). However, like every subgenre of the Gothic, there are common themes, tropes, and ideologies that Victorian Gothic engages with. According to Warwick, there are two main strains of Victorian Gothic. One strand of Victorian Gothic deals with the city as the Other, while another strand problematizes bourgeoise domestic spheres as the site of Gothic anxiety and fear: "The earlier work of Dickens and the Brontës has enabled the Gothic to come home, from the cultural, geographical, religious and chronological margins to permeate every area of Victorian life: domesticity, the family, the streets, the empire, the future" (35).

While Emily Brontë, Charlotte Brontë, and Anne Brontë were not the only women writers who presented the domestic sphere as a Gothic site of struggle and danger, the Brontë sisters were prominent figures of this domestic strand of Victorian Gothic. The Brontë sisters destabilised the notion of the home as a place of domestic bliss and safety: "In contrast to the emphatic Victorian development of the idea of the home as a place of peace, safety and protection, the Brontës' domestic spaces, and the state of marriage or family life that the spaces embody, are terrifyingly ambiguous" (Warwick 30). In late Victorian Gothic, or *fin de siècle* Gothic, the breakdown of the domestic sphere becomes even further apparent. Bram

Stoker's *Dracula*, published in 1897, shows the titular character, Dracula–of Eastern European origins–upending the domestic peace of Mina and Jonathan's married life.

The second strand of Victorian Gothic focuses on the city as the site of the Gothic. The urban city, where poor, migrant, queer, and gendered bodies existed and roamed, became a site of anxiety for the imperial, white, heteronormative male and female subject. Indeed, the very layout of the city became emblematic of the Gothic, with narrow streets, slums, docks, and laboratories occupying a significant visual space in the landscape of the city. The gothification of the city in literature began with G. W. M. Reynolds *The Mysteries of London*, published in 1831, and continued with Dickens' novels, especially *Great Expectations*, published in 1860. In later years, during the *fin de siècle*, or late Victorian Gothic era, as the city continued to change, as the empire continued to expand, and as an increasing number of Othered bodies populated the city, scientific theories and discoveries led to the popularity of the abhuman figure in Gothic literature. As noted by Kelly Hurley, "Evolutionism, criminal anthropology, degeneration theory, sexology, pre-Freudian psychology — all articulated new models of the human as abhuman, as bodily ambiguated or otherwise discontinuous in identity" (5). Therefore, abhuman figures such as Dracula, Frankenstein's monster, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Dorian Grey, and characters from the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes populated the literary landscape.

Imperial Gothic

While the Gothic has always been interested in the relationship between the self and the Other, imperial Gothic specifically focuses on Othered bodies from faraway, non-European locales. Coined by Patrick Brantlinger in his book *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (1988), imperial Gothic follows the structure of quest romances and imperial adventure fiction, gaining popularity in the late-nineteenth century, during the late Victorian Gothic era: "Imperial Gothic fiction emerged in late Victorian

culture together with other sub-genres of popular romantic narrative, including detective stories and science Fiction" (Brantlinger 210).

At its centre, imperial Gothic: "deals with innumerable threats to the power and glory of the British Empire…expresses anxieties about decline and fall that always seem to haunt political, military and economic success" (Brantlinger 203). The cause of the Empire's decline or loss is always connected to the Other, and the Other's influence on the colonial subject/self. By focusing on the Otherness of the Other, colonial subjects were able to shift the narrative of the colonial project; the Other deserved to be colonised because they were inferior to the Empire: "Imperial Gothic frequently did the work of naturalising structures of otherness and monstrosity crucial to colonial rhetoric in terms of easing the consciences of the colonisers" (Ilott 20).

Postcolonial Gothic

The term postcolonial applies to, "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day." (Ashcroft et al. 2). Though the 'post' in 'postcolonial' suggests a period after the end of colonisation, like the Gothic, the colonial project continues to reinvent itself, currently thriving in the form of neoliberalism. Therefore, postcolonial literature, nowadays often referred to as world literature, continues to prosper, addressing the past and present borders of colonialism, and the ongoing global impacts of the colonial project. If imperial Gothic was invested in actively distancing, fearing, and mystifying the Other–in the context of imperial and postcolonial Gothic, this Other is always a colonised Other–then postcolonial Gothic, and the postcolonial perspective, is engaged in the opposite agenda.

Addressing the goals of postcolonial Gothic, Sarah Ilott notes that it actively engages with destabilising binaries, thereby challenging ideologies upon which notions of superiority/inferiority are based. In turn, this destabilisation challenges the very basis of

Eurocentrism: “Rather than merely reversing such patterns of monstrosity, the work of postcolonial Gothic is often to expose the Hegelian dialectic on which such binary oppositions of good/evil, white/black, centre/margin and self/Other rest” (20). In *Orientalism*, Edward Said–a key scholar of postcolonial studies–also notes similarly: “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (3). European identity is based on its ability to create distinctions between itself and the Other; without these boundaries, identity becomes more fluid, and, as a result, a more fear-inducing notion. More importantly, at times, the colonial self projects its unwanted desires/actions onto the figure of the Other to secure and create its own sense of moral boundaries, pushing its culpability and corruption onto the colonised Other. Commenting on why the Gothic particularly is a suitable genre to write back against the Empire, James Proctor and Angela Smith note that the Gothic’s “obsession with otherness, monstrosity and the non-human, its reproduction and *transgression* of racial binaries, possibly explains the genre’s seductiveness for many postcolonial writers” (97). Therefore, starting from postcolonial Gothic, the manner in which the Gothic engages with the Other starts to change and become even more multifarious.

By rewriting an imperial Gothic text from the perspective of the Other, or by “re-animate[ing] the traumas of their colonial pasts to produce Gothic narratives” (Gelder 220), postcolonial Gothic allows the Other to speak, rather than just be spoken about. More importantly, often, postcolonial Gothic emphasises how hybridised characters, stuck in a limbo between two different identities, also struggle to assimilate themselves into a stable subjectivity. I am putting more emphasis on hybrid characters, and the idea of hybridity, because under globalisation and due to technological advancements, the idea of hybridity has become more widespread, with identity not being strictly confined within cultural and traditional national borders anymore. Often, hybrid characters, neither here nor there, further

unsettle the relations of power which contribute towards binaries of identities. A good example of this conflict is Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), which is a Gothic retelling of *Jane Eyre* that focuses on the character of Bertha Mason, known as Antoinette Cosway in the Rhys' novel. In his discussion of the book, Ken Gelder notes that, by setting the novel against the backdrop of the slave uprising in Jamaica and the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, Rhys foregrounds how Antoinette (Bertha) as a Creole character, is not at home in Jamaica– where the Black slaves are enraged at the privileges of the white Creole–or at Britain with her husband, where she is not considered to be white enough: "Her Creole identity means that she is neither slave nor white; emancipation passes her by, and privilege eludes her" (2). By displacing the 'centre' of the narrative from the Empire and its subjects to the periphery and its subjects, Rhys is able to unlock a new set of power relations between different subjects. In a similar tangent, applying the postcolonial lens to imperial Gothic novels allows scholars to examine the colonial mindset, and give voice to how the text itself hides the oppression of the Other in subtle ways. For example, Spivak, in her essay *Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism*, notes how Jane's feminism as a white woman is dependent on the suppression of Bertha's freedom as a woman of non-British origins.

Gina Wisker makes an astute observation regarding postcolonial literature, noting that, "postcolonial spaces, worldviews, writers, writings and reading are inevitably Gothic, since they, like the geographies of place and of history, are haunted by the ghosts of those who were hidden and silenced in the colonial and imperial past" (402). Wisker's comment highlights how, through hauntings, monsters, and with an insistence on the past, the field of postcolonial Gothic studies can richly engage with conversations about identity and trauma by deliberately placing the Other on the centrestage. In *White is for Witching*, Oyeyemi's postcolonial Gothic novel, Oyeyemi plays ambiguously with the idea of self/Other, and good/evil to highlight how Miranda, and Britain at large, is stuck between an idealised

colonial past where Britain is an isolated entity that is superior in comparison to other nations, against the contemporaneous reality of post-Empire Britain that is inhabited by a plethora of formerly colonised subjects. Similarly, Butler and Due, who are more connected to the African American Gothic tradition, also ambiguously portray Shori and Angela's identities to engage with questions of who is an Other and who is a self, and what the implications of those labels are, and the resulting fluidity in power dynamics. Though they are two separate subgenres of the Gothic, African American Gothic and Postcolonial Gothic have the same investment with the Other. Following a historiographic discussion of the American Gothic tradition, I will engage with the similarities and differences between the two subgenres.

Early American Gothic and its Obsessions

Paradoxically, in the newly independent republic of America, "Gothics were the most popular printed imports from the 1790s to 1820" (Ringel *New England Gothic* 7). Despite the myth of American exceptionalism and the idealisation of the new republic as an Edenic space, citizens were enthralled by a genre that was mired in death, decay, and ruins. Naturally several questions arise: Why the fascination with the Gothic, and how are British and American Gothic different?

In terms of the spatial features of the Gothic, Leslie Fiedler has tried to create sharp and clear distinctions between British and American Gothic. Fiedler notes that, "In American gothic…the heathen, unredeemed wilderness and not the decaying monuments of a dying class, nature and not society becomes the symbol of evil" (147). While Fiedler makes astute observations, in his drive to differentiate between the two traditions, he does dismiss how the Gothic reinvents itself, as well as continuities between American and British Gothic. As noted by Punter in his discussion of Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, the house in this novel, reminiscent of the haunted castles and houses of British Gothic, becomes

representative of "a lower-middle class myth of an overpowerful *haute bourgeoisie* which has tried to usurp democratic privileges" (175), rather than an aristocratic family's decay and ruin.

Therefore, Old World spaces transform to suit the needs of the New World in American Gothic; houses and mansions replace castles and monasteries to reflect the bourgeoisie populace. The issue of Gothic space is further complicated because, as highlighted by Ringel, writers of American Gothic did "import the Old World's castles along with dungeons, cruel aristocratic fathers, loyal *famuli*, simple peasants, conspiracies, and the dead hand of the past" (*Early American Gothic* 23) to the tradition. Therefore, there is a continuity in spatial imagery between British and American Gothic–though often the imported spaces represent something different in the American context–as well as newness, especially when taking wilderness into account. Wilderness becomes a Gothic threat because they are representative of the danger posed by Native Americans, non-white and non-Puritan communities, and the possibility of sinning through religious rebellion.

Fiedler also argues that the British Gothic tradition focuses more on class-based differences between the self and the Other, and has more supernatural qualities, whereas the American Gothic tradition is based on racial differences between the self and the Other and is rooted in America's historical account. Fiedler goes so far as to claim that, "the proper subject for American gothic is the black man" (378). However, this emphasis is problematic. As noted previously in the 'Origins of the Gothic' and 'Victorian Gothic' sections written above, British Gothic has always had a preoccupation with the racial Other, especially Victorian and fin-de-siecle Gothic. H. L. Malchow, in his analysis of racial imagery in eighteenth century British Gothic notes similarly, explaining that the "gothic genre of the late eighteenth century… offered a language that could be appropriated, consciously or not, by racists in a powerful and obsessively reiterated evocation of terror, disgust, and alienation"

(3). Lastly, as rightly noted by Justin D. Edwards, Fiedler's claim "negates gender, homosexuality, incest, rape, war, murder, religion, and class" (xxvii), all of which also occupy tremendous space in American Gothic, and, in the Gothic tradition in general.

Nevertheless, the extent and explicitness with which American Gothic obsesses over the racial Other is unique, and the only equivalent of this obsession can, arguably, be found in a small number of British Imperial Gothic texts. Noting the differences between British and American Gothic, Edwards succinctly summarises the differing manner in which the British in Britain were confronted with the racial Other in comparison to the British and European colonial settlers who came to the New World: "the British slave trade and plantations…existed outside the nation…This distance between the homelands and the colonies made it possible for many British citizens to ignore the gothic horrors of slavery" (xviii). In comparison, in America, the 'gothic horrors of slavery' and genocide were inescapably present in every citizen's everyday life. Teresa Goddu, discussing the inevitable presence of slavery in the American Gothic tradition, notes how, "Over and over again, American authors turn to the Gothic mode…to disclose the ghostly origins of the nation as issuing from the oppressive social structure of slavery." (63). Jonathan Hogland, discussing the American frontier through the lens of imperial frontier Gothic, makes a similar point. He notes that the "frontier is not only a dangerous place, it is primarily a regenerative space capable of transforming the Old World immigrants into New World pioneers" (24). However, this regenerative transformation is a byproduct of violence against the Native Americans, Black people, and the surrounding wilderness. For Edwards, who focuses on expression of gothic discourse in nineteenth century American fiction and nonfiction, the most telling characteristic of American Gothic is the fear and threat of racial ambiguity: "Disruptions in the stable categories of race, nationality, class, and gender, I argue, result in a dread that is often represented by gothic discourse, contributing to the development of American gothic

discourse" (xxx). Certainly, in Antebellum America, the principal cause of racial ambiguity was miscegenation, and later, passing, both of which are rooted in slavery.

Southern Gothic

If the American Gothic tradition is haunted by the crimes committed against the racial Other by white settlers, nowhere else is this haunting more prominent than in Southern Gothic. The South cannot escape the Gothic legacy of slavery and its horrors, and has had its past imposed on it again and again by the rest of the nation. Christopher Lloyd notes that "The South has long been depicted as the nation's other, an aberrant space within America's borders" (79). By alienating the South, by making it seem as the monstrous Other, the rest of the nation is able to create a separation between itself and the harrowing foundations of the nation rooted in genocide and slavery. Just like the "Othered body–the "Not-Free, Not-Me" of American culture–is made to enact all of the deviance and failures the white rational body denies" (Wester, *African American* 5), so the Southern Gothic genre and the South become the repository of every horror of its origin and economic success that America wants to deny and hide. Sven Beckert discusses how Mid-Atlantic states and New England reaped the benefits of slavery in the South, relying on cotton production for economic development. As a result, the whole nation is implicated in the horrors of slavery, not just the South.

National culpability–and not just a Southern one–in the horrors of slavery is reflected in *The Good House* and *Fledgling* through the locales engaged in the texts. Both texts take place primarily on the West coast, and both texts engage with the aftereffects of racial discrimination, highlighting how the effects of slavery, racial discrimination, and racial trauma are not confined merely to the South. Jay Ellis also notes the Othering of the South, pointing out that, "Not only in terms of race, but also every other aspect of social identity and conflict, the South has become the synecdochic repository for sexism, ignorance…" (xxxii). This othering of the South, alongside the South's undeniably complex and haunting relations

with the institution of slavery, often translate themselves into Southern Gothic's particularities, such as the overlying use of the grotesque in Southern Gothic. While the grotesque is overwhelmingly present in Southern Gothic, as famously noted by Flannery O' Connor, "anything that comes out of the South is going to be called grotesque by the Northern reader, unless it is grotesque, in which case it is going to be called realistic" (40).

A Turn in Gothic Discourse

Teresa Goddu asks a poignant question, one that has been, in part, the catalyst of this thesis: "How could they [early Black writers of Gothic slave narratives] claim their humanity through a genre that played into their cultures' racial anxieties and fears?" ("Slave Narrative" 73). From the early nineteenth century to mid-nineteenth century, there were countless debates about the institution of slavery. While many in New England argued that "slavery should be abolished, few clearly agreed upon what to do with blacks if they were freed" (Wester, *African American* 19). Meanwhile, in response to the Haitian Revolution and the violent revolt led by Nat Turner, proslavery advocates and writers reiterated the monstrous Otherness of slaves, depicting them as savage degenerates who deserved their enslavement. Thomas Dew, a proslavery writer, compared slaves to Frankenstein's monster, presenting them as "inevitably destructive to white patriarchal society, consuming an invaluable commodity–white women" (Wester, *African American* 20). In this instance, where the body of the racialized Other is synonymous with atavism and savagery, the fear of the 'consumption' of white women by the racially Other is representative of the terror represented by racial ambiguity and miscegenation. Through miscegenation, and the resulting racial ambiguity, the supposed purity, intellect, and superiority of the white subject came under threat through the destabilisation of the self/Other binary.

However, since the Gothic is a mode of discourse, adaptable to the needs of its writers, the anti-slavery movement writers and escaped slaves also used the Gothic to write back

against proslavery narratives as well as the Othering and dehumanisation of slaves: "Represented as a house of bondage replete with evil villains and helpless victims, vexed bloodlines and stolen birthrights, brutal punishments and spectacular suffering, cruel tyranny and horrifying terror, slavery reads as a Gothic romance" (Goddu, "Slave Narrative" 72). Teresa Goddu rightly posits "the origin of the African American slave narrative in the Gothic tradition" ("Slave Narrative" 74). Similarly, it is right to argue that slave narratives constitute the beginning of the African American Gothic tradition. From Harriet Jacobs *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) to *The Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb* (1849) to Hannah Crafts' *The Bondwoman's Narrative* (2002), slave narratives are replete with Gothic language, imagery, and tropes, with the white slave-owning masters cast as the villains, while the Black body inserts itself into the role of tortured heroes and persecuted heroines. For example, Jacobs, who writes as Linda Brent in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, flips the trope of the monstrous Other, presenting her white masters as monstrous by depicting how they derived pleasure from torturing enslaved Black people through beatings, sexual abuse, and emotional and mental abuse. Unlike in previous forms of Gothic fiction, the stakes are higher in slave narratives because the Gothic terror of being captured, of torture, and of confinement is real; "the scenery is not staged but real" (Goddu *Gothic America* 135), effectively conveying the gothic existence endured on plantations and in bondage.

However, using the Gothic as a means of communicating the horrors of slavery was not without its challenges. Goddu rightly notes the precariousness of using Gothic tropes to signify one's gothic experience and existence since the very language of the Gothic is overflowing with demonised representations of blackness: "Whether through coding monsters as dark or through depictions of rebellious slaves as bloodthirsty fiends, the Gothic, in demonizing blackness, also dehumanized the slave" ("Slave Narrative" 73). When writing slave narratives to voice their gothic entrapment, and when writing back against proslavery

narratives, Black and abolitionist writers had to be careful to avoid falling into the readied pitfalls of Gothic language, which wasn't always a successful endeavour. Discussing *The Narratives of James William* (1838), Goddu highlights an instance when Williams describes a mistress as having "black eyes [that] glowed" and eyebrows that "bent and darkened" (35). In this instance, connoting darkness with evilness, William simultaneously "demonizes the slaveholder in the Gothic's terms of racial difference and reinforces his culture's association of dread and menace with the racialized other" (Goddu "African American" 77). Yet, despite the pitfalls, the Gothic continued to be a productive field of literary engagement for Black writers in the States, and the African American Gothic tradition continued to evolve.

In her book, Maisha Wester, tracing the African American Gothic tradition from slave narratives to contemporary Gothic novels such as Tananarive Due's *Ghost Summer* (2008), advocates for "investigations into black revisions of the gothic genre" (256). As discussed in the previous paragraph, while slave narratives operated mostly by flipping the binary of good/evil and white/black, as the tradition evolved and built on itself, "texts go beyond merely inverting the color scheme of the gothic trope…to destabilizing the entire notion of categories and boundaries" (2). Dara Downey, analysing the African American's women's Gothic fiction, notes similarly, explaining that because of the "Gothic's focus on power relations, on the difficulties of breaking free from patterns of behaviour established by and benefiting those in power, and on the past's dangerous hold over the present" (229) it is a useful avenue to assess racial discrimination and violence. Downey argues that after emancipation, many Black thinkers and writers tried to distance themselves from mysticism, voodoo, and the idea of the 'Black Magic', which was weaponized by white hegemonic culture to contribute to the Otherness of Black people. However, African American women's Gothic writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Octavia E. Butler, and Tananarive Due, by reintroducing magic, mythology, and the supernatural in their Gothic narratives, undo "some

of the historical erasure to which African and Native American beliefs, traditions and histories have been subjected" (237).

Wester and Downey make astute observations in their assessment of the African American Gothic tradition, observations which are relevant to the texts I am invested in for my thesis. Due's *The Good House* specifically deals with the supernatural and mysticism in connection to familial curses, with Angela, the protagonist, needing to learn about her familial history which is deeply tied to Haitian vodou. In *Fledgling* and *White is for Witching*, on the other hand, the authors destabilise notions of self/Other radically through the figure of the vampire. In *Fledgling*, for example, self/Other binaries are complicated because, throughout history, the Ina have almost always been the vilified Other of human society, prejudiced against and hunted for their paleness and blood-drinking. However, within Ina society, Shori is clearly an Other. Shori, therefore, is twice Othered, marginalised in human and Ina society both, highlighting how oppressive systems are learned behaviours which get disseminated via constructed networks, existing in every microcosm regardless of how advanced a society claims itself to be.

Similarities and Differences: Postcolonial Gothic and African American Gothic

The Postcolonial Gothic tradition and the African American Gothic tradition are deeply interconnected, since slavery was another effect and byproduct of the capitalist colonial project, brought to America through settler colonialism to create profit for the European colonial powers. Since Postcolonial Gothic and African American Gothic are concerned with inserting the voice and agency of the Other within the Gothic tradition, and since the root of the Other's oppression is mired in the colonial project, both traditions and their agendas often work interchangeably. One may rightly argue that the scope of Postcolonial Gothic is broader than that of African American Gothic, since the postcolonial deals with all the locales that used to be former colonies, while the African American Gothic

tradition solely deals with America's origins and the ghost of slavery that haunts the nation to this day. However, as demonstrated in the previous sections on Southern Gothic and African American Gothic, what happened in the colonies, such as the Haitian Revolution, had a stark impact on what happened in representations of the racial Other within the American Gothic tradition. Therefore, the postcolonial Other and the African American Other are intrinsically connected. Even if the British did not have the institution of slavery established within England, the Empire was the dominant power in the Atlantic Slave Trade, transporting approximately 3.1 million slaves to its colonies in the Caribbean, North and South Americas, and other colonies. Therefore, it is always implicitly connected to the horrors of slavery.

On the other hand, as noted in the section above on American Gothic, because England transposed the cruelty of the slave trade onto the site of the colonies it exploited, the US has a far more intricate and inseparable connection to the institution of slavery. For Britain, on the other hand, slavery is but one of many horrors lurking in its history, horrors it has managed to keep itself distant from by transferring them onto faraway lands. In Britain, the fear of the Other has always centred around the Other invading Britain, whereas in America, the fear is more deeply tied to the position of the Other in society.

Critical Lens

To support my discussion of the novels and the argumentation of my thesis, I will primarily be using the critical lens of psychoanalysis. The Gothic is intricately tied to psychoanalysis, since both the Gothic and psychoanalysis are deeply invested in the past, and the return of the past. The concept of 'the uncanny' is especially relevant to my thesis, since the uncanny informs the concept of hauntings, which is central to my analysis of each text. Forwarded by Freud in his essay, "The Uncanny" (1919), it encompasses a "commingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar…a sense of homeliness uprooted, the revelation of something unhomely at the heart of hearth and home…It…[is] indissociably bound up with a sense of

repetition or 'coming back'-- the return of the repressed" (Royle 1-2). At the heart of the uncanny, there is haunting, and at the heart of haunting, there is the uncanny.

Hauntings are not possible without the spectre, or the ghost. Andrew Smith defines the spectre as "a liminal being that inhabits and gives shape to many of the figurations of trauma that characterise the Gothic. The spectre is also a strangely historical entity that is haunted by the culture which produced it" (147). It must be noted that none of the three texts that I will be examining in this thesis are ghost stories, at least not strictly. However, there are elements of the ghostly in them, especially in *White is for Witching* and *The Good House*. In all three novels, ghosts often take the form of memories, dreams, or haunted sites. Avery Gordon, in her exposition of ghosts, notes that "The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life" (8).

Another psychoanalytic concept, that of the abject, is also pertinent to my thesis, especially since it relates to the figure and concept of the monstrous Other. According to Julia Kristeva, the abject is that which does not "respect borders, positions, rules [that which] identity, system, [and] order" (4). The monstrous Other and the abject are connected because the Other "enters a process of abjection through a moment of projection, the "throwing off" and "throwing under" in which the self disavows all that is disdained and deemed unlawful by the superego" (Wester *African American* 16). Christina Sharpe offers insightful commentary on the monstrous Other in relation to Black people, noting that for the Black subject, "violent subjections introduce the ongoing processes of subjectification during slavery and into post-slavery" (3). Black people, viewed as objects under slavery, entered subjectification while being viewed as objects; the process of subjectification was inherently violent, and this is violence keeps recurring. Lastly, the Gothic figure of the vampire is intrinsically connected to the abject because of their transgressive nature: "The image of the

vampire as miscegenated and miscegenating monster illustrates the fear…[that] once racial boundaries were transgressed— whiteness would be irrevocably contaminated" (Wester *African American* 19). Therefore, the vampire is a crucial figure when discussing gendered and racialized Others in the Gothic, since it holds the capability to embody both spheres of Otherness through its abjectness.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter One, I will be examining *The Good House* by Tananarive Due. Set in Sacajawea, Washington, *The Good House* is a Gothic horror novel that narrates the story of Angela Toussaint as she tries to solve the mysterious curse surrounding her grandmother's house and her son's death, realising that the two are connected. In this chapter, I illustrate how the past, aided by the haunted house, haunts the present through repetitions, memories, rememories, and dreams. Through my analysis, it becomes evident that unresolved traumas from racial discrimination are the cause of the curse surrounding the Toussaint family.

In Chapter Two, I will be focusing on Helen Oyeyemi's *White is for Witching*. Set in Dover, England, *White is for Witching* is a postcolonial Gothic novel that narrates the story about how and why Miranda Silver disappeared from the Silver House. In this chapter, I highlight how xenophobia and patriarchy collude within the site of the haunted house to oppress and control the Silver women. Furthermore, through the figure of the monstrous, the binaries between self and Other dissolve to reveal the inherent instability of identities.

In Chapter Three, I will be analysing *Fledgling* by Octavia E. Butler. Set in California, *Fledgling* follows Shori Matthews, an amnesiac hybrid Black vampire as she unravels who she is, and who killed her entire family. I argue that Shori's body is a site of haunting, and that Butler presents a society with a complex discourse of power to question the binary of self/Other.

Chapter One: Haunted Houses and Rememory in *The Good House*

"*Perhaps I will steer you, Dominique, when you are well again, or your son or daughter who is yet to be born. Or, perhaps I will find a great-grandchild who is the very image of* grandmere *and steer her sleep to this piece of her destiny. And when she wakes, I will show her the story of her line.*"
–Tananarive Due, *The Good House* (186)

Rememory as in recollecting and remembering as in reassembling the members of the body, the family, the population of the past. And it was the struggle, the pitched battle between remembering and forgetting, that became the device of the narrative. The effort to both remember and not know became the structure of the text. Nobody in the book can bear too long to dwell on the past; nobody can avoid it.
–Toni Morrison, "Rememory" (587)

The past has a constant and insistent presence in *The Good House*. Throughout the narrative, Due represents her characters reminiscing obsessively about the past. Through dreams, rememories, memories, and repetition, the past rises to haunt the present. Indeed, the very town of Sacajawea, the story's setting, seems to be a haunt from a bygone era, described as the "set of *Little House on the Prairie*" by Angela (20). Due's choice to describe the town as a set suggests a sense of insularity and artifice, indicating a deliberate willingness on the part of the inhabitants to remain isolated from the rest of the nation. Angela recalls Corey describing Sacajawea as "Time Warp, U.S.A." (21), implying that time had, somehow, stopped in Sacajawea, or flowed differently there than it did in the rest of the country.

There are layers of haunting in *The Good House*, and in the following sections, I will examine the multifarious ways in which the past resurfaces and haunts the present. I am primarily interested in the site of the Good House, the surrounding lands known as Crossroads Forest, and in the town of Sacajawea itself. Through these sites, Due reenacts the past to draw attention to repressed traumas, which facilitates Angela and Corey's reassembling of their rememories. Through this reassembling, Due highlight's Angela's growth as a character; by confronting and acknowledging her family's history, she breaks the curse on her matrilineal family and restores balance in her lineage. Due exposes the lasting trauma incurred by the institutions of slavery, genocide, and racial discrimination through the

trope of haunting in the novel. By juxtaposing the past against the present, Due highlights how Black and Native American histories have been silenced across the United States, leading to generational trauma, which is portrayed as a curse in the novel. Due, like Morrison in *Beloved* and Butler in *Kindred*, highlights the importance of acknowledging and understanding the past; when Corey and Angela acknowledge personal and historical trauma to reestablish their connection to their family's history, the curse is lifted. Unlike previous authors, however, Due is unique in her representation of generational trauma as a curse that has been passed down through the matrilineal line to haunt the living. Furthermore, the way Due interlaces Gothic uncanniness with horror throughout her story is unique and further emphasizes the trauma of the past horrors. Additionally, through the figure of the monstrous Other, vampiric consumption, and possession, Due destabilises and challenges the binary of self/Other and good/evil that is often present in the genre of the Gothic and presented in the novel by white colonisers and oppressors.

Fascinatingly, though set in the state of Washington, far removed from the South of the nation, the way Due characterises Sacajawea is reminiscent of Faulkner's fictional Yoknapatawpha County, and Jesmyn Ward's fictional Bois Sauvage. Both Faulkner and Ward engage with the South's antebellum history, as well as the decay and atavism within smaller Southern counties, which were forgotten and Othered by the rest of the nation. By depicting Sacajawea–also a fictional town–in similar terms, Due suggests that the decay and degeneration associated with the South is not merely confined to the South. Rather, it is characteristic of and widespread throughout the nation. This degeneration is reflected in Marie's journey. After her husband, Phillipe, is murdered by white supremacists in New Orleans, Marie takes her "precious Dominique away from New Orleans, away from the South, as far from the place of her father's murder as" (262) possible. Yet, it is in the West coast, in Sacajawea, that her "damnation began" (262). The violence and racism of the South

follows Marie to Sacajawea, creating generational trauma in the Toussaint family. Therefore, through the Toussaint family's migration from the South to the West Coast, Due highlights how the spectre of racism and slavery continues to haunt generations of Black families across US, regardless of where they are situated within the country.

Similar to the setting, the narrative structure in *The Good House* is reflective of the recurring presence and importance of the past in the novel. The story, told in a third-person omniscient perspective, oscillates between three timelines, creating a vital link between the past and the present. The three narrative timelines belong to three different generations of the Toussaint family. Marie's narrative time, set in 1929, is depicted through flashbacks, chronicling how she misused her powers as a Vodou manbo by releasing the baka to punish the people of Sacajawea, whose violence triggered Marie's trauma of losing her first husband, Phillipe, to racial violence. However, by releasing the Baka, Marie angered her spirit husband and Iwa, Papa Legba When Marie tries to defeat the baka, it possesses Marie's daughter, Dominique. Marie's actions led to the Iwas' abandonment of her family, placed a curse on her family, and made her family a target of the baka's rage.

Angela's timeline, set in 2001, focuses on Angela's journey of coping with her son's death and uncovering the secrets of her matrilineal family. To free herself from the family curse, Angela must defeat the baka Marie released and Corey unknowingly strengthened. Throughout her journey, Angela has to deal with the deaths of multiple loved ones, who are all targeted by the baka. Corey's narrative timeline, also set in 2001, acts as a bridge between Marie and Angela's timelines. Marie guides Corey towards her book, *Les Livre des Mysteres*, through dreams. Corey tries to defeat the baka but fails; rather than succumbing to the baka's influence, he kills himself and tries to get rid of the curse. However, Corey fails, and he kills himself rather than succumbing to the baka's influence. Through these three interconnected timelines, Due highlights how history repeats itself, emphasising the traumatic effects of

racism from generation to generation. Consequently, the haunting of the present by the past becomes even more inescapable, creating a sense of claustrophobia within the text, further emphasising Angela's inability to outrun her familial history, collective historical trauma, and her personal loss, which are all interlinked.

Angela and Corey reclaim their lost histories through hauntings in the forms of dreams, memories, and rememories. The reclamation of her history also heals the Good House and the surrounding lands. I create a distinction between memory and rememory because while an individual willingly remembers memories, rememories constitute repressed memories or knowledge that moves from the individual towards the collective. Rememories are also often located within specific sites and objects and are not confined to one's psyche. In *Beloved*, Sethe describes rememory as follows: "If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place–the picture of it–stays, and not just in my rememory but out there, in the world" (35). Therefore, rememories are tied to the concept of intergenerational transmission, which is possible due to the "materiality and intersubjectivity of memories" (Hirsch 74). When one dwells on a place, or on an object, or on a person, they may "bump into" (Morrison *Beloved* 36) a rememory that isn't theirs. Hence, Sethe warns her daughter to not go near Sweet Home plantation, afraid that Denver will get sucked into the past, or the past will reenact itself for Denver. Yet, the intentional repression of memories is also inherently haunting in nature. Repressing memories cannot stop the past from resurfacing or reenacting, as seen in *Beloved* and in *The Good house.* Therefore, like ghosts, rememories lie in a liminal state between presence and absence, between becoming and forgetting; they are haunting in nature because of their liminal state, and function like the 'return of the repressed' but, unlike the 'return of the repressed', they are not constrained to the realm of the individual. Through rememories, the "personal, political, cultural, historical, and theoretical are intricately merged" (Rhee 2) to form networks of connection that need to be rediscovered to reclaim, and recover from, the

past. Scholars have defined Morrison's concept of rememory in various manners, however, I am interested in the framework offered by Rhee, who explains that "rememory simultaneously refers to both forgetting and remembering and rememory is both doing and (non) being…In addition, rememory exists both inside and outside an individual's experience, thinking, and knowing" (2). In *The Good House*, there are various forms of rememories at play, ranging from the personal to the national, that Angela needs to remember, recollect, and 'reassemble', to stop the baka and lift the curse that has been placed upon her family.

Haunted Town and Haunted Land

The town of Sacajawea, and the land surrounding the Good House, referred to as the "Crossroads Forest" (347), are haunted by various intersecting pasts. The word crossroads generally indicates an intersection, where several roads meet, and is an important concept in various religious and spiritual schools of thought. In Vodou, it signifies a meeting place between the living and the dead where the living can commune with the dead. However, they have a double meaning in *The Good House* since the Crossroads Forest is also a meeting point of several histories. Upon her arrival at Sacajawea, John, a Chinook man who lived in Sacajawea, informs Marie, "When the plague came…his people's dead outnumbered the living…there had been a forest of canoes at Sacajawea until the white men removed them" (343). John is referring to the Crossroads Forest, which used to be a burial site for the Chinook people who were native to the land before colonial settlers exiled them and removed their burial site, thereby erasing the Chinook's historical connection to the place. Furthermore, John's reference to the plague refers to the genocide of his people caused by the diseases brought by the settlers, who are likened to a plague upon the land, disrupting the peace that had existed there by desecrating the sacredness of the space.

However, despite removing the "burial canoes from the trees" (343), the settlers were not able to remove the memories embedded into the land, which gives the land its power. Papa Legba, the "Lord of the crossroads" (Hurston, 128), led Marie to Sacajawea and the Good House because the Crossroads Forest is a potent liminal space between life and death where the spirits continued to thrive. Marie acknowledges the power of the forest upon her arrival: "There was so much life, and so much death, that I had to shut my ears so I would not go insane" (343). Therefore, the Crossroads Forest is a powerful historical site for the Chinook people, but also for Vodou practitioners, since it allows them access to the spirit world, bringing together the history of two disparate peoples. Marie, due to her connection with the spirit world, can experience and feel the history of the land. Similarly, after Angela defeats the baka and is invited into the spirit world, she, through rememory, can experience the Crossroads Forest as it used to be once upon a time: "This was a burial ground. The canoes were the last remnants of a people, and their spirits had been here all along, whispering stories as they hung" (458). Angela's use of the words, 'all along' suggests that the spirit world and the burial canoes have always been a remnant, a haunt, within the space of the Crossroads Forest. However, because of Angela's inability to connect to it, she could not remember and reassemble the history and energy of the space. Having sought out hidden truths and knowledge, she can see the burial ground as it used to be, much like Marie had the power to do so.

Due repeats the word 'burial' several times throughout *The Good House*, creating networks of connection between the historical, the collective, and the personal. The repetition of the word 'burial' also highlights the haunting of the present by the past; what is buried at the Crossroads Forest, does not stay buried, but keeps resurfacing in the present. When the townspeople come to the Good House to cut down the rotten walnut tree, Angela notes that the people had "come for a burial…A lost tree, a lost era. The logging industry was

depressed, nothing like it had been, and these guys had memories of a different time" (157). By describing the cutting down of a tree as a burial, Angela creates a connection between the past and the present. It is implied that Sacajawea was a prosperous county once. However, due to the decline of the logging industry, the affluent version of Sacajawea only exists in the memories of the elder townspeople, in historical documents, and within the land itself, which was transformed through logging and bears the physical remarks of this forgotten tradition.

Later in the novel, remembering the van he left in front of the Good House, Tariq contemplates that "it was probably no accident that he's left one of the last relics of his past parked at the place where his future had vanished. That place was only a burial ground in his mind now, the empty van of a shrine" (193). For Tariq, the Good House and Sacajawea are a place of death. His son and his relationship with Angela are buried there: "When Corey died, all of it died" (193). Through Tariq, Due connects the historical to the personal. Sacajawea has a history of being a burial site, a site of pain and death, and Tariq's personal loss exhumes that past. Similarly, when Sean mentions to Angela that Corey got Marie's ring back with spells and magic, Angela has a sudden rememory: "Spells. The image of a secret burial forgotten, Angela felt herself hiding Gramma Marie's ring" (138). The vision of this reflective of Angela's buried past. By reconnecting with Gramma Marie's ring, and by acknowledging that Corey's death might have been connected to the supernatural, Angela's spirit is awakened to the hidden truths of her family, the Good House, and the land. In *The Good House*, burials always refer to the past, to repression and loss, because loss is embedded within the very landscape of the terrain on which Sacajawea is built, and on which the Toussaint family has established their presence. Therefore, through repetition, memory, and rememory, Due highlights the forgotten past of Sacajawea, a past that keeps haunting the people who live there through the loss, decay, and deaths they experience.

Like Sacajawea's past as a burial site keeps being exhumed in the text, the town's past of racial discrimination is also repeatedly unearthed. Marlene, an aged resident of Sacajawea, tells Angela, "I was happy as a clam drinking my coffee and watching the colored man, Bryant Gumbel, on the morning news" (19). In response, Angela thinks about how, "*Colored* outdated *Negro*, even!" (20). Angela further acknowledges that "Young or old, Sacajawea residents freely referred to Gramma Marie as their *colored pioneer*" (20). The continuous use of the word '*colored*' therefore, becomes a linguistic haunting, a disturbing relic of a racist and bygone era that is kept alive by the townspeople. Indeed, when Marie first arrived at Sacajawea, she was treated abhorrently by the townspeople; her association with Elijah lost him business in town, and after Elijah's death, she was "subjected to profanity and terrible glares" (346), eventually leading to racially motivated assaults on the Good House. The townspeople began admiring Marie after she saved Maddie, proving her value as a powerful healer. However, this respect and veneration is not extended to her family. When the walnut tree is being cut down, Angela notes, "these people loved her. And even if they didn't love *her*, they had loved Gramma Marie" (157). The tension between the townspeople and the Toussaint family becomes further evident with Corey, who is subjected to hate crimes by Bo Cryer. Noticing Corey's admiration of some white girls in town, Bo asks him, "'Who the *fuck* are you staring at, nigger?'" (298). The words 'nigger' and 'colored', when used by the white residents of Sacajawea, emphasizes the Otherness of Black people and the Toussaint family. This is further highlighted when Bo says, "You sound white, but a skinny nigger's all I see" (299). Bo cannot perceive or conceive of Corey as a subject; Corey is reduced to the colour of his skin, and the binary of white/Black and self/Other continues to persist through language. Similarly, Marie is not known as a 'pioneer', but she has been designated as the 'colored pioneer'; even when she is respected, she is Othered. Likewise,

Marie's Native American husband, John, is called 'Red John' by the townspeople, "reducing him to the color of his skin" (343).

Significantly, the town's violence against Marie, and Bo's hatred against Corey, are are rooted in the fear of racial ambiguity. Marie contemplates that the townspeople hated her because, "they saw [her]...as a terrible force "corrupting" their good red man, and feared John's remaining people would become equally bold, following his example. Perhaps they feared a mass migration of colored and red people, soiling their town" (343). If more Black and Indigenous people arrived in Sacajawea, whiteness, white femininity, and racial purity would be harder to control and protect. By taking ownership of the Good House, being successful, and marrying John, Marie sees herself as equal to the white townspeople; if she sees herself as equal, other people of colour could too. This would destabilise the binaries of self/Other upon which whiteness claims its superiority. Bo's violence against Corey is a signifier of this fear too. Bo sees Corey as a threat when he observes Corey looking at the three white girls. He verbally, and then physically assaults Corey as a response. As noted in the introductory chapter, one of the fears perpetuated against slaves by pro-slavery writers when arguing for the institution of slavery was that freed slaves would be "consuming an invaluable commodity–white women" (Wester, *African American* 20). The so-called responsibility of protecting white femininity from Black men is a regenerating and recurring fear, persistent in American culture until this day. It is a rhetoric that continues to be used by anti-Black white supremacists.[2] Therefore Bo's verbal vitriol, use of racial slur, and Othering of Corey is a repetition of the old fear of miscegenation that has had an insistent presence in white America. Through flashbacks, diction, and by creating parallels between the past and

[2] From the Tulsa Race Massacre in 1921, which was instigated because a Black man allegedly stepped on a white woman's toes, to the lynching of 14 year-old Emmett Till in 1955, where a white woman falsely claimed that Emmett Till sexually harrassed her, to a recent video in 2020 of a woman named Amy Cooper giving a false report to the police because she was angry that a Black man had asked her to leash her dog in Central Park, white femininity has been used as a weapon to punish Black men since the origins of the nation.

the present, Due highlights oppressive ideologies and binaries continue to be a part of everyday discourse in Sacajawea. By allowing the past to keep haunting the present, Due emphasizes how historically oppressed peoples and their histories continue to be Othered in contemporaneous times.

The Good (Haunted) House

As a site, the Good House simultaneously offers protection and threatens Angela; it houses the "dialectic of past and present…and closely resembles the tensions present in narratives of starting anew and being haunted" (Curtis 7). In its duality, the Good House becomes an uncanny site for Angela. On the one hand, the house holds loving memories of her grandmother and her son. Yet, the house is also a site of pain. Upon her return, Angela refuses to enter Corey's room and the cellar because within the house, these specific rooms are sites of trauma for her. Her trauma forces parts of the house to become unfamiliar territory for her, leading to the uncanniness. Andrew Hock Soon Ng, examining haunted houses in Gothic narratives, notes that some houses have "dialectical relationship[s] with the subject as it fluctuates between a protective haven and a hostile space threatening her existence" (2). The house, carrying rememories of Marie, guides Angela towards resolving the curse, but under the influence of the baka, also threatens Angela and her loved ones. Myles notes that, "If a house could feel pain, Angie's grandmother's house was in agony" (386). The house, torn between two diametrically opposed forces, was in agony.

The uncanny nature of the house is emphasized by Due at the end of the novel. On the one hand, the baka makes the house uninhabitable for Angela; rivulets of mud and water try to purge Angela and Myles out of the house. On the other hand, under Marie's influence and rememories, the house guides Angela towards the attic, where Marie's spirit is the strongest: "But Gramma Marie was in this space, waiting. Angela knew that much" (385). Within the space of the attic, through rememories and connection to the spirit world, the temporal

distance between the past and the present unifies within Angela. This unification allows her access to a repository of knowledge, intuition, and memories which helps Angela defeat the baka, ultimately. Unlike the rest of the house, the haunting Angela experiences in the attic is one of healing and nostalgia, not one of repressed trauma. Yet, even in this moment of reconnection, there is an aspect of uncanniness. Upon seeing the altar her grandmother made, Angela must refamiliarize herself with Marie—her grandmother is both familiar and unfamiliar to her, just as the house is both familiar and unfamiliar to her. Therefore, the house, through its uncanny architectural space—which holds rememories, secrets, and threats—allows Angela to relearn about her familial and personal past to defeat the baka, heal the curse on her family, and heal from the trauma of losing her son.

The Monstrous Other and Vampiric Consumption

Due often represents whiteness as monstrous in *The Good House.* Through the very act of dehumanising an(Other) human being, white supremacist racist ideology embodies the inherent violence and monstrosity it wishes to project onto people of colour. W.S. Poole, examining representations of the monstrous Other in America, notes the following: "West Africans entrapped in the slave trade viewed these "cannibal" slavers in the context of witchcraft…Africans saw the trade as deeply monstrous. Whites, in turn, used the imagery of the monstrous to legitimize the institution the slave trade had created" (48). After witnessing Phillipe's murder, Marie accuses their attackers of "monstrosity" (261). Similarly to what Poole described; Phillipe is perceived as the Black monstrous Other by white supremacists during the Jim Crow era because of his skin colour. However, Due, by ascribing "monstrosity" to Phillipe's attackers, challenges the very binaries on which racial discrimination and Othering are built. Like slave narratives use the Gothic mode to emphasize the horrors of their experience and vilify their captors, Due uses the concept of monstrosity to question whose and what behaviours constitute as monstrous. Later in the

novel, when Bo attacks Corey by using racial slurs, Corey comments on the similarities between his attack and his great-grandfather Phillipe's attack, who was "killed by white men calling him *nigger*. His attackers might have castrated him and burned him and who knew what else kind of madness; Gramma Marie hadn't been able to make herself write it all down" (299). Corey' comment further elucidates the sheer horror of the attack that Marie witnessed; a horror that she couldn't even put into words. Through the explicit descriptions of the attacks borne by generations of Toussaint men, Due highlights that the ideal of moral and racial superiority whiteness was founded upon is the monstrous Other at the heart of American culture. By dehumanising Others to highlight its supposed superiority, whiteness keeps highlighting its own troubled ideation of itself.

Significantly, Bo only stops verbally attacking Corey when Corey transforms "himself into Super-Nigger, the only kind of black person a kid from Sacajawea knew, the ones from rap videos, movies, and TV" (300). By drawing attention to popular culture, Due highlights how Black people are still represented and constructed as Other within pop culture and are still associated with violence. Andrew Weinstock, examining representations of the monstrous in America, notes that "the racist American tendency to associate monstrosity with those who deviate from the white, able-bodied norms continues in the twenty-first century – witness contemporary debates over…'racial profiling'" (44). Racial profiling is a deeply racist form of policing that is tied to the Othering of people of colour; within the institution of racial profiling, Black people are frequently perceived as more dangerous, just as during slavery, slaves were perceived as being inherently violent. This perception leads towards heightened police injustice and brutality. Therefore, when Corey plays into the role of the violent Other assigned to him by Bo, and stops 'sounding white', Bo backs away, since his expectations were met and his racial discrimination, in his eyes, becomes a justifiable and just

cause again. In this scene, Due emphasizes how identities and binaries are socially constructed concepts which are fundamentally unstable and imposed on people.

Due further reaffirms the unstable nature of the self/Other binary through the baka's monstrous Otherness, and through its vampiric consumption. Despite being an evil spirit, the baka's possession of people is vampirically coded. While under the baka's influence, Art informs Angela that "It ate Tariq" (334). Later, Tariq acknowledges that, "Myles would have given it [the baka] more fear to feed from before he died" (396). The baka eats away at its host's soul until there is nothing left, like how a vampire would drain its victim of its blood. Furthermore, like a vampire often heightens its victims' desires, the baka also amplifies and distorts pre-existing feelings and impulses within its victim as a form of manipulation and control. Indeed, under the baka's influence, Corey's anger towards Angela becomes murderous, while his hatred towards Bo leads him to inadvertently kill Bo. The baka feeds into and further fuels Corey's anger at the world. Tariq explains that "The baka was feeding here (in Sacajawea) now, on the new blood that ran into the soil" (396). The lexical field of 'blood', 'feeding', and 'ate' all refer to vampiric consumption, emphasizing the vampiric nature of the baka.

According to Barbara Creed, vampires represent "abjection because she crosses the boundary between the living and dead, the human and animal" (60). The act of taking blood, of tearing into their victims' bodies with teeth and disturbing bodily boundaries makes vampires a symbol of abjection. Furthermore, as creatures who are both dead and alive, vampires exist in an abjected space which doesn't respect the boundaries between life and death. Similarly, since the baka feeds on its hosts' emotions and possesses its victims, it is vampiric and parasitic in nature, and, like the vampire, it is an abject creature because it doesn't respect boundaries and borders. More importantly, the baka feeds on dark impulses which already exist within its host, heightening them. As a result, the baka, in *The Good*

House, acts as a symbol of the subject displacing their monstrousness onto an Other. The baka's victims are diverse, from children to young women to white men to black men; it indiscriminately possesses its host. Through the baka, Due makes the concept of the monstrous Other fluid; everyone is capable of monstrosity under the baka's influence because everyone has monstrous tendencies.

Haunted by Generational Curse/Trauma

Racial discrimination and its resulting trauma lie at the foundations of the curse that plagues the Toussaint family. Though most of Marie's family escaped slavery, she is still a victim of white supremacy Marie's first husband, Phillipe Toussaint, was killed in front of her eyes with a gun by white supremacists for "encouraging other colored people to register to vote despite the stranglehold of Jim Crow" (261) when they lived in New Orleans. When killing Phillipe, the racists warned Marie to "'Remember the sight of this, nigger'" (262). The warning is meant to act as a deterrent and the use of racial slur highlights how these people do not view Marie as human; she is dehumanised, and her pain is not considered to be worthy of note. Furthermore, personal attacks have communal repercussions, especially when a community is marginalised. As a result of this attack, any momentum gained by Phillipe would be reversed. The continued perception of Black people as Other, as being less than the white subject, leads white supremacists towards such brutal acts of physical violence, as well as creates opportunities for systematic violence and oppression in the form of apartheid during the Jim Crow era.

Despite how "Most of her [Marie's] line had been spared slavery across the sea" (264), due to the Iwas' blessing, Marie and her descendants are affected by slavery because they are in America. Joanne Chassot, describing what haunting is, notes that it is "struggling with things that come to us from outside our discrete experiences of the world, but which we nonetheless experience as emerging out of our own psyches" (6). While Marie and her kin

did not experience slavery personally, their embodied experience in Americais informed by the trauma of slavery and the resulting racial discrimination. Under the apartheid system of oppression, Marie is still Other, and therefore, continues to be perceived as a threat to white identity and subjecthood. Through Marie's story, Due emphasizes how trauma is a collective experience; even though Marie was not a slave, she is deeply traumatised by the institution of slavery and racism.

Oppression and hatred follow Marie to Sacajawea, and subjected to constant dehumanisation and torture, Marie starts to echo the hatred and anger directed towards her, which eventually leads to her downfall. Through Marie's journey, Due highlights how hatred is a learned behaviour that can irrevocably damage the perpetrator and the victim. Marie notes "The longer I was hated, the more I learned to hate in return" (347). Like the hatred of the white supremacists leads them to blindly commit incomprehensible acts of violence against Black people, Marie's continued subjection to hatred teaches her to act hatefully as well. Hatred begets hatred in the novel, leading to disastrous consequences. The townspeople repeatedly shoot Marie's home, forcing Marie to "relive again and again the horrible fate brought upon Phillipe" (347). By forcing Marie to relive her trauma, the townspeople forcefully keep her in the past. The gunshots further compound her fear of losing more loved ones. also compound her fear of losing more loved ones to senseless hate and violence. One night, when "the attack was more horrible than usual" (347), Marie, under the influence of her anger, fear, and hatred, seeks vengeance and acts recklessly. Marie asks Papa Legba to cast a plague over the town, but he refuses, telling Marie: "Pray to me again when you have regained your senses" (347). Papa Legba's advice implies that Marie is not herself. Unhappy with his decision, Marie turns to the bakas, who are evil spirits. The next day, Marie regrets her actions, especially when Maddie Booth, a young girl, is possessed by the baka Marie released: "There is a cost for all things, one mirroring the size of the other…She had brought

it here herself, as surely as she's called it" (5). Marie tries to stop the baka, but without Papa Legba's help—who's forsaken Marie for her betrayal—she cannot do it. The baka turns on Marie's family. Marie's trauma is manifold. On the one hand, she is traumatised by the violence and hatred she has witnessed, and the painful loss she has suffered. On the other hand, she is traumatised by how she allowed herself to respond in anger and fear to the hatred she was subjugated to because in doing so, she betrayed the trust of the Iwas and betrayed her own sense of morality. She also invited the baka's influence into her family

Since the foundations of the Toussaint family curse are deeply intertwined with the racialised trauma Marie suffered and witnessed, the curse can be interpreted as generational trauma that passed down the matrilineal line from Marie to her descendants. As the trauma traverses down the generations, it compounds and creates further trauma. The trauma/curse passes down from Marie to her daughter, Dominique, who, under the baka's influence commits suicide. Before committing suicide, Dominique heard the "voices of demons" (27), which led to her living in a state of inebriation to escape her mental trauma. As a result of Dominique's troubling past, Angela suffered through parental neglect, with Dominique never being cognizant enough to "keep track of where Angela was" (131) and the eventual loss of a maternal figure. Angela's dysfunctional relationship with her mother, in turn, affects her relationship with her son. Having had no parental guidance from her mother, and having been given strict boundaries by Marie, Angela emulates Marie in her relationship with Corey; she is too protective and controlling, leading Corey to view her as the "Bad Cop to his father's Good Cop" (131). As a result, Corey is wary of communicating with Angela. This leads him to hide and keep secrets from Angela, which proves to be fatal. Instead of sharing what he found about Marie's past with Angela, Corey tries to do a spell by himself and makes mistakes. Again, rather than communicating with Angela, he tries to fix his mistakes by himself, leading to his failure and eventual death. Therefore, the trauma disguised as a curse

passes from Marie to Dominique to Angela to Corey, detrimentally affecting every one of Marie's descendants.

Marie deliberately suppresses her family history. She doesn't tell Angela or Corey about the curse, about their family's connection to the Iwas, or about how and why Phillipe and Dominique died. Marie intends to protect her descendants, but by repressing the family history, she creates circumstances which allows the past to be repeated. Angela and Corey, unaware of the truth, keep making mistakes, and continue the loop of secrecy, hiding vital truths from each other, which further exacerbates the trauma/curse. When meeting Gramma Marie in the spirit world, Angela points out Marie's failures to her: "'You should have told me, Gramma Marie, Angela said, with more sadness than scolding" (460). Having witnessed the gothic loop of trauma her actions wrought, Marie agrees. In her explanation of generational trauma and violent histories, Gabriele Schwab comments,

> "What I call "haunting legacies" are things hard to recount or even to remember, the results of a violence that holds unrelenting grip on memory yet is deemed unspeakable. The psychic core of violent histories includes what has been repressed or buried in unreachable psychic recesses. The legacies of violence not only haunt the actual victims but also are passed on through the generations" (1)

What Marie has passed down to her descendants is a haunting legacy; she couldn't speak of it, too ashamed of herself and too afraid of the unknown. However, her repression didn't stop the trauma from transmitting from generation to generation. Indeed, when John, Marie's second husband, tries to talk to her about the baka, Marie shushes him, thinking: "They had agreed to forget about the events of that night, and it was dangerous to give the memory language. Speaking of past events kept them alive, and he knew that as well as anyone" (6). Marie's 'haunting legacy' will not and cannot stay buried; it resurfaces compulsively, demanding to be acknowledged. Moreover, in Sacajawea, the past never stays buried; the

land itself, due to its disturbing past and the erasure it underwent, haunts the present with its absence.

Therefore, Marie miscalculates how compelling and overwhelming the past is, even when it is denied language. Without language, the past haunts Corey, and later Angela, through dreams, beckoning them to unravel it, leading them towards Marie's book. When Marie tries to contact Angela, "'the dreams strayed. They went to Corey. He was more open. Closer to his spirit self'" (334). Unaware of and unable to decipher the language of the spirit world, since Marie never taught her to do so, Angela's lack of connection with the spirit world brings danger and death to Corey. The dreams guide Corey towards the secret crypts within the house–the attic and the room behind the blue door–where Marie her book containing accounts of the trauma that afflicts the Toussaint family. However, since Corey, too, was untaught in magic, he "'learned enough to get in trouble'" (334), but not enough to defeat the baka. Indeed, the very land and house within which Marie resides are affected by her actions. As explained previously, the generational curse/trauma occupies a physical architectural space within the house, with the house being transformed by past events, containing memories of the past within. As a result, the trauma, unresolved, keeps repeating itself and rises continuously. Furthermore, the foundations on which the curse is predicated–racial discrimination and racialised trauma–continue to thrive, ensuring that history will repeat itself.

Like Marie, Corey experiences racial discrimination, and in his anger, like his grandmother, mistakenly calls on the baka, further strengthening it. Realising his mistake, Corey tries to perform a cleansing ritual, but is distracted by the baka who manifests itself in the form og a young white, blonde girl named Becka. Becka claims that Bo sexually assaulted her. When Corey accuses Bo of rape, Bo reacts violently, hitting and hurting Corey. He uses racial slurs again, calling Corey a "monkey" (407). Disappointed with Corey's

fighting, he also says “I thought niggers could fight” (410). Bo also accuses Corey of raping Becka, saying that, “If anybody raped that trashy whore, it was *you*” (410). Due’s emphasis on the ‘you’ indicates that Bo believes that Corey is the only one out of them all who is capable of sexually assaulting a white girl. Bo’s language and actions reflect his previous interaction with Corey, where he sees Corey as a threat, and, even while inflicting violence upon Corey, accuses Corey of violent, basing his assumptions on stereotypes of Black men. Like Marie, overwhelmed by anger, fear, hatred and vengeance, Corey makes a “simple prayer in his heart, not caring whose ears it reached: *Help me punish him*” (412). However, since the Toussaint family were stilled cursed, the Iwas ignored him, and the baka hears him.. As it did for Marie, the baka creates a mudslide for Corey, ensuring that Bo sinks “within a manhole-sized pool of mud” (412). Corey, unknowingly, repeats Marie’s mistake. Unaware of the past, Corey cannot look to the spirits for help, and he cannot learn from past mistakes.

Due also uses guns as a symbol of unresolved, resurfacing generational trauma in the text. Most of the violence in the novel centres around guns. Phillipe was murdered with gunshots, and after moving to Sacajawea, gunshots keep haunting Marie. Similarly, Angela is haunted by the sight of guns and sound of gunshots as well. Angela, having worked as a public defender for two years, hates guns due to the violence they represent; her personal life and experiences with guns further compound this hatred. At twelve years old, having seen her mother “standing in front of her bureau mirror with a handgun in her mouth” (22), Angela develops a deeply troubling and traumatic relationship with guns. Myles notes the lasting trauma Dominique’s actions wrought on Angela, pointing out that she hadn’t “‘trusted a soul since the day you found your mother with that gun in her mouth’” (421). However, after Corey’s suicide with his father’s gun, they become a haunting reminder of her loss for Angela. Even two years after Corey’s death, Angela keeps hearing the “powerful sound of something exploding in a POP” (35). The ‘POP’ sound of the gunshot intrudes into Angela’s

life ceaselessly when she is in California, a constant reminder of Corey's absence and her loss. When holding a gun to defend herself against Tariq, Angela notes that "The gun felt like a living creature, subject to an unexpected, deadly tantrum" (374). By describing the gun as a creature able to throw tantrums, by giving it an anthropomorphic quality, Due imbues the gun with a life-like quality, highlighting how it represents a lack of control and danger for Angela. Guns continue to haunt the text. At the end of the novel, Tariq kills Myles with the same gun Corey killed himself with; Angela imagines hiring a hitman to kill Tariq with a gun; under the baka's influence, Corey imagines killing Angela with Tariq's gun before turning it on himself in defiance, and ultimately, Angela kills Tariq with a gun, ending the baka's reign of terror. Beginning with Marie and Phillipe and ending with Corey, every generation of the Toussaint family is haunted by guns and the violence and resulting trauma they represent.

Considering how the Toussaint family's generational trauma and curse is rooted in racial discrimination and violence, Due logically chooses guns as the instrument that instigates and acts as a catalyst for their trauma. The history of gun ownership in America is deeply tied to the institution of slavery, with guns being used by slave-owners and plantation-owners as a means of controlling and oppressing slaves. The concept of people protecting themselves using guns was reinforced during the Reconstruction era, during the South's societal and political upheaval. White people and former slave-owners were afraid of newly freed Black Southerners, who were empowering themselves and striving for equality. Having witnessed slave revolts and rebellions, white people, who tortured, murdered, raped, and oppressed Black slaves for centuries were afraid of receiving the same treatment from freed Black Southerners. Therefore, guns were a signifier of safety against the Black Other. The correlative narrative between gun ownership and safety is still perpetuated heavily in the United States, especially in the South, with the NRA often creating a narrative of 'us versus

them' for their white members, making gun ownership the only possible protection against the threat of Others. Furthermore, gun violence continues to be a cause of trauma in Black communities, where it is prevalent against and in Black communities due to historical segregation and systematic discrimination. By making guns a symbol of haunting violence in *The Good House*, Due connects the personal to the collective; the traumas sustained and carried by the Toussaint family are not a singular incident, but rather, endemic within Black communities in the United States due to systematic racial discrimination that has been prevalent since slavery. Even without depicting slavery, through guns, Due keeps making references to the systematic discrimination that came after the end of slavery. Through guns, characters continue to be haunted by the institution of slavery, emphasizing how Gothicity of the institution, just as America is haunted by the legacy of its origins.

Reclaiming Forgotten Ancestors and Past

While Marie fails to teach her descendants about their family history and the language of the Iwas, Angela also deliberately distances herself from the practice of vodou, which further hinders her ability to understand the warnings sent to her by her grandmother's spirit. This distance is partly informed by her traumatic relationship with her mother. Frustrated that Marie had "played the stereotype" (27), of the 'witch doctor' in town, Angela wonders if her grandmother had "sown the seeds for her mother's delusions" (27) at an earlier age. However, Angela also maintain distance from Vodou due to scepticism and racial stereotypes. When Art Brunell compliments Marie's teas, saying that his father believed Marie's teas were "voodoo for sure" (26), Angela feels her "ears burning with embarrassment" (26). She also dreaded being treated as "the progeny of a legendary medicine woman" (26). Angela, refusing the possibility of anything spiritual or divine, believes that her grandmother's medicinal knowledge came from her training as a nurse, and any herbal knowledge that John may have taught her. Therefore, Angela finds the stereotype of "witch

doctor" (27) offensive, wondering, "Would anyone assume she [Marie] had been a witch if she and her husband had been white?" (27). Angela's concerns are certainly valid. The stereotypes of Black people and Black diasporic religions and beliefs as magical and Other has been a persistent narrative in white culture, turning "diasporic reinventions of African religious practices into sources of Gothic terror" (Downey 229) to further alienate Black people. Brenda Marie Osbey notes similarly, arguing,

> "that colonial whites, by and large, believed in the inherent magical nature of black people. That is to say, they quite often believed that blacks, so far removed, as they saw it, from themselves in historical and social and technological reality, were *naturally possessed of magical properties in their very persons*." (78)

As a result of racial stereotyping and the idea of Black people being inherently 'magical', and therefore, inherently Other to the Christian and white, Black people often created a distinction between "themselves from associations with voodoo, hoodoo or conjure" (Downey 232). Angela exemplifies this behaviour; she views vodou sceptically. Corey, having found Marie's book, wants to share it with Angela. However, he comments that Angela would not understand the value of Marie's legacy: "Mom got embarrassed when anybody asked about Gramma Marie's voodoo, like it was something shameful" (188). The use of the word 'shameful' implies that Angela is aware of the historical implications of and stereotypical perceptions of voodoo and is concerned about being perceived as Other by the townspeople like Marie was.

Indeed, for Angela, vodou is representative of a history she is uncomfortable with; she doesn't want to identify with how "primitive at heart" (364) her grandmother was. Angela also notes that vodou was used by "Africans who needed rain. Slaves who needed to feel their souls were free" (364). Unable to comprehend the history of trauma she was born into, both personal and collective, Angela kept "trying to run away" (364) from it. Myles is also a

prime example of this kind of distancing and disbelief. A journalist and a strong believer in Christianity, Myles dismisses all the signs Angela tries to point out to him after her enlightenment. In Myles's mind, his Christian beliefs and the religious beliefs of Vodou cannot coexist; he is only aware of the "demonised, marginalised, and, via the tourist trade, commodified" (Downey 230) version of Vodou. For Marie, Haitian Vodou is a syncretic religious practice that reflects and is representative of the journey her enslaved ancestors were forced to endure from Haiti to the United States. Through Myles and Angela's dismissal of Vodou, Due represents how fear of Othering can make marginalized people more aware of their differences, and work to ensure that they are fitting a mould that is acceptable to the majority. Even after talking to Art, who, under the influence of the baka killed his son, Glenn, Myles rejects Angela's reasoning, noting that there was "no need to blame demons…There were plenty of humans to spread the misery" (370). Frustrated with Myles's inability to accept the truth, Angela asks him, "'Will you *open your eyes*?'...'It's as if you don't *want* to see it'" (377). Angela's remark to Myles emphasises his wilful suppression of the truth; even when Myles sees the baka, he tries to find sensible explanations for what is happening because he is removed from the possibility of there being alternative truths.

After being buffeted with rememories, experiencing the uncanniness of the Good House, and being connected to the spirit world through Marie's ring, Angela finally learns to understand the language of the spirit world. Marie tries to 'talk' with Angela from the spirit world, but, Angela can't understand the signs. In the prologue, Marie notes that, "Fleurette did not want her to open the door. Her burning ears told her so" (2). Marie's "*esprit*" (2), the guiding voice of her ancestors–including the voice of her grandmother, Fleurette–regularly communicates with her to help guide her through life. Similarly, during her party, Angela felt a "cold-burn sensation [that] seized her arm again" (28). Later, she "felt a single icy fingernail brush the back of her neck, hearkening to the strange cold-burn she'd felt at the

store and in the kitchen" (30). The 'cold-burn' sensation implies that Angela's ancestors were trying to communicate with her to warn her about Corey being under the baka's influence. However, since Angela wasn't taught how to communicate with her *esprit*, she simply finds the sensation uncanny and confusing. Through Angela's ignorance of her history and Vodou, Due expresses how histories, customs, and languages were lost because of colonization and the slave trade.

When Angela opens herself to the possibility of Vodou and deliberately seeks the truth of what happened to Corey, Angela starts to remember and reassemble lost and hidden memories, allowing her to communicate with her *esprit*:

> "'Keep talking to me, Gramma Marie,' Angela said. 'I hear you.'
>
> Gramma Marie's whispers came in so many ways now; the tingling, a subtle foreknowledge that made her feel slightly out of sync with the world around her, words and ideas popping into her head. Was Gramma Marie getting stronger? She hoped so." (280)

When Angela is led to the attic where Marie and Dominique stayed when they first arrived at the Good House, Angela starts to relive their memories: "'She never told me, but I remember it now. I *remember*,' Angela whispered" (382). Since the attic was Marie's domain, her presence is the strongest there. By coming into the attic, Angela can 'bump into'–to use Morrison's words–Marie's memories, experiencing the grief and loss Marie suffered through. When leaving the attic, Angela mourns "the things she would never know about that room, about that altar. But…she had rescued her grandmother's soul" (386). Angela takes a *govi*—a ceremonial earthen pot that houses immortal souls of ancestors—from the attic, thereby literally rescuing her grandmother's soul from where it was hidden. However, the idea of rescuing and reclamation has a secondary meaning in this instance.

Alongside reclaiming Marie's soul and memories—by witnessing her trauma—Angela also reclaims her intersecting lost histories by retrieving memories about John. Afterwards, she claims she "could see John hidden in Myles's face" (420). Indeed, "spirits lived on memories" (423) and by being disconnected from hers, Angela had made herself and her ancestors weak, prone to the ceaseless repetition of past traumas. However, by reclaiming lost memories, Angela had made Marie, and in turn, herself stronger, able to withstand and heal from the traumas of her past. In the forest, Angela notes that "Gramma Marie's memories were overrunning Angela's, melting time, a feeling as unsettling as it was astonishing" (421). By allowing time to 'melt', a process that becomes fully formed and embodied by Angela when Marie possesses her to defeat the baka and return Papa Legba's stolen word to him, the past and the present intertwine. Through this merging, past and present reconcile. By possessing Angela, Marie is able to redeem her mistakes; she restores the balance within the Good House and the surrounding lands, returning the house to her progeny, and she heals her relationship with the Iwas, restoring balance in the spirit world. On the other hand, by being possessed by Marie, Angela is able to understand her past and heal herself; the mystery surrounding her son's death gets solved, allowing Angela to acknowledge the true depth of her trauma and pain. She can also understand her mother's past better, sympathising with the trauma Domnique underwent. Furthermore, through this reclamation and restoration of the past, Angela's present and future are also healed; the spirits and Iwas grant her a miracle, returning her lost loved ones to her. Through the melding of time, the nature of haunting changes in the novel. Due's representation of time in *The Good House* moves from temporal collapse, where the past compulsively haunts the present by recurring to show how the traumas of slavery and racial discrimination continue to haunt the present, to a sense of temporal unity that is reflective of John Mbiti's conceptualisation of

temporality in *African Religions and Philosophy*.[3] According to Mbiti, through remembrance of the dead, the past becomes an integral part of the present, a source of reconciliation where the living dead (the ancestors) and the living can coexist, with the living dead guiding their descendants. Indeed, in *The Good House*, Due represents this change of time perception because the past transforms from being a source of haunting to a healed repository of memories and knowledge that can aid the living.

…A Break in the Gothic Loop

Like *White is for Witching*, Angela's timeline in *The Good House* begins where it ends; with Angela's fourth of July party in 2001. However, whereas *White is for Witching* ends and begins with Miranda's disappearance, indicating that she has been consumed by the Silver house, *The Good House* ends with Angela breaking the Gothic loop of trauma, secrets, and repression. Furthermore, after Angela's return from the spirit world, the separate timelines between Marie, Corey, and Angela somewhat fuse into a cohesive timeline, with Angela being more in touch with the spirit world, her past, and being more honest with Corey going forward. Corey reciprocates this honesty and openness, allowing the two of them to heal their bond. Angela's journey is similar to Shori's; Shori, given justice for the execution of her family, is able to move on and start her journey of learning to become an Ina anew. Similarly, Angela, who has been vying for a miracle since the beginning of the novel, finally gets her miracle at the end of the novel when Marie tells her to "think about that miracle" (462) on her way back from the spirit world because she had "earned it" (462). Despite not retaining her memories from the spirit world, or from the trauma she experienced before, Angela gets a reset after her return. Furthermore, she remains more attuned to her grandmother's spirit. Like Corey, Angela begins to receive dreams, indicating that the rift between her and her grandmother, and the trauma in the Toussaint family has been healed.

[3] S pages 25-33 of Mbiti's *Religions* to read about how time and space are conceptualised

Therefore, the Gothic trope of hauntings, which take the form of memories, rememories, and dreams, play an important part in *The Good House*. They allow Corey and Angela to reassemble their pasts, be a witness to the trauma suffered by their ancestors, and come to terms with their own traumas. While the repetition of the past is traumatic, the acknowledgement of this repetition ultimately proves to be healing for the characters, allowing them to learn from the past and break the Gothic hold the past has over the present. Through hauntings, Due allows the past and the present to parallel each other, allowing readers to see how oppressive systems of racial discrimination continue to operate, thrive, and cause trauma to historically Othered people. By showing how history repeats itself, Due highlights how binaries of self/Other are kept alive to the detriment of marginalised peoples, and why it is important to challenge these binaries. Furthermore, through the Gothic figure of the baka, a demonic and vampiric monstrous Other, Due not only challenges, but completely destabilises the self/Other binary. By depicting whiteness, especially white femininity, as monstrous, Due emphasises how the discourses on which the Black Other, especially Black men, are presented as a threat are unstable. Furthermore, the baka effects everyone in town, regardless of their identity, which further highlights how monstrosity is not confined to a certain racial identity but is something that can be an inherent part of being human.

Chapter Two: Xenophobic Legacies and Monstrous Consumption in *White is for Witching*

> "Something that explores the meaning of the old woman whose only interaction with other people was consumption. The soucouyant who is not content with her self. She is a double danger–there is the danger of meeting her, and the danger of becoming her. Does the nightmare of her belong to everyone, or just me?"
> –Helen Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching* (179)

> "To make one's self vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that one relinquish forever one's mainstream positionality. When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, gen-ders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other."
> –bell hooks "Eating the Other" (23)

The past does not merely haunt the present in *White is for Witching*—the past, vampiric and cannibalistic in nature—consumes the present slowly and deliberately. Embodied by the xenophobic, racist, and patriarchal Silver House, the past haunts the Silver women, none of whom can escape the house's consumption of their bodies, or the iron-grip their foremother, Anna Silver—also known as Anna Good and the goodlady—has on them. Anna, in collusion with the Silver House, controls and consumes the bodies of her descendants to strictly maintain their whiteness. Moreover, like the house consumes and entraps the Silver women, the Silver women consume the non-white Other who come to visit or work at the Silver House. At times, the borders of the Silver House shift and extend into Dover, allowing the women to attack non-white populations within Dover. Therefore, the Silver House is an uncanny presence within Dover; it looks like a house, but it is functions with autonomy and consciousness, defying expectations of what a house ought to be.

Significantly, the Silver House was brought to its xenophobic power and consciousness through Anna Silver. In a moment of grief and fear, learning that her husband died fighting Germans in Africa, Anna curses everyone she considers to be Other, stating, "'I hate them…Blackies, Germans, killers, dirty…dirty killers. He should have stayed here with

me'" (137). Absorbing Anna's racist and trauma-filled diatribe, the house vows to 'protect' Anna and her descendants by imprisoning them inside its architectural space, ensuring they can never leave and abandon Anna and the house. Therefore, through the space of the haunted house, Oyeyemi connects personal hauntings to national hauntings. Like America is haunted by its national past—as seen in *The Good House*—due to its origins being established upon the institutions of slavery and genocide, England too is haunted by its national past of colonialism. For both nations, the violence of its past keeps repeating itself through continued discrimination and Othering. The spectre of the Empire and imperial power haunts England, alongside the myth of Englishness and English exceptionalism. In turn, these myths haunt the Silver House and the Silver women. The consumption of Anna's body haunts and reenacts itself again and again through her descendants, while the Silver women's consumption of non-white Others reenacts the trauma of colonisation repeatedly.

In my discussion of *White is for Witching*, I would like to focus on the paternalistic force of the Silver House in the novel. To draw connections between the Silver House and patriarchy, I will be focusing on the two paternal figures in the text: Andrew Silver and Luc DuFresne. The connection between the house and the male figures in the text has largely been understudied by scholars. I argue that through the site of the haunted house, patriarchy and nationalism collude to entrap the Silver women in Victorian ideals of womanhood. While some scholars briefly mention how the roles of "'Mother' Britain and the 'Angel in the house'" (King 61) entrap the Silver women, it is a connection that has largely been left unexplored. Similarly, Stephanou mentions that "The consumption of the body is associated here with Victorian obsessions with bodily boundaries, tuberculosis, and its angelic connotations" (1248). However, again, the connections between patriarchy, nationalism, and Victorian ideals of womanhood are not fully developed. Furthermore, considering the trauma and grief that Miranda and Ore undergo through the loss of a maternal figure, I would like to

examine how the concept of the monstrous Other relates to both Miranda and Ore in *White is for Witching*; often, scholars consider Miranda to be monstrous with Ore as her victim, however, like *The Good House*, the binaries of self/Other and monstrosity are not stable.

Patriarchy and the myths of Englishness and English Exceptionalism are deeply intertwined, and the critique of Englishness and English exceptionalism presented by Oyeyemi in *White is for Witching* strikes a deep chord in the post-Brexit era, with Oyeyemi seemingly predicting the advent of Brexit. The self-cannibalism of the Silver women is suggestive of the isolationist mindset that fuelled the desire for Brexit, since it requires the focus to be on the self. Indeed, even the setting of the novel foretells the coming of Brexit. Dover's "white cliffs were far from symbolising togetherness and openness, standing instead overwhelmingly for divisiveness and inhospitality, since the Brexit debate has been riddled throughout with the question of immigration and border control" (Kung 201-202). Similarly, in *White is for Witching*, the white cliffs of Dover "becomes a site of alienation as a point of ingress for "others" whose material presence threatens to supplant Englishness" (Cousins 48). Therefore, by engaging with the myth of Englishness, Oyeyemi highlights the struggle for English identity, and the struggle to establish England's borders, both of which are recurring and continual struggles in light of the decline of Empire because, "For imperial nations… Their whole history has been one of suppression of national identity in the interests of preserving the empire...With empire gone, the English have indeed had to reconsider their future as a nation" (Kumar 101). The myth of Englishness constitutes the,

> "adoption of a specifically southern English landscape as a place of true Englishness, the home of peace, tranquillity, harmony and tradition, came… as a conscious and deliberate response to social, economic and political developments of the time…[including] the increasing orientation towards imperial expansion with its

> associated imperial discourse and migration that seemed to grow into a threat to "true" Englishness" (Berberich 5).

The ideal of Englishness, however, contrasts with the desire for English exceptionalism, whereby England retains its imperial global power despite having lost its colonies. Like Anna Silver and the Silver House impose cannibalistic insularity on the Silver women to the point where they eat themselves to maintain their whiteness, the myth of Englishness imposes insularity and isolationism upon England, removing it from its imperial role. Despite the fundamental differences in the myths of Englishness and English Exceptionalism, both myths thrive on the consumption of the Other, focusing on the Other's ability to produce commodities that allow the 'motherland' to flourish while disavowing the rights of the colonised/formerly colonised Other. Therefore, due to its dependency on the colonised Other, yet its inability to see the Other as an equal subject, England is haunted by the Other and the spectre of the Empire; it cannot let the Other go since its very conceptualisation is based on the suppression and commodification of the Other, and yet, it cannot accept the Other either.

As a postcolonial Gothic novel, *White is for Witching* actively engages with the binaries of self/Other by examining the aftereffects of colonialism. While Victorian and imperial Gothic often renders the foreign Other as the monstrous agent within the Gothic, as seen, for example, in Stoker's *Dracula*, Oyeyemi "reverses the trope to emphasize the gruesome nature of White British xenophobia" (Anatol 211) by representing whiteness as monstrous through the figure of the soucouyant. Written in a stream of consciousness style, the narrative is told through three perspectives: the Silver House, Eliot–Miranda's twin–, and Ore, Miranda's Nigerian British girlfriend. Though Miranda is one of the protagonists of the story–the second protagonist being Ore–Oyeyemi does not allow Miranda to narrate the story; Miranda's story is written in the third-person narrative voice or recounted by someone else. As a result, there is a narrative distance between Miranda and the readers which makes

it, at times, even harder to distinguish between Miranda and her ancestors. Like Angela and Shori, Miranda also lost her, Lily, who was killed in Haiti while working as a photojournalist. Miranda, like her foremothers, also suffers from pica, "an appetite for non-food items, things that don't nourish" (Oyeyemi 25), with chalk being one of her favourite inedible objects. Since the novel is set in Dover, chalk represents the "chalk cliffs at Dover, which represent the borders of English territory" (Cousins 53). After Lily's death, Miranda's pica worsens, and Miranda admits herself to an institution. After returning to the Silver House, Miranda increasingly starts to embody her maternal ancestors, and develops an insidious hunger for non-white human flesh, one she tries her best to deny. To escape her ancestral legacy and the influence of the Silver House, Miranda goes to Cambridge, where she falls in love with Ore. When Miranda's pica worsens, she returns to the Silver House, with Ore coming to visit her. Miranda, under influence of the house, attacks Ore, but Ore escapes with help from Sade, the Yoruba housekeeper Lue hired. Ore escapes, and Miranda is consumed by the house like all the other Silver women, leaving Luc and Eliot grief-stricken..

Scholars have rightly paid a lot of attention to the xenophobic site of the haunted Silver House in *White is for Witching* in connection to the Silver women's unusual and cannibalistic appetite, represented by the figure of the vampire/soucouyant. Emily Horton, examining how the monstrous figure of the vampire is representative of white monstrosity, argues that "the arrival of the non-white 'stranger' initiates a decolonial critique of British immigration politics which circles back to the imperial home, especially as this manifests in xenophobic haunting and nationalistic violence" (75). Aspasia Stephanou, examining how the house's consumption of Miranda allows her to consume the non-white Other, notes that, "The house manifests hatred against all foreign visitors, black, Kurdish, refugees, and immigrants, expelling different and non-white bodies; as a symbol of lost imperial power, it continues to insist on white supremacist ideology, feeling off and given life by old hatreds" (1247). This

hatred is mobilised through Miranda's body and vampiric abilities. Similarly, Amy K. King, analysing the site of the Silver women bodies in connection to the Silver House argues that "the body of the teenage protagonist Miranda Silver bears the weight of…British (neo)imperial tastes in the late twentieth century as the extreme ideals of whiteness supernaturally take over her body and mind" (59). Helen Cousins, analysing the manner in which Oyeyemi deploys Yoruba myths and folklore within the genre of the Gothic to engage with the dispossession of the Other through the perspective of the Other, notes that "Oyeyemi describes what is monstrous in the colonial past and its present legacies from the perspective of those that England designates as its "others" at home" (57).

Other scholars have examined the Silver House in a myriad of other ways. Bianca Tredennick, taking a postmodern approach, compares the haunted Silver House to the "form of the novel itself…[seeing] *White is for Witching* become the monstrous house of Gothic fiction" (184) through Oyeyemi's blend of genres and narrative modes, intertextuality, and unreliable narrators. Anita Harris Satkunananthan, comparing the Silver House to the Greco-Roman Underworld and Yoruba Underworld, argues that it is a liminal space where characters are allowed to transgress against their oppressions through the metaphor of doublings. Oyeyemi, through the figure of doubles, "reveal[s] the conflict between women of different generations" (212).

In their analysis of the characters, scholars often tend to provide a singular reading of Miranda's character, whereby Miranda is the Silver House's xenophobia made into flesh; she becomes a symbol of "White monstrosity and evil femininity" (Stephanou 1246). While an accurate reading of her character, analysing Miranda as merely an extension of the house and Anna Silver's racist legacy, and deeming her 'evil' strips away any sense of agency that Miranda has and struggles for throughout the novel. Moreover, it takes away from the complicated approach Oyeyemi adopts to dismantle the binaries of self/Other in the novel.

Therefore, I will be analysing the dialectic of good and evil represented by Miranda and Ore, analysing how either character refuses to be confined to simplistic roles of villain and victim. Lastly, since matrilineal curses are featured in *The Good House* and *White is for Witching* in connection to trauma and agency, a comparison between the two novels can reveal illuminating results about why in *The Good House*, Angela was able to escape and resolve the curse, whereas in *White is for Witching*, Miranda becomes a part of the curse.

Silver House: Where Xenophobia and Patriarchy Meet

Not only is the Silver House a deeply xenophobic entity and space, it is also rigidly governed by Victorian domestic values informed by patriarchy. In turn, the house imposes and controls all the Silver women through these Victorian values. The patriarchal identity of the Silver House is established through the very name of the house, since it is titled after Andrew Silver's last name, suggesting that it belongs to him and is a part of his domain. Trapped within the walls of the house, the Silver women are also under his domain. Despite his death, through the house and the domestic space within the house, Andrew continues to dictate how the Silver women live their life. When describing their meeting, the house narrates that Andrew's "manners were strange. He didn't speak to her [Anna], but he looked at her for longer than was polite" (135). Earlier in the paragraph, the house narrates that, "you could tell he [Andrew] was important because of the way he wasn't afraid to be caught looking at whatever interested him" (135). Andrew's interactions with Anna are representative of him entrapping her within the male gaze; he looks at her as an object of desire and sexuality, as something for him to be fascinated by, and this objectification is carried over to the private sphere as well. This is further emphasised by Anna when the house narrates her saying, "*The house is Andrew's*, she told herself; *I have no part in it*" (26).

Oyeyemi's emphasis on the phrase '*I have no part in it*' highlights Anna's entrapment because it emphasises Anna's lack of agency within the domestic sphere; the house belongs

to Andrew, just as she belongs to Andrew, she has no autonomy within the house or in her relationship. The house further explains that Anna had pica in "1938; a year before she became Anna Silver" (26). Here, Oyeyemi implies that Anna developed pica in preparation for her marriage to Andrew; she started to consume less and started to transform herself into the ideal woman for Andrew. Anna "ate leaves by the handful and chipped her tooth on pebbles" (26) because '*The house is Andrew's*'; she cannot consume normal, nourishing food and must subsist on non-nourishing food as a sign of her willingness to self-sacrifice herself for the sake of her husband's approval and enjoyment. Therefore, the phrase '*I have no part in*' it suggests Anna's complicity with patriarchal and Victorian values; she does not have a part in the house because she believes in her commodification as an ideal and an object, as a site and figure of English femininity that must uphold the values of Englishness and is exclusive to anyone who is considered to be an Other. Since an Other was viewed as uncivilised and savage, and colonisation was justified as a civilising mission, under British imperialism, only the English were considered to be civilised. Therefore, to maintain English purity and English identity, the ideal Victorian woman had to be diametrically opposed to an invasion of her body an Other. Women's bodies stood as a symbol of the nation, therefore, maintaining the boundaries of a woman's body was likened to the safekeeping of English purity from the threat of miscegenation.

Andrew's nationalist and racist attitude towards Others is brought to attention when Elliot comes across "patriotic cartoon[s]...all on the theme of plucky Brits defeating the enemy by maintaining the home front–a stout housewife planting her own potatoes and taking a moment to smack a potato that looked just like Hitler…that sort of thing" (80). The 'stout housewife' as a representation of the 'home front' further emphasises the connection between women's bodies and national boundaries. Drawn by Andrew, Anna had saved "Three years worth of cartoons" (81). While these cartoons are harmless mementos of

Andrew, their content is troubling, emphasising the importance of maintaining the boundaries between self and Other, with the self being the English self. Anna saving these cartoons implies her absorption of the hatred and fear that informed these cartoons. Furthermore, the fact that the housewife stands in for the 'home front' in the cartoon and is a protector of the national border highlights how Victorian ideals were carried over during World War II. Like women were idealised as the keepers of Englishness during the expansion of the Empire, women continue to be guardians of Englishness half a century later, when migrants threaten the borders of England again. Significantly, when the house comes to consciousness, it acknowledges that Anna's speech about her hatred of Others came "from that part of her that was older than her" (137). This quote implies that hatred and fear of Others has been ingrained in Anna since before her trauma of losing Andrew; it is symptomatic of a larger national identity and legacy; it is a pre-existing condition that did not begin with her. However, living with Andrew and consuming his propaganda, has further supplemented and strengthened Anna's previously held beliefs. Therefore, through Andrew–and under his gaze and influence, Anna–the spheres of patriotism, patriarchy, nationalism, and xenophobia become further blurred, turning into an overwhelming and debilitating fear and distrust of the Other, feelings which are embodied by the house.

Unlike Andrew, Luc does not actively propagate racism or hatred of the Other. However, it is implied that Luc is aware of the house's xenophobia, and Miranda's worsening condition. Yet, he does not counter either narrative. Therefore, Luc contributes to the problem through his passivity. Elliot mentions that Lily "gave him [Luc] the house" (22) and that after Lily's death, Luc "got even more control of the house" (22). Both statements imply that after Lily's death, Luc gained control of the house, and, like Andrew, was the patriarch figure of the house. In turn, this implies a certain collusion between the Silver House and him. Indeed, while Lily wanted to sell the house after her grandmother's death, Luc "spent

about six months working on Lily" (17), convincing her to turn the house into a bed-and-breakfast. While the house outrightly states that Luc "is not welcome" (137), it does not negatively affect Luc; it does not banish Luc out of its boundaries and neither does it harm him, even though it can do both. The house implies that Luc knew it was "nothing like that flat of theirs in London" (86), which again suggests that Luc is aware of the house's uncanny nature and power. However, Luc ignores the house's sinister machination in favour of maintaining his role as a doting and ideal father-figure.

While Luc isn't outrightly racist, he does have certain ideals about family and fatherhood that align with the house's vision for the Silver women. The house narrates that sometimes, Luc's family pretended he wasn't there so that he "could look at his rosy little English family as if they were in a portrait" (87). Oyeyemi's use of the word 'portrait' indicates the deliberate framing of a narrative that appeals to Luc; by composing the ideal of a 'rosy little English family', Luc is able to adopt the role of the perfect father and actualise his desire to be an ideal family man. His family, aware of his presence, continued to play the game for his benefit, suggesting an implicit agreement of artifice between all family members. When Azwer and his family, the previous immigrant housekeepers at the Silver House leave, he informs Luc that there's something wrong with the house. In response, , Luc "looked at Miranda" (58) before asking Azwer if money was the issue. Luc's deliberate act of looking at Miranda in response to Azwer's statement suggests that he is aware of Miranda's disturbing connection to the house; he is aware that the Silver women are the problem. . Yet, to protect and maintain the image of a 'rosy little English family', Luc overlooks the effect the house has on Miranda and its other occupants.

Significantly, Andrew and Luc are not English. Andrew is an American, brought up in England, while Luc is a French man who has been residing and working in England. However, Luc and Andrew partake in English culture and want to identify as English

themselves. Unlike the refugees and non-white Others, since Luc and Andrew are white, the Silver House allows them to integrate into whiteness, something that it does not allow Ore, for example, or the other people of colour who live and work at the Silver House. Despite not being English, both Andrew and Luc insist on the Englishness of their identity; Luc has his 'rosy little English family' while Andrew draws patriotic and nationalist cartoons for England and dies fighting England's enemies during the second world war. Another way they insist on their Englishness is through the Silver women; if women are representative of nation's borders, then, by marrying by Silver women, Andrew and Luc claim their Englishness. Therefore, not only are the Silver women a receptacle of patriarchal and Victorian values, but these values are also further imposed on them because through the women's Englishness, the men claim their English identity as well.

Oyeyemi further highlights Anna's allegiance to Victorian values through the figure of Britannia. While the figure of Britannia has a dynamic place in British culture-making, she always stood for British imperial and naval prowess, as well as English nationalist pride. Beginning in the seventeenth century, representations of Britannia "began to be promoted in a positive, nationalist light…when Britain's imperial power was growing in a way that made comparison with that of the Roman Empire possible" (Scott 138). This representation changed during the Victorian era. During Queen Victoria's rule, Britannia was represented as a matronly figure, whose "austere purity of…attire attest[ed] of course to her moral as well as military superiority" (Scott 146), with which she looked over her English subjects and subjugated people from the colonies. Indeed, in the Victorian era, a lot of emphasis was put into the role of women, especially in connection to the domestic sphere maintaining the morals of the empire:

> "Powerful codes governing the middle-class British woman–her importance in cultivating the private, domestic sphere, her imagined moral superiority and capacity

> for sacrifice, her supposed incapacity for sustained intellectual activity…were sufficiently in ideological place at the beginning of the Victorian period for them to become available to an emerging and adjacent discourse: that of writing the imperial nation" (David 5)

Anna embraces these ideals while imposing them on her progeny, thereby highlighting her complicity with patriarchal and xenophobic ideals. Indeed, when talking about the Silver women, the house adopts a language of repressive morality that objectifies and regurgitates Victorian ideals. The house narrates that it had to save Anna because "She was pregnant, you see. It was two Silvers at stake" (136). Anna's pregnancy makes her a valuable commodity to the house, to the Silver line, and therefore the house must protect her. In another instance, the house notes that it "can only be as good as they [the Silver women] are" (137). The use of the word 'good' here signifies a sense of morality–the idea of a good woman, or a Victorian 'angel in the house' who is the epitome of morality and femininity. The significance of Victorian ideals is further emphasised when the house talks about Jennifer Silver: "She was modern and couldn't countenance being held by four walls just because she'd had a baby at a young age" (97). The use of the word 'modern' is negative here, denoting selfishness, when the ideal woman is supposed to hold 'capacity for sacrifice', as mentioned above. Furthermore, the house implies that Jennifer deserved what she got because she was "cold and self-reflective" (98) and concerned with her prettiness as opposed to being a good mother and daughter: "Maybe she was not really like that. It's just that I would prefer you to think that what happened to her was justified" (98). That the house is trying to justify its consumption of Jennifer is especially alarming, and reflective of patriarchal oppression and language; the justification of violence and oppression against women is a part of rape culture, and something a rape apologist may say, indicative of the house's self-conscious toxic patriarchal values. To keep Jennifer from abandoning her mother and daughter, and to

enforce her role as an ideal Silver woman, the house traps Jennifer inside it, ensuring that "Jennifer Silver never did leave home" (100). To show further collusion between house and Anna, Oyeyemi presents an alternative narrative, where "Jennifer strangled to death in a circle of Anna's fingers…without a corpse there is no proof of what may have come" (100). Regardless of whether Anna killed Jennifer, or the house consumed Jennifer, since Anna is a "mother" (27) to the house, their actions are ultimately reflective of each other.

Satkunananthan, in reference to Oyeyemi's *White is for Witching* and *The Opposite House* mentions that, "The houses in the texts are therefore sites of struggle between the masculine and the feminine sphere or domains, instances where male and female parental figures grapple for dominance in Oyeyemi's texts" (206). However, Anna represents a toxic coexistence of the masculine and feminine spheres within the domestic space. More importantly, through Anna, the masculine, embodied within the space of the haunted Silver House, consumes the feminine repeatedly in an unending and inescapable Gothic loop. Anna's complicity with Victorian ideals of patriarchy–which are entrenched in xenophobia and the exclusion of the Other–and resulting consumption of the Silver women by the house is a form of self-cannibalising act. Kelly Hurley, in reference to the positionality of women in Victorian society notes the following:

> "This nineteenth-century perception of women as "the sex" — fully constrained within a sexualized identity, and so both corporeal and animalistic — stands in sharp contradistinction to Victorian celebrations of woman as a domestic angel, an essentially disembodied creature. Thus, as any number of cultural critics have noted, Victorian representations of women tend to polar extremes: women are saintly or demonic, spiritual or bodily, asexual or ravenously sexed, guardians of domestic happiness or unnatural monsters" (121)

In *White is for Witching*, Oyeyemi plays around with the dualistic conception of Victorian womanhood outlined by Hurley above, since the Silver women occupy both of these roles, especially Anna. In her need to be and create 'guardians of domestic happiness', Anna, and under her inescapable influence, the other Silver women, become 'unnatural monsters' who self-cannibalise in order to keep the monstrous 'Other' at bay. However, in the process of Othering the immigrant and foreign Other and maintaining Victorian ideals of femininity and being guard-keepers of Englishness, they become monsters themselves. They are dichotomous figures whose dual existence as monster/victim of imperial and patriarchal fantasies confine them to the Silver House and keep them stuck in the past.

Like the Silver women occupy dual roles as victim/monster, the Silver House occupies the dual roles of protector/predator and homely/unhomely, making it an uncanny space which steadily blurs the line between the past and the present, between Miranda and her ancestors, further entrapping Miranda in her dual roles of monster/victim. Deme and Suryaz, the children of the Kurdish immigrants who work at the Silver House, warn Miranda in a letter before they leave, saying, "*This house is bigger than you know!* There are extra floors with lots of people on them" (66). Miranda experiences this herself in an uncanny moment in the novel when all the Silver women are sharing a meal together in a secret room. During this meal, the Silver women offer Miranda the body of Jalil–an immigrant boy in Miranda's school who likes Miranda–as food. Seeing the way his "fingers twitched, she got the sense that they weren't attached to a body, only to each other, and that she was watching ruptured nerve endings in denial" (149). Miranda is horrified at her foremothers and at herself; it is implied that she does eat Jalil, since Grand Anna and Jennifer say "*More*" (150), encouraging further consumption. After Miranda's ordeal, she "climbed back up into the main house" (150). The house is an uncanny space in itself, but it also makes Miranda unfamiliar to herself; she struggles to recognize herself, and in the scene above, she struggles

to recognize Jalil as well. The house distorts Jalil's body, breaking into pieces, into an object that needs to be consumed, thereby rendering Miranda's embodied experience uncanny as well.

Realising that the house is trapping her more and more each day, Miranda plans to "go away again" (150) though she suspects that the house will continue to haunt her and influence her. Therefore, the house proves to be a place of comfort, especially Miranda's room, dubbed the 'psychomantium', but it also holds spaces of horror where Miranda is encouraged to consume and be consumed, where she looks at her reflection and sees "a cube instead, four stiff faces in one" (150). The uncanniness of the house is exemplified by the following quote: "Good mother, good father, good children, all watched over by me" (88). The fact that the house watches over the Silver family is simultaneously disconcerting and soothing; it protects them, but in protecting them, it also isolates them, surveys them, and confines them within its walls. By examining how patriarchy and racist nationalism collide within the site of the house, Oyeyemi highlights how women are victims of these paternalistic institutions which impose themselves on women's bodies and further thrive on women's oppression. However, Oyeyemi also emphasises how under oppression, women often become the most aggressive instigators of hateful and racist attitudes. Through Anna, Oyeyemi explores the detrimental effect that growing up with racist and misogynist ideals may have on someone. Indeed, Anna is not only oppressed herself; she entraps her entire lineage in her entrapment, ensuring a continuity of the oppression that she felt.

Beauty and Consumption

The concept of beauty in regard to the bodies of the Silver women is also connected to ideals of Victorian femininity and patriarchal control over women's bodies. When Miranda returns to the Silver House from Cambridge, the house describes her followingly:

> "My Miranda came home from college and her change had almost come full circle. She looked so beautiful. Tiny. Immaculately carved; an ivory wand. Her eyes were oracle's eyes, set deep, deep in the smooth planes of her face…Only I knew how unwell she was. Really she should have been hospitalised. But what would have become of her beauty then?" (222-223)

The house is ecstatic about Miranda's weakness. Miranda's physical frailty strengthens her connection to the house, making her more susceptible to the house's influence; the house has slowly eaten away at Miranda until she was 'immaculately carved; an ivory wand' that the house could use for its own agenda. Indeed, her increased inability to consume actual nourishing food suggests that her pica is worse, and through it, her hunger for non-white human flesh, indicating her increasing loss of identity. The house's perception of Miranda as being beautiful due to her frailty further attests to its absorption and regurgitation of Victorian ideals of femininity. In Regency and Victorian era, consumption (tuberculosis) was a widespread disease in England. While disliked in the working class due to its association with poverty and hard work, consumption was seen as a signifier of beauty in the middle and upper classes, especially in women: "The tubercular appeal was also intensified by the growing rhetoric equating women with fragility, a notion then explicitly connected to beauty" (Day 84). Theorists like Edmund Burke and George Keate further solidified the connection between feminine beauty and frailty. Burke noted that feminine beauty "almost always carried with it an idea of weakness and imperfection" (qtd. in Day 85), leading to women consciously learning "to lisp, to totter in their walk to counterfeit weakness, and even sickness…[because] beauty in distress is much the most affecting beauty" (qtd. in Day 85).

Therefore, the discourse of consumption in *White is for Witching* is not merely constricted to vampiric consumption, but coalesces with the actual disease of pica which, in turn, allows the house and Miranda's foremothers to consume Miranda's body and her

identity. Pica, by taking away Miranda's nourishment, allows her body to self-cannibalise and eat itself from within, much like consumption ate away at the bodies of its victims from the inside. Expanded onto the parameters of national identity, the myths of Englishness and English Exceptionalism similarly consume England from within, haunting it with fantasies of a level of power and 'purity' that cannot be achieved. Additionally, Miranda's pica and the resulting frailty also makes her a successful predator, allowing her to consume the bodies of Others because her weakness hides her vampiric desires. Ore, looking at an earlier picture of Miranda notes, "The girl was one of those Gothic victims, the child-woman who is too pretty and good for this world and ends up dying of tuberculosis or grief" (187). Miranda's beauty, cultivated by her foremothers and the house into a weapon, allows her to seamlessly move between the roles of victim and monster; it allows her to lull her prey into a false sense of security because of her seeming frailty and then attack later. When confronting Miranda, Tijana asks her, "'Why don't you stay away from our boys?'" (104), indicating that Miranda is the pursuer in her interactions with the boys. This is demonstrated later when Miranda kisses Jalil in the bar. Jalil approaches Miranda, but Miranda initiates intimacy between them. Afterwards, noticing his "Open pores…[and how] the shade of brown varied from forehead to neck" (118), Miranda turns away from Jalil because of the differences she notices. Miranda's romantic and sexual interactions with Others is representative of what bell hooks notes of interactions between the subject and the Other: "To make one's self vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that one relinquish forever one's mainstream positionality" (23). Miranda seeks difference, but ultimately, she cannot make space to accept it; her ancestral legacy of hate and racism will not allow her to do so. Instead, Miranda gives into her ancestral craving, leading to the stabbing of the boys, and later, to the consumption of Jalil's flesh.

Certainly, the manner in which Miranda consumes the non-white Other is reflective of the manner in which the Empire operated and consumed, and continues to consume, its colonised subjects. Though colonisation–as it was understood and known during the height of the Empire's power–is over, through neoliberalism, colonisation continues to thrive. While promising the non-white Others a good life in the 'motherland', the colonial entity continues to consume the labour of the non-white Other. The Silver House, while hateful of Sade and the Kurdish family, is maintained by immigrant labour. Similarly, non-white guests such as the Black couple who came to visit Dover from London pay for the upkeep and maintenance of the Silver House. Therefore, while Silver House does not accept people of colour, it accepts their money and their labour, thereby commodifying them. Miranda's consumption of non-white Others, therefore, reflects the House's commodification of non-white Others, which in turn, is representative of how the state consumes the labour, time, and body of the Other while discriminating against them. Indeed, as noted by Giselle Anatol, the "actual monster is the colonial or neocolonial nation that greedily sucks the life-blood of foreign lands and foreign people via economic, political, sexual, cultural, and ecological exploitation" (190). The Silver House, by consuming Miranda's body and weaponizing Miranda's beauty; by exploiting the labour of immigrants and refugees, and by being a hostile space for non-white Others, highlights how Victorian ideals of femininity can be used to discriminate against and commodify the Other for the self's personal gains. Furthermore, by merging the spheres of patriarchy and nationalism through the maintenance of Victorian ideals, Oyeyemi connects Miranda's personal hauntings and lack of bodily autonomy to national commodification of Others.

The Monstrous I/Other

That Miranda, under the influence of the house and her grandmother, transforms into the soucouyant is an overtaxed and well-established argument made by most scholars

working with this novel. Rather, I am interested in how the soucouyant is a figure of fluid identity for both Miranda and Ore, representing their struggle to form a stable sense of self. The loss of a maternal figure greatly affects both characters. Miranda's pica symptoms get worse after Lily's death, and, in her grief, Miranda is more vulnerable to the insidious schemes of the Silver House and her dead ancestors since she is searching for a maternal figure. This is emphasized in the text by Miranda calling her room the psychomantium, which, in parapsychology and spiritualism, refers to a room used to communicate with the dead. By calling her room a psychomantium, Miranda expresses her desire to speak to her dead ancestors. Miranda also wears Lily's watch religiously, maintaining the Haitian time zone in which Lily died. Miranda's obsession with Lily's watch indicates a sense of stagnancy in her life because she carefully maintains the time of another time zone, while neglecting her own time and health, indicating her desire to be close to her mother, and marking the moment of her trauma. However, Miranda's desire is twisted by the Silver House, and eventually, in searching for her mother, Miranda starts to lose herself and her sense of self.

Ore, on the other hand, was put into the foster care system when she was one year old: "I'm assuming she hurt me, my birth mother. I wasn't even a year old. I'm glad I don't remember anything" (172). However, like Angela in *The Good House* remains haunted by Dominique's neglect, Ore too is haunted by the absence of her mother and her abandonment. Afterwards, Ore was adopted into a white family. Like Miranda is confused about who she is under influence of her ancestors, Ore is confused about her identity, since she feels torn between two different cultures. This is clearly emphasised when she says, "My name is not a big deal to me–if it was Rose it would've worked better with my surname and people would be able to spell it without that moment of uncertainty before putting pen to paper" (171). Ore's very name emphasises her struggle with her identity; she feels disconnected from

Nigerian culture, but more importantly, she feels disconnected from her birth mother and wants to create a distance between them, just like Angela wants to distance herself from Vodou. This struggle translates into not feeling at home anywhere. When Tijana asks Ore why she didn't sign up to be a part of The Nigerian Society, Ore replies, "'Yeah? And why don't you join the fucking refugee society?'" (173). Even if Ore is not prejudiced against refugees—though it seems likely that in a bid to be accepted into white society, Ore has internalized the language of discrimination—Ore has cousins who are racist and keep needling her about her Nigerian heritage, creating further conflict in her acceptance of herself

However, Ore doesn't feel welcome at Cambridge either: "Walls and windows forbade me. They pulled at me and said, *You don't belong here*." (182). Therefore, in many ways, Ore and Miranda are doubles of each other; they are both traumatised by the loss of a maternal figure and are being haunted by that loss; neither of them feels like they belong anywhere, and both of them are trying to establish an independent identity for themselves, one liberated from imposed expectations. This is further emphasised when they accuse each other of being the soucouyant:

> "'I thought you were the soucouyant,' I said.
>
> She said, 'I thought you were.'
>
> We touched each other's faces in the dark, trying to be sure." (250)

This phrase, through the echoing of language, emphasises how Miranda and Ore are mirrors of each other; in their search for stability, they are doppelgangers of each other. Therefore, through the figure of the soucouyant—a creature which slips into the skin of someone new each night—Miranda and Ore are able to connect to each other, since they both have unstable identities. Ore and Miranda are both trying on different identities, hoping that one of them will stick to their skin. Indeed, in *White is for Witching*, the soucouyant itself has an unstable identity. Ore notes that "the soucouyant seemed more lonely than bad" (171), and fears "the

danger of becoming her" (179) because she didn't want to be lonely. Here, Ore is seen to be sympathising with the soucouyant, which reflects a sense of self-pity for herself. However, Ore also calls the soucouyant a 'monster', telling Miranda that, "'All monsters deserve to die'" (192), which emphasizes her conflicted views on the subject, and by extension, her identity.

However, while Ore has the opportunity to try on various identities, Miranda's identity gets more cemented and intertwined with that of the goodlady. As a result, Ore, in her indeterminacy, ends up being a victim to Miranda's unwanted but uncontrollable urge to consume the Other. While Miranda refuses to consume Ore, Ore is saved from the Silver House by Sade, who, unlike Ore, is very secure in her identity. Before Ore leaves, Miranda tries to consume away Ore's Blackness: "I concentrated on making myself colourfast, on not changing under her tongue. I know what I look like. The Ore I signed onto paper in the letter of my name" (264). This is a transformative moment for Ore; threatened with the total dissolution of who she is, she acknowledges and accepts her identity. While Ore becomes more confident in her identity, Miranda is completely consumed by the goodlady, "trying to sew herself back into the skin" (266) of the goodlady when she is momentarily free. Yet, before disappearing, Miranda regrets her inability to save Ore from her cannibalistic desires; unlike Anna Silver or the house, Miranda still retains slivers of her personality. Therefore, even at the end, when is mostly overtaken by house, Miranda is not a completely monstrous.

Cannibalistic Ancestors and Continuation of Gothic Loop

Unlike Angela's ancestors, who have moved on into the spirit world and continue to communicate with their progeny from the spirit world to guide them, Miranda's ancestors are trapped within the architectural space of the Silver House. The Silver women are not wizened spirit guides, rather, they are embittered and entrapped spirits who, in their resentment and anger, want to keep reenacting their moment of entrapment by consuming Miranda, and

entrapping her. When Anna brought the house to consciousness, alongside hate, she also experienced deep fear: “Her fear of her pica and the whispers and her fear of shrapnel and fire and, yes, her fear of me, of being left all alone in a big silent house” (137). The house, having absorbed this fear, preserves Anna’s descendants for her so that she is not alone. Therefore, Miranda’s communion with her maternal ancestors leads to further confinement, as opposed to a sense of liberation and freedom because her great-grandmother cannot let go of her trauma and has instead colluded with the house to inflict her fate onto her progeny. While in *The Good House*, the past and the present unify to create a healed timeline which allows Angela to break the Gothic loop of trauma, receive her miracle, and restore her family, in *White is for Witching*, time can only collapse into itself, emphasising Miranda’s entrapment. Oyeyemi uses the space of the psychomantium to depict this temporal collapse and Miranda’s increasing entrapment.

Typically, a psychomantium means a small, dim room where people can talk to spirits and the dead. A psychomantium is usually a small space with a mirror in it to further reflect darkness. The fact that Miranda refers to her room as a psychomantium indicates that she is perpetually in conversation with the dead Silver women, which emphasises the hold the dead Silver women have over Miranda. In one instance, when Miranda is looking into the glass within the psychomantium, she:

> “saw Lily Silver standing there in her room, smiling sadly. It took half a minute, too long a terror, to realise that she was only looking at herself. Wasn’t she? It was the haircut and the fact that she had grown thinner and her eyes had grown bigger in her head” (39).

Miranda, through pica and under the influence of her ancestors, who are forcing her to become a soucouyant-like creature, starts to lose her sense of identity; instead, she starts to resemble the dead, zombified and emaciated Silver women who haunt the Silver house. She

keeps slipping into the skin of her ancestors until she cannot recognise herself. Instead, her 'haircut' and 'eyes' seem foreign to her. Through her pica and through her bodily haunting, Miranda's own body becomes an uncanny space for herself; she is both familiar and unfamiliar to herself. Through Miranda's uncanniness, Oyeyemi emphasises Miranda's struggle for her own identity. Miranda's increasing entrapment is highlighted when Eliot notes that, when he's in the psychomantium, "Sometimes I talk to her [Miranda's] reflection instead of her, and she doesn't seem to mind" (82). If mirrors facilitate conversation with the spirits, it only makes sense that Miranda, becoming a spirit herself, would be comfortable talking to Eliot through her reflection.

The most abject moment of cannibalistic consumption of Miranda by her ancestors occurs when Ore "cracked" (265) Miranda open:

> "She split, and cleanly, from head to toe. There was another girl inside her, the girl from the photograph, all long and straight hair and pretty pearlescence. This other girl wailed. 'No, no, why did you do this? Put me back in.' She gathered the halves of her shed skin and tried to fit back them back together across herself" (265-266)

The wailing girl confirms that she is Miranda, but she was wearing the skin of the goodlady, who is Anna Silver. Furthermore, the phrase, 'another girl inside her' makes Miranda seem like a Russian doll, a copy of someone else. This indicates that Anna Silver had fully consumed Miranda. While the soucouyant is supposed to inhabit the bodies of other people to consume their souls, in *White is for Witching*, the soucouyant only inhabits the body of itself; the goodlady attacks people she considers to be Other by inhabiting Miranda's body. Furthermore, its primary object of consumption seems to be Miranda's body, not necessarily her soul. Anna's cannibalistic consumption of Miranda's body goes back to the oppressive ideals of femininity and nationalism that she prescribes to. Under patriarchy and nationalism, women's bodies become a site that needs to be controlled strictly in order to maintain borders

and purity. Indeed, the goodlady obsession with cleanliness, borders, and purity is the reason why she will consume Miranda's body, but not inhabit the body of someone who is not her descendent. Miranda's body has been prepared and cleansed through her pica, readied for consumption, whereas other bodies have not gone through this process of purification. Therefore, Miranda's ancestors must consume her in order to consume the Other. Through this devouring, the Gothic loop of consumption continues within the Silver House.

Breaking the Gothic Loop Through Queer Desire

While *White is for Witching* ends unhappily for Miranda–who is now trapped inside the Silver House alongside the other Silver women–Miranda's relationship with Ore, the transgressive power of their queerness in a patriarchal site and space that demands heteronormativity and control over women's bodies, does disrupt the Gothic loop of the Silver House to some extent. Firstly, through her queer desire, Miranda takes back a semblance of agency over her own body; by not engaging in a heteronormative relationship, she stops the Silver line, refusing to participate in the Silver House's entrapment of more Silver women. Secondly, after Ore's escape, and her warning to Miranda to not "become" (266) the goodlady, Miranda writes back to Ore, saying: "*I'm sorry for everything*, she wrote. *I'm going down against her*" (270). Miranda's postcard is a promise and an apology, conveying her love for Ore. It also signifies that the house and her ancestors have not completely consumed her. This is further emphasised when, inside the psychomantium, Miranda asks the house: "*Are you happy?* She asked the walls, the ceiling, the floor. *Are you happy that we have no one but each other*?" (272). Furthermore, Grand Anna's question, "'Why did you let the black girl leave?'" (272) further indicates that Miranda still has some agency left over her own self, which she used to defy the house and her great-grandmother.

Chapter Three: Haunted Memories, Haunting History, and Racism in *Fledgling*

> **"'**Do you feel yourself to be a different person because of your loss?' I had an almost overwhelming impulse to scream at him. Instead, I kept silent until I could manage my voice. Then I spoke carefully into the microphone. 'My childhood is gone. My families are gone. My first symbionts are gone. Most of my education is gone. The first fifty-three years of my life are gone. Is that what you mean by 'a different person?'"
> –Octavia Butler, *Fledgling* (283)

If *The Good House* and *White is for Witching* are haunted by the past, then *Fledgling* is haunted by the lack of a past. Though *Fledgling* is largely considered to be a science fiction novel, and Octavia E. Butler is most well-known as a science fiction writer, there are undeniably Gothic elements in her entire oeuvre, including in her last novel *Fledgling*. Whereas Angela and Miranda are constantly buffeted by memories, images, sites, and figures from their repressed and traumatic ancestral pasts, Shori is haunted by the loss of her memories, and by the loss of her past and her identity. However, since "*Fledgling* may be the least Gothic of Butler's fictions" (Crow, "Review" 143), scholars have largely ignored the element of haunting in the novel or have only looked at the Gothic figure of the vampire in the novel. Lin Knutson, for example, notes that "Much of *Fledgling* is a quest narrative, and on the level of genre, Butler mixes the vampire narrative, the Gothic, and the slave narrative with science fiction" (214). However, the Gothic aspects of the novel, especially the theme of haunting—both personal and collective—have remained unexplored by scholars. Butler's approach to the Gothic vampire novel is unique. As discussed throughout this thesis, the past has an overwhelming presence in the Gothic genre. However, by extricating Shori from the confines of her past, by eradicating her past, Butler, on the one hand, further emphasises how central a character's past is for their narrative arc. On the other hand, Shori is only able to succeed in healing from her traumas and reimagining her place in the world because she is removed from her past. In Shori, Butler creates a character who embodies a constant battle

between past and present, despite the absence of the past. Butler, through Shori, asks readers to evaluate the importance of the past in the Gothic genre.

Therefore, I am interested in the role memories play in *Fledgling.* While Shori's hybridity is essential to Butler's vision within *Fledgling*, and continues to attract scholarly attention, the role of memories, or rather, the role that the absence of memories play in the novel has been largely ignored by scholars. Shori's amnesia haunts the pages of *Fledgling*, with Shori repeatedly struggling to cope with her lack of memories. Her amnesia forces Shori to undergo a process of relearning and re-education that proves to be illuminating not just for her, but for other Ina as well, forcing them to confront the gaps in their historicity. Furthermore, I am interested in the complex discourse of power outlined by Butler in *Fledgling*; power is inherently volatile in the novel and in a constant state of flux, moving from the Ina to Shori to the human symbionts of the Ina. Rather than focusing only on Shori's hybridity, I will be examining how Ina/human relationships operate, and how Shori potentially disrupts that operation of power dynamics.

In *Fledgling*, Butler narrates the story of Shori, a fifty-three year old black human-Ina hybrid who, unlike the rest of the Ina–all of whom are pale and blonde–can walk in the sunlight without dying. Shori's matrilineal and patrilineal families have been murdered, alongside their symbionts and her own symbionts, because she was the victim of a racist attack. Ina purists like the Silks and Katherine, who don't believe that Shori is Ina, and who fear that she will pollute their blood, want Shori dead. Suffering from amnesia, Shori must relearn how to become an Ina and how to create her own family unit with her symbionts. Humans and Ina live symbiotically; when an Ina feeds on a human, they have the option to form a bond with them, turning them into a symbiont, with Inas having clusters of symbionts to protect their symbiont families from death by overfeeding. The novel ends with Shori receiving the justice she deserves for her loss and trauma. She, alongside her remaining

human companions, vow to embark on a journey to find out more about the Ina way of life and establish their family unit.

Shori is a hybrid character. She occupies a "position in between different identifications, involving a refusal to accept fixedness, allow[ing] for the crossing of different cultural, national, and racial borders. In such situations, narrative strategies include mimicry and counter-discourse that challenge hegemonic values and show their constructedness" (Kuortti 62). Through her human-Ina hybrid status, Shori can destabilise the barriers between the self/Other binary that seem to dictate both human and Ina societies. Scholars have frequently noted Butler's engagement with relations of power, and Shori's ability to destabilise constructed relations of power. Chuck Robinson argues that, "For Butler, becoming-minor is the sole vector of futurity–for better or for worse–and majoritarian identity begets only stagnation and annihilation" (486), therefore, Shori, "who comes from a long line of minorizations" (488) is able to constantly adapt to her environment in order to succeed where other humans and Ina would fail. Similarly, Ali Brox argues that Shori's hybridity allows *Fledgling* to be read as a utopia, where problems are addressed "and dealt with" (392); through Shori, "fixed categories and boundaries are challenged and human (or Ina) agency can instigate change" (393). G. J. Hampton argues somewhat similarly, commenting that "By writing Shori as a force that cannot be easily manipulated or erased, Butler makes the suggestion that black female bodies can and should be sources of political power" (122). M-L Loefler, examining the interracial relationship between Shori and Wright, argues that their relationship "remodels power disparities that have frequently been at the core of conventional representations of black and white relations" (112) while challenging "traditional feminine and masculine roles" (112).

Relearning the Past Through Haunted Amnesia

Shori's amnesia, her lack of memories from before the attack, haunts the narrative repeatedly. The words 'memory' and 'remember' appear constantly in *Fledgling*, and through its very appearance, it constantly points towards what is missing from the text. From the moment Shori awakens "to darkness" (7), she is haunted by what she does not know, and later, what she cannot remember. Therefore, rather than a haunted house, in *Fledgling*, Shori's haunting is an embodied experience; she carries her haunting within herself, within her mind. Having been the victim of a racist attack, her trauma is localised on her body. Though she physically heals from the trauma, she continues to be a victim of this trauma through the lack of her memories. When Iosif is explaining Shori's memory loss to the symbionts in his compound, Wright remarks that Shori "'healed on her own. Not a scar'" (78). In response, Iosif notes, "'Except for not knowing herself or her people…I would call that a large scar'" (78). Though invisible, Shori's amnesia is the sign of her trauma; her amnesia is a total repression of her past, which highlights the breadth and weight of the painful trauma she suffered, though she does not fully feel this suffering because, for her, her family "never really lived" (271). Yet, just because Shori does not feel grief, does not mean that she's not mourning for a lost past, or being haunted by the absence of a past. Erica Moore, investigating the connections between the Gothic and memories through the narrative form of memoirs, notes that, "Memory is a Gothic haunting…The human mind is a Gothic landscape, painted as an unsettled space where memory intermingles with history, and fact is perpetually contested and re-memorialized" (169). Intimately connected to the past and to history, memories define a person. However, barred from accessing the repository of who she is and what defines her, Shori is left bereft of an identity; she has to actively engage in finding fragments of herself so that she may be someone whole, and so that she may go back home: "If I could go there with him, maybe the things I saw there would help me begin to get

my memory back –and I would have a home" (18). Shori's search for a 'home' indicates her struggle of situating and placing herself; she doesn't know where she belongs.

Furthermore, the experience of this lack, of not knowing herself, is an uncanny experience. Having recently learned her human birth mother's name, Shori contemplates the following:

> "Jessica Margaret Grant. I shut my eyes and tried to find something of this woman in my memory–something. But there was nothing. All of my life has been erased, and I could not bring it back. Each time I was confronted with the reality, it was like turning to go into what should have been a familiar, welcoming place and finding absolutely nothing, emptiness, space." (138)

By turning her mind into empty 'space', by enforcing it to become the opposite of the familiar—the unfamiliar and the uncanny—trauma, through amnesia, has transformed Shori's mind and lack of memories into an uncanny site. The fact that Shori experiences this feeling of uncanniness 'each time' she is reminded of the loss of her memories further highlights her uncanny state of being. She is haunted by the spectre of who she was, and who she could have been in the future had trauma not upended her identity. The imagined version of who she used to be is her doppelganger, she cannot let go of the idea of who she might have been. Shori is indeed a "'different person'" (238) now then who she was before, and, because of her amnesia, she will never recover the lost version of Shori. In this sense, within her very body, Shori houses two versions of herself. However, one of these self's are forever lost to her. Shori used to be familiar to herself, but now she is unfamiliar to herself; she must refamiliarize and, when needed, recreate and relearn herself in order to move forward. Additionally, the fact that Shori's survival and the survival of her symbionts is dependent on her memories makes her amnesia doubly haunting. Her amnesia isn't only connected to her past trauma and loss, but also plays a significant role in her being able to keep her new family

alive: “My ignorance wasn’t just annoying. It was dangerous. How could I take care of my symbionts when I didn’t even know how to protect them from me?” (132). Shori, being the Ina in the relationship, feels responsible for her symbionts, and wants to “know how to take care” (129) of them; the responsibility of caring for her symbionts periodically haunts Shori. To do this, she must enter a process of “relearning the things that [she] should know about [herself] and [her] family” (283).

However, Shori is not the only one becoming refamiliarized with oneself and relearning about being an Ina. Through Shori’s journey, the Ina are forced to face the hatred and discrimination that has been growing within their society. Therefore, through Shori’s journey of relearning the past, the Ina relearn and rediscover their present, thereby connecting the personal to the collective. Hence, Shori’s journey is not only her own, but one which changes the entire Ina society. When Wright suggests that the attacks are “happening because Shori is black, and racists–probably Ina racists–don’t like the idea that a good part of the answer to your daytime problems is melanin” (153), the Gordons dismiss Wright’s suggestions out of “wounded pride” (154). According to the Gordons, “Ina weren’t racists…Human racism meant nothing to the Ina because human races meant nothing to them. They looked for congenial human symbionts wherever they happened to be, without regard for anything but personal appeal” (154). The Ina refute Wright’s claims out of “wounded pride” (154) because in their minds, even if they won’t admit to it, Ina are superior to humans. The Ina believe they are more logical and have overcome their violent pasts: “Ina didn’t use humans as daytime weapons against other Ina. They hadn’t done anything like that for centuries.” (154). However, as noted earlier by Brook, “not everyone treats symbionts as people” (137). At the end of the day, the humans and the Inas have a mutually transactional relationship; as long as the Inas can feed from their symbionts without the threat of miscegenation and racial ambiguity due to biological incompatibility, the Ina are secure in

their racial purity and in their identities. They can safely consume the Other, to rephrase bell hooks, without giving up their "mainstream positionality" (23). However, Shori, as a Black half-Ina/half-human, poses a threat to this 'mainstream positionality'. Since Shori is half-human and half-Ina, she can procreate with other Ina, allowing miscegenation to occur. Through Shori, the Ina's racial 'purity' and aesthetic 'purity' are threatened.

Therefore, through Shori's journey of relearning herself, through her attempts to recreate and restore her fragmented and lost past, Shori unearths the Inas long buried violent pasts. The Inas violent pasts is deeply tied to Shori traumatic past, since the two intersect, leading to Shori suffering from the loss of her identity and the genocide of her families. By connecting Shori's personal trauma to the collective trauma within the Ina's history through the process of relearning about the past and rediscovering the past, Butler maps out an intersecting and widespread network of histories and traumas which overlap.

History Repeating Itself

Like it does in *The Good House* and *White is for Witching*, violent histories borne out of oppression repeat themselves compulsively in *Fledgling* as well. There are two kinds of histories repeating themselves in *Fledgling*. On the one hand, the Inas' violent histories of intercommunal feuds and disputes have made a return, with the Silks' instigating genocide against Shori's matrilineal and patrilineal families. Though the Inas have tried to suppress their violent tendencies, their lack of acknowledgement of it allows it to continue to rise. On the other hand, through Shori's personal trauma and loss, which ties into the collective history of slavery and racial discrimination in America, Butler emphasises how racial violence continues to repeat itself in the United States. Though Shori is genetically engineered, she is tied to this history through her Black human mother. Shori inherited her Blackness and the human half of her genes from Jessica, and through the embodiment of her Blackness and humanness, Shori is inevitably tangled up in discourses of power where she is

viewed as an Other in both human society and in Ina society. More importantly, Shori, with her hybridity is a threat against Ina purity because she is the result of miscegenation, and she represents the threat of further miscegenation. The spectre of slavery and racial discrimination arises against Shori in multiple ways; through the genocide of her families, and through verbal violence against Shori, where her status as an Ina is questioned repeatedly, much like there were debates regarding whether slaves could be considered as human as their white masters

Though two separate forms of violence, verbal violence and the massacre of Shori's family are deeply intertwined. The continued proliferation and dissemination of racially discriminatory language and thought allows the eventual occurrence of racially motivated violence such as genocides. As noted above, non-purist Inas like Preston and the Gordons don't think that Ina can be racist. They believe that they are superior to humans in such notions. However, having coexisted with humans for as long as they have, Ina purists like the Silks and Katherine have absorbed the language of hate that humans have circulated. Victor, one of the humans sent to kill Shori, calls her a "'Dirty little nigger bitch'" and a "'mongrel cub'" (179); under the influence of the Inas who sent him to kill Shori, he regurgitates the language they used in reference to Shori. Later, during the trials, Milo tells Shori that she has "'no more business [being[at this Council than would a clever dog!'" (244). Lastly, Katherine, making a case against Shori and her ability to carry Ina children, exclaims, "'You want them to get black, human children from her. Here in the United States, even most humans will look down on them. When I came to this country, such people were kept as property, as slaves" (278). Katherine's speech further emphasises that having been exposed to human racism and racial discrimination, Ina purists have adopted these behaviours; they have learned to hate, oppress, and dehumanise Black people. The repeated references to animals in connection to Shori highlights racist ideology and language that has been carried over from

the institution of slavery into contemporaneous times. Furthermore, the Silks' and Katherine's racial violence against Shori emphasises that oppressive institutions are kept alive through language and dehumanisation; racism is a learned behaviour that keeps systems of oppression turning. Indeed, when the other families are passing judgement on the Silks and Katherine, several families note that they had seen racism amongst humans and didn't "'need [it] growing among us'" (280). In this quote, the Ina, again, try to distinguish themselves from humans, but, as noted above, they are not above human prejudice, which further suggests that the Ina are more human than they conceive of themselves. Through the similarities between the Ina and humans, Due highlights how most differences are self-perceived but don't exist. Therefore, the binary of self/Other is entirely socially constructed

Additionally, the deliberate and systematic massacre of Shori's family is representative of the manner in which, during the Atlantic slave trade, and during slavery in United States, ties within Black families were forcefully dissolved through the act of enslaving people. Parents were removed from children, children were often sent away or sold to other plantations, and family bonds were broken to the point where people couldn't trace each other back to their families. In such cases, like Shori, people were left without a familial history, and, if they severed from their families young enough, without concrete memories. Situating his analysis in post-slavery America, tobias c. van Veen notes similarly, arguing that "*Fledgling* tells the familiar story of a white Ina family, the Silks, seeking to preserve the purity of their race—for all racism is absolute purification of the universal (race)—by murdering a black Ina family, that of the black female protagonist, Shori Matthews" (215). Furthermore, as noted by E.L. Jones, the genocide of Shori's families is tied to the ideology of eugenics in the United States, which was forcibly enforced upon the bodies of Black women, especially, in order to maintain Black populations and protect whiteness: "The hierarchy of Ina superiority is so strongly embedded that these families consider genocide the

only way to prevent mixed Ina offsprings…[they must maintain] separation of species at all costs, even if it means ethnic cleansing" (44). Indeed, the Silks and Katherine certainly think of Shori as lesser, as Certainly, the systematic breakdown of Black families in America continues to this day due to racial discrimination and a justice system that indiscriminately profiles and punishes Black people. Therefore, Shori's experience of loss is a recurring experience, tying her personal loss and trauma to a national loss and trauma that keeps perpetuating itself.

Who is a Self, Who is an Other?

Power is in a constant state of flux in *Fledgling*, with no one group coming out as the dominant group, or being entirely comfortable in their identity. While the Ina believe themselves to be "the more gifted cousin" (73) of human beings with "more than ten thousand years of recorded history" (238), they are also extremely vulnerable to human attacks, having been "suspected, disliked, driven out, or killed" (136) throughout the ages. This leads the Ina to occupy a strange position in the discourse of power; they are the hunters and the monstrous, but, as a result of Othering due to them looking "like foreigners" (136), they are simultaneously the hunted and the victim as well. The Inas intolerance of sunlight makes them vulnerable to human attacks during the daytime, and humans far outweigh the Ina in numbers. This leads the Ina to mostly live in seclusion; they avoid building communities in large cities and keep themselves away from non-symbiont humans to keep their identities a secret and maintain their safety. The split role of hunter and hunter, alongside the Inas reliance and need of human symbionts, makes them resentful of the humans. Therefore, for the Ina, humans become a constant reminder of weakness. Indeed, Joan notes that even an Ina purist like Milo who sees his need for symbionts as "weakness…loves them" (276). However, an Ina's love and protection only extends to their own symbiont, "an instinct of self-preservation" (276). This leaves other symbionts and

humans free to be manipulated by the Ina. Though Ina law states that an Ina cannot harm another Ina's symbiont, some Inas end up using their symbionts to harm other symbionts. Katherine, for example, uses her symbiont to kill Theodora. allows them to love and protection only extend to his own symbionts

Humans, on the other hand, are weaker than the Ina physically, and are vulnerable to Ina venom; a bitten human essentially has no free will and is susceptible to being manipulated by the Ina who bit them. Symbionts are even further vulnerable to their Ina's whims, since they are dependent and addicted to their Ina's venom. When Shori asks Wright if he would like to leave her, he replies, "'I can't leave you. I can't even really want to leave you'" (90). Biologically, Wright is dependent on Shori as her symbiont; this dependency stops him from seeking any form of liberation from her. In a conversation with Martin, Joel's father, Martin notes that when his Ina, William, first asked him to stay, he ran away because he thought being a symbiont "sounded more like slavery than symbiosis" (210). However, while there are Ina who view other humans and symbionts as lesser than them, Ina cannot harm their own symbionts. Joan explains that, "We either weave ourselves a family of symbionts, or we die. Our bodies need theirs" (276). Therefore, while the Ina are more powerful, their livelihoods are dependent on human beings. Arguably, in the human-Ina discourse of relations, Ina are more dependent on humans; without humans, the Ina would die out. Without Ina, the humans would just lead normal lives, bereft of the added benefits that Ina venom can provide for their symbionts. Therefore, there is a constant shift and negotiation of power between the Ina and the humans, with neither group occupying a stable position. Even within the microscopic world of the Ina, humans and Ina don't occupy a stable position of power.

However, Shori, through her hybridity, is uniquely well suited to navigate these discourses. As a human-Ina hybrid, Shori is able to bring these two opposing forces, vying

for power, into an, at times uneasy, settlement within one body. Unlike other Ina, Shori does not take her symbionts for granted; she takes their well-being and opinions into consideration throughout the novel, going as far as to leave Theodora behind when leaving for the Gordons' residence. Despite wanting to take Theodora with her, Shori knows that the uncertainties lying ahead would be too hard for Theodora to cope with and does what is best for her. She also asks Wright repeatedly whether he was willing to become her symbiont, explaining, "'Freedom Wright. Now or Never'" (55), giving Wright the last choice. Shori's human genes allow her to withstand the sun, run faster than other Ina, and makes her venom more potent, proving that her Ina abilities and qualities exceed those of the traditional and purist Inas. Within Shori, the Ina and the human parts meld together to create a new generation of hybrid bodies that are more adaptable to their environments and more receptive to difference.

Shori's Monstrous and Abjected Body

Shori's narrative starts with her in an abject state of being. If the Other "enters a process of abjection through a moment of projection, the "throwing off" and "throwing under" in which the self disavows all that is disdained and deemed unlawful by the superego" (Wester *African American* 16), then Shori, in the beginning of *Fledgling*, is the abjected Other. Due to her Otherness, she has literally been discarded in a forest. The boundaries between her wounded body and the surroundings are diminished, and, coming across a "creature" whose raw meat Shori needed to consume in order to heal, Shori, "clung to it, rode it, found its throat, tasted its blood, [and] smelled its terror (8). However, significantly, Shori is in an abject state of being because of the Ina purists' monstrosity towards her. Shori enters abjection and monstrosity as a response to the violence enacted upon her body. Therefore, Shori's monstrous and abjected body acts as a sign of monstrosity on the part of the perpetrators who committed the violence against her. Indeed, the Silks and Katherine, by committing violence against Shori, highlight their own monstrosity. Like the racists in *The*

Good House, and the xenophobic house and cannibalistic Silver women in *White is for Witching*, monstrosity and abjected bodies in all three novels point to the instability of the self/Other binary – monstrosity cannot be contained within binaries. Instead, through abject bodies, and by trying to Other the monster, those who identify as a 'self', as the non-monstrous, act monstrously themselves.

A New Beginning; The Breakdown of a Gothic Loop

Unlike Angela and Miranda, Shori does not have a matrilineal legacy or curse that has been passed down to her from her foremothers. Shori only has her amnesia, which signifies the trauma of not having female Ina ancestors through its lack of memories, and she has her name, given to her by Black human mother. Shori's name, which also translates to 'fledgling' is indicative of her journey moving forward. Having won justice for the crimes committed against her family and her symbiont, Katherine, Shori is free to relearn herself, like a fledgling creature needs to relearn its boundaries and body in order to survive. Shori's lack of memories, while traumatising in itself, is also an opportunity for a fresh start; having received the justice that she was entitled to, she has the choice to not be haunted by the past through the absence of her memories. Instead, she is free to make new memories and start her journey anew with the Braithwaite family. Unlike before, this time around, Shori is aware of the possible hatred and obstacles she and her family unit may face and better prepared for their future. In this manner, Shori's journey is similar to Angela's. Angela also receives a new beginning from the Iwas and spirits because of her bravery and her dismantling of the family curse. She is stripped off of her traumatic memories, and instead, is able to pursue a new beginning. Similarly, despite the violence inflicted on her, Butler gives Shori a new beginning. Unlike Miranda, or even Ore, who are either overtaken by their past memories, or continue to suffer from their ordeals, Angela and Shori get a chance at new beginnings.

Conclusion

> "Black slavery enriched the country's creative possibilities. For in that construction of blackness *and* enslavement could be found not only the not-free but also, with the dramatic polarity created by skin color, the projection of the not-me. The result was a playground for the imagination. What rose up out of collective needs to allay internal fears and to rationalize external exploitation was an American Africanism–a fabricated brew of darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire that is uniquely American. (There also exists, of course, a European Africanism with a counterpart in colonial literature.)
> –Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (37-41)

> "We live in Gothic times"
> –Angela Carter, *Afterword to Fireworks*

I started this project wondering why the Gothic continued to thrive in our contemporary culture, and why so many Black women writers engaged with the Gothic consistently in their writing. The answer lies in the Gothic's malleability as a genre, which allows authors to continue to centralise the figure of the Other in the Gothic. As demonstrated throughout the thesis, due to the porous and mutable nature of the Gothic, writers are able to use Gothic tropes such as hauntings, haunted houses and sites, and monstrous bodies to engage with and create connections between the past and the present. Through these relations between past and present, systems of oppression which thrive on disenfranchising and marginalising the Other are brought out to the limelight.

Across all three texts examined in this thesis, the past has had a consistent and haunting presence. In *The Good House* and *Fledgling*, the national past of slavery, genocide, and racial discrimination creates traumas that haunt the characters. When trauma remains unacknowledged, they repeat and compound, creating stronger and wider reaching networks of trauma. In *The Good House*, Marie's inability to confess her mistakes to Angela, and inform Angela about the trauma in the Toussaint family line causes immeasurable pain to Angela, until she, through rememory, memories, and dreams unlocks her family history. In *Fledgling*, Shori has to make peace with her memory loss, borne out of a traumatising and violence attack that was spurred on by racial discrimination. In *White is for Witching*,

Miranda is the inheritor of a deeply racist and oppressive family legacy that threatens to obliterate her very identity and turn her into someone that she doesn't wish to be.

By engaging with oppressive pasts and on-going systems of oppression, writers are then able to use Gothic tropes and monsters to destabilise the binary of self/Other that keep systems of oppression in place. In all three texts, the self's monsterising of the Other, of turning and viewing the Other as monstrous, ultimately reveals the self's monstrosity. In *The Good House*, white supremacists and racists attack Phillipe, Corey, and Marie because they believe that Black people are violent, savage, or lesser than the white subject. Yet, through their very act of dehumanising the an(Other) human being, the white self reveals its monstrosity. Therefore, the foundations on which the binary of self/Other is predicated is destabilised. Similarly, in *White is for Witching*, in order to maintain the purity of the Silver line, to protect whiteness from becoming unclean by mixing with other colours, the Silver House and its dead matriarch, Anna Silver, turn into monstrous entities. In *Fledgling*, the Ina purists' attack on Shori is a further indictment of their own flaws, monstrosity, and violence.

The Gothic genre, therefore, is a malleable tool that writers can use to connect personal traumas and oppression to national systems of oppressions. Unfortunately, in the current socio-political environment of the world, the Gothic, alarmingly, seems even more relevant than ever, especially when it concerns the position of the racialized and gendered Other globally. Just this year, the UK had violent race riots in August, where marginalised peoples, and their places of worship, were viciously attacked by rioters. Minority communities were also subjected to racist verbal vitriol. Meanwhile, in the United States, the former president and currently re-elected President, in reference to Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, claimed that immigrants were "eating the dogs…they are eating the cats", recalling colonial racist diatribe and stereotypes whereby the racialized Other was referred to as uncivilised savages. While Trump's unfounded, and frankly ridiculous, claims have been reduced to

funny memes and reels on the internet, according to a Washington Post article, fifty-two percent of Trump's constituents do believe him, and this is not the first time Trump, and his supporters have dehumanised the racial Other. Police violence against minorities and marginalised peoples continues to be a terrifying reality everywhere, but especially in the US, where every year cops disproportionately imprison and kill Black and Hispanic Americans. In the US, women's bodies continue to be under attack, both constitutionally through the suppression of reproductive rights, as well as physically and verbally through assault, with Black women and indigenous women facing far higher rates of violence in comparison to white women. Lastly, though not situated in the Western hemisphere, Israel's genocide in the illegally occupied Palestine is certainly connected to the West, with the US and British government being the biggest supporters of Israel, and the occupation of Palestine being rooted in colonial history. Despite Israel's clear genocidal intent and language towards Palestinians in Gaza, and continued war crimes in Gaza and West Bank, most Western media platforms have relentlessly scrutinised and dehumanised Palestinian people, showing an astronomical disregard for brown and Arab lives in the Middle East. In a different context, yet similar fashion, refugees from the global South continue to be portrayed as violent and troubling Others in the media, intent on terrorising and destroying the lawful citizens of the global North, though most refugees flee from conflicts that are perpetrated by the global North due to socio-economic and political gains

Under such horrifying and troubling circumstances, when language is clearly used in favour of dehumanising and Othering the voices, rights, bodies, and lives of certain peoples, writers cannot help but turn to the Gothic to shed light on our Gothic existence, since the past refuses to stay dead and history ceaselessly repeats itself. Old haunts like colonisation, genocide, and exploitations wear new garb in the form of neoliberalism to keep resurfacing again and again.

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