

The Uses and Abuses of Mentally Ill Women in Modern US and European Literature

by

Emily Lottermann

Submitted to the Department of Humanities
School of Literature
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College
State University of New York

May 2021

Elise Lemire, Sponsor

Gaura Narayan, Second Reader

Introduction	2
Early Psychology in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century	3
Mid-Twentieth Century, American Asylums, and The Gender Bias	15
Contemporary Versions of Mentally Ill Women in Literature	20
Conclusion	37

Introduction

The understanding of mental illness throughout the centuries in the West has improved, spanning from a time when those deemed unstable for society were locked in cages away from public view to the more modern, ethical approach of understanding mental health and the scientific advancements in understanding brain chemistry. Similarly, the understanding of women throughout the centuries in the West has improved, leaving a time when women were seen primarily as domestic property for men behind as we brave the current fourth-wave of feminism. Despite this, when these two topics intersect and society is met with a “mentally ill woman,” all progress reverts. Between the late nineteenth century to the present day, mentally ill women are objectified, subject to patriarchal control as they are shoved into boxes of diagnostic criteria seemingly specific to their gender. To examine the timeline of this, it is important to look at prevalent works spanning the three centuries, starting with early psychiatric care (the “rest cure”), through to psychoanalysis, to asylums and more modern aspects of mental health care. In order to do this, I examine Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Sigmund Freud’s *Dora*, Susanna Kaysen’s *Girl, Interrupted*, John Green’s *Looking for Alaska*, and Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Growing up as a young woman afflicted by mental illness, being exposed to these novels -- particularly John Green’s entire collection -- led me to inherently romanticize and fantasize about a man “saving me” from my self-inflicted wounds by loving me enough. It had made me consider conceptually how mentally ill women were treated differently from the “normal” woman and why. Two of the novels read, *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *Girl, Interrupted*, are written from the female perspective, while the other three, *Dora*, *Looking for Alaska*, and *The Reluctant*

Fundamentalist, are written from the male perspective, thus casting a different light on the topic at hand. Additionally, both female-written pieces are autobiographical or semi-autobiographical, allowing for a firsthand account of their diagnosis and the conceptualization of their “craziness.” In doing so, both female authors come to the conclusion that the patriarchal society is the ultimate cause of their suffering. All three male-written pieces demonstrate the objectification of the mentally ill woman, showcasing the lack of agency mentally ill women are subjected to under the patriarchy.

Early Psychology in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century

In 1884, author Charlotte Perkins Gilman suffered a serious episode of what would now be diagnosed as postpartum depression. In order to cure this, she sought treatment with Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell in Philadelphia and was confined to an asylum bed under the “Rest Cure” (Connecticut History). She returned home after a month; however, her depression remained and she felt the only option was to separate from her husband, later recalling, “It was not a choice between going and staying, but between going, sane, and staying, insane” (Connecticut History). In Perkins Gilman’s 1892 short story, “The Yellow Wallpaper,” the female protagonist suffers postpartum depression and is put under the rest cure just as the author herself was eight years earlier. Perkins Gilman uses the story to bring to light the unfair treatment mentally ill women in the 18th century faced by an overwhelmingly male led field.

Perkins Gilman sets up the narrator as already seemingly mentally unstable and under the control of her husband’s patriarchal grasp. The narrator recalls the home as being “a colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity -- but that would be asking too much of fate! Still I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it” (647 Gilman). Her notation that the home feels remnant of a haunted house alludes to the mental illness she is suffering, as her body is the home to the hauntedness she feels within her. She claims it being a haunted house would be the “height of romantic felicity” indicating that she desires the unnatural, only to follow it up by saying “that would be asking too much of fate!” Her wish for the home to be haunted alludes to the narrator’s later breakdown in which she begins to believe it truly *is* a haunted house due to the images of women she sees in the walls. Despite her thoughts on the home, she does not tell her husband, John,

noting that he does not believe in “faith” or “superstition” and “[scoffs] openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures” (647 Gilman). While this demonstrates the contrast between John’s rational and practical manner and the narrator’s imaginative and sensitive demeanor, it also establishes the hierarchy within the household. The narrator’s distrust in her husband believing -- or even humoring -- her claims demonstrates the patriarchal structure within their house. Anything she says that he merely disagrees with can be used against her, especially considering her husband is also her physician, the one who has decided it is in her best interest to be physically restrained:

John is a physician, and *perhaps*--(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)--*perhaps* that is one reason I do not get well faster. You see he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do? If a physician of high standing, and one’s own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression -- a slight hysterical tendency -- what is one to do? My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing. (647-48 Gilman)

The narrator has her feelings and interpretations belittled by both her husband and her brother: an evident symbol for the patriarchy that dictated the medical world in the 19th century, evidenced by the 25 total female doctors in England and Wales in 1881 (Jefferson). Here, Perkins Gilman exemplifies the neglect faced by women in the world of scientific medicine, a problem modern day feminists still attempt to combat. This is based on the idea that women are perceived as “reproductive beings,” which leads them to be under-researched and under-diagnosed (Shahvisi). Because of this, doctors began investigating “nervous depression” in the late 1800s -- a disease

that most frequently appeared in educated, middle-class women deemed to have “weak” nervous systems. Historian Cassie Nesper notes that doctors believed “stress, over-education, or lack of exercise during [a woman’s] formative period could permanently damage the nervous system.” Her husband’s misunderstanding of her affliction only worsens it, causing the narrator to hover in a rift separating the world in which she knows she is mentally ill and the world in which her husband and brother have denied it so vehemently that she is no longer sure.

Perpetually dismissed by the patriarchal figures in her life, Gilman has the narrator fall into the confines of her diary which acts as a physical recollection of her mind. Although her rest cure prohibits her from working, especially from writing, the narrator believes that the activity and freedom that comes with it will allow her to “relieve her mind” (648 Gilman). The act of writing in her journal, though she notes it as exhausting, proves rewarding when she begins to write about the house in excess detail. She writes:

there is something strange about the house -- I can feel it. I even said so to John one moonlight evening, but he said what I felt was a *draught*, and shut the window. ... I don’t like our room a bit ... The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others. No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long. (648-49 Gilman)

The narrator once again mentions the “strangeness” of the house, indicating she is aware of something her husband is not. John continues to find excuses for the strange phenomenon -- symptoms of the narrator’s growing mental illness -- instead of discussing it with her, demonstrating once again his dominance over the situation the narrator finds herself in. Feminist

critic Susan Lanser says, “the phrase ‘John says’ heads a litany of ‘benevolent’ prescriptions that keep the narrator infantilized, immobilized, and bored literally out of her mind” (418 Lanser). John’s influence is seen down to the room they sleep in, as he had chosen it, and the narrator’s immediate disgust with it. He ensures through her medical treatment that the narrator cannot make executive decisions for herself, forcing her to rely on him for everything. Lanser continues her commentary on John as the oppressor:

Reading or writing her self upon the wall allows the narrator, as Paula Treichler puts it, to “escape” her husband’s “sentence” and achieve the limited freedom of madness which, virtually all these critics have agreed, constitutes a kind of sanity in the face of insanity of male dominance. (418 Lanser)

This demonstrates how, for Gilman, female mental illness is attributed to the restraint women feel placed on them by the patriarchy as the narrator can only find a sense of sanity when her husband is not around, and she can only find freedom in her madness.

Despite Gilman’s narrator’s initial hatred for the yellow wallpaper, Gilman has her narrator grow accustomed to it in order to demonstrate the only freedom such a woman can find in a patriarchal world. She writes in her diary:

I’m getting really fond of the room in spite of the wallpaper. Perhaps *because* of the wallpaper. ... I lie here on this great immovable bed -- it is nailed down, I believe -- and follow that pattern about by the hour. I start, we’ll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I will determine for the thousandth time that I *will* follow that pointless pattern to some sort of conclusion. (650 Gilman)

In a stark difference from before, the narrator notes that she is near physically restrained to the room as the bed is nailed to the floor, rather than the rest she alluded to prior when she was still able to roam the house in small increments when they arrived. It is akin to her being locked up in a padded room, hence her becoming more interested in the walls she despised before. In the walls she makes out the profiles of people, but most jarring of all is the woman who creeps: “And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don’t like it a bit. . . . The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out” (652 Gilman). Although terrified, the narrator discovers the woman in the wallpaper is just as trapped as she is and instead of fearing her, decides to help her escape. In doing so, the narrator effectively begins escaping her husband’s dictatorship as she is finally doing something on her own command under her own agency.

As Gilman’s narrator’s mental health worsens, she views the emergence of the woman in the wallpaper as a positive because she can abide by her husband’s wishes to remain in bedrest while also gaining the agency to do something of her own accord. Gilman’s narrator’s ability to glide between reality and unreality as she glides between a world in which she follows social boundaries to please her husband and allow him to think he is profound in his medical knowledge, and a world in which she is devoted to the wallpaper and refuses to discuss it in fear of it revealing her psychosis, demonstrates to the readers that the narrator, a depressed woman, is significantly more intelligent than the people around her -- namely the men in her life -- believe her to be. She writes, “I didn’t realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-pattern, but now I am quite sure it is a woman . . . It keeps me quiet by the hour. I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can” (653 Gilman). The narrator now lives a double life, pretending to abide by John’s wishes and staying in bed all day

so she may free the woman in the walls at night. Through this, the woman becomes the only person to accompany the narrator through this time of depression when what she needs most is someone to be by her side. John is fooled and believes the rest cure has proven itself to be an effective treatment because his wife now lives under the guise of appearing “mentally stable.” The narrator is self-aware for the first time at this point in the story: “John is so pleased to see me improve! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to be flourishing in spite of my wall-paper. I turned it off with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was *because* of the wall-paper -- he would make fun of me. He might even want to take me away” (653 Gilman). John’s initial idea that the wallpaper would hinder his wife’s improvements demonstrates his disconnect with her. He appears to make his own assumptions about how his wife feels and interprets the world around her rather than talking to her, thus objectifying her and removing her agency, and when she does talk, he has the automatic tendency to shut her down. Through this, Gilman’s narrator is able to discover that the only way she will ever have agency over herself is by remaining secretly insane.

In the conclusion of the story, Gilman has her narrator enter full blown psychosis, shedding herself of the patriarchy and gaining complete agency over herself. No longer are there other women in the walls. Instead, Gilman’s narrator finds herself stuck within the walls as she is finally able to see the restraint the patriarchy has kept on her, and she attempts to save herself. Gilman’s narrator and the woman in the wall have become one, dancing in tandem as they attempt to escape: “As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her. I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper” (655 Gilman). The mimicry in the movement between the narrator and the woman forces the reader to see them as a combined unit. The

interconnectivity of the narrator and the woman is confirmed at the end of the story when John enters the room and she says, “I’ve got out at last . . . in spite of you and Jane? And I’ve pulled off most of the paper, so you can’t put me back” (656 Gilman). Lanser refers to this as a “triumphant conclusion despite the narrator’s own unhappy fate” (419 Lanser). The narrator, although having reached the brink of psychosis, has freed herself from the confines of the patriarchal system that had imprisoned her from acting on her feelings. Her outburst onto John has forced him to finally listen to her as she crawls over his unconscious body, denouncing his mistreatment of her.

While the contemporary studies push for a political view, turn-of-the-century readers ignored that in favor of a primarily “case-study”-esque analysis, “praising [the story] for its keenly accurate ‘case study’ of a presumably inherited insanity” (418 Lanser). Acknowledging both of these readings is integral to understanding the history of mental illness throughout literary history and how Gilman’s work, in a way, revolutionizes the concept by demonstrating the mentally ill woman’s struggle firsthand. Many analyses of the text “end by distinguishing the doomed and ‘mad’ narrator, who could not write her way out of the patriarchal prison-house, from the sane survivor Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who could” (419 Lanser). Despite this, it is important to acknowledge both Gilman’s personal story as well as her narrator’s story as they are both possible outcomes for the mentally ill woman not only in 1890, but today.

In Elaine Showalter’s essay, “On Hysterical Narrative,” she discusses the genre of Hysterical Narrative as the bridge connecting 1890s feminist works such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s short story, “The Yellow Wallpaper” to early 20th century texts like Sigmund Freud’s *Dora*. While the genre typically had to do with sharing the story of a “hysterical” young woman, it has now become synonymous for women’s writing and the women’s novel as “hysteria” is

exclusive to women. Showalter describes this genre as a way to detract from the doctors' stories that dominated medical discourse and shine light onto the patients' stories that were typically modified for general viewing (24 Showalter). Showalter mentions feminist critics Julia Kristeva and Juliet Mirchell as women who defend the literary tradition of women's literature being the "discourse of the hysteric" as they believe all women novelists "must be [a] hysteric ... someone who simultaneously accepts and refuses the organization of sexuality under patriarchal capitalism" (25 Showalter). In Sigmund Freud's case study, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, he attempts to psychoanalyze the 18-year-old "Dora" -- a pseudonym given to protect the identity of his real patient, Ida Bauer. In his case study, he prescribes Dora the diagnosis of hysteria due to her inability to be a proper female in a male-dominated world, similar to Gilman's narrator.

Freud's practices were in early psychoanalysis, a form of therapy in which it is believed that personal experience, childhood traumas, and dreams impact a person's mental and physical wellbeing. When Dora is brought to Freud, she is exhibiting psychosomatic symptoms, such as asthma attacks and fainting spells despite having no pre-existing conditions, thus leading him to believe her physical symptoms are the result of previous trauma. In her 14th year of life, Dora had a nonconsensual sexual encounter with her father's best friend, Herr K., husband of Frau K.:

[Herr K.] persuaded [Frau K.], however, to stay at home, and sent away his clerk so that he was alone when [Dora] arrived. When the time for the procession approached, he asked the girl to wait for him at the door which opened upon the staircase leading to the upper story, while he pulled down the outside shutters. He then came back, and, instead of going out the open door, suddenly clasped the girl to him and pressed a kiss upon her lips. This was surely just the situation to call

up a distinct feeling of sexual excitement in a girl of fourteen who had never before been approached. But Dora had at that moment a violent feeling of disgust, tore herself free from the man, and hurried past him to the staircase and from there to the street door. Neither of them ever mentioned the little scene, (21 Freud)

The language Freud uses to describe the scene between Herr K. and Dora is perversely romantic, indicating that he believes Dora should have appreciated all the effort Herr K. had put into seeing her for a moment alone. If this situation were to be between two consenting adults, it would be a secret romance akin to that of a fairy tale, as seen by Freud claiming this situation to be one that would “call up a distinct feeling of sexual excitement in a girl of fourteen who had never been approached.” Freud, evidently, is not a fourteen year old girl and thus cannot claim to know what a teenage girl would appreciate from a man; however, he takes the opportunity to claim to know Dora better than she knows herself. This is once again seen in how he describes the kiss between Herr K. and Dora with words such as “clasped” and “pressed.” These words echo a scene in a romance novel as they are gentle and romantic, and that accurately portrays how Freud analyzes the situation; however, from Dora’s point of reference it is nauseating, as evident through her “violent feeling of disgust.”

As Freud was the only person Dora had ever admitted this occurrence to, his bias controls Dora’s narrative as an abused woman. Dora’s supposed falsified and imagined interactions with Herr K. that make up her first -- and seemingly only -- sexual encounter with a man were assumed to be the primary cause of her psychosomatic asthma attacks and fainting spells. Freud evaluates the situation through his own perception:

In this scene -- second in order of mention, but first in order of time -- the behavior of this child of fourteen was already entirely and completely hysterical. I

should without question consider a person hysterical in whom an occasion for sexual excitement elicited feelings that were preponderantly or exclusively unpleasurable; and I should do so whether or not the person was capable of producing somatic symptoms. (22 Freud)

Despite noting her age in the earlier passage, Freud finally refers to her as a “child,” thus indicating that he is aware of her age throughout all of this. He claims a person who cannot exhibit pleasurable feelings when propositioned with sexual interaction should be deemed “hysterical” -- a medical phenomenon that was previously used as an umbrella term for women who did not act the way men anticipated them to. In Maria Ramas’s article, “Freud’s Dora, Dora’s Hysteria: The Negotiation of a Woman’s Rebellion,” she quotes fellow essayist Steven Marcus:

If we try to put ourselves in the place of this girl between her sixteenth and eighteenth years, we can at once recognize that her situation was a desperate one. The three adults to whom she was closest, whom she loved most in the world, were apparently conspiring separately, in tandem, or in concert -- to deny her the reality of her experience. They were conspiring upon matters that might easily unhinge the mind of a young person; for the three adults were not betraying Dora’s love and trust alone, they were betraying the structure of the world. (476 Ramas).

Because Freud, and the other adults in Dora’s life, have taken complete control over her narrative, the reader never truly receives Dora’s account and is unable to fully understand the situation from her perspective. It is incredibly important that one recognize the difference in Freud’s interpretation of events and Dora’s interpretation of events while analyzing the text. To

Freud, and the other adults in her life, Dora's physical symptoms are a result of her repressed sexuality, leading him to believe only two scenarios: the first being that Dora is lying about the entirety of the encounter with Herr K. and is using it to harbor attention; the second being that Dora is telling the truth about her encounter with Herr K. and reacted "hysterically" due to her repression of sexuality.

While Freud takes over Dora's narrative and leaves only two possible scenarios, he effectively becomes yet another adult tacking onto the abuse she has faced. Feminist critic Elaine Showalter believed that throughout Freud's months of treating Dora, Freud had become addicted to the power he held over his patient and he had become the unreliable narrator in the text rather than Dora -- evident as Dora has absolutely no voice and Freud literally holds it as he writes her story for her. Showalter notes that he "never understands her story at all and simply tries to bully her into accepting his version of events ... [Freud] reflects his own obsessions with masturbation, adultery, and homosexuality [onto Dora]" (Showalter 27). Instead of Dora being the subject of her own narrative, she is forced to become an object of Freud's. Similarly to the narrator in Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," Dora loses all control over herself; however, the narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" redeems her stolen freedom from the patriarchy whereas Dora is unable to in the hands of Freud.

While creating his own version of events, Freud begins to blame Dora's sexual repression under the assumption that she is secretly homosexual. In particular, Freud thinks Dora is in love with Frau K., Herr K.'s wife, which is why she wanted nothing to do with him and had an increasingly strained relationship with her father. Ramas explains that instead of Freud explaining Dora's hysteria, sexuality, and actions with rationality, he would rather explain it away. She basis this on Freud's primary argument is "fundamentally an ideological construct

developed in defense of a patriarchal phantasy of femininity and female sexuality” (477 Ramas). In other words, Freud -- and most other men -- cannot imagine a world in which women can exist without them. Freud focuses so heavily on Dora’s rejection of Herr K. that it ultimately impacts the entirety of her treatment, diagnosis, and the validity of Freud’s claims. Freud never truly dissects the true ailment of Dora’s disorder, and notes that years later, Dora had successfully blended into society by marrying a man and starting a family with him, thus submitting to the patriarchal standard that caused her harm.

Mid-Twentieth Century, American Asylums, and The Gender Bias

By the mid-twentieth century, mentally ill individuals were no longer subjected to the rest cure and psychotherapy. Rather, these patients would either be treated at home in the presence of their families like physically disabled patients were, or they would be sent away to hospitals and community homes specializing in psychiatric care. These special hospitals, known as “asylums,” were built along the East Coast of the United States on the foundation that moral treatment could cure the insane: “repudiat[ing] the use of harsh restraints and long periods of isolation” and instead focusing on providing “quiet, secluded, and peaceful country settings; opportunities for meaningful work and recreation; a system of privileges and rewards for rational behaviors; and gentler kinds of restraints used for shorter periods” (2 Penn Nursing). Unfortunately, the Great Depression drastically cut state funding for asylums, pushing patients towards outpatient clinics or traditional talk therapy and psychiatry sessions. By the 1950s, only the wealthy and those who could not live elsewhere had access to these facilities. One of the most renowned asylums -- still in use today -- is McLean Hospital, which housed several famous female authors and artists, such as Sylvia Plath, Susanna Kaysen, and Anne Sexton.

Although all of the artists and authors who had spent time at McLean had incorporated it into their art at some length, the only one to fully document her two year experience there was Susanna Kaysen. At the time of her stay, Kaysen was eighteen years old, recently out of high school and having an affair with her English teacher, when she was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, described as “often pervasive and is manifested by uncertainty about several life issues such as self-image, sexual orientation, long-term goals or career choice, types of friends or lovers to have, and which values to adopt” (Kaysen 159). Considered to have recovered at the time of writing her story, Kaysen is cognizant enough to dissect the

documentation taken at the time of her stay and provide insight into how she was treated not just as someone with a mental illness, but as a woman with a mental illness. She finds in her file a description of borderline which reads, “the disorder is more commonly diagnosed in women” (157 Kaysen). Kaysen writes in response an annotation to her diagnosis:

Note the construction of that sentence. They did not write, “The disorder is more common in women.” It would still be suspect, but they didn’t even bother trying to cover their tracks. Many disorders, judging by the hospital population, were more commonly diagnosed in women. Take, for example, “compulsive promiscuity.” How many girls do you think a seventeen-year-old boy would have to screw to earn the label “compulsively promiscuous”? Three? No, not enough. Six? Doubtful. Ten? That sounds more likely. Probably in the fifteen-to-twenty range, would be my guess -- if they ever put that label on boys, which I don’t recall their doing. And for seventeen-year-old girls, how many boys? (158 Kaysen)

In her document, it is blankly stated that borderline personality disorder is effectively a woman’s disease -- a modern day hysteria as it is caused by women’s oppressed social roles rather than any true ailment. According to Kaysen, most of the disorders her friends at McLean were diagnosed with seemed to be more common in women, despite the hospital being co-gender. She specifically mentions the diagnosis of “compulsive promiscuity,” something attributed to her affair with her English teacher, and notes that a man would never receive such a diagnosis because men are celebrated for obtaining women, whereas women are meant to remain pure until taken by a singular man; this leads Kaysen to wonder if her diagnosis is at all a true diagnosis, or if it is no more than a product of societal repression. In Elizabeth Marshall’s article, “Borderline

Girlhoods: Mental Illness, Adolescence, and Femininity in *Girl, Interrupted*,” Marshall looks at Kaysen’s reliance on the mentally ill girl to comment on gendered practices that are intended to define feminine adolescence: “[Kaysen] returns to, and reorganizes, her girlhood in a way that disrupts the objectivity of psychiatric discourses that seek to press her particular experiences into a generalized trajectory of feminine development” (118 Marshall). Noting the objectivity of psychiatric discourse further exemplifies that this issue extends beyond Kaysen’s own experience, as seen in Dora’s experience in which Freud attributed a sexuality and illness to her, and Gilman’s experience in having her course of treatment entirely dictated by her husband who did not listen to her seriously, disregarding her symptoms.

Despite understanding the bias in mental illness, Kaysen cannot separate herself from the romanticism of being mentally ill. Instead, she documents her own encounters with suicide and suicidal ideation with a storybook narrative:

I had an inspiration once. I woke up one morning and I knew that today I had to swallow fifty aspirin. It was my task: my job for the day. I lined them up on my desk and took them one by one, counting. . . . I could have stopped, at ten, or at thirty. And I could have done what I did do, which was go onto the street and faint. (17 Kaysen)

Kaysen begins by calling her suicide attempt an “inspiration,” clearly lightening the subject matter, before stating she “knew that today I had to swallow fifty aspirin.” The words “knew” and “had” indicate that for Kaysen this idea had become more than an inspiration, but rather something her being depended upon. She then details how she lined them up, emphasizing the aesthetic nature inherent to the romanticization of suicide, before admitting her plan to commit had fallen through and it truly became nothing more than a show for the people around her. She

fails to emphasize the severity of her attempt because it was ultimately unsuccessful, later comparing it to “putting the gun back in the drawer” (17 Kaysen). She later describes this event as “metaphorical,” explaining that she was not trying to kill herself, but rather a “certain aspect of her character” ... “a kind of self-abortion” to rid herself from the part of her that desired death (39 Kaysen). Through this, Kaysen brings up the importance of detachment, as it allowed her to separate herself enough to believe that her mental illness was a separate entity from her; however, as seen in Gilman’s narrator for *The Yellow Wallpaper* and Dora in Freud’s *Dora*, detachment only further worsens the problem as both women’s illnesses worsened as they attempted to hide their symptoms. Kaysen’s story is vastly different from *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *Dora* due to the fact that Kaysen is able to successfully rejoin society “healed”; however, like Dora, she only finds this through rejoining the patriarchal society she rejected at first. Aware that her options are limited to marriage -- which would allow her to become a writer -- or sexist, demeaning work as a typist or a dental hygienist, Dora marries one of her former boyfriends. In fact, Kaysen notes in her autobiography that she was discharged because of the marriage proposal: “in 1968, everybody could understand a marriage proposal” (133 Kaysen). She remains aware of her place in the patriarchal world, opting to later join former McLean roommate Georgina to “consciousness-raising” groups in which women broke free from societal expectations (161 Kaysen). She states that, while the group was crazy, she “went often enough to become suspicious of [her] marriage, and of [her] husband in particular” (161 Kaysen). Eventually, Kaysen is able to separate from her husband and live alone, finally disregarding the patriarchal structure without being labeled as “crazy.” Kaysen’s recount of her time at McLean allows for a “shift in perspective about adolescent girlhood and madness” as it demonstrates the blatant sexism prevalent in diagnostics (120 Marshall). Because of the time gap between

experience and publishing of the novel, it is fair to say Kaysen is only able to provide a hopeful story for young women because society has developed since the mid-twentieth century.

Contemporary Versions of Mentally Ill Women in Literature

Despite being a longstanding trope in media history, in 2005 film critic Nathan Rabin coined the term “manic pixie dream girl” (MPDG) after watching Cameron Crowe’s *Elizabethtown*. He said the MPDG “exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures” (AV Club). Although coined in a film review, this trope can frequently be found in contemporary novels, most notably in young adult novelist John Green’s *Looking for Alaska*. In this multi-award winning novel, readers are invited into the mind of Miles “Pudge” Halter, a teenage boy attending Culver Creek Boarding School in an attempt to find the meaning to life, or as he calls it, his “great perhaps.” In his search, he meets living enigma Alaska Young who becomes his obsession and the cause of his sexual awakening. Although for a young adult audience, Green’s novel holds great similarities to Mohsin Hamid’s 2007 adult fiction novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in which Pakistani immigrant Changez attempts to find a sense of belonging in America, only to be drawn into a relationship with fellow classmate, Erica.

Alaska is sixteen and Erica is in her mid-twenties, but both women are dissected into body parts and trauma in the eyes of their male counterpart. The first time Pudge, nicknamed by his roommate in irony of his stick-like physique, sees Alaska he refers to her as “the hottest girl in all of human history” before spending an entire page detailing her physique and how it makes him feel:

And now is as good a time as any to say that she was beautiful. . . . But even in the dark, I could see her eyes — fierce emeralds. She had the kind of eyes that predisposed you to supporting her every endeavor. And not just beautiful, but hot, too, with her breasts straining against her tight tank top, her curved legs swinging

back and forth beneath the swing, flip-flops dangling from her electric-blue-painted toes. It was right then, between when I asked about the labyrinth and she answered me, that I realized the *importance* of curves, of the thousand places where girls' bodies ease from one place to another, from arc of the foot to ankle to calf, from calf to hip to waist to breast to neck to ski-slope nose to forehead to shoulder to the concave arch of the back to the butt to the etc. I *noticed* curves before, of course, but I had never quite apprehended their significance. (19 Green)

Pudge is so taken aback by her physical appearance that he begins to drift from their intellectual conversation into a haze in which he begins to cut up her body into nothing more than slices of meat. He begins by noticing her eyes, “fierce emeralds” -- something he will note again in other passages. For centuries, emeralds have been a symbol of protection, wisdom, and royalty, with many believing wearing the gem could confer power and riches upon a person, so for Pudge to correlate the color of her eyes with such a powerful gem begins his idolization of Alaska (Gem Society). Although it begins as a description of her eyes and agency, he moves on to slicing Alaska into slabs of meat as he describes the curvature of her body moving from “calf to hip to waist to breast to neck to [nose] to forehead to shoulder to ... arch of the back to the butt,” stripping Alaska of all subjectivity as she is no longer human when she is in pieces. Her body is held in stark contrast to that of Pudge's, who is anything but sexualized as he is described as “awkward” and “lanky” throughout the novel. In a similar fashion, Changez also romanticizes and sexualizes Erica in contrast to his own unattractive appearance:

... so stunningly *regal* was she. Her hair was piled up like a tiara on her head... I noticed Erica was untying the straps of her bikini. And then, as I watched, only an arm's length away, she bared her breasts to the sun.

A moment later -- no, you are right: I am being dishonest; it was *more* than a moment -- she turned her head to the side and saw me staring at her. ... She started to laugh, her small breasts bouncing ... I followed her, watching the muscles of her lower back delicately to stabilize her spine. (17, 24 Hamid)

Similar to Pudge, Changez distracts himself from every other feature of Erica by placing his full attention specifically on her appearance — in his case, her breasts. The difference between Pudge's description of Alaska and Changez's of Erica is quite stark, as Pudge sees her fully, albeit dissected, whereas Changez solely focuses on her breasts. It also comes off considerably more voyeuristic as he claims “[Erica] turned her head to the side and saw [him] staring at her” before giggling. This indicates that he wanted her to know that he was viewing her like this and that she approved of his initial sexual attraction towards her. Erica's sexual agency is much more direct initially than Alaska's is, demonstrating her reliance on the male gaze in contrast to Alaska's overwhelmingly feminist personality (mentioned in more detail later in this section). It is also important to note that Changez sees Erica's body as one as he flows effortlessly through describing her abdomen, mentioning how her body parts “delicately stabilize” one another rather than listing body parts as disconnected cuts hanging in a butcher's shop.

While the male protagonists focus initially on the beauty of their female counterparts, they truly become taken by the girls' trauma, which would be properly diagnosed as PTSD stemming from their respective childhoods. In both novels, Green and Hamid only provide Alaska and Erica with a voice in the small sections they have where they describe their trauma.

Alaska's does not become fully actualized until right before her suicide half way through the novel:

“The day after my mom took me to the zoo where she liked the monkeys and I liked the bears, it was a Friday. I came home from school. She gave me a hug and told me to do my homework in my room so I could watch TV later. I went into my room, and she sat down at the kitchen table, I guess, and then she screamed, and I ran out, and she had fallen over. She was lying on the floor, holding her head and jerking. And I freaked out. I should have called 911, but I just started screaming and crying until finally she stopped jerking, and I thought she had fallen asleep and that whatever had hurt didn't hurt anymore. So I just sat there on the floor with her until my dad got home an hour later, and he's screaming, 'Why didn't you call 911?' And trying to give her CPR, but by then she was plenty dead. Aneurysm. Worst day. I win. You drink.”

And so we did.

No one talked for a minute, and then Takumi asked, “Your dad blamed you?”

“Well, not after that first moment. But yeah. How could he not?”

“Well you were a little kid,” Takumi argued...

“Yeah. I was a little kid. Little kids can dial 911. They do it all the time.” (119 Green)

Alaska's recount of her mother's death is interesting as it is reflected in the voice of her inner child, evident by the details she remembers and her sentence structure. It begins with one of the few details she remembers about her mother, that she liked the monkeys at the zoo, before rapidly changing between short, quick sentences and long, almost run-on sentences. They hold

almost no detail besides the concrete details that Alaska can remember, limiting the emotional reaction to a singular sentence and the mention of tears. Through this, it is clear that despite it having been over ten years, Alaska has never recovered from the situation. Additionally, her father's now-strained relationship with her has further exacerbated the traumatic situation for her as she believes it is her fault.

As aforementioned, this is the only section in which Green attempts to have the readers sympathize with Alaska; however, it falls short when he allows Pudge to reflect the narrative onto himself:

When she cried and told me that she fucked everything up, I knew what she meant now. And when she said she failed everyone, I knew whom she meant. It was the everything and everyone of her life, and so I could not help but imagine it. I imagined a scrawny eight-year-old with dirty fingers, looking down at her mother convulsing ... And in the time between dying and death, a little Alaska sat with her mother in silence. And then, through the silence and my drunkenness, I caught a glimpse of her as she might have been. She must have come to feel so powerless. (120 Green)

Pudge's recount is vastly different from Alaska's matter-of-fact, structured, detail-oriented account. In Alaska's retelling, she has little mention of herself, focusing on her mother, but in Pudge's account he focuses entirely on her. He imagines her appearance — something entirely unnecessary — in an attempt to further box her into his idea of a girl who needs to be saved. Additionally, he continuously claims from this one story he “[knows]” and understands Alaska fully now despite not knowing anything at all. This is amplified by his verbiage in projecting how he believes she *should* have been feeling or reacting to her, believing his thought is superior

to her action. Pudge's imagining Alaska's most traumatic event perfectly encapsulates his inability to empathize with her, proving his confusion of the concept of "infatuation" and "love."

Like Alaska, Erica's entire life is defined by one person and one tragedy: the death of her childhood lover, Chris; however, Hamid allows her to mention the event in small details throughout the narrative in order to demonstrate Changez's inability to ever fully understand Erica, despite him believing that he does. She first tells him over lunch in Greece about Chris:

We stayed at our table, talking as the sun set, and she told me about Chris. They had grown up together -- in facing apartments, children the same age with no siblings -- and were best friends well before their first kiss, which happened when they were six but was not repeated until they were fifteen. He had a collection of European comic books with which they were obsessed, and they used to spend hours at home reading them and making their own: Chris drawing, Erica writing. They were both admitted to Princeton, but he had not come because he was diagnosed with lung cancer -- he had had *one* cigarette, she said with a smile, but only the day after he received the results of his biopsy -- and she had made sure she never had classes on a Friday so she could spend three days a week in New York with him. He died three years later, at the end of the spring semester of her junior year. "So I kind of miss home, too," she said. "Except my home was a guy with long, skinny fingers." (28 Hamid)

Erica's retelling comes from Changez's perspective only, as he doesn't tell the reader verbatim what Erica had said but rather a summary. Because of this, it is safe to assume that Changez has only told what he regarded as the important pieces of the narrative, thus taking away Erica's agency. He brushes over their childhood relationship and primarily focuses on post-admission to

Princeton and Chris's death, and while it is not directly mentioned, Changez becomes aware that Chris's death is the reason he has the opportunity to be with Erica. If Chris had gone to Princeton, Erica and him would most likely have been on that beach in Greece together. This becomes more evident to him as he attempts to take Erica on a picnic in Central Park, and Erica ends up reminiscing about Chris and confessing more of herself to Changez:

“I haven't done this in a long time,” she told me when she spoke again. “Chris and I used to come to the park a lot. We'd bring this basket with us and just read or hang out for hours.” “Was it when he died,” I asked, “that you stopped coming?” “I stopped,” she answered, plucking a daisy, “a bunch of things. For a while I stopped talking to people. I stopped eating. I had to go to the hospital. They told me not to think about it so much and put me on medication. My mom had to take three months off of work because I couldn't be by myself. We kept it quiet, though, and by September I was back at Princeton.” (59 Hamid)

Erica's confession tells the reader and Changez a great deal about her mental health post-Chris; however, Changez begins to romanticize it in turn as evident by his interest when she had stopped coming to the park. He reflects on this moment, claiming he had “glimpsed” “even more clearly than before” at “the crack inside her; it evoked in me an almost familial tenderness” (59 Hamid). This “familial tenderness” evoked within Changez is without a doubt his projection of himself as the “fixer” of Erica's problems as the patriarchal figure, much like Pudge had with Alaska and Freud had with Dora back in his essay, *Dora*.

After the initial instance in which he comes to the conclusion Erica needs a savior, he begins explicitly noticing her mannerisms in conjunction with both her external and internal presentation of her mental illness. Through his relationship with Erica, he is able to satisfy his

patriarchal hero desire, as well as be apart of her world -- one that would be unattainable for him otherwise:

Often as we stood or sat in the midst of an impeccably turned-out crowd, I would observe that she was utterly detached, lost in a world of her own. Her eyes were turned inward, and remarks made by her companions would register only indirectly on her face, like the shadows of clouds gliding across the surface of a lake. ... She was struggling against a current that pulled her within herself, and her smile contained the fear that she might slip into her own depths, where she would be trapped, unable to breathe. I wished to serve as her anchor in these moments, without being so vulgar as to make known that this was a role I felt she needed someone to play. (86 Hamid)

Changez's wording of Erica's depression beautifies her depression almost entirely as he refers to her as being "lost in a world of her own" before comparing her apparent disconnect to "the shadows of clouds gliding across the surface of a lake." He then further poeticizes Erica's situation by comparing it to her being lost at sea; however, his proclamation that the sea is also Erica demonstrates his inability to see this as anything more than Erica hurting herself. He wishes to be her anchor -- a device that would hold her down rather than assist her in coming above the surface -- in the hopes that she will begin to depend on him. Since their meeting, Changez has been vying for Erica's attention to a romantic, dependant level (hence his internal conflict with Chris despite him being deceased), and Changez sees that Erica's depression is the only reason he is kept around. If he were to help her escape from her depths, she would have no need for him anymore. In fact, he begins pushing her further into a depression by attempting to

take Chris's place, specifically when he finally is presented with the opportunity to become intimate with Erica:

When I tried to kiss her, she did not move her lips or shut her eyes. So I shut them for her and asked, "Are you missing Chris?" She nodded, and I saw tears begin to force themselves between her lashes. "Then pretend," I said, "pretend I am him." I do not know why I said it; I felt overcome and it seemed, suddenly, a possible way forward. "What?" she said, but she did not open her eyes. "Pretend I am him," I said again. And slowly, in darkness and in silence, we did. ... It was as though we were under a spell, transported to a world where I was Chris and she was with Chris, and we made love with a physical intimacy that Erica and I had never enjoyed. Her body denied mine no longer; I watched her shut eyes, and her shut eyes watched *him*. (105 Hamid)

Changez does not force Erica to engage with him, but he certainly coerces, and in that he traumatizes her by taking her agency and having her wish for something they both know she can never have again. He almost denies any responsibility for coercing her, claiming he "felt overcome" and "it seemed" like "a possible way forward" to a place where "her body denied [his] no longer." For Changez, traumatizing her to obtain his fantasy is miniscule, as he claims she enjoyed the intimacy that night in a way that she never had before. It is not until afterwards that he realizes he has made a grave mistake, and instead of pulling Erica closer, he has pushed her away: "the night I finally made love to Erica -- a night that ought, were ours a more normal relationship, to have been one of great joy. She left before dawn ... once again, considerable time would pass before I heard from her again" (109 Hamid). Here, Changez notices the change in Erica's actions, admitting their relationship was abnormal and that night, which should "have

been one of great joy” was not. Erica, retraumatized and becoming aware of Changez’s actions, begins to distance herself entirely as she leaves before dawn to limit the intimacy between them once again.

While Changez blatantly romanticizes Erica’s depression because of his desire to be a part of her world and he utilizes it to his advantage, Pudge’s romanticism of Alaska comes mostly from his lack of worldly knowledge. Coming from a small town in Florida, Pudge has never been exposed to a girl like Alaska Young, and because of this, he idolizes her as believes her to be the epitome of “cool” (88 Green). Changez notices all of Erica’s flaws and the mannerisms formed due to her depression as seen when he analyzes her at a party, but Pudge genuinely does not take notice of Alaska’s depression. Green demonstrates this the first time Alaska tells Pudge of her suicidal ideation:

“Why do you smoke so damn fast?” I asked.

She looked at me and smiled widely, and such a wide smile on her narrow face might have looked goofy were it not for the unimpeachably elegant green in her eyes. She smiled with all the delight of a kid on Christmas morning and said,
 “Y’all smoke to enjoy it. I smoke to die.” (44 Green)

Alaska directly tells Pudge that she “smoke[s] to die”; however, like the first time he spoke to her, he had become distracted by her physical appearance. He notices her smile, which he notes would look “goofy” on anyone who did not look as beautiful as she did, contrasting the somber tone of the conversation. Alaska’s reaction of “smiling with all the delight of a kid on Christmas morning” to Pudge’s question demonstrates both her excitement with Pudge’s interest in her -- something she eggs on through their entire relationship -- and her excitement with being the object of someone’s affection. In Erica, the readers are presented with a traumatized woman who

withdraws herself because she believes nobody can love her the way Chris did; however, in Alaska's case, she never experienced male affection due to her distant relationship with her father, and so she seeks comfort in men idolizing her.

Alaska, like Erica, is much more intelligent than her male counterpart gives her credit for, and she uses Pudge's admiration to her advantage. Pudge begins to base his life decisions around her in an attempt to win her affection, most notably over Thanksgiving break in which he decides to stay at school with her so that she has company. During this time, Alaska convinces Pudge to partake in activities against the school's code of conduct, leading them to break into a fellow student's dorm and discover a porn stash. During this, Alaska decides to have Pudge watch one with her:

By the time they started doing it, Alaska commenced with her righteous indignation. "They just don't make sex look fun for women. The girl is just an object. Look! Look at that!"

I was already looking, needless to say. ... I couldn't help but take mental notes.

As if reading my mind, she said, "God, Pudge. Never do it that hard. That would *hurt*. That looks like torture. And all she can do is just sit there and take it? This is not a *man* and a *woman*. It's a penis and a vagina. What's erotic about that? ...

Just by the virtue of how they're doing it, it's objectification. He can't even see her face! This can happen to women, Pudge. That woman is someone's daughter.

This is what you make us do for money."

"Well, not *me*," I said defensively. "I mean, not technically. I don't, like, produce porn movies."

"Look me in the eyes and tell me this doesn't turn you on, Pudge."

I couldn't. She laughed. It was fine, she said. Healthy. And then she got up, [and] stopped the tape. (88 Green)

Alaska confronts her sexuality directly, explicitly expressing to Pudge not only her own feelings on the tape, but also asking Pudge about his. She tells Pudge what she does not like about the video (the lack of eroticism, how it's just "a penis and a vagina", how it "would hurt", and how it does nothing for the woman) in order to manipulate the formation of Pudge's budding sexuality. This greatly contrasts Erica's avoidance of sex with Changez, and when Erica and Changez do have sex, it ends up pleasurable for Changez -- the man -- and not Erica -- the woman -- as Erica is objectified in Changez's mind like the woman is in the porn video. Alaska, although not desiring sexual relations with Pudge, wants Pudge to understand that women are people, not sexual objects designed for male pleasure. It is evident that the conversation had an effect on Pudge as after the video is turned off, he watches Alaska fall asleep:

I wanted so badly to lie down next to her on the couch, to wrap my arms around her and sleep. Not fuck, like in those movies. Not even have sex. Just sleep together, in the most innocent sense of the phrase. But I lacked the courage and she had a boyfriend and I was gawky and she was gorgeous and I was hopelessly boring and she was endlessly fascinating. So, I walked back to my room and collapsed on the bottom bunk, thinking that if people were rain, I was drizzle and she was a hurricane. (88 Green)

Because Alaska has informed Pudge of her beliefs regarding pornography, Pudge comes to the conclusion that if he is not desiring sex with Alaska, he is not sexualizing her; however, he still desires her physical touch, thus still forcing her to be an object for him to desire. This is reinforced in how he discusses Alaska, once again bringing up her appearance -- referring to her

as “gorgeous” -- in comparison to his own -- referring to himself as “gawky.” He also cannot find any other words to describe her personality apart from “endlessly fascinating” despite knowing her for nearly over three months at this point in the novel; however, he describes her as a “hurricane” at the end of the passage, showing that he does believe Alaska to be a strong, intense force in life. This greatly contrasts Changez’s depiction of Erica as someone struggling to keep their head above the water at sea, and consequently, what each protagonist thinks of their counterpart. In Green’s novel, Pudge, although idolizing and pining after her, does not try to limit Alaska in being a person. Instead he frequently tries to help Alaska -- for better or for worse -- as demonstrated by his willingness to abandon his family for the holidays and look after Alaska instead. In Hamid’s novel, Changez acknowledges that he needs Erica more than she needs him, and so he actively attempts to sabotage her into creating a dependance on him, as seen in their sex scene and later when he visits her at the psychiatric hospital.

After intimacy does not go as planned, Changez begins to realize he is losing grips on Erica as she sinks deeper into her depression, and instead of helping her, he begins to project his heroic narrative onto her in which he can “save” her. When he visits Erica after she is institutionalized, Changez presents to her what he believes to be a grand romantic gesture that she cannot deny:

“Do not be grateful, be lustful -- come back to New York with me,” I said it without that core of conviction that gives words their power; she leaned her head momentarily against my shoulder, but she was not compelled to respond. ... For a moment, I was seized by the wild notion of abducting her and taking her away with me in my rental car, surely my ministrations would be more productive in

restoring her to reality than the chemicals she was subjecting herself to here. (135 Hamid)

The grand romantic gesture strips all agency from Erica as Changez essentially fantasizes about kidnapping her so that they may have the life he has dreamed of. He says, “Do not be grateful, be lustful”, indicating that he believes he is helping her and that is a reason for her to finally love him, desire him, like she should have all along. Erica’s action, or rather inaction, indicates that she sees Changez’s warped version of her and his inability to see her as more than the two-dimensional object of “royalty” he met in a string bikini in Greece. In fact, he mentions to the reader that he could “restore [Erica] to reality” better than the psychiatric facility can; however, Changez’s reality differs from true reality, and as such he could never heal Erica. In response to this, Erica tells Changez he should move on from her and find someone better for him, causing Changez to grow irritated:

She gave me a hug afterwards and she stood there, looking at me. But he is *dead*, I wanted to shout! It was all I could do not to kiss her then; perhaps I should have. I had to choose whether to continue to try to win her over or to accept her wishes and leave, and in the end, I chose the latter. (136 Hamid).

In Changez’s reality, Erica is not allowing him to save her. He is unsure of who to blame for this: Chris, for encapsulating Erica’s heart, or Erica, for not allowing Chris’s memory to fade. Still not allowing her to have any agency over the situation, he debates forcing himself upon her in hopes that it will convince her to change her mind; however, he admits defeat and internally blames Chris for his inability to succeed, just as he had been through the entire novel.

While Erica attempts to provide Changez with a form of closure before her eventual suicide, Alaska does no such thing with Pudge. Because of this, Pudge is forced to rationalize

Alaska's death on his own as she has removed herself from the narrative entirely; however, by removing herself from the narrative, she forces Pudge to rethink the last few months. The night he hears of her death, he dreams of her:

I am sleeping, and Alaska flies into the room. She is naked, and intact. Her breasts, which I felt only very briefly and in the dark, are luminously full as they hang down from her body. She hovers inches above me, her breath warm and sweet against my face like a breeze passing through tall grass...

"I just want you to stay," I say.

"No," she says, and her weight falls dead on me, crushing my chest, stealing away my breath, and she is cold and wet, like melting ice. Her head is split in half and a pink-gray sludge oozes from the fracture in her skull and drips down onto my face, and she stinks of formaldehyde and rotting meat. (147-48 Green)

As he mentions, Pudge has never seen Alaska naked. The most he has ever known of her body is from a brief touch of her breasts and his initial view of her in which he obsessed over the curvature of her form. His nightmare following the crash literally rips Pudge out of his romanticism of Alaska as he goes from seeing how he wants her to be to how her body is. Pudge asks her to stay, fill the fantasy of his, and Alaska denies his request. In this, Alaska's act of committing suicide can be seen as her giving herself agency as it is something that Pudge cannot alter the reality of. From here on out, Pudge begins to see the reality in which he did not know Alaska Young for who she truly was. After being told it is a suicide, Pudge says that "all it does is make [Alaska] into [an] awful, selfish bitch" (165 Green). In response, his roommate, the Colonel, answers, "Christ, Pudge. Do you even remember the person she actually *was*? Do you remember how she *could* be a selfish bitch? That was a part of her, and you used to know it. It's

like now you only care about the Alaska you made up” (165 Green). For the first time in the entire novel, Pudge is called out for romanticizing Alaska and replacing who she *was* with who he *wanted* her to be. The dream and the Colonel’s reaction is the novel -- and Green’s -- not-so-subtle way of punishing Pudge for his behavior. Green forces Pudge, and the reader, to acknowledge that Alaska’s lack of voice throughout the text was due to the objectification of women from a male perspective. Pudge recollects this idea in the final moments of the novel:

But ultimately, I do not believe that she was only matter. The rest of her must be recycled too. ... There is a part of her greater than the sum of her knowable parts. And that part has to go somewhere, because it cannot be destroyed. ... I know she forgives me, just as I forgive her. (220-21 Green)

Pudge finally rejects the notion that Alaska was just “matter,” admitting that he did not know all of her, and nobody truly knew her. He says, “that part has to go somewhere, because it cannot be destroyed,” demonstrating that he hopes her memory lives on, and that her story should help others reflect on how they treat others in their lives. Finally, he forgives her for ending her own life, and he claims he “knows she forgives [him]” for treating her the way he did. While the sentiment is nice, it shows that Pudge has grown, yet not enough to realize that Alaska’s life went primarily unaffected by him, and that if it had not been him, it would have been another boy to experience this.

While Pudge’s journey ends with him understanding his wrongdoings, Changez’s does not. Instead, several years post Erica’s death, he finds himself still believing he could have “saved” her:

I wondered what I could do to help Erica. ... No, hers was an illness of the spirit, and I had been raised in an environment too thoroughly permeated with a tradition

of shared rituals of mysticism to accept that conditions of the spirit could not be influenced by the care, affection, and desire of others. What was essential was that I seek to understand why I had failed to penetrate the membrane with which she guarded her psyche; my more direct approaches had been rejected, but with sufficient insight I might yet be welcomed through a process of osmosis. I could imagine no alternative but to try; my longing for her was undiminished. (140-41 Hamid)

He blames it almost entirely on his upbringing, saying his environment was too “thoroughly permeated” with the idea that “rituals of mysticism” could influence and heal “conditions of the spirit,” thus, once again, finding a way to subvert the blame for his behavior onto something or someone else. He continues by claiming he just did not know the correct approach in dealing with Erica’s affliction, saying he “[seeks] to understand why [he] had failed to penetrate the membrane with which she guarded her psyche.” Using the word penetrate demonstrates Changez’s inability to let go of his sex scene fantasy in which his intimacy would heal Erica, following up with saying he had just not found the key to the “process of osmosis” with her. Changez’s inability to let go of Erica and admit that he could never save her shows that Hamid only ever intended for Changez to see Erica as an object for him to utilize, greatly contrasting Green’s conclusion in *Looking for Alaska*.

Conclusion

Throughout the texts analyzed -- Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Sigmund Freud's *Dora*, Susanna Kaysen's *Girl, Interrupted*, John Green's *Looking for Alaska*, and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* -- it is evident to see that the label of being "mentally ill" comes primarily from being unable to exist "normally" in society. Under the patriarchal rule all the ill women are subjected to, it is not their choice to decide whether or not they are "normal," but rather the men who oversee them dictate this and thus dictate their entire livelihood. Susanna Kaysen and Dora initially submitted to the suppression, marrying husbands and becoming dutiful housewives; however Kaysen eventually was able to gain her own footing and leave the submission by becoming successful on her own. For Gilman's narrator, Alaska, and Erica, the only option for them to escape the demands of society was to succumb to their mental illnesses either by reaching insanity or killing themselves. Through this, it is evident to see that in the patriarchal world women are unable to peacefully exist without disruption caused by their unwillingness to submit to the societal standard.

Works Cited

Beam, Alex. *Gracefully Insane: The Life and Death of America's Premier Mental Hospital*. Public Affairs, 2003.

D'Antonio, Patricia. "History of Psychiatric Hospitals." *Nursing, History, and Health Care: Penn Nursing*,
www.nursing.upenn.edu/nhhc/nurses-institutions-caring/history-of-psychiatric-hospitals/.

Freud, Sigmund, and Philip Rieff. *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*. New York: Collier Books, 1993. Print.

Gagnon, Amy. "Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Connecticut History: a CTHumanities Project." *Connecticut History | a CTHumanities Project*, 5 Mar. 2020,
connecticuthistory.org/charlotte-perkins-gilman/.

GJ. Andrews, E. Peter, et al. "Medicine Is Patriarchal, But Alternative Medicine Is Not the Answer." *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*, Springer Singapore, 1 Jan. 1970,
link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11673-018-9890-5.

The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination, by Sandra M. Gilbert et al., Yale University Press, 2020.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Virago Press, 1981.

Green, John. *Looking for Alaska*. New York, New York: Penguin Group, 2005.

Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Toronto: Bond Street Books, 2007. Print.

“History & Progress.” *History & Progress at McLean Hospital*,
www.mcleanhospital.org/about/history-progress.

Jefferson, Laura, et al. “Women in Medicine: Historical Perspectives and Recent Trends.”
OUP Academic, Oxford University Press, 8 Mar. 2015,
academic.oup.com/bmb/article/114/1/5/246075.

Kaysen, Susanna. 1993. *Girl, Interrupted*. New York: Turtle Bay Books.

Kerber, Linda. “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment - An American
 Perspective.” *The John Hopkins University Press*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1976, pp. 187–205.

Uroff, Margaret Dickie. “On Reading Sylvia Plath.” *College Literature*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1979,
 pp. 121-128

Lanser, Susan S. “Feminist Criticism, ‘The Yellow Wallpaper,’ and the Politics of Color in
 America.” *Feminist Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1989, pp. 415–441. *Feminist
 Reinterpretations/Reinterpretations of Feminism*.

Nespor, Cassie. “Debating Women's ‘Nervous Temperament’ in the 1890s.” *Melnick
 Medical Museum*, 29 July 2014,
melnickmedicalmuseum.com/2014/06/25/womens-nervous-temperament/.

Marshall, Elizabeth. “Borderline Girlhoods: Mental Illness, Adolescence, and Femininity
 in *Girl, Interrupted*.” *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2006, pp. 117–133.,
[doi:10.1353/uni.2006.0009](https://doi.org/10.1353/uni.2006.0009).

Pryal, Katie Rose Guest. "The Genre of the Mood Memoir and the Ethos of Psychiatric Disability." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 5, 2010, pp. 479–501., doi:10.1080/02773945.2010.516304.

Ramas, Maria. "Freud's Dora, Dora's Hysteria: The Negation of a Woman's Rebellion." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1980, p. 472., doi:10.2307/3177476.

Sakane, Yōko. "The Mother, the Self, and the Other: The Search for Identity in Sylvia Plath's 'The Bell Jar' and Takahashi Takako's 'Congruent Figure.'" *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, no. 14, 1998, pp. 27–48., doi:199.79.168.81.

Showalter, Elaine. "On Hysterical Narrative." *Narrative*, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan. 1993, pp. 24–35.

Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*. Virago Press, 2012.

Showalter, Elaine. "Introduction." *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, Virago Press, 2012, pp. 1–20.

In Showalter's introduction to her book *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, Showalter presents the argument that the "mad woman" is a living figment of the patriarchy's imagination that women have been subjected to for centuries. She begins by discussing Mary Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel *Maria; or The Wrongs of Woman* (1797), a novel built on a heroine forced into an asylum for wanting financial and sexual equality with her husband. In the novel, Maria sees the asylum as "a symbol of all the man-made institutions, from marriage to the law, that confine women and drive them mad" (1). This sets the tone for the rest of the intro as Showalter transitions into discussing art by male artist Tony Robert-Fleury who depicted women in asylums during this same time. Unlike Wollstonecraft, Robert-Fleury depicted and believed the incarcerated women to be lost, exposed, and hysterical because they do not know their place within the patriarchy. In his painting "Pinel Freeing the Insane" (1887), Robert-Fleury suggests the central most woman's freedom "exists in a complex tension with male control" (3). This suggests Robert-Fleury, along with the majority of the 18th century men, believed madness to be the wrongs of a woman in her rejecting the patriarchy. This can be supported by the statistics on female patients incarcerated at asylums from the 18th century until the 20th century, especially when compared with the number of male doctors and psychiatrists.

After demonstrating the blatant divide between genders and their view of madness, Showalter presents her true claim: the madwoman is a symbol for the female artist in which she can release her inner anxieties and own herself, yet the man has taken this and subverted it into a romanticized version where the woman must be saved from herself by the man (4). She claims that while one should honor the symbol of the madwoman, one should not enforce madness as a form of rebellion. Instead, madness must be investigated thoroughly, especially in "how ... notions of a gender influence the definition and, consequently, the treatment of mental disorder" (5). England becomes the center point for this study due to the rich history of "English Madness"; however, much of the English asylum work carries over throughout Europe and the United States.

The rest of Showalter's introduction discusses the influence men have had on women's madness throughout time and the impact it has had on such discussions. She introduces Shakespeare's Ophelia from *Hamlet*: the mother of the madwoman. She paints the portrait for every woman to follow when diagnosed as "mad," branching off into two forms of the madwoman: the most popular known as Crazy Jane, "a poor servant girl who, abandoned by her lover or bereft of him through death, goes mad as a result" (11). The second being Lucy, the dangerous counterpart to Crazy Jane, who came from Sir Walter Scott's novel *The Bride of Lammermoor* (14). These two idealized women have been altered throughout time to keep up with societal standards, yet remained the example for the "madwoman." Showalter brings it back around to remind us how all of this was propositioned by men without the input of women. Going forward with my Senior Project, I will continue to examine the claims men have made for and against the madwoman and compare them to the women who were actually diagnosed as mad. This will help me find a common ground between the villainization of said women and the romanticization.

Pryal, Katie Rose Guest. "The Genre of the Mood Memoir and the Ethos of Psychiatric Disability." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 5, 2010, pp. 479–501., doi:10.1080/02773945.2010.516304.

In Katie Rose Guest Pryal's article "The Genre of the Mood Memoir and the Ethos of Psychiatric Disability," she argues how individuals with mental illness, primarily mood disorders, use the narrative genre Pryal has coined as the *mood memoir* to overcome the rhetorical exclusion they face on a daily basis. These stories can be grouped within their own genre "because their shared exigencies have given rise to shared rhetorical conventions, including an apologia, a moment of awakening, criticism of doctors, and certain techniques of [rhetorical amplification]" (3). Mentally ill patients have been subject to long time criticism, deeming them non-credible sources in law, medicine, and any other fact-based field due to the interpretation that mental illness detracts from a person's ability to coherently understand the world around them. In order to conquer the society that places this stereotype on them, the community has used the genre of the memoir to show they should not be excluded based on their unreliable ethos, and instead should be shown as stories of strength.

In order to do this, the memoirists rely on a set format for creating their newly found reliable ethos. The mood memoir differs from the typical disability memoir in the way that it "does not track the narrative conventions" of "the exceptional cases who have overcome disability" (482). It is noted that:

"the mood memoirist rarely seeks to remove stigma through a Supercrip narrative; rather, the memoirist tends to embrace her illness as not just a disability, but also a gift, building an *ethos* based on links between mood disorders and creativity drawn by recent scientific research, as well as upon the historical conception of the mad genius that dates back to Plato" (482).

By doing this, the community opens the opportunity to take their identity out of the hands of psychologists and doctors and regains authority over their own persons. They do not deny that they are disabled, claim them to be an anomaly among their community, or place themselves on a pedestal. Instead, they make their stories relatable and accessible so others in similar situations may find the strength to find help for themselves. Taking from other types of memoirs, such as spiritual memoirs and slave memoirs, the mood memoir has its format broken into a three-piece format: 1. The apologia, in which the writer apologizes for what they are doing, but reinforces that it is a necessary action; 2. The "Convention of Awakening," in which the writer realizes their wrong doings, or in the case of the mood memoir, their mental illness; and finally 3. The "Move Towards Enlightenment," in which the writer finds his or her path to recovery and extends a hand to those suffering from similar issues. Using this method, the writer is able to build up a reliable ethos with their audience. The remainder of this article breaks down each of these three parts further to analyze them and see how different mood memoirists, such as Kay Redfield Jamison, a psychiatric doctor who suffers first hand from bipolar disorder, use it to relay their stories for the public eye.

This article not only opened my eyes to an entirely new genre, but gave me a new way to break down the firsthand accounts of mentally ill women that I have been reading for my project. I plan on using it with all of the novels written by women about themselves (whether directly or indirectly) to see how it influences the audience, and potentially how I can use it when I discuss my own story with mental illness.

Lanser, Susan S. "Feminist Criticism, "The Yellow Wallpaper," and the Politics of Color in America." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1989, pp. 415–441. *Feminist Reinterpretations/Reinterpretations of Feminism*.

In Susan S. Lanser's article, "Feminist Criticism, "The Yellow Wallpaper," and the Politics of Color in America, she discusses Charlotte Perkins Gilman's text as a defining piece of feminist literature, noting that it breaks the patriarchal hold over classic literature. Lanser proves her argument by analyzing numerous feminist critiques on the story, covering its place as a biography, the identity of the female author, its textual form, and the various interpretations collected over the years. She begins by mentioning feminist critic, Elaine Showalter, and her assertion that "literature is deeply political, indeed steeped in (patriarchal) ideology" (416). Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" brought the patriarchal grip on literature to light, specifically when it was banned from publication due to its gruesome depiction of a female character, referred to as being "miserable" and "terrible and too wholly dire" (417). The reaction to the story is noted as being a misogynistic struggle due to Poe's ability to get published almost half a century earlier despite his content being similar to that of Gilman's, thus this story holds importance in demonstrating a woman's struggle from a firsthand account.

Lanser goes on to describe how throughout literature, women have only been permitted to be seen as men want to see them. After laying the basics of literature as a patriarchal construct, Lanser explains "The Yellow Wallpaper" and its true importance to pushing for a feminist narrative in literature as it is read from the female consciousness. Contemporary studies claim:

"the phrase 'John says' heads a litany of 'benevolent' prescriptions that keep the narrator infantilized, immobilized, and bored literally out of her mind. Reading or writing her self upon the wallpaper allows the narrator, as Paula Treichler puts it, to 'escape' her husband's 'sentence' and achieve the limited freedom of madness which, virtually all these critics have agreed, constitutes a kind of sanity in the face of insanity of male dominance." (418 Lanser)

This demonstrates how female mental illness can sometimes be attributed to the restraint women feel placed on them by the patriarchy as the narrator can only find a sense of sanity when her husband is not around, and she can only find freedom within her madness. In relation to my paper, this brings up ideas and thoughts pertaining to the relation between a woman's place in a patriarchal society and her mental status. Would the narrator be more mentally stable if not for John, or would she be mentally ill regardless? While the contemporary studies push for a political view, turn-of-the-century readers ignored that in favor of a primarily "case study"-esque analysis, "praising [the story] for its keenly accurate 'case study' of a presumably inherited insanity" (418 Lanser). Acknowledging both of these readings is important to understand the history of mental illness throughout literature and how Gilman's work, in a way, began the story of the mentally ill woman. The rest of the article breaks down Lanser's research into the different interpretations and readings of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper." Many analyses of the text "end by distinguishing the doomed and "mad" narrator, who could not write her way out of the patriarchal prison-house, from the sane survivor Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who could" (419 Lanser). However, Lanser believes the text holds more than just being Gilman's account of her own mental illness, and has encouraged me to look at the story in two ways.

Kerber, Linda. "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment - An American Perspective." *The John Hopkins University Press*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1976, pp. 187–205.

In Linda Kerber's article, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment -- An American Perspective" she details the role of women as the "Republican Mother" and their place in patriarchal societies, specifically in a political context. She begins by looking into the idea of men and women being unequal is seen as a more modern concept as when the original documents of mankind were written, "he" was considered a generic term for all living beings. It is only recently that we have begun to pick apart these documents, take them out of their historical context, and claim that they deliberately meant for "he" to mean only "he." Despite this, it is evident that in the Enlightenment Era much of it was directed for men and excluded women heavily. Peter Gay described the Enlightenment as "'man's claim to be recognized as an adult, responsible being' who would 'take the risk of discovery, exercise the right of unfettered criticism, accept the loneliness of autonomy'" (187 Kerber). Because women were unable to do that based on the societal laws at the time of the Enlightenment, Kerber wonders if this means women are unable to be enlightened. This in itself is difficult as it is difficult to find recollections from women as the majority of the work during this period was written by men with the exception of Mary Wollstonecraft and Catharine Macaulay. Aside from them, women during this time exist only as "moral support to male friends and lovers, making only minor intellectual contributions" (187 Kerber). By examining further into the male dominated works of the Enlightenment, she discovers there is no mistake and the use of "man" and "he" was literal. As America realized they needed a role for women, they created the ideology of the "Republican Mother" -- a role for women that "masked political purpose by promising domestic service," or in other words, let women continue to be moral support for men despite them believing otherwise (188 Kerber).

Kerber begins by dissecting philosopher's ideas on women and womanhood, beginning with Locke. Locke believed man and woman should be equal as the bible portrays it that way. His piece, *Two Treatises on Government* directly attacked Richard Filmer's *Patriarcha*, claiming that if a family cannot be balanced without a mother and a father, neither can a society. He noted the struggles women faced by the patriarchy, believing that a hierarchy does exist, however it should be done voluntarily. Like his contemporaries and successors, Locke believed women should remain in the domain of domesticity, but believed they should have the right to control their children sans husband and have their own property (190 Kerber). She continues on to discussing Montesquieu who believed women did not have a direct role in shaping government, but they did impact it through their homekeeping, thus creating a strong link between domestic life and political life (191 Kerber). Continuing on to Condorcet who believed men and women were inherently different in their interests and morals, he claimed in every way except for brute strength "women were obviously men's equals" and some were even superior (191 Kerber). He stated he believed a more balanced and representative government would improve women's status; however, he never developed his theory further.

Kerber uses the remainder of her essay to dive into the rest of the Enlightenment's philosopher's thoughts on women and how they pushed for women to stay in domestic living despite how important they were deemed to society. This article will be beneficial to my developing and proving my thesis as it sets the basis for not only the patriarchal society we live in today, but it begins discussing why women are in the roles they are in today.

Sakane, Yōko. "The Mother, the Self, and the Other: The Search for Identity in Sylvia Plath's 'The Bell Jar' and Takahashi Takako's 'Congruent Figure.'" *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, no. 14, 1998, pp. 27–48., doi:199.79.168.81.

In Yoko Sakane's article, "The Mother, the Self, and the Other: The Search for Identity in Sylvia Plath's 'The Bell Jar' and Takahashi Takako's 'Congruent Figure,'" she sets out to identify the issue women face when separating selfhood from motherhood, or finding what it means to be an individual as a woman. She notes that "this is not an easy task because women are often constructed in relation to men, other women, and society in general. Their searches for self begin with deconstruction of the concepts of womanhood that have been socially established and ideologically internalized within women's psyches" (27 Sakane). Plath models the character of Esther off of herself; however, she publishes under a pseudonym in fear of people discovering the novel's intention as a confessional. Now knowing that *The Bell Jar* is a confessional, it becomes difficult to separate the novel from Plath's personal life. Sakane begins to discuss Plath's personal life in relation to her identity -- one revolving almost entirely around her husband -- and how it impacted her ability to acknowledge herself as a great writer on her own accord. This leads to Sakane's biggest question: "Can women escape from the convention of womanhood by becoming women-haters themselves? Is it possible to reject the femininity that is part of one's self?" (30 Sakane).

Sakane then begins going into the concept of "The Dissociation from the Other," explaining that while Plath almost exclusively dealt with issues related to femininity, her depiction of women is "harsh" and "hostile" (30 Sakane). In *The Bell Jar*, Esther believes creativity can only be attained if one abandons womanhood as creativity and writing are associated most commonly with masculinity. Due to this, she refuses to associate with women and effectively alienates herself from society. The next section of Sakane's essay is "The Mother-Daughter Relationship," in which she details how Plath's works seek to destroy the sanctity of motherhood. Adrienne Rich discusses the contradictions in the "Mother Myth":

Throughout patriarchal mythology, dream-symbolism, theology, language, two ideas flow side by side; one, that the female body is impure, