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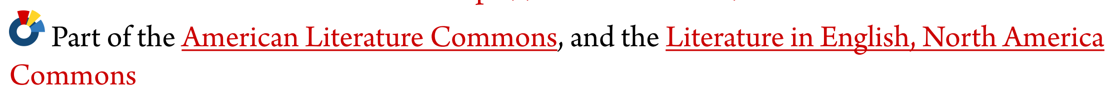
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The foundation of the nation: Exploring tenets of property ideals in nineteenth-century American literature

by

Rebecca Blanchette

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English (Literature)

Program of Study Committee:
Matthew Wynn Sivils, Major Professor
Dometa Brothers
Cynthia Myers

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2014

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ABSTRACT

The foundation of the American nation can be traced back to corruptions of ownership and property ideals. From the confiscation of native land to the ownership of both Indian and African American slaves, America's "founding" is rooted in English hegemony and the marginalization of non-white races. In the nineteenth century, American authors took retrospective looks into the past in order to unmask problems that, though allegedly "resolved" or "over," were actually still very much alive in their present day. I use the works of Sedgwick, Hawthorne, and Twain to argue that even post-Revolution old property ideals of the colonial era were still practiced in the new American nation.

I start off by examining representations of property in Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*. I argue that the Puritans succeeded in confiscating and colonizing Indian land because of their commonwealth structure. At the same time, I point out that Sedgwick's instances of captivity actually foster friendships that promote cross-cultural understanding. Next, I explore the evils of inheritance in relation to Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*. I indicate that European ideals of fixed-class structure impair social mobility and promote old evils, and that, for this reason, the ending actually echoes eventual doom. Lastly, I take a look into the post- Civil War era at *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and argue that Twain's satire unveils the problems African-Americans still faced even after being "freed." Additionally, I indicate that through the restoration of "proper" inheritance at the novel's close, Twain challenges the reader to judge the characters without regards to their skin color.

All three of these novels display different aspects of property problems in the nineteenth century through retrospective lenses. In this manner, they unmask conflicts of

their present-day while also tracing these disputes back to the nation's founding. I contend that through these texts Sedgwick, Hawthorne, and Twain indicate how the colonial era and its issues of ownership lived on well past independence.

INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century in America was a period of national struggle that derived from conflicting ideas of property rights. From the confiscation of Indian lands, to the dying off of aristocratic models of inheritance, to the enslavement of African Americans, all of the century's biggest issues had something to do with different forms of property. The American identity constantly fluctuated during the nineteenth century as European colonists transformed into Americans post Revolution. These citizens of a new nation had to figure out what would shape the American character, something that was so disagreed upon it led to the Civil War. Perhaps the biggest struggle laid in figuring out how American values should differ from European ideals. At the heart of this argument laid the struggle to define property laws both in terms of land and house ownership and in terms of slavery. The works of Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Mark Twain all display anxieties about the ways in which property was defined. In *Hope Leslie, or Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827) Sedgwick deals with the ways colonists stole American land from the Indians and, in the process, often stole their identities and lives. In *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) Hawthorne presents the issues that come with inheritance laws and displays the differences between seventeenth-century colonial ideals of fixed class structure and nineteenth-century republican ideals of class mobility. Lastly, in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894) he exposes the flaws associated with American ideas of race and thus slavery, especially critiquing the one-drop rule, but also the idea of slavery of black Americans altogether. Each one of these novels takes a retrospective look at the past; the first two set or partially set pre-American Revolution and the last one set pre-Civil War. This shows these authors' careful considerations of both past and present at issues that may have

happened long ago but that still shaped the American identity of their present day. By tracing each author's representations of it, I indicate that property was the biggest issue that both created and destroyed the American identity. From colonists confiscating Indian lands and bodies for profit, to inheritance laws that kept a select few in power, to the enslavement of black Americans that were used as commodities, the nineteenth century shows how America often valued profit over human decency and even over life, and the works of Sedgwick, Hawthorne, and Twain all display different aspects of this national problem.

Post independence the United States struggled to create its own identity separate from England. At the heart of this conflict laid the struggle to define property in a way that still reflected the American ideals of liberty and freedom. However, in the early nineteenth century much had not changed since the colonial era and the American way of life reflected European ideals that defied these concepts. "The American Revolution, for instance, provoked struggles about price regulation, property rights, and the terms on which the new nation's finances would be conducted. New states and the federal government offered rural people contradictory lessons on the nature of property, debt, money, and financial obligations" (Clark 29). While these principles slowly changed throughout the century, property in terms of both land and slaves created what could be termed an "American aristocracy" or "gentry" that still lived on post-independence. In this sense, having land (often stolen from natives) and the slaves to cultivate it represented both wealth and power, and early on in the century many Americans depended upon their children's inheritance of these in order to secure comfortable conditions for them beyond the grave.

While many American Indians died violently in wars with colonists or as a result of contracting English diseases, those that moved West eventually saw their land stolen again post-

Revolution when America expanded. This second influx of violence was of course characteristic of English colonists' behavior upon their initial arrival in the "New World." For example, in September of 1893 "more than 100,000 people pour[ed] into the Cherokee Strip of Oklahoma to claim valuable land that had once belonged to Native Americans…ironically, not many years before that same land had once been considered worthless desert" ("Settlers Race to Claim Land"). Americans continued to drive Indians off of their land into the late nineteenth century. In this sense, property was actually not tied to liberty, or, essentially, only provided liberty for some. Restrictions applied to these rules that threatened the idea of a free nation. Both Native Americans and slaves were exceptions to the American idea of liberty and both were used as pawn pieces for white males in America who "encouraged by the federal government's wars against Native Americans, dragged roughly a million black people from their homes in the eastern Carolinas and Chesapeake and forced them 'down the river'" (Penningroth 1047). They set these two marginalized races against each other over disputes about property that neither group even had the right to own. In order for America to be born other groups had to be marginalized, such as Native Americans and African-Americans. Sedgwick, Hawthorne, and Twain all detail nineteenth-century anxieties about property and unveil the corruption that occurred in their "free" nation.

In Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* she displays the corrupt way in which English colonists settled American soil in the first place. Set in the seventeenth-century Puritanical Massachusetts Bay Colony, the novel depicts pilgrim and American Indian characters and their struggle to exist together on the same land. The novel, based largely on historical information, begins with descriptions of the Pequot War and continues to detail English hegemony over a several year period. Ultimately, Sedgwick shows that when colonists came to the New World they not only

stole Indian houses and land but also destroyed entire tribes and confiscated cultures. In place of the land's Native American identity they cut down trees and changed the landscape, set up their own houses, churches, and laws, and destroyed native culture and replaced it with a European model. Essentially, Sedgwick enforces the idea that America was built on stolen property; property that was taken by force, property that colonists killed for, and property that became altered to fit an English mold. In this chapter, I argue that Sedgwick displays how the Puritans succeeded in dominating the land because of their commonwealth model. Additionally, the concept of this valued community also aided Puritans in obtaining independence from England.

In Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* a family obtains ownership of a house in seventeenth-century New England through the wrongful sentencing of witchcraft on its owner. In the nineteenth-century present day of the novel, the house has been inherited generation after generation but with an ancestral curse that has caused mysterious murders in the abode. Hawthorne uses the Pyncheon family (the inheritors of the house) and the Maule family (whose members were killed so that the Pyncheons could obtain the house) to position seventeenth-century colonial English ideals of fixed class structure against nineteenth-century Jeffersonian republican ideals of class mobility. As Holgrave, a Maule and believer in progressive American ideals, says, "To plant a family! This idea is at the bottom of most of the wrong and mischief which men do. The truth is, that, once in every half century, at longest, a family should be merged into the great, obscure mass of humanity, and forget all about its ancestors." Additionally he states, "If each generation were allowed and expected to build its own houses, that single change, comparatively unimportant in itself, would imply almost every reform which society is now suffering for" (Hawthorne 140). Clearly, Hawthorne here comments on the anxieties of his time, in which inheritance lived on into the nineteenth century even post-Revolution. Through

this novel it becomes evident that the transfer of property was at the heart of America's problems in the nineteenth century. I argue that the often misinterpreted "happy" ending actually echoes ancestral cure and ultimate doom due to the continuous inheritance of the house and thus the sustaining of old European property ideals.

Property problems also manifest in Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, a novel that juggles both inheritance and slavery. Twain sets this text in Dawson's Landing, Missouri, a town that was built right after the Revolution by the Founding Fathers of Old Virginia. Though the town was born post-independence, the founders set up aristocratic modes in the town to keep the power they held in the colonial era alive. The most powerful man in town is Judge Driscoll, who has no children but gains guardianship of his nephew after his brother's death. At the time that the baby is born the judge's slave Roxy also gives birth to a child. It is difficult to tell the two babies apart because Roxy is only 1/16ths black, therefore her baby appears white. She switches the babies so that her son becomes the heir to the Driscoll fortune, but also out of fear that if he remains a slave he will be sold down the river. Therefore, anxieties surrounding property drive her decision to switch the two. The plot is driven by her son's antics and gambling problems and the judge's constant threat that he will disinherit him.

In *Pudd'nhead Wilson* Twain hilariously critiques English property ideals through the Founding Fathers of Virginia (F.F.V.). To start, none of them are capable of having children, which shows that the old colonial aristocracy has become infertile in the new America. Anxieties also abound in the novel when the judge has to make his irresponsible nephew his heir in order to keep his property in the bloodline. His nephew, Tom, does not exhibit the sense of nobility that one from the "finest bloodline of the Old Dominion" should. As historian F.M.L. Thompson says, "Only rarely does an aristocrat appear who was indifferent to the claims of loyalty to the

family, its fair name, its traditions and its future, and was prepared to sacrifice these to present indulgence" (17). Tom, however, represents just this kind of rebel, as he continuously finds himself in debt throughout the novel due to his gambling addiction. Similarly, Twain comments on slavery in a multitude of ways, from the ridiculousness of the "one drop rule," to the Mississippi River as a marketplace for slaves as commodities, to slaves' connection to the land. When Roxy, after being free in the North for years, returns to Dawson's Landing Twain displays the connection that freed slaves still had to the land they were enslaved on. In this final chapter I argue that through the restoration of property to its "proper" place at the novel's close Twain encourages the reader to transcend prejudices and stereotypes of race and to view the justice system without regard to skin color.

Through both Twain and Hawthorne it becomes evident that the inheritance of property was a huge anxiety in nineteenth-century America and that there were conflicting views of how these disputes should be handled. Through Sedgwick's retrospective look into the seventeenth century she brings to light the corruption of how Americans obtained their land in the first place. From English colonists' confiscation of Native American land, to their transfer of slaves to the New World, to their definitions of property and liberty, America found itself in the aftermath of an English whirlwind post-Revolution, and it took time for the United States to sift through its adopted property problems and create its own identity. These nineteenth-century texts display this national struggle to redefine property ideals. Furthermore, each author's retrospective look into the past comments on how similar problems still abounded in their present day. For instance, while Sedgwick wrote *Hope Leslie* her own family was involved in the removal of Indians in the American West and while Twain wrote *Pudd'nhead Wilson* in the post-Civil War era the unfair treatment of African Americans was still very much a problem. Sandwiched between these two

writers, Hawthorne unmasks the corruption of inheritance that limited class mobility and restricted liberty in the nineteenth century. Through the examination of the representations of land, Native American relations, inheritance, and African American enslavement in these texts it becomes evident that the conflict over how to define property in a multitude of ways was the largest evil in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 1:
NO NATIVE HOPE:
THE UPROOTING OF PEQUOD SOIL AND CULTURE IN *HOPE LESLIE*

In *Hope Leslie* Catharine Maria Sedgwick takes a nineteenth-century retrospective look into the seventeenth-century Massachusetts Bay Colony that laid the foundation for what would become the American nation. In the novel she juggles the economics of the land, English independence, the Pequot War, interracial relations, and the Puritans' eventual conquest of Indian soil. At the core of all of these matters lies the overarching dispute of property. The Indians, the Puritans, and the English all fight to claim the land as their own. Maureen Tuthill agrees, and writes that, "Property matters take several forms in *Hope Leslie*—controversies over the legitimacy of the royal charter, recognition of natural land use rights—but they all boil down to the core issue at the center of the novel: the land, and who owns it" (102). Sedgwick starts the novel at the time of the Pequot[1] War and outlines two massacre scenes; one of the English on the Indians and the second vice versa. These accounts automatically lay the groundwork for the fight over property. Sedgwick then skips ahead several years, a time lapse that shows just how much colonization has taken affect in a short amount of time, as she portrays the land as more cultivated and civilized since the war. At the same time, Sedgwick plants Puritan conflicts with the English in the text, as the colony struggles to define its own laws and become independent from the king.

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[1] When referring to the real tribe I use the "Pequot" spelling, and when referring to Sedgwick's fictional representation of that tribe I use the "Pequod" spelling, as she does in the novel.

Though the novel ends pre-Revolutionary War, Sedgwick closes *Hope Leslie* with Puritan hegemony of the Indians and the colony's accomplishment in creating what Winthrop termed their "city upon a hill." Sedgwick though, offers up an alternative view on this matter, one that suggests that, though it laid the groundwork for the building of a new nation, it still does not mean that the commonwealth was necessarily the superior community. She plays with the conventions of the captivity narrative in order to defy stereotypical outcomes of this genre. Instead, instances of captivity foster interracial friendships and cross-cultural assimilation. In this sense, captives often serve the opposite of their intended purpose; while the initial act of taking a captive is fueled by hatred, it unintentionally results in positive relations. In these instances, Sedgwick suggests that one community is no less right or wrong or even drastically different than another, though one *is* stronger and thus able to conquer the other. Though the Massachusetts Bay Colony laid the groundwork for the building of a new nation, at the roots of America's start lies brutal massacres of Indian conquest. Though historians have a number of theories regarding the Puritan motive for the Pequot War, Sedgwick's fictional world depicts the conflict as being at the center of two foundational principles. First, the Puritans set out to annihilate the natives because they saw them as a threat to their religious community. The Massachusetts commonwealth was dependent upon all of its members having the same belief system. Therefore, the natives could never function within their community. Second, in order to keep this commonwealth alive and prosperous, the Puritans needed a source of economic growth and also a place to house their community, both of which they found in the land. The Puritans justified their confiscation of the land on the grounds that the Indians were not cultivating the soil and thus not using it to its full monetary purpose. They also took advantage of the Indian's ignorance to English conventions, as Tuthill writes, "With their arrival in the New World,

colonists claimed entitlement to the land by the 'doctrine of discovery' and other European legal theories that were alien to the Indians" (102). Sedgwick shows how the commonwealth's success stems from the balance between a universal accordance with the Puritan belief system and an economic prosperity that kept the commonwealth alive in the first place. In the end, the colony succeeds in running the natives off of their land through their tight-knit, though often invasive, community.

Sedgwick opens up the novel in England with a romantic conflict that masks an underlying property dispute. Sir William Fletcher intends to marry his daughter Alice off to his nephew, William Fletcher, who will in turn inherit his fortune. However, he and his nephew (who eventually leaves England behind for the "New World,") have drastically different world-views. Sir William expresses that liberty is the, "Daughter of disloyalty and mother of all misrule—who, from the hour that she tempted our first parents to forfeit paradise, hath ever worked mischief to our race" (Sedgwick 6). This retrospective look into the seventeenth-century past allows today's readership, and Sedgwick's nineteenth-century audience, to see Sir William as an extremely anti-American model. Once Sir William discovers that his nephew supports the Puritan religion he immediately calls off the marriage. Their union would result in his fortune passing into the hands of someone who would use it in ways that would further a cause he was so vehemently against. Alice, of course, has no say in the matter because she too is her father's property. As Karen Richardson Gee argues, "One cannot doubt that [Sir William] sees his own child as a commodity—as much as is his money" (162). The king's guards haul Alice away at the boat docks, where she tries to escape to the "New World" with William Fletcher, and her father marries her off less than two weeks later to a man better suited to take over his finances. The business of inheritance drives this entire sequence. The generational transfer of property

secured a family's reputation and continual upper class status. Sir William found his nephew to be a threat to the family name and found him to be an unsuitable heir to his fortune. On the other hand, William Fletcher becomes able to sail to the colonies in the first place because of his father's sudden death and thus his inheritance of his father's money. William Fletcher uses family money to fuel Puritan ideology and to flee from the religious restrictions of England, which displays that Sir William's fears were legitimate. Leaving his home behind, William Fletcher seeks a new land, a new home, and a new piece of property, where he can devote himself to his religion without persecution.

Sedgwick sets up images of the changing New England landscape as she contrasts nineteenth-century descriptions with seventeenth-century ones in order to display the rapid advances of colonization. By doing this, she makes it clear that her own nineteenth-century landscape was born out of English hegemony and war. She writes, "Where now stands the stately hall of justice—the academy—the bank—churches, orthodox and heretic, and all the symbols of a rich and populous community—were, at the early period of our history, a few log-houses, planted around a fort, defended by a slight embankment and palisade" (Sedgwick 16). Where once English influence was limited, the same land two centuries later shows nearly no trace of native culture. The "rich and populous community" of the nineteenth-century could only exist with seventeenth-century extermination of Indians. Perhaps for this reason, in addition to other corrupt Puritan practices, William Fletcher (who I will now refer to solely by his last name, while referring to the elder as "Sir William Fletcher") decides to remove himself from Boston and settle in the wilderness. The narrator relates, "He fixed his residence a mile from the village, deeming exposure to the incursions of the savages very slight, and the surveillance of an inquiring neighborhood a certain evil" (Sedgwick 17). It is worth pausing here to clarify just how

taboo Fletcher's voluntary removal from the community would have been in the Puritanical Massachusetts Bay Colony. Historian Stephen Innes outlines the foundation of the Massachusetts commonwealth as he writes, "This was a commonwealth that successfully promoted *human* as well as economic development, that 'improved' skills, initiative, and the social web as well as field and fences. It did so by linking capitalism to redemptive community" (6). In other words, the colony's economic success was dependent upon the community's collective efforts, and also upon a universal notion that the land was theirs to take. Additionally, it was dependent upon a universal understanding of Puritan duty. "In New England the notion of the calling, one's service to God through service to the community in the realm of work, was powerfully articulated throughout the seventeenth century" (Innes 14). For this reason, Fletcher's removal from the community threatens the colony's success. Members of the colony were expected to live in close proximity on the land that they had cleared and thus deemed safe. Fletcher, on the other hand, flees to the wilderness, and instead lives in close proximity to the "savages." This uncultivated landscape poses a threat to the pilgrims, and still Fletcher finds it less dangerous than being under the constant watchful eye of the Puritan community. The commonwealth, while extremely successful, could only exist with eventual English domination of Indian land. Fletcher, conflicted by the ways in which the Puritan community was carrying out colonization, removes himself from the corrupt colony.

Still, at times, Sedgwick offers a generous interpretation of the Puritans, as she relates their own sacrifice in settling the frontier. Though critics argue that she wrote the novel in order to, in a sense, rewrite history and attribute blame where blame was due to the settlers, she walks a thin line between critique and understanding of their actions. The narrator relates that, "They were pilgrims, for they had resigned, for ever, what the good hold most dear—their homes.

Home can never be transferred; never repeated in the experience of an individual" (Sedgwick 17). While Sedgwick calls on the reader to recognize the settlers' own sacrifice, her definition of home also tempts her audience to acknowledge the destruction of Indian dwellings. The pilgrims left their homes in order to come to the "New World" and destroy others' homes, to set up new homes that could not be replicated from their English counterparts in the first place. If home cannot be replaced then the Indians, driven off of their own land, experience the same loss that the pilgrims did; however, the Puritans voluntarily left home, whereas the Indians were forced off of their land. The structures of the colonists' homes, built on this stolen land, shows the differences in family structure and culture from Indian property; differences that the colonists often used to justify the natives as "uncivilized." Innes writes that, "the Bay colony migrants showed little disposition to lower their standard of living once in America" and "New England men and women worked to establish a 'comfortable' standard of living, to live in 'box-framed' houses" (16). In other words, they brought with them their English standard of living and "civilization." The narrator describes the Fletcher household as, "a low-roofed modest structure, containing ample accommodation for a patriarchal family; where children, dependants, and servants were all to be sheltered under one roof-tree...—the habitation of civilized man; but all else was a savage howling wilderness" (Sedgwick 17). In a sense, Fletcher sets up his own little community in the forest, but this type of close-knit family structure was a unique characteristic of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and it reflects the ideals of the commonwealth. Innes writes that,

> New England mothers and fathers were accorded what may have been a historically unprecedented length of time to socialize their children, who—in sharp contrast to Chesapeake youth—typically lived with their parents until

> achieving majority. The Chesapeake pattern of parental death and early inheritance was reversed in New England. In tandem with Calvinist divinity, this allowed the Puritan family truly to become a 'little commonwealth.' (13)

The Fletcher household serves as the universal structure that keeps this community afloat. The house creates a close-proximity amongst family members that fosters a commonwealth. However, not all types of communities operate in the same way, as is evidenced through the Indians' wigwams. In this type of community, individual family members are not all under one roof. This ultimately causes a breakdown in safety in the novel when the Pequods are invaded by the English and the men are not able to protect their wives and children. Magawisca says, "Our warriors rushed forth to meet the foe; they surrounded the huts of their mothers, wives, sisters, children; they fought as if each man had a hundred lives, and would give each, and all, to redeem their homes" (Sedgwick 50). Still, the English are too easily able to set the huts on fire and destroy the Indian homes. However, not even Fletcher or his more structurally-sound abode can protect his wife and children from an Indian raid. Philip Gould writes, in reference to the Indian chiefs that, "The public sphere of political duty…leaves the home tragically unprotected" (650), but this is also the case for Fletcher, whose duties to the colony keep him from his home and from intervening in the massacre. This suggests that his removal from the commonwealth poses a threat to the family structure. Their small community at Bethel is vulnerable because there are no surrounding allies to assist in times of crisis, which promotes the idea that the commonwealth is stronger than the individual.

Though pilgrim and Indian property differ, the physical space of the home holds the community together in both cultures. As Mononotto says to his daughter, "Speak not to me of happiness, Magawisca, it has vanished with the smoke of our homes" (Sedgwick 87). In this

sense, happiness directly correlates with property, because property creates a space for a community to manifest. As Gould argues, "In a series of replicating images, then, the Pequot fort, Fletcher home, and maternal nest vary only in degree of cultivation and together manifest the sacredness of domestic space" (650). Additionally, both the colonists and the Indians use palisades in order to stake their space, claiming land and drawing lines around their property, but these boundaries are broken and thus their communities invaded and destroyed. What is puzzling, however, is the fact that the Pequods' huts get destroyed by the English, but Fletcher's house does not get destroyed during the Indian raid. Sedgwick uses this difference as a symbol. The colonists' homes will stand, whereas the Indian homes will be destroyed, displaying a Puritan victory of the land. This truth was of course evident to Sedgwick, whose family participated in Indian removal during the time when she was writing *Hope Leslie*. Carolyn L. Karcher writes that, "Sedgwick never resolved the conflict between allegiance and resistance to her father's values and the patriarchal authority he represented, as her characterization of the Puritan fathers in *Hope Leslie* reveals" (xiii). Similarly, Hope also struggles to balance her devotion to the Puritan commonwealth and her own personal moral beliefs.

Though Hope strengthens the Fletcher family structure, her arrival ironically overlaps with the attack at Bethel and thus the destruction of the domestic sphere. Hope breathes new life into the home and in a way fills up the space that Martha left in her death, however the former does not conform to the latter's strict adherence to staying within the private sphere, which will be addressed later. Her mother similarly found herself in an unconventional situation when she set sail for the colony. Sedgwick relates that Alice, after her husband's death, became the "sole mistress of her fortunes" and that she was "determined to cast her lot in the heritage of God's people" (20). In an unusual circumstance of feminine power, Alice gains full control over her

property and decides to set sail to the Bay Colony with her inheritance, the same action Fletcher took when he inherited his father's money. However, in her attempt to fulfill an old destiny, she dies on the ship over and leaves her children to Fletcher, thus putting her fortune in his hands. After all the resistance of Sir William Fletcher many years before, Alice sets up Fletcher as the heir to her fortune anyways. Around the same time that Hope and Faith join the Fletcher household, so do Magawisca and Oneco, who have been captured and kept as slaves by Governor Winthrop. The colonists see Magawisca as a valuable servant because she knows English, which she learned from a colonist that her own tribe took captive. This is the first of many instances where Sedgwick shows that taking the enemy captive as property actually creates an interracial community that the Puritans so vehemently feared. Another example of this comes when, once Magawisca has entered the home, Martha Fletcher, in a letter to her husband, expresses her fears surrounding Everell and Magawisca's friendship. She wants to remove Magawisca from their home because she believes that she threatens their sense of community through her and Everell's interracial friendship. Later in the letter she proposes that Everell be sent to England to be educated, which seems to again arise out of her fear that he does not seem to be following English cultural standards by befriending Magaswisca. In this same letter, Martha writes that,

> There hath been some alarm here within the last few days, on account of certain Indians who have been seen lurking in the woods around us. They are reported not to have a friendly appearance. We have been advised to remove, for the present, to the Fort; but as I feel no apprehension, I shall not disarrange my family by taking a step that would savour more of fear than prudence. (35)

Martha refuses to relocate even when warned of danger. Her place, as a Puritan woman, is in the home where she must keep the family together. Their house encloses their small community, and Martha fears the result of breaking up that structure more than she fears an Indian attack.

The same night that the Pequods attack Fletcher's property, Magaswisca relates the brutal details of the Puritan attack on her tribe to Everell. She relates that,

> Some of our people threw themselves into the midst of the crackling flames [of their burning houses], and their courageous souls parted with one shout of triumph; others mounted the palisade, but they were shot and dropped like a flock of birds smitten by the hunter's arrow. Thus did the strangers destroy, in our own home, hundreds of our tribe. (Sedgwick 51)

Some of the Indians wished to die with their homes because without them their communities would cease to exist. In a way, perishing with the home seemed to be the less painful route, though it also mirrors the Puritans' own desire to kill the Indians on their scouted land, as evidenced by the massacre of those who tried to flee over the fence. They are unable to cross that boundary of land, as the colonists do not want them settling elsewhere either. Instead, they intend for them to perish in their fenced-off plot. Magawica's account also reveals how the colonists tricked the Pequods into a friendship that ultimately served as a source of plotting the tribe's destruction. They had been invited into the Indian homes before, for as historian Alfred Cave writes, "The Pequots…hoped to maintain their precarious access to the rich trade of the Connecticut by means of an alliance with the Bay Colony Puritans" (71). The Indians had let the colonists into the community and inside the boundaries, and the colonists took advantage of this privilege and knowledge of the inner workings of their culture. Magawisca describes that those few who were able to escape sheltered themselves in a "dismal swamp" (Sedgwick 53) and "all

day we heard the strokes of the English axes felling the trees that defended us" (Sedgwick 54). Sedgwick provides an image of the colonists clearing the frontier and changing the landscape, which hints at economic motives for the war. Magawisca also describes how, though she was taken captive to Boston, some of her tribe were sold into slavery, which shows that property was a main concern for the colonists. This correlates with the accounts of pilgrims farming the land. The narrator relates that, "The meadows were, for the first time, enriched with patches of English grain, which the new settlers had sown, scantily, by way of experiment, prudently occupying the greatest portion of the rich mould, with the native Indian corn" (Sedgwick 63). They used not only Indian crops and Indian land but also Indians themselves to create property and make profits. This becomes especially evident when Digby keeps the scalp of a native for monetary compensation from the government. Not only are the Indians property in captivity but even after their death. Cave details the different theories scholars have of the Puritan motives for the war. He writes that,

> The popular historian Alvin Josephy, drawing on the work of the anthropologist Lynn Ceci, maintains that wresting control of wampum-producing areas from the Pequots was the basic objective of the Massachusetts Bay Colony's offensive. Wampum, Josephy reminds us, served as money in the English colonies in the 1630s, and Pequot domination of the wampum mints of eastern Long Island Sound thus had serious economic implications for Puritan New England." (Cave 5)

This interpretation of the war supports the notion that the Puritans were driven by economic reasons, though Cave also argues that, "Some scholars, however, have cautioned against seeking to explain the Pequot War in purely economic terms. Neal Salisbury…argues that the war also

served to provide a means of reestablishing unity within the contentious Puritan community" (5). Therefore, it would seem that the Puritans had two motives; first, to conquer the land in order to achieve economic success and second, to create a new nation, or commonwealth, founded on Puritan principles. The community's success depended upon economic prosperity, and the colonists felt entitled to make as much money out of the land as possible. In other words, the land's main purpose was to create an economic profit, and since the Indians failed to use the soil to its utmost benefit the Puritans felt entitled to take over.

Soon after Magawisca finishes relating her story, Sedgwick segues right into the Pequod attack on the Fletcher home, perhaps as a way of setting up a justification for the approaching massacre. Martha and her youngest son, only a baby, are killed, while Everell and Faith are taken captive and Magawisca and Oneco return to their tribe. Fletcher, away in Boston and removed from the small community of his household, is unable to defend his family. Oblivious to the attack, he rides up to his abode with Hope for the first time, who exclaims, "my home!" (Sedgwick 71) upon seeing the dwelling. Her excitement to enter the familial commonwealth, however, quickly becomes shadowed by the realization of the onslaught. Mr. Pynchon relates to Fletcher, "thy house is desolate" (Sedgwick 72). In other words, the dwelling still stands but the community is removed, some from the property and others from the world entirely. The familial structure is destroyed as, "the apartment was as still as that in which death held his silent dominion" (Sedgwick 74). Here Sedgwick shows that property is not what holds a culture together, but rather the community it encompasses. Mr. Pynchon adds insult to injury when he tells Fletcher that he should not be surprised at the attack, since he built a house in the wilderness. "My friend, bear your testimony now—edify us with a seasonable word, showing that you are not amazed at your calamity—that you counted the cost before you undertook to

build the Lord's building in the wilderness. It is suitable that you should turn your affliction to the profit of the Lord's people" (Sedgwick 74). Mr. Pynchon suggests that Fletcher's misfortune comes as a direct result from his removing himself and his family from the Puritan commonwealth and into the desolate wilderness, away from the strong landscape of the tight-knit community. Cave argues that, "The physical separation of Puritan and Pequot territory prevented an immediate confrontation. But English migration into Connecticut in 1635 prompted renewed efforts to secure Pequot agreement to Puritan demands and also led to new misunderstandings" (76). In other words, Fletcher's settlement in the wilderness caused an overlap in communities that brought about new conflicts, and Fletcher's "little community assembled at Bethel" (Sedgwick 76) was unsuited to protect itself from an attack.

After the raid the Pequods take Everell hostage and intend to kill him, however Magaswisca courageously throws herself on Everell's body during his execution, losing an arm to save his life. This again serves as another instance of captivity "gone wrong." Henry Brown writes, "As the Indian represents both the vitality and the degeneracy of the New World, racial mixing represents both a necessity and a threat to the formation of a national identity" (145). Only when members of these opposing races are taken captive as property, are they allowed to mingle and create interracial friendships. David Watson writes that, "*Hope Leslie* both recuperates sympathy as a viable affective bond between America and the American Indian, and diagnoses an anomie haunting national fantasies of the founding and expansion of the United States" (16). Magawisca's sacrifice shows an insoluble bond between her and Everell, and reveals that sometimes when the enemy enters the community it can have positive, rather than negative, results. If not for Magawisca, Everell would have perished. After this scene Sedgwick skips ahead several years and places Everell in England, on the verge of returning back to New

England. Through Hope's letter to him, the changes that have taken place in government and landscape in the colony are revealed. She relates that, "By the way, their skirmishing on the debateable grounds of church and state, have of late almost ceased" (Sedgwick 101) which comes as only the first indication of many instances where Sedgwick comments on the colony's struggle to define its laws. Hope later describes her trip to what would become the Berkshires and comments on how the New World landscape differs from Old England, and says that, "We lingered for an hour or two on the mountain. Mr. Holioke and your father were noting the sites for future villages, already marked out for them by clusters of Indian huts" (Sedgwick 104). In instances like these, it becomes clear that the Puritans' motives in killing off the natives are property driven. Though the men view the landscape and the Indian community already set up in this location, they still plot a plan to take over the land and expand their own community in the region. Karen Richardson Gee agrees and writes,

> As white men explore America's forests, groves, and plains, they ask themselves what the land can give them or what they can take from it… the men comment only briefly on the majestic and profound beauty around them; then they speed from that observation and spend the afternoon planning how to use the land. (163)

The expansion of their community and their economy are their main concerns on this front. Clearly they only view the Indian huts as a small obstacle, which they can easily conquer. Tuthill believes that the colonists' scouting of specific plots represents a unique ideal. She writes, "Magawisca and her people are highly mobile, suggesting their ability to settle themselves comfortably in *any* land, not necessarily in New England. On the other hand, the vision that Hope's father and Mr. Holioke entertain about the future English settlements implies a perfect fit between the Puritans and this *specific* expanse of terrain" (104). It seems, however, that the

Indians are only "highly mobile" because they are *forced* to be on the move. Additionally, they had strong familial ties to the land, unlike the Puritans. On what grounds, then, do they appear to be so mobile? In the viewing of Mount Holyoke Sedgwick creates a tragic clash between the beauty of the landscape, the natives who inhabit said landscape, and the invaders who will soon conquer that landscape.

Sedgwick's time lapse between Everell's near execution and his return to New England also serves to reveal the struggles the colony faces in trying to set up their own independent mode of government. On Everell and Sir Phillip Gardner's boat ride over from England, their sailor relates, "I do remember I heard the boys up in town saying, that our magistrates, at election, did scruple about the oath, and concluded to leave out that part which promises to bear true faith and allegiance to our sovereign lord King Charles" (Sedgwick 130), a statement that reveals the early signs of colonial independence from English laws and community. With these attempts to sever ties comes a debate over land ownership, as Everell says,

> The King, no doubt, would like to resume both power and possession; but still, I think we might retain our own, on the principle that he had no right to give, and in truth could not give, what was not his, and what we have acquired, either by purchase of the natives, or by lawful conquest, which gives us the right to the vacuum domicilium. (Sedgwick 131)

This statement raises questions about the definition of "lawful conquest" but it also displays the English and colonial fight over the land. Tuthill writes, "In *Hope Leslie,* Sedgwick addresses the royal controversies by suggesting that the Puritans' legal rights to the colony hold more authority than the capricious whims of the king" (103). The colonists' biggest fear is that the king will encroach upon their property, which is their biggest concern because it holds their

commonwealth together. It becomes evident that in the several years since the Pequod War the English, rather than the Indians, have become the colonists' biggest threat. It also becomes evident just how much the colonists have prospered since dominating Indian land, as the sailor says, "And I can remember, for I was among the first comers to the wilderness, when for weeks the congregation met under an oak tree—and there was heart-worship there, gentlemen, if there ever was on the ball" (Sedgwick 133). This account shows how much more the colony has become a formed structure and more of a community as time has passed. Sedgwick also comments on the colony's eventual long-term success, describing the luxuriousness of the pilgrim mansions and writing from a nineteenth-century perspective that, "If any are incredulous as to the correctness of the above extract [describing the mansions], we assure them that its truth is confirmed by the spaciousness of the pilgrim habitations still standing in Boston, and occupied by their descendants" (150). The fact that these abodes still stand in Sedgwick's nineteenth-century America shows how the colonists succeeded in claiming the land and running off the Indians. These houses represent the success of the commonwealth but also the success of colonial hegemony and the extinction of other types of communities.

Sedgwick portrays Hope and Everell as partial rebels of the colony as they often act on their own moral compasses, whether or not that defies Puritan laws, which leads Governor Winthrop to call Hope a "lawless girl" (Sedgwick 161). Though they are part of the community they only adhere to its laws when they seem morally sound, and often they suffer no consequences for breaking the rules due to their privileged status in the community. Still, however, the powerful figures in the commonwealth constantly urge them to act according to Puritan law. When Everell is urged to marry Esther he expresses that, "I am satisfied with the consciousness that I would not marry any woman with a fortune, whom I would not marry if the

case were reversed or even if we were both pennyless" (Sedgwick 168). Though Esther is a virtuous woman with good standing in the community, Everell makes it clear that he would not marry solely for property sake or for inheritance. In so doing, he defies the community's workings, as Fletcher says, "We who have undertaken this great work in the wilderness, must not live to ourselves. We have laid the foundations of an edifice, and our children must be so coupled together, as to secure its progress and stability when the present builders are laid low" (Sedgwick 169). In other words, the commonwealth has been built with the intent that it will be inherited. Marrying within the community serves the purpose of preserving the land, which shows why Everell's friendship with Magawisca displays such a threat. Esther would be a favorable match for Everell because she strictly obeys Puritan laws and knows her place in the home, unlike Hope, for "there was never any keeping her within the four walls of a house" (Sedgwick 181). Hope literally cannot be confined by property; she will not stay in the house where she "belongs." This contrasts both with Esther and with Martha Fletcher, who would not even leave the home after receiving warning of an Indian attack. The community members vehemently try to steer Hope and Everell towards lawfulness and while Everell can sometimes be persuaded, Hope expresses, "I really wish that my tutors, governors—good friends all—would not think it necessary to keep quite so strict a guard over me" (Sedgwick 189). Winthrop even goes so far as to insist that Hope stay with him because he sees her as a threat. Cheri Ross writes that, "The Puritan fathers decree that Hope must reside with Governor Winthrop's family in Boston to learn proper maidenly behavior" (334). Their attempt to sustain her within the domestic sphere, however, backfires since it sets up an opportunity for Hope to free Nelema from Winthrop's basement. As Mendy Claire Gladden argues, "Hope is able to accomplish a virtuously disobedient act because the civic is housed in the domestic" (147). Sedgwick

comments here on the fact that it is not sufficient enough to just physically be within the boundaries of the community, one must also be in agreement with the laws of that sect in order for the commonwealth to be successful. Keeping marriage within the community and unions that adhered by Puritan law were crucial for the commonwealth's long-lasting success. However, Sedgwick plants an interracial marriage in her storyline that complicates Hope's progressive beliefs, and shows that even she, who often disobeys the commonwealth's rules, views living outside the community as appalling.

When Magawisca returns and unites Hope with her long-lost sister Faith, Hope learns her sibling has assimilated into Indian culture, so much so that she has married a native, Oneco. Somewhat surprisingly, Hope abhors this notion. Through Faith and Oneco's union Sedgwick defies stereotypical expectations of the traditional Indian captivity narrative. Matthew Sivils outlines the conventions of this genre, and argues that,

> At the core of the most popular of such stories is the element of a captive woman's struggle to retain life, her virtue, and her sanity while at the mercy of a supposedly demonic people. Indeed, these immensely popular Puritan narratives helped solidify the master plot of most captivity tales: the victim is torn from her home and undergoes a series of hardships, after which in some cases she returns home, forever transformed by the experience. (88)

Sedgwick complicates this form by creating a white woman captive who does not return home not because she cannot be rescued but because she does not want to return. At their reunion Hope refers to her sister by her English name "Mary," which represents how Faith never truly entered the Puritan community, as her religious name did not stick. When Hope tries to speak to her sister she can only respond with "No speak Yengees" which the narrator relates is "all the

English she could command" (Sedgwick 238). She has become completely removed from both Puritan and English culture, so much so that she can no longer even speak the language. This devastates Hope, who says, "I want once more to see her in the dress of her own people—of her own family—from whose arms she was torn to be dragged into captivity" (Sedgwick 239). Though Hope is a progressive figure who often defies the laws of her community, being an outcast of that community seems to not be an option for her. Though she befriends Magawisca, she looks down upon her lifestyle. She still views the commonwealth as the superior community. Sivils explains that "intermarriage with a member of a tribe" was worse than rape, according to Puritan beliefs (87). Therefore, at the core of Hope's character lies a woman who truly does believe in Puritan foundations, and she tries hopelessly to convert her sister back to her old ways against her will.

Like Everell and Magawisca's friendship that bloomed out of her captivity, Faith and Oneco's bond formed when he was a captive of the Fletcher family, and, when their roles reversed and *she* became a captive of *his* family, they married. Ezra Tawil writes that, "American readers first encountered…the English heroine who married an Indian, neither in frontier romance nor in domestic fiction, but in the captivity narrative" (101). Ironically, the biggest threat to the community structure comes in the form of taking the "enemy" captive as property, because this forced close proximity, though initiated by a desire for dominance, actually fosters understanding and friendship. The commonwealth took Indians captive in order to secure the safety of their community, but by placing the "enemy" in the most vulnerable of places, their homes, they actually helped foster their fear of interracial mixing. Tawil argues that, "Mary Leslie had not only married out of the community of English people, she had also abandoned everything that signifies membership in that community" (116). Through this marriage,

Sedgwick presents an interesting dynamic in which the Puritan commonwealth is not viewed as the dominant culture. It is one thing for an Indian to not want to enter into the colonial community, but another thing for a white woman who once belonged to that commonwealth to so vehemently reject re-admittance. Through this unconventional sequence, Sedgwick suggests that the colony's sense of community may not be the best one, or at least not the only one worth recognition.

Still, even with these displays of how captivity fostered interracial relationships and violence (as Mononotto and Fletcher are often motivated to attack in order to gain back possession of their children) these instances of imprisonment continue. At Hope, Faith, Magawisca, and Oneco's meeting the Governor's guards rush upon the scene and capture both Faith and Magawisca, while Oneco grabs Hope and holds her hostage as revenge. When the guards bring Magawisca back to the community Governor Winthrop declares that, "this Indian woman is the prisoner of the Commonwealth" (Sedgwick 245). Meanwhile, Hope is imprisoned on a boat with Oneco and Mononotto. From the water Hope views her community as an outsider, unable to enter. As the narrator relates, "Friends were on every side of her, and yet no human help could reach her" (Sedgwick 248). When lightning suddenly strikes Mononotto, Oneco frantically steers the boat to an island where Hope escapes from his captivity. However, this uncultivated wilderness poses a threat, as it is inhabited by sailors who were denied admittance into the Bay Colony and thus took refuge on the island. In this lawless land these sailors are just as dangerous, if not more dangerous, than the Indians, as they try to assault Hope. Ross writes, in reference to Sir Philip Gardner, "Here is Sedgwick's strongest reminder that white males can be much more dangerous to women than Native Americans are" (332), however it seems that an equally-strong reminder comes in the sailor instance. It becomes clear that a lack of community

altogether creates savagery. Though the Pequods have different beliefs, they have their own system of government that keeps their community in tact, like the colony. The absence of a set of communal rules altogether becomes a larger threat than a community with an opposing viewpoint. Still, though, the colony's success becomes dependent upon Indian annihilation, the obtainment of land, and the view of the Bay Colony as the dominant commonwealth in the "New World."

Sedgwick's seventeenth-century creation shows early displays of independence in the colony and the construction of a separate government with different laws than England. Barnaby, the jail keeper, tells Sir Phillip that, "Here, in our new English colony, we have come, as it were, under a new dispensation. Our prisoners are seldom put in for those crimes that fill the jails in Old England" (Sedgwick 266), and later he tells Hope that, "Why I could not let in [the jail] the king if he were to come from his throne—the king truly, he is but as his subjects now; but if the first parliament man were to come here, I could not let him in without a permit from the Governor" (Sedgwick 324). The king's power deteriorates in the new colonial law system and is replaced by Governor Winthrop, who denies this notion later in Magawisca's court trial, as he says, "I am no king; and I trust the Lord will never send one in wrath on his chosen people of the new world, as he did on those of old. No, in truth, I am no king. I have but one voice in the commonwealth, and I cannot grant pardons at pleasure" (Sedgwick 287). In other words, as Amy Dunham Strand suggests, "The crowd's potential collective action on Magawisca's behalf is constrained by Puritan legal processes" (151). The problem with the colony's new form of government, though, is that it is extremely subjective and often Winthrop *does* act as a tyrant. Contrary to what Winthrop says, he *can* grant pardons, as he continuously does for Hope and Everell because of their privileged status in the society as being part of the Fletcher household.

Though their commonwealth ideal claims to take into consideration all of the members of the community when making governmental decisions, that rule is only upheld when the community members' opinions are in accordance with the Governor's. It again becomes apparent how easily the laws can be bent when Barnaby asks Sir Phillip,

> "Does not your honour think our magistrates may have some way opened up for their pardon?" [and he responds], "I see now how they can, master Barnaby, unless these sore relievers renounce their heresies, or—" he added, with an involuntary sneer, fortunately for him unobserved by his simple companion, "or, their title to the Indian lands. (266)

Here, Sir Phillip suggests that the prisoners could be pardoned by either following the law, or, by sacrificing property, which would help support the commonwealth's success. This shows that, with money, or property, one could buy their own exemption. Thus this form of communal government is corrupt from the start and Magawisca refuses to recognize it, which she expresses in her trial.

The colony tries Magawisca in a court of law, a ritual very particular to the colonies, and later, America. In court she tells the judges that, "not one of my race has ever acknowledged your authority," (Sedgwick 302) which shows that she does not recognize their form of government, nor does she abide by their rules. Maria Karafilis writes that, "The recognition and acceptance of this pattern of behavior are what forges a common political identity" (333). Magawisca and her people threaten the structure of the commonwealth because they refuse to obey its governmental boundaries, which leads Sir Phillip to say, "we should never have peace in the land till their last root was torn from the soil" (Sedgwick 303). Indian culture and land literally needs to be uprooted in order for the commonwealth to succeed. Still, though, in this

sequence Sedgwick displays how corrupt the court system can be. Earlier, Digby tells Hope that, "Times are changed—there is a new spirit in the world—chains are broken—fetters are knocked off—and the liberty set forth in the blessed word, is now felt to be every man's birth-right" (Sedgwick 236). The trial scene, however, shows that there are exceptions to that rule, as Governor Winthrop ignores Magawisca's plee of "death or liberty" (Sedgwick 309). In the colony, one's liberty depends on their belief in the Puritan religion. With defiance of that faith, comes a break down in the governmental structure. The commonwealth, then, only provides liberty for some, not all. Essentially, it only protects those who are part of the Puritan community. Mononotto becomes devastated when he learns that the Puritans subject Magawisca to the laws of their commonwealth and hold her hostage as governmental property. The narrator relates that,

> He might have endured to have had her cut off by the chances of war, but to have her arraigned before the tribunal of his enemies, as amenable to their laws—to have her die by the hands of the executioner, as one of their own felon subjects, pierced his national pride as well as his affection, and he resigned himself to overwhelming grief. (Sedgwick 344)

He would rather she die in war than be subjected to their rules as "one of their own" prisoners. Through this phrasing Sedgwick shows how Magaswisca has been taken into their community as a piece of property, something to be claimed.

After Hope and Everell rescue Magawisca from jail she tells them that, "the Indian and the white man can no more mingle, and become one, than day and night" (Sedgwick 349). In other words, there is no way for these two separate communities to exist simultaneously on the same land. Still, the two urge her to stay with them, as Everell plees, "come back to us and teach

us to be happy, as you are, without human help or agency" (Sedgwick 352). Hope and Everell, part of the dominant culture or community, are naïve in their urgings for her to stay. As Karafilis argues, "For what Hope and Everell offer Magawisca at the end is a solution for the individual Native American and not for the community; Magawisca can only be incorporated into the colony as a solitary individual" (342). However, even as an individual she could never exist within their commonwealth without posing a threat, as she would continue to defy the foundations of their government's belief system. As Dana Luciano writes, "Magawisca rejects even the possibility of inclusion in a nation whose authority her tribe does not recognize" (49). The commonwealth relies on its members' universal understanding, which Magawisca could never reach.

By the novel's close, the Pequods must tragically accept their fate and move off of the land. Sedgwick writes,

> Before the dawn of the next morning, this little remnant of the Pequod race, a name at which, but a few years before, all within the bounds of the New-England colonies—all, English and Indians, 'grew pale', began their pilgrimage to the far western forests. That which remains untold of their story, is lost in the deep, voiceless obscurity of those unknown regions. (359)

Sedgwick ends the novel with an Indian defeat, but does so in a way that calls attention to the fact that not long before both races shared the land. Still, the colony's domination silences the Pequods who move into uncultivated regions and become "voiceless." Tuthill argues that, "*Hope Leslie's* exposition of Indian removal policy serves the larger purpose of protecting what had become the cornerstone to a national identity in the early Republic: private ownership of land and a sense of moral entitlement to that land" (96). Sedgwick suggests that the Indian race's

failure derived from a lack of a common community to help defend their land. After the Pequods leave the land the narrator writes that, "A messenger had that day arrived, from the chief of the Narragansetts, with the information that a war had broken out between Miantunnomoh and Uncas, and an earnest solicitation that the English would not interfere with their domestic quarrels" (Sedgwick 362). The Governor does, indeed, decide not to interfere. In other words, he decides to let them fight it out and destroy each other. Sedgwick suggests that this is the natives' biggest downfall. Their inability to establish a universal community makes them vulnerable to English hegemony. Had all the separate tribes gathered together to fight against the colonists then they might have been able to stand their ground and keep their land, but their lack of a commonwealth makes them weak. The Massachusetts commonwealth, on the other hand, displays a strong connected nation. In the final chapter Sedgwick writes of Hope and Everell's wedding that, "the ceremonial of our heroine's wedding…took place in due time, to the joy of her immediate friends, and the entire approbation of all the inhabitants of Boston, who, in those early times, manifested a friendly interest in individual concerns, which is said to characterise them to the present day" (369). In other words, Sedgwick comments on how the commonwealth structure still stands in her nineteenth-century present day, which therefore displays just how successful the colonists were in claiming their land, setting up a new government, and making it last. The Massachusetts commonwealth, even today, still prospers. This strong, though often invasive, form of community, paired with stolen Indian land that could provide economic prosperity and the annihilation of native communities, was essential to the building and sustaining of what would become the new American nation.

CHAPTER 2:

ANCESTRAL CURSE CARRIES ON: REVEALING *THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES'* HIDDEN HORRIFIC ENDING THROUGH PROPERTY IDEALS

While Sedgwick deals with the seventeenth-century battles that lead to Indian annihilation and English hegemony, Nathaniel Hawthorne focuses on the outcome of these battles two centuries later in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Like Sedgwick, he begins the novel with a retrospective look into the seventeenth century, but, unlike Sedgwick, he quickly returns to the nineteenth century present day. In this novel Hawthorne details sins rooted in New England soil and the subsequent generations that carry an ancestral curse. Hawthorne begins the novel in the seventeenth-century colonies during the Salem Witch Trials, where he quickly reveals that Judge Pyncheon has accused Matthew Maule of wizardy in an act of revenge over a property dispute. Pyncheon wants Maule's land and sentences him to death in order to obtain said soil. At his execution, Maule places a curse on the Pyncheon family in which God will give them "blood to drink!" (Hawthorne 3). After his death, Pyncheon demolishes Maule's humble abode and constructs the Pyncheon House, also known as The House of the Seven Gables. This seventeenth-century house serves as the medium through which ancestral sin and Maule's curse passes from one generation to the next. Through the agency of this Gothic structure the "old world" seventeenth-century colonies haunt the "new world" nineteenth-century America on the very land they have in common. Additionally, the house operates as a placeholder for the Pyncheon family's upper-class status, which supports a European ideal of fixed class structure that was the norm in the seventeenth-century colonies. In other words, the house serves as a system through which old ideals are sustained. However, not only do the Pyncheons inherit the

house but also the curse connected with it, and they are destined to continue being cursed as long as their family benefits from the very plot of land that served as the reason for Matthew Maule's death.

Hawthorne situates the majority of the novel in the nineteenth-century present day, where the Pyncheons are still haunted by their ancestors' choices. In the end, Holgrave, a Maule, marries Phoebe, a Pyncheon, and while many critics (whom will be addressed later) see Holgrave as a character whose ideals are transformed by the power of love, an analysis of his suspicious and abrupt change in property beliefs from a nineteenth-century Republican model to a seventeenth-century European model reveals his motives. His inheritance of the house and additional land in the country raise flags about his marriage to Phoebe and draws out his intentions to revenge the Pyncheon ancestral line and place the plot of land back in the Maule family. However, the inheritance of property by both Maules and Pyncheons displays European principles of class legacy. At the same time, the Pyncheon family continues to profit from the land that was responsible for a wrongful sentencing of death during the Salem Witch Trials. For this reason, the much-debated and seemingly happy ending actually echoes ancestral curse and ultimate doom. Combining the anxiety of property inheritance with the anxiety of national guilt, Hawthorne ties ancestral fears with realistic American issues in the nineteenth century through the medium of the house that connects together differing ideals. He uses this structure in order to comment on the corruption of property laws that carried through centuries from the founding of the colonies.

The novel's central struggle deals with property and the power of those who control the land. Judge Pyncheon's power solely relies on his inheritances of land, and through this ownership he controls his cousins Hepzibah and Clifford, and when he dies at the end of the

novel that power transfers to them. The Pyncheon transmission of power characterizes seventeenth-century colonial ideals based on European culture in which class mobility was impossible because, through inheritance, property and power were kept in the familial lines of the small ruling class. Families saw inheritance as a means of securing future generations' well being since power was directly linked to land. However, Hawthorne's nineteenth-century present-day America was of shifting ideals. Historian Paul E. Johnson explains that at the beginning of the century Thomas Jefferson believed that, "Without new land, a burgeoning rural population would be drawn out of agriculture and into factories and cities—where they would form a dependent, propertyless, and decidedly unrepublic horde" (32). Additionally, though Jefferson believed that land secured liberty, he also opposed inheritance because it kept a select few in power and thus was unfair. However, by Andrew Jackson's term, the nation had to "abandon Jefferson's export-oriented agrarianism and encourage prosperity and national independence through subsidies to commerce, manufacturers, and internal improvements" (138). Industrialization made intangible money more important than land, and as historian Elizabeth Blackmar writes,

> By 1875…the United States had ceased to be a landed society…Many Americans, however, encountered the changing value of land ownership within a volatile industrializing economy most immediately in the changing conditions of its transfer over generations, that is, in the displacement of land as patrimony. (94)

In *The House of the Seven Gables* Judge Pyncheon holds onto this old ideal that was quickly slipping away. Holgrave, on the other hand, believes, like Jefferson, that inheritance is an evil. Hawthorne shows America at a pivotal moment in the mid-nineteenth century during which property rights were shifting. As Samuel Scoville states, "the House of the Seven Gables

provides a transitional link between two eras" (68). At the start, Hawthorne places the reader not only in New England, but also in the colonies still under British rule, while one chapter later he transports us to the nineteenth-century present day of the novel. Critic Holly Jackson says that, "The House of the Seven Gables narrates the pivotal transformation in conceptions of American property that defined the passage from the seventeenth-century colonies to the nineteenth-century nation" (287). After the Revolutionary War America tried to create a new identity based on democratic ideals in which family did not determine status and in which social mobility was a possibility, but these foundational ideas were largely ignored and liberty still was not accessible to all citizens. Hawthorne makes this evident in the novel through characters that have drastically different political ideals. Through Holgrave, Hawthorne depicts a radical Republican who thinks houses should be torn down every twenty years and each generation should build its own (Hawthorne 140), while through Judge Pyncheon he depicts a European-model aristocrat who "does not belong to the dreaming class of men" (Hawthorne 18) and believes in the inheritance of property, class, and ironically and subsequently, curse. As Holly Jackson details people in the nineteenth century were questioning what would happen to the family structure *without* inheritance, and were becoming obsessed with the ancestral identity they obtained *with* inheritance (280).

While some critics, like, Thomas H. Pauly believe that the house "function[s] as illuminating background to the characters rather than as a prerequisite to the fiction he [Hawthorne] is attempting to create," (288) without the house the story would not exist. The house ties together two worlds and separates two families while also determining the economic statuses of both. Hawthorne infuses the house with two different ancestral lines, a Maule-Pyncheon hybrid that makes it figuratively come alive and act out against the feud it lies victim

to in New England soil. As Peter Buitenhuis argues, "When all is said and done, the House of the Seven Gables is the chief character in the book, as well as its structural and thematic center" (103). Other critics, such as Scoville, agree with this notion of the house as a main character. Hawthorne's decision to name the house makes this notion further evident. While the narrator refers to the abode as "The House of the Seven Gables" and the "Pyncheon House" interchangeably, the community and characters know it by the latter, a name that displays its admittance into the Pyncheon family, and thus its role as victim of the ancestral curse as well. As editor Evert Augustus Duyckinck wrote, "It is a ghostly, mouldy abode, built in some eclipse of the sun, and raftered with curses dark: founded on a grave, and sending its turrets heavenward, as the lightning rod transcends is summit, to invite the wrath supernal" (26). For Hepzibah, Clifford, Phoebe, and their ancestors who once inhabited the house in the past, the Pyncheon House carries a curse out of their control. It strings together generations of the Pyncheon family instilling within them a common curse, which serves as the main focus of the novel. Through Gothic tropes Hawthorne allegorizes real issues during the nineteenth century through the shadow of supernatural elements.

Recent ecocritical pieces on Hawthorne have shed light on the natural human instinct involved in choosing a spot of habitation, such as Ian Marshall's piece "Reading the Willey Disaster" that explores land selection in Hawthorne's short story "The Ambitious Guest". In regards to this short story Marshall says, "The fatal flaw being presented, the point of the cautionary tale, is that we should be careful where we choose to settle and attentive to transitory environmental cues" (7). This concept can be applied to *The House of the Seven Gables* in which Matthew Maule and the first Judge Pyncheon seek very different environments and thus their desires for the plot of land where the Pyncheon House stands are contrary. Maule settles on the

land because it rests in a remote location, displaying his Romantic ideals of American freedom of geography. However, Judge Pyncheon becomes interested in the land a few decades later because the town had grown around that plot, which shows Pyncheon's emphasis on society and power and his desire to be in the center of everything, representing signs of a European ideal of upper class dominance. Furthermore, Pyncheon exercised his already powerful stance in society as a judge to go to great measures to kill Maule and take the land, showing how vicious the process of property selection could get. This forcefulness correlates with seventeenth-century European ideals of property and power dominance. When the old Judge Pyncheon killed Maule and took his land he tore down the humble cottage that once stood there in order to construct the Pyncheon House. Through this cottage it becomes evident that Holgrave's Romantic ideals of property are parallel with his ancestors' beliefs. The Maules did not put much emphasis on building a house to claim their plot of land, unlike the Pyncheons who make their presence and power known through the building of a huge abode. The house was built on the land that was connected to Matthew Maule's alleged wizardry, and Judge Pyncheon literally built the house out of the "bewitched" soil that represented their sins and fears, constructing it out of magic dirt that was cursed by Maule right before his hanging. The mixture of Maule soil and the Pyncheon House combine two different families and two different sets of ideals and carries a curse that further ties them together.

Beneath the Gothic components, such as ghosts and witchcraft, lies a real historical significance. While the house and its Gothic elements dominate the story many readers and critics fail to uncover the anxieties it actually represents. As Alex Shakespeare says, Hawthorne "built houses into metaphorical structures whose walls hid the waylaid stories of history" (69). With ignorance towards the political ideals Hawthorne positions below the surface comes

misunderstanding of the ending. Too many critics have chalked up this seemingly chipper closure to Hawthorne "selling out" and answering to popular demand. However, as Hawthorne himself wrote in a letter to editor Duyckinck, "I was illuminated by my purpose to bring it to a prosperous close; while the gloom of the past threw its shadow along the reader's pathway" (Buitenhuis 58). Critics and readers often disregard this gloomy shadow and ignore the inevitable fate that waits for the characters beyond the novel's close. As the novel nears its supposedly happy ending Holgrave proposes to Phoebe and the narrator relates that, "They transfigured the earth, and made it Eden again, and themselves the two first dwellers in it" (Hawthorne 235). This eerily mirrors historian Edwin Haviland Miller's statement that, "When the Puritans came to New England to establish a new Eden, they brought with them all the evils humans are heir to, such as murder, theft, alcoholism, incest, and whoring" (21). When the Puritans settled in the colonies with the intent of creating an Eden on Earth they actually committed horrific sins themselves that haunted Hawthorne's nineteenth-century audience, especially the Salem Witch Trials, and their unjust punishments based on European models of abuse. When Hawthorne says that they will create an Eden he allegorizes the sins and crimes the Puritans committed in trying to do the same, and actually relates that Phoebe and Holgrave's lives will be nothing like Eden. While on the surface their union seems pure and innocent Hawthorne fills it with gross undertones that reveal their inevitable doom that will take place past the novel's close due to their inheritance of ancestral property and curse.

While Hawthorne does not reveal Holgrave's Maule ancestry until the end of the novel, Holgrave takes on peculiar traits throughout the book that outline his ancestral identity and connection to the Salem Witch Trials and wizardry. Through his telling of the tale of Alice Pyncheon to Phoebe many similarities can be drawn that depict Holgrave as a hypnotist and

possibly a wizard. As the story goes, Alice Pyncheon was hypnotized by Matthew Maule's grandson (also named Matthew Maule) in exchange for a parchment that would give him ownership of desirable plot of land in Maine. Lesley Ginsberg writes that,

> As a British subject, Gervayse imagines the title he would receive if he were to find title to the storied Pyncheon properties: these would be "worth an earldom, and would reasonably entitle him to solicit, or enable him to purchase, that elevated dignity from the British monarch. Lord Pyncheon!—or the Earl of Waldo!" (40)

Again, old European ideals are found in the "New World" as Gervayse Pyncheon desires the property solely for the purpose of attaining a higher title. Property trumps family in this instance as he sacrifices his daughter Alice for property, just as Judge Pyncheon had sacrificed the first Matthew Maule for property, establishing a string of Pyncheon ancestral identity that places a higher value on land than on human life. Similarly, the Maule ancestral identity carries a thread of revenge, as the first Matthew Maule put a curse on the Pyncheons, and his grandson unnecessarily hypnotized Alice in an act of revenge for the original act of hanging that began the feud in the first place. "Is it my crime that you sold your daughter for the mere hope of getting a yellow sheet of paper parchment into your clutch?" (Hawthorne 157) asks Maule after hypnotizing Alice. Ginsberg writes, "In Holgrave's legend, the succeeding generations of Pyncheons are doomed by their transatlantic ties" (39). The Maule ancestral identity carries the idea of Jeffersonian Republicanism in which inheritance and the paper its made legal on mean nothing, while the Pyncheon ancestral identity places so much emphasis on property that they sacrifice human lives to obtain land. However, the Maule ancestral identity also bears revenge and Holgrave, too, seeks such revenge as he hypnotizes Phoebe through his relation of Alice's

story. Later, in the final chapter Holgrave confesses the truth about his identity and reveals the secret about the parchment that killed Alice Pyncheon.

> "My dearest Phoebe," said Holgrave, "how will it please you to assume the name of Maule? As for the secret, it is the only inheritance that has come down to me from my ancestors. You should have known sooner (only that I was afraid of frightening you away) that, in this long drama of wrong and retribution, I represent the old wizard, and am probably as much a wizard as ever he was. The son of the executed Matthew Maule, while building this house, took the opportunity to construct that recess, and hide away the Indian deed, on which depended the immense land claim of the Pyncheons" (Hawthorne 243)

Holgrave states that the only thing he has inherited from his ancestors is the secret about the parchment, which was hidden in an act of vengeance. In other words, he has inherited the Maule sense of revenge. He further grounds himself in his forebearers by saying that he "represents" the wrongly killed Matthew Maule *and* by comparing himself to his alleged wizardry. Furthermore, we learn that the second Matthew Maule purposefully hid the deed, which shows his desire for revenge but also his eagerness to keep property out of Pyncheon hands and halt the distribution of land via inheritance.

When Holgrave finishes relating the story of Alice, the narrator presents Pheobe in a state of hypnosis, creating ancestral ties and common traits between the Maule in the story and Holgrave, the Maule that just told her the tale.

> With the lids drooping over her eyes—now lifted for an instant, and drawn down again as with leaden weight—she leaned slightly towards him, and seemed almost to regulate her breath with his. Holgrave gazed at her as he rolled up the

> manuscript, and recognized an incipient stage of that curious psychological condition which, as he had himself told Phoebe, he possessed more than an ordinary faculty of producing (Hawthorne 162).

As the narrator relates, Holgrave had told Phoebe of his hypnotist skills and perhaps wizardry characteristics before chronicling the story. Still, she gives into his hypnosis, establishing Holgrave as having the upper hand in their relationship. In that same chapter he reveals to her, “I am somewhat of a mystic, it must be confessed. The tendency is in my blood, together with the faculty of mesmerism, which might have brought me to Gallows Hill, in the good old times of witchcraft” (Hawthorne 167). Holgrave blatantly admits his ancestral connections that carry in his blood, and even admits that he would have been considered a “wizard” and thus hanged during the Salem Witch Trials. Ginsbgerg argues that, “Holgrave’s mesmeric skills make him a double for both old Matthew Maule, the wizard, and young Matthew Maule, the carpenter who appears in Holgrave’s fiction” (39), a statement that supports the idea that these two families are intertwined with their ancestors’ identities. Whether one takes the strange occurrences of the novel to be that of witchcraft or not, the importance here lies in Holgrave’s strong ancestral ties with the Maules, and their common ancestral desire for Pyncheon revenge. Miller writes, “Holgrave almost renders Phoebe powerless—the artist now brutalizing woman through his skill—until he wakens her and prepares the way for the end of the Pyncheon-Maule feud” (334). However, Holgrave’s hypnosis of Pheobe does not pave the way for resolution, rather it plots a strategy of revenge.

Holgrave’s proposal to Phoebe raises concerns, as it coincidentally comes directly after Judge Pyncheon’s death, and thus Clifford, Hepzibah, and Phoebe’s inheritance of not only the Pyncheon House but also the estate in the country. While on the surface their union seems pure

and innocent, Hawthorne pollutes it with gross undertones that reveal their inevitable doom that will take place past the novel's close due to their inheritance of ancestral property and curse. Holgrave's sudden change in property ideologies from a Jeffersonian model of American democracy to a European aristocratic model quickly flips his character, a hard to believe transition. During his proposal he expresses that he wishes to build a house for another generation, an idea he claimed not to believe in before Judge Pyncheon's death, and additionally he claims that he wants to conform to society and its laws. Furthermore, when they take up their quarters in the country seat Holgrave says,

> But I wonder that the late Judge—being so opulent, and with a reasonable prospect of transmitting his wealth to descendants of his own—should not have felt the property of embodying so excellent a piece of domestic architecture in stone, rather than in wood. Then, every generation of the family might have altered the interior, to suit its own taste and convenience; while the exterior, through the lapse of years, might have been adding venerableness to permanence which I consider essential to the happiness of any one moment (Hawthorne 241)

This, of course, drastically contrasts with his earlier belief that "If each generation were allowed and expected to build its own houses, that single change, comparatively unimportant in itself, would imply almost every reform which society is now suffering for" (Hawthorne 140). He has moved from an American ideal of social mobility and ancestral freedom, to a European ideal of strict class structure and strong ancestral ties. He even suggests that his new European ideologies of fixed class structures are stronger than the Judge's, the novel's villain, by saying houses should be built even sturdier than how the Judge constructed his.

Some critics account this conversion to Holgrave's love for Phoebe and her ability to perhaps hypnotize him, such as Joel R. Kehler who states, "Holgrave's conversion from the philosophy of rootlessness is a result of lessons learned from Phoebe about the meaning of 'home'" (151). Similarly, Scoville writes, "For Holgrave…Phoebe's influence is equally rengenative—transforming him from the radical who believes 'even our public edifices…should crumble to ruin, once every twenty years' to the conservative who advocates building houses in stone rather than wood'" (71). Writing this conversion off as something of Phoebe's doing shows irresponsibility, especially since Holgrave often assumes the power in their relationship. Holgrave does not experience a drastic flux in ideals; rather he exercises his power over Phoebe by lying to her about this alleged transformation. By marrying Phoebe, Holgrave experiences social mobility, thus achieving part of the American dream that the Republicanism he identifies with at the beginning of the novel is strongly based on. Furthermore, he succeeds in seeking out his ancestors' revenge on the Pyncheons by placing himself in a position to inherit the land the Pyncheon House stands on. Holgrave hypnotizes and fools Phoebe into marriage so that he can himself inherit the house, restoring the land to its proper Maule ownership. Holgrave takes on a false role of European aristocrat in order to plot the revenge that will finally put the plot of land the Pyncheon House rests on back in Maule possession, however this does not mean that the feud will be over or that the curse will be broken.

To conclude that the marriage, which will combine the Maule and Pyncheon ancestral lines, will end the Pyncheon-Maule feud and ancestral curse is just another way of naively depicting a happy ending. While the marriage will eventually result in Maule family dominance, since Holgrave is a male and thus the property will transfer to him, the Pyncheons (Hepzibah, Clifford, and Phoebe) will continue to benefit from the land, more so at the end of the novel than

ever before, as it puts power and class in their hands. As critic Clark Griffith states, “If we are to presume that a kind of blanket amnesty is obtained through the marriage of Phoebe and Holgrave (Pyncheon and Maule) then our belief in the regenerative capacities of sin and, most especially, in a personal struggle for atonement is instantly negated” (22). While Holgrave seeks and succeeds in securing his revenge, he also, along with Phoebe, Clifford, and Hepzibah, partakes in the anti-American ideal of inheritance that will ultimately doom them all to their ancestral identities. The ending of the novel has spurred many debates in which some critics take the closure at its face value and bash Hawthorne for the happy “sell out” finish, as Charles Campbell outlines, “All in all, critics contend the ‘happy story book ending’ is inconsistent with the somber issues and radical hopes raised by the story and with its stated moral” (2). Other critics who accept the happy ending try to tie it up in a bow of pleasant conclusions, such as Griffith who writes, “But to pass *into* and *through* and then *out* of the house, as Phoebe and Holgrave and Hepzibah and Clifford do—herein lies the correct moral balance and, therefore, the way toward redemption” (23). This justification naively ignores the ancestral curses, sins, and identities that define these characters. Hawthorne partially receives his fame from his unresolved endings that leave the reader to decide the course of the story past the words on the page. However, the implication of doom always stands as an option, such as the doom of the sinful community in “The Minister’s Black Veil” and the ironic possibility of a religious man bound for hell in “The Man of Adamant”. In *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne does not break this tradition, and some critics have been too apt to passively receive the ending as happy. Left with an ending that is eerie and uncanny in its naïve and unrealistic happiness, the combined family of Pyncheons and Maules skip off to “Eden” where through inheritance they will root themselves

even deeper in the ancestral ties that America was trying to get away from in the nineteenth century.

Hawthorne's contemporary and friend Herman Melville conceived the ending for the dark and Gothic Hawthorian characteristics it implies. In a letter to Hawthorne he writes, "The marriage of Phoebe with the daguerreotypist is a fine stroke, because of his turning out to be a *Maule"* (25). Melville understands that the combination of these two opposing families plots a deeper meaning than what lies on the novel's surface. As Peter Buitenhuis argues, "Melville was the first to recognize the cosmic joke that Hawthorne was playing on his readers—presenting on the face of things a world of kindness and sunniness, which is really a thin skin over the endemic deviltry of man and nature" (60). Pulling off this thin skin will uncover the inevitable occurrences that will play out past the end of the novel. While the country (where Phoebe, Holgrave, Hepzibah, and Clifford flee to in the end) might seem like a pastoral place for escape, the novel displays multiple instances where Pyncheons were pulled from the country to the Pyncheon House. As Kehler points out, while Judge Pyncheon claims to be content in the country he constantly finds himself returning to the Pyncheon House. The pull of the curse lures him into the house where he dies. Another Pyncheon pulled towards the house is Phoebe, who lives a lovely life in the country yet returns multiple times to the house. The ending, though masked with a romanticized escape into the pastoral, actually mirrors Judge Pyncheon's Gothic ancestral fate, indicating that Clifford and Hepzibah must return and that the pull of the house will draw them to the ancestral curse too. Clifford acknowledges the evil in inheritance as he says, "There is no such unwholesome atmosphere as that of an old home, rendered poisonous by one's defunct forefathers and relatives" (Hawthorne 200), and even so, by the novel's close Clifford moves from inhabitant to owner of the Pyncheon House. They are doomed to suffer the

fate of the curse because they inherit the property and profit economically from Matthew Maule's seventeenth-century hanging at the Salem Witch Trials. They continue to transfer the curse and the European ideals of inheritance through the ancestral line, defying American Romantic nineteenth-century morals. While the Pyncheons continue their ancestral traits of power through property the Maules continue their ancestral traits of revenge.

At the novel's close Hawthorne leaves the reader with an image of Holgrave, Phoebe, Clifford, and Hepzibah driving off in a barouche as they abandon the Pyncheon House. Two passer-bys stop and comment on Hepzibah's sudden economic success.

> "Well, Dixey," said one of them, "what do you think of this? My wife kept a cent shop three months, and lost five dollars on her outlay. Old Maid Pyncheon has been in trade just about as long, and rides off in her carriage with a couple of hundred thousand—reckoning her share, and Clifford's and Phoebe's—and some say twice as much! If you choose to call it luck, it is all very well; but if we are to take it as the will of Providence, why, I can't exactly fathom it!" "Pretty good business!" quoth the sagacious Dixey. "Pretty good business!" (Hawthorne 24)

The irony here lays in the fact that her sudden economic progress has nothing at all to do with business and everything to do with inheritance. This anonymous townfolk makes a clear distinction between luck and Providence. Had Hepzibah's sudden fortune been obtained out of luck then that would mean others would have had an equal shot at achieving such luck. Her wealth, however, comes from her ancestral line, which means others without wealthy relatives would not have had the same shot at achieving her sudden success. Her wealth was not random but rather predetermined through inheritance, and thus out of Providence, an old Puritan concept that assumes people have presupposed destinies. In other words, she did not earn her money and

achieve class mobility out of hard work, a Jeffersonian-American ideal, but rather she had it handed to her via inheritance, a European ideal. Hawthorne ends the novel with a quip that shows the unfair and unjust nature of ancestral lines, and in this case Hepzibah may inherit a plethora of money but she also inherits the Pyncheon curse. As William J. Scheick writes, "Whatever is ostensibly, optimistically regenerative at the end of *The House of the Seven Gables* is, as the reference to autumnal September gales in the last paragraph suggests, inevitably subject to a fundamental autumnal decay and wintry dissolution" (108). Hawthorne's final images of happiness are actually prerequisites for future instances of doom.

A closer look at Holgrave's suspicious shift in property ideals makes it evident that the seemingly happy ending of *The House of the Seven Gables* displays Hawthorne's true talent in masking terror with a very thin layer of joy, making the often misinterpreted ending even more Gothic in readers' misunderstanding and happiness towards doom, curse, and horror. Critics are often just as fooled by Holgrave as the Pyncheons who skip off to "Eden" holding hands with the Maule that just revenged them. Holgrave's shift from a nineteenth-century American Republican belief of property to a seventeenth-century European aristocratic ideal of property hides more than what Hawthorne reveals in the narrative. Holgrave, who at the beginning of the novel rejects ideas of inheritance, puts himself in a powerful position to take over as owner of the Pyncheon House through ancestral transfer via marriage. He does so in order to finally put the property back in Maule possession, but the fact that Pyncheons are still benefiting from the plot of land that killed Matthew Maule means that the curse still cannot be broken. Had Hawthorne, say, concluded with the house's destruction, then the economic profit and the curse would both be abolished. Clifford even suggests this idea, as he says, "And it were a relief to me if that house could be torn down, or burnt up, and so the earth be rid of it, and grass be sown

abundantly over its foundation" (201). However, the fact that the house still stands at the novel's close, and that the Pyncheon family still benefits from its value, means that the curse will continue to carry on, and that future generations are fated to inherit it as well. As Clifford says, "What we call real estate—the solid ground to build a house on—is the broad foundation on which nearly all the guilt of this world rests" (Hawthorne 201). Still, he, Holgrave, Phoebe, and Hepzibah all doom themselves to ancestral curse as they submit to inheritance and thus approval of Matthew Maule's hanging and we can only imagine the horrors that happen to them beyond the last page of *The House of the Seven Gables*.

CHAPTER 3:

DAWSON'S LANDING'S *PUDD'NHEAD* APPROACH TO PROPERTY IDEALS: TRACING THE ROOTS OF EUROPEAN VALUES IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

While Sedgwick and Hawthorne take retrospective looks into the seventeenth century, Mark Twain takes a look back into the Antebellum Era from a post-Civil War perspective in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Set in the Antebellum South, the novel depicts a country that struggles to define its relation to property. Dawson's Landing, a fifty-year-old slaveholding town run by old Virginia aristocracy, reflects European ideals in a new America. With a strong focus on inheritance laws and slavery, the ownership of money and people plays a central role in the novel. Twain strategically situates his story in a town that reflects a plethora of anxieties that roared through the early nineteenth century. Dawson's Landing *should* represent a new beginning and a new identity separate from England since it was born out of the American Revolution (only fifty-years old in 1830), unlike East Coast towns that first existed in the colonies. However, it ironically sets up the same modes of aristocracy. The Founding Fathers of Virginia, and especially Judge Driscoll (who we are told serves as the "chief citizen,") founded the town on aristocratic ideals even post Revolution because they did not wish to alter their relationship with property, which would force them to lose their titles. As the narrator relates at the novel's opening, "He [Judge Driscoll] was very proud of his old Virginia ancestry, and in his hospitalities and his rather formal and stately manners he kept up its traditions" (Twain 2). In a new America that attempts to disregard fixed class structure and aristocracy, Twain makes it clear that the First Families of Virginia set up Dawson's Landing to hold onto their upper class property-dependent status and pre-Revolution English traditions. Situated on the Mississippi,

which serves as an avenue for the slavery marketplace, the residents of Dawson's Landing are obsessed with money, inheritance, and the ownership of people. Even the title of the novel comes from a property dispute, as David Wilson obtains his nickname after he makes a joke about the ownership of a dog in which he suggests that property can be shared, an appalling concept to the townsfolk. Thus, Twain portrays Dawson's Landing as a type of America that exists as nothing but an extension of fixed class structure and slavery that derived from Europe, a distorted system that romanticizes old ideals of community.

The first chapter of the novel sets up a quaint view of property in Dawson's Landing that immediately gets crushed once the narrator relays that the town holds slaves. Twain provides lengthy descriptions of "modest one and two story frame dwellings" with their identical gardens and white fences (1). Apparently a content cat sleeping on one's property symbolizes status in Dawson's Landing, as the narrator expresses, "A home without a cat—and a well-fed, well-petted and properly revered cat—may be a perfect home, perhaps, but how can it prove title?" (Twain 1). This comment immediately sets up the importance of status in the community, while it also displays a picturesque image of a town that rots with corruption underneath the surface. The importance of status and yearning for European ideals becomes further enforced when Twain moves to the images of Main Street and the reader learns that, "The candy-striped pole, which indicates nobility proud and ancient along the palace-bordered canals of Venice, indicated merely the humble barber shop along the main street of Dawson's Landing" (2). Here, Twain creates a yearning for European traditions that are fading in the new America, and a desire to hold on to those customs anyway despite the fact that they are becoming obsolete. Lastly, Twain delivers wonderful descriptions of the Mississippi River and relates that the houses are sandwiched between hills and the body of water. Geographically isolated, Twain literally cuts

the town off from the rest of America, which creates a strange sort of social experiment that allows the citizens to ignore the shift in values that occurred after the revolution, and perhaps even ignore the fact that they are in America in the first place.

The Mississippi River serves as the town's only access to the rest of the world. Steamboats "stocked with every imaginable comfort or necessity which the Mississippi's communities could want" corral up and down the river and through the town (2). However, soon after, it becomes evident that those necessities include slaves; that the marketplace of the Mississippi not only provides material property but *people* as property, and yet disturbingly "the town was sleepy and comfortable and contented" (2). Chad Rohman writes that, "The very serious reality of what's *down* the river, human degradation for slaves, and the very real economic prosperity for plantation owners and others (including Northerners) involved in this form of human commerce, is always looming below the surface" (246). In Twain's Gilded Age fashion, the town's pleasant facade hides the destruction that pulses beneath its surface. Satisfied with their dated ideas of slavery and inheritance, Dawson's Landing reflects America's struggle to define itself once it became its own country. At the heart of these conflicts lays the identification of property and the attempt to answer the questions: Can people *be* property in America? Can people *inherit* property in America? George M. Spangler agrees that, "the basis for the narrative is the fact that human beings may be sold as property, and its starting point is Roxy's recognition, itself the result of an incident involving petty theft, that her master may sell her child down the river at any time" (29). Slavery and fixed-class structure both disobey the concepts of "freedom" and "liberty" America was founded on, which made early nineteenth-century practices problematic and questionable. Here, I argue that through conflicting views of property *Pudd'nhead Wilson* represents the struggle for America to become its own country in

the decades post-Revolution and pre-Civil War. At the core of this conflict lays the nation's attempt to create traditions and morals separate from England.

In order to understand how English property ideals are in danger of alteration in the novel, one must first understand the historical context of property in the nineteenth century. After the American Revolution, the United States struggled to define property in a way that still reflected the American ideals of liberty and freedom. However, in the early nineteenth century, much had not changed since the colonial era and the American way of life reflected European ideals that stifled these concepts. Historian Christopher Clark states that,

> The American Revolution, for instance, provoked struggles about price regulation, property rights, and the terms on which the new nation's finances would be conducted. New states and the federal government offered rural people contradictory lessons on the nature of property, debt, money, and financial obligations. (29)

While these principles slowly changed throughout the century, property in terms of both land and slaves created what could be termed an "American aristocracy" or "gentry" that still lived on post-independence. Ideas of property played a huge role in the construction of the Declaration of Independence and of the United States. As Michael Kammen states, "Man could be fully free only if he possessed property" and "During the later nineteenth century, Supreme Court justices in the United States would define liberty as the opportunity to own property" (25). The concepts of liberty and property were hard to divorce during this time period. Even John Adams said, "Property must be secured, or liberty cannot exist" (Kammen 27). However, the way that many people secured property was through inheritance, which is a European aristocratic ideal that keeps power within certain prominent families.

The transfer of property, in order to keep a select few in power century after century, was a European ideal that fought to stay alive in the nineteenth century. In England it was more about a transfer of title than it was about a transfer of land, whereas in America inheritance became a means of financial security more than a status symbol. Twain makes it evident that the F.F.V. place a higher importance on the former, as they wish to keep the Old Dominion line alive and powerful. As historian Elizabeth Blackmar states, "Before the Revolution, farmers and planters devised land with the expectation that their heirs would continue to look to agriculture for their livelihood" (96). The colonial era was of course characteristic of English traditions, and this was the period when the F.F.V. came to America. However, throughout the nineteenth century, industrialization made intangible money more important than land, as was evidenced by the changes in the nature of inheritance in America. Blackmar writes that,

> By 1875…the United States had ceased to be a landed society…Many Americans, however, encountered the changing value of land ownership within a volatile industrializing economy most immediately in the changing conditions of its transfer over generations, that is, in the displacement of land as patrimony. (94)

In other words, Americans began to favor the idea of selling off their land for money rather than holding onto it for status. These are the kinds of ideas that Twain's townsfolk refuse to accept. Since land no longer possessed as much power, Americans instead turned to movable forms of property to secure their livelihood. "By the end of the nineteenth century, however much they continued to regard land as a bedrock of security, few American families could expect to devise land as the means of independence to their children or grandchildren" (Blackmar 116). Industrialization and the rise of capitalism shifted the ideals of property in America and altered the way in which Americans devised laws of inheritance. Unlike in England, not land but rather

the financial worth of the land mattered to Americans. This explains the inter-generational conflict in the novel where the judge makes Tom his heir because he is primarily concerned with preserving his bloodline and keeping status in the family, while Tom is interested in the monetary value of his inheritance. While the former displays aristocratic views, the latter defies them.

As Michael Zakim and Gary Kornblith write in their book *Capitalism Takes Command*, "The transfer of wealth [in America] from one generation to another was certainly driven by an ethos of preservation antithetical to the liquidity, risks, and uncertainties of capitalist economy" (8). On the contrary, in England, "Property in land was not merely immovable, and therefore a guarantee that its owner would have an inescapable attachment to the concerns of a particular locality, but it also formed a real, tangible and visible domain, a territory naturally felt to be under the authority of its owner" (Thompson 6). Again, land ownership in England was more about title than wealth, as is the case in Dawson's Landing. Yet more commonly, unlike the English, often land in America would be sold after its owner's death and the money would be dispersed to his heirs. The monetary worth of the land was more a concern than the actual obtainment of American soil, because the obtainment of land was not a rarity in the United States. This idea emerges in the judge's ability to create a new town in the first place. Additionally, the idea that there would be multiple heirs to an estate was a very American concept, as in England the oldest son would inherit everything, just as Tom is set up to do. In America, however, "Northern farmers not only ceased to favor oldest sons but increasingly directed that their land be sold in order to insure that each son and daughter receive an equal share of the family property" (Blackmar 97). The notion of property being divided went against everything English aristocracy stood for, which explains why Wilson's half-a-dog joke horrifies

the community. When land was broken up and dispersed, it lost the power it once possessed. For this reason, the English liked to leave their property to only the eldest son in order to ensure that the family name retained its title, which exactly reflects the judge's intentions.

The introduction of Judge Driscoll's character emphasizes his Virginia ancestry, which ultimately means that his family was among the first that came from Europe to settle the first colony, and shows that he still views himself as deeply rooted in colonial soil and traditions. Twain writes that, "In Missouri a recognized superiority attached to any person who hailed from Old Virginia; and this superiority was exalted to supremacy when a person of such nativity could also prove descent from the First Families of that great commonwealth" (68). As "chief citizen" and "judge of the county court" Twain implies that the judge sets up the laws in town, and that the town will follow his definition of property and his old colonial traditions (2). We learn that, "He was well off and gradually adding to his store," which means he has a bountiful amount of property, in terms of real estate, money, and slaves (3). However, the one thing he cannot seem to "possess" is a child. Not only the judge and his wife, but also his sister, are all infertile. Additionally, Pembroke Howard, another resident of old Virginia ancestry, is a forty-year old bachelor, also without children. Finally, the judge's brother Percy had multiple children that died, and his wife died in her final childbirth to the only offspring that lived, Tom. Soon after, Percy himself died. In this sequence, Twain comments on the aristocracy's inability to carry on their blood line and pass down their inheritance, a comical critique of colonial property ideals. The old Virginia aristocracy has literally become infertile in the new America. Their impotence reflects the end of their cherished bloodline. Their prized tradition of fixed-class structure cannot live on unless they can pass their property down to their offspring, all of which they have failed to produce or keep alive, which represents the dying off of European ideals in America.

Their traditions of property are of course challenged in other ways as well, such as how the judge unknowingly makes a legal slave the heir of his property. In this sense, Twain critiques inheritance by creating a situation that would horrify the aristocracy, but that would not appall someone of a more progressive mindset who believes slaves do deserve to be heirs to their master's fortunes. Post-Civil War this actually became a reality in America when freed slaves stepped forward and tried to inherit their former masters' land. Allison Morantz outlines one such instance in 1871, when a former slave by the name of Lettie Marshall sued her master's estate because she felt she should inherit the land. "After Emancipation, Marshall and her family had become sharecroppers on B.G. Marshall's estate and continued to farm the land until his death" (Morantz 245). This was further complicated by how some American slaves were viewed by some Southerners not only as property but also as family members, which created problems with inheritance laws after abolition. Similarly, Dylan Penningroth states that, "Few U.S. slaves could argue that being one of the master's family gave them rights to his plantation property" (1062). Since Twain wrote *Pudd'nhead Wilson* post-Civil War he was most likely aware of such instances. As Rohman writes, "Because the novel was written in post-Reconstruction America it may also represent the unsavory truth that subjugation by one's skin color continued late into the century and beyond" (244). In retrospect, Twain shames those who claimed slaves as property and critiques title inheritance by toying with the structure of the ideals these concepts depended upon. With such a strong emphasis on blood lines, the deterioration of aristocratic blood, and the misinterpretation of identity the European ideals of inheritance in Dawson's Landing start to fall apart. Problems with inheritance abound in the novel as the characters' relations to property are constantly altered, especially in the form of Tom's continual belief that he has been disinherited, or, in other words, that his connection to property has been diminished.

In Dawson's Landing one's relationship to property depends on their ancestors, a European aristocratic concept. Tom inherits the judge's fortune solely because they share the same blood (or so he thinks), as the judge says, "He is of the best blood of the Old Dominion" (Twain 70). The judge even begins to question his own aristocratic beliefs when Tom's behavior becomes so bad, as he continuously threatens to disinherit Tom, though he never actually does. Tom does not exhibit the sense of nobility that one from the "finest bloodline of the Old Dominion" should. As historian F.M.L Thompson writes in *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, "Only rarely does an aristocrat appear who was indifferent to the claims of loyalty to the family, its fair name, its traditions and its future, and was prepared to sacrifice these to present indulgence" (17). Tom, however, represents just this kind of rebel, as he continuously finds himself in debt throughout the novel due to his gambling addiction. The story's plot is driven by this familial conflict over property. The judge constantly has anxieties about leaving his fortune to his irresponsible nephew and Tom regularly schemes ways to remain the heir in the midst of his gambling debts, which shows his inability to handle and hold onto property and his incompetence in keeping the aristocratic code alive through the constant obtainment of large amounts of property. Twain writes, "The F.F.V. was born a gentleman; his highest duty in life was to watch over that great inheritance and keep it unsmirched" (69). Tom threatens this concept and thus fixed-class structure, which terrifies the judge; however, he must keep Tom as his heir since they come from the same bloodline. In the mind of the F.F.V., blood and property cannot be separated.

This concept also applies to slavery in the novel, which especially criticizes the "one-drop rule." As we learn, "To all intents and purposes Roxy was as white as anybody, but the one-sixteenth of her which was black out-voted the other fifteen parts and made her a negro. She was

a slave, and *salable* as such" (emphasis added, 8). Though Roxy appears white, the one-drop of black blood in her body automatically makes her property and as such she serves as a marketable commodity rather than a human being capable of owning her own property, which threatens the American concept of liberty. Additionally, "Her child was thirty-one parts white, and he, too, was a slave, and by a fiction of law and custom a negro" (8). Still, the child looks so white that the judge can only tell the boys apart as babies by their clothing, which again shows how property is used in their world to display class, and ultimately the nobility or lack thereof of one's bloodline. As Michael L. Ross writes, "The central target of Twain's satire in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is the inescapable propensity of any society—even of one that claims officially to be classless—to accept and abide by a rigidly hierarchical caste system" (246). In *Pudd'nhead Wilson,* blood determines whether one is a property owner or whether one is property. This importance placed on bloodlines reflects European ideals and points out the problems present in America, a concept Twain draws attention to through Wilson's calendar. The July 4 entry reads "Statistics show that we lose more fools on this day than in all the other days of the year put together. This proves, by the number left in stock, that one Fourth of July per year is now inadequate, the country has grown so" (Twain 100). This entry pokes fun at the birth of the nation and points out the presence of problems in nineteenth-century America. Derek Parker Royal argues that, "His ironic calendar…is filled with stinging commentary and downright condemnation of a nation trapped within the contradictions of its selective freedom" (424). Twain uses Wilson's position as an outsider in the community as a basis by which to contrast these issues of "selective freedom" in Dawson's Landing.

David Wilson becomes instantly ostracized from the community when he makes his half-a-dog joke, which puzzles the citizens of Dawson's Landing. As one witness ponders, "if you kill

one half of a general dog, there ain't any man that can tell whose half it was" (Twain 5). Wilson's joke disrupts the idea of clearly defined ownership, which challenges the community's beliefs of property. As Spangler writes, "Wilson's little joke is of the very sort the town loafers could understand—but in this parable about property it is clear enough: Wilson's low status is the result of his apparent failure to respect and understand the laws of property" (32). The idea of joint ownership was a progressive American ideal because it split up power. Again, in England families would leave their estates to the eldest son in order to carry on title; however, in America, families often preferred to divide up their property amongst multiple heirs, which broke down a power structure. Wilson, who comes to Dawson's Landing from New York to make his fortune, is of a more progressive belief system, especially in the pre-Civil War era of the novel. Unlike the Virginia aristocracy in town, Wilson does not obsess over wealth. Though Wilson originally arrived with "a trifle of money," he chooses to stay in town even after he becomes labeled as a "pudd'nhead" and his business fails (Twain 6). He eventually moves his failing business to his house, which we assume is a result of not being able to afford the Main Street office any longer with his lack of work.

We slowly see Wilson's property deteriorate, and yet he chooses to remain in the town. He eventually takes up work as a land surveyor and accountant; ultimately he measures property and manages property. Just as money is not of concern to him, neither is class or status. Again, he chooses to remain in a community that labels him a "pudd'nhead" and does not seem eager about correcting this perception. For example, when Tom asks Wilson to defend him in court, Wilson says that Tom should have fought a duel to settle the dispute with the twins. This baffles Tom who does not understand why Wilson would not jump at the chance to finally establish his status in town. "And you'd have finished your days a pauper nobody, instead of being an actually

launched and recognized lawyer to-day…I believe you—upon my word I do…I think you're the biggest fool I ever saw" (75). Tom cannot comprehend a more progressive approach to American life separate from the concept of furthering one's title or reputation. Wilson's favor of kindness and morals over status and money shows an American approach; however, the reason he is willing to give up his chance for status and money is to give the judge a "gentleman's chance," which then leads one to believe that preserving aristocratic traditions is actually important to Wilson (75). However, we cannot know if his sacrifice is grounded in morals or in preservation of the judge's ideals. What we do know is that for Wilson property is not the driving force in life, as it is for Tom. While Tom wants to take the twins to court, the rest of the town wants Tom to duel with the twins, an old European way of settling feuds. In this rallying of the community, Twain shows that the entire town operates on old ideals and that they do not favor the American concept of common law. It is already evident that common law is corrupt in Dawson's Landing since the only judge in town believes in old aristocratic modes, and Tom's desire to take the twins to court represents a very American approach of common law that he gets scolded for. Even Wilson calls him a "degenerate remnant of an honorable line!" (75). By this point, Wilson starts to adopt the community's aristocratic beliefs, or at least satirically pretends to believe in them. His disinterest in advancing his property and status, however, points to the latter sentiment. In this moment, Twain plays up Wilson's irony, as he constantly lives by the town's old standards while always maintaining a progressive voice of reason.

Like Wilson, Roxy also agrees that Tom should duel and she adopts the aristocracy's notions of property, even to the point of accepting herself as a commodity. George E. Toles writes, "In the black society of Dawson's Landing, all ethical standards are formed in imitation of white models…It is in the shadows left by the sins of the community fathers that the slaves

strive to define themselves" (69). Like the F.F.V. Roxy believes in the strength of bloodlines and thinks that one's identity derives from them. As she says,

> My great-great-great-gran'father en yo' great-great-great-great gran'father was Ole Cap'n John Smith, de highest blood dat Ole Virginny ever turned out, en *his* great-great-gran'mother or somers along back dah, was Pocahontas de Injun queen, en her husbun' was a nigger king outen Africa—en yit here you is, a-slinkin' outen a duel en disgracin' our whole line like a ornery low-down hound! Yes, it's de nigger in you! (84)

Like the judge, Roxy attributes importance to bloodlines and even to Old Virginia and the old ideals of the colonies, an ironic viewpoint since this is the exact place American slavery was born. Additionally, Roxy gives Chambers his name because she thinks it sounds aristocratic. As Toles argues, "The name she decides to give him, Valet de Chambre, which she mistakenly assumes has some connection with aristocracy, is merely her first attempt to reduce the dissatisfactions, the feeling of rivalry, the guilty longing to conceal the stain of race from the eyes of society that her mind restlessly provokes" (71). Roxy yearns to be a part of their world, a world that enslaves her, rather than yearning to break away from these corrupted views. Her idea of property is warped because she sees herself in the same way the "aristocracy" does, as property. She even comes back to the slaveholding south after being free in the north for years. She lost all of the money she had saved working on a steamboat because "the bank had gone to smash and carried her four hundred dollars with it," which represents another problem with property in early nineteenth-century America: the inability to trust anyone with it, even banks (Twain 38). This goes back to why the community is so appalled by Wilson's concept of owning half of a dog; because no one could trust their property in the hands of someone else. However,

even more so, the community operates on greed and capitalism. Again, the English preferred to leave a large sum of property to one person rather than dispersing wealth to multiple heirs. This system creates a small amount of wealthy people within a society and a large amount of poor citizens, like Roxy, who returns to Missouri when she finds herself completely broke. Even in the free north she finds herself worthless; however in the south she can use her body as commodity. While she originally intends to return to Dawson's Landing in order to be taken care of by her old friends, she quickly finds scheming ways to survive that include selling her knowledge and her body.

Still, Roxy displays an eerily happy spirit as she enters the slaveholding south again. "By the time she reached Dawson's Landing she was her old self again; her blues were gone, she was in high feather" (Twain 38). Again, Twain displays a creepily picturesque image of a town that is loaded with greed and corruption. Shortly after her return to town, she tells Tom the truth about his heritage and bribes him into giving her half of his monthly allowance from then on, in exchange for her keeping the secret. In other words, she asks him to divide up his wealth, an American concept. She uses the power of her secret as property and makes Tom buy her silence. However, Tom's debts prevent him from giving her the amount she requests, so she instead agrees to help him steal. Together they become thieves. Mary Esteve argues that, "Twain implies that the slave's exclusion from the liberal institution of property contributes to his or her diminished compunction regarding other people's things" (375). In this sense, slaves steal because they are unable to own their own property. In other words, they steal out of desperation. As the narrator relates, "They had an unfair show in the battle of life, and they held it no sin to take military advantage of the enemy—in a small way; in a small way, but not in a large one" (Twain 10). Similarly, Roxy defies the property laws of Dawson's Landing when she switches

Tom and Chambers out of fear that her son will be sold down the river, a fear that arises when her master accuses her of stealing and threatens to sell her down the Mississippi. However, at the beginning of the novel she has sworn off thieving after a church revival, and thus is the only one of Mr. Driscoll's slaves that is not guilty. The fact that Roxy goes through a period when she does not steal because she was told to do so at church represents another aspect of the corrupt machinery of this society. Roxy goes to church because she tries to be like the white people in town, but she has to go to a "black church", at which she is told by a white man not to steal. If that isn't a corrupt enough vision of religion, the narrator even tells us that, "to be a gentleman—a gentleman without stain or blemish—was his [Judge Driscoll's] only religion" (2). The townsfolk use religion as a medium through which to justify their own ideas of property, much in the same way the first English colonists justified the theft of Native American land and lives with the concept of "providence." Still, her master's threat at the beginning of the novel serves as a pivotal moment where Roxy realizes herself as a piece of property.

Later, Roxy offers up her body for Tom to sell in order to pay down his gambling debts. "I's gwyne to be sole into slavery, en in a year you's gwyne to buy yo' ole mammy free ag'in" (Twain 97). Roxy returns to town to weasel her way with property by the codes of the south, even willing to once again turn herself into property. She uses the town's ideals to the utmost of her power. As Rohman writes, "Roxy's value exists solely in her skin color because being 'black' means that she is a valuable piece of property, chattel, an awful truth Roxy speaks herself [when she tells Tom to sell her]" (245). Still, even though she "went away broken heart," she was still "proud of what she was doing, and glad that it was in her power to do it" (Twain 99). In a bizarre and Gothic fashion, Roxy uses her blackness and her label as property to her advantage (or at least to Tom's) and takes pride in having the ability to become property. Esteve writes,

"Roxy goes from being worth nothing as a free person to being worth six hundred dollars once Tom forges a bill sale" (359). In the North she is worth nothing and goes broke, but in the South she can become money and use her body as commodity. However, she does so with the intention that it would be temporary, but when Tom sells her *down* the river she becomes property forever. In this sequence Roxy plays by the aristocratic rules of the town, toying with the idea of buying and selling property, which in this case is herself, and it backfired on her. As Joseph B. McCullough writes, "She has not escaped the training of the community of Dawson's Landing, but has adopted its set of morals" (3). She accepts their European ideals as reality, even after working in the free north more characteristic of American freedom, but her new relationship with property contrasts from her fear of it at the beginning of the novel. She learns how their aristocratic system works and she uses that knowledge to the utmost of her advantage. Though she gives up robbery at the beginning of the novel, when she returns to Dawson's Landing she helps Tom scheme his thievery antics.

Tom's biggest burglary occurs when he robs Judge Driscoll of his life in an attempt to rob him of his money. Twain rots the judge's death with financial imagery that ultimately represents the death of what could be termed the "American aristocracy." As Tom enters the room where his uncle sleeps, he sees that he lays next to his cash box and "near the box was a pile of bank-notes and a piece of paper covered with figures in pencil" (Twain 115). Twain provides an image of the judge smugly sleeping in his heap of wealth. Spangler also recognizes the significance of this scene; he writes, "He is dozing over his cash and accounts when Tom comes to rob him, a scene which suggests the economic base of his status, one perhaps similar to that of his brother and Tom's presumed father who died a bankrupt because of his speculations in land" (35). Tom intends to steal the key to his safe and rob its contents; however, when the judge

wakes up during this attempt Tom stabs and kills him out of panic. "Without hesitation he drove the knife home—and was free! Some of the notes escaped from his left hand and fell in the blood on the floor" (Twain 115). The judge's blood pouring over his bank statements represents the end of his bloodline, his title, and his fortune, especially in conjuncture with the fact that his heir is not even related to him. Ultimately, his death represents the end of his aristocratic line and the deterioration of European ideals in America. Still, the grand finale of property disputes in the novel comes with the fulfillment of Roxy's worst nightmare when both her and her son are sold "down the river." Wilson unveils Roxy's secret, Judge Driscoll's creditors sell Tom down the river, and Chambers becomes the rightful heir to the Driscoll fortune. While the property becomes restored to the proper bloodline, the problem that Twain leaves the reader to contemplate is the fact that Chambers has absolutely no sense of how to be part of an "aristocratic" family. He spent his whole life as property and suddenly finds himself the heir to a F.F.V. fortune. While it may seem that all is resolved on the surface, the ending masks a plethora of other problems.

Critics find the ending extremely problematic because it concludes with all people back in their proper places based on old pre-Civil War ideals. The African-Americans are sold as property down the river and the white heir of Old Dominion blood receives his fortune. Toles argues that,

> Twain cannot, and perhaps does not wish to dispel the suggestion that the secret sins and defilements that spread like vinelike tangles over the community's past form the substance of its traditions and the soul of its honor. *Pudd'nhead Wilson* ends with the calmly reportorial announcement that "the creditors sold him (Tom) down the river" (64)

Still, the social repercussions of Tom and Chambers' upbringings do not make this sequence so clear-cut. While property is restored to its European ideals of inheritance and slavery by the novel's end, these characters have experienced what it means to live on the other side. Here, Twain enforces the fact that bloodlines and property should *not* determine ones identity, unlike the English belief that it should. Royal asserts that, "What seems to disturb readers the most about David Wilson is that, however indirectly, he uses this critical authority to reestablish the assumptions of racial inequality—thereby reinforcing the structures of slavery—and does so by using rational tools of identification" (424) which discourages so many scholars. Another example of this upset comes from Toles who writes that, "Wilson's fingerprints of Tom [are] the ineradicable sign of his blackness and guilt" (73). However, it must be remembered that Tom *is* guilty whether he is white or black. If we identify these characters by their upbringing rather than by their blood, then the spoiled white upper-class boy is sold into slavery at the end and the poor slave boy finds himself in possession of property. Twain challenges us to not define Tom and Chambers by their ancestry the way that Dawson's Landing does. Instead, he asserts the concept that a person's character, rather than skin color, should define their station in life.

The images of money and property in Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* represent America's struggle to separate itself from European property ideals of the colonial era. Twain critique's the United States' nineteenth-century corruption through the creation of an isolated aristocratic town on American soil. Spangler agrees that "It is a book pervaded from start to finish with the very obsession with property which is its theme" (29); and, as Royal writes, "Twain was painfully aware of the changes under way in late-nineteenth-century America. The decades following the Civil War paved the way for vast industrialization, unbridled wealth, and dreams of a social utopia… the miasmic combination that Twain aptly terms 'the Gilded Age.'" (428). Through a

retrospective lens Twain was able to display property problems that were still present in his day in a gilded town of his own creation. He uses Dawson's Landing as a metaphor for all of America, which is itself an isolated country. Ross says that, "What the whole narrative strongly suggests is that this mechanical enforcement of arbitrary class distinctions is not merely a local peculiarity but an inescapable, crippling tendency of the human spirit" (246). Twain uses his picturesque fictional Missouri town in order to unveil the corrupt nature of American society under its pleasant façade. He displays the ways in which the Antebellum South enforced old ideals and resisted new American models, which ultimately corrupted the "liberty" and "freedom" that the country was founded upon. For this reason, Twain's sentiments are summed up perfectly in Wilson's final calendar entry, "It was wonderful to find America, but it would have been more wonderful to miss it" (Twain 138).

CONCLUSION

All three of these texts address different aspects of ownership conflicts that reveal the multitude of ways in which property was corrupt in the nineteenth century. Sedgwick's retrospective look into the seventeenth century actually mirrors much of what was going on with Indian relations at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as Andrew Jackson pushed for Indian removal in the American west. The colonists' greed for land led to the confiscation of soil, cultures, and people, but the same problem manifested in Sedgwick's time. By displaying what was wrong with the Indian wars in the seventeenth century she reveals what was still wrong with them in her present day. In this sense, it becomes evident that even post-revolution Americans still exercised unjust practices from the colonial era. Hawthorne also comments on this concept in *his* retrospective look into the seventeenth century. The unjust death sentence of Matthew Maule and the inheritance of the Pyncheon House show how the colonial era still haunted the nineteenth century. The fact that his death was due to a property dispute shows how corrupt the founding of the nation was in the first place. Not only did pilgrims kill *Indians* to obtain land, but they also killed *each other*. Both Sedgwick and Hawthorne trace America's property problems back to the seventeenth century and reveal how the value of property often trumped the value of life.

Twain, writing later in the nineteenth century, takes a retrospective look into the pre-Civil War era to comment on the problems associated with slavery. In so doing, he also brings to light the problems that manifested for African Americans even after they were "freed," many of which arose out of their inability to purchase their own land. He drives the plot of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* with inheritance laws and misconceptions about who is and who is not "black." In this sense, he

comments on how land ownership should not be exclusively reserved for white males, and shows how skin color and familial line should not affect property ownership. Like Hawthorne, he grounds his plot in inheritance laws and places a judge at the top of the totem pole. Both Judge Driscoll and Judge Pyncheon represent old European aristocratic ideals and are English colonial figures that infest the new America.

All of these authors comment not only on how property laws were corrupt in the past but also in their present day. They show how America is a nation founded on English hegemony and grounded in stolen land. These texts show how property ideals were the reigning force in America's construction and how, in many cases, marginalized races would have rather died than become property themselves. Sedgwick makes this evident in Magawisca's "give me liberty!" demand at her court trial, and even Tom's transformation into property at the end of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* suggests that death would have been better. Instances of captivity, though, often result in cross-cultural tolerance. It manifests Magawisca's friendships with Hope and Everell and it unites Faith and Oneco. In *Pudd'nhead Wilson* Roxy's switch allows an African American boy to experience white culture and vice versa. These instances where people become property often display the opposite of their captures' intended purpose. Sedgwick and Twain use these types of storylines to unmask the corruption of such practices and poke fun at those who so vehemently believed in these unjust concepts. Ultimately, by displaying the problems that arise when people are taken captive, they make clear that people should not be turned into property.

Furthermore, all three of these novels use allegedly resolved endings to hide a darker truth that would have been too controversial if directly spoken to in the nineteenth century. Sedgwick, Hawthorne, and Twain adopt Shakespearean comedy closures to create "happy" endings. *Hope Leslie* closes with the marriage of Hope and Everell, and *The House of the Seven*

Gables ends, too, with a marriage and also with a pastoral escape into the country. Lastly, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* ends with the "happy" triumph of Tom's ancestry being revealed, and with a restoration of all characters back to their "proper" places. However, these "happy endings" are just thin layers on top of deep corruptions of property and hegemony. By the close of *Hope Leslie* the Pequods have been run off of their own land. By the end of *The House of the Seven Gables* inheritance keeps the ancestral curse alive. Finally, at the close of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, two African Americans are sold down the Mississippi River. Therefore, these endings are only happy on the surface, and actually hide a plethora of problems that manifested in the nineteenth century.

Through these three different texts, written at three different points in the nineteenth century, it becomes evident that the foundation of the nation was built on property corruption. The colonies were settled through English hegemony via the massacres of Native Americans and the confiscation of land. Additionally, class mobility was restricted since inheritance kept ownership and thus power in the hands of a select few. All of these ideas carried into the American nation post-revolution. In the nineteenth century Native Americans were again killed and driven off of their land and inheritance continued to restrict ownership. Additionally, the inability of African Americans to own property post-Civil War kept them in the lower class and often drove them back into the power of their previous owners. By the nineteenth century America had not come very far as an independent nation, as it continued to practice dated property ideals. Through these novels these authors aimed to reveal this notion to their nineteenth-century contemporaries. Property practices from the seventeenth century carried well into the nineteenth century in a multitude of ways, and Sedgwick, Hawthorne, and Twain unmask the fact that the nation's founding was grounded in corrupt property ideals.

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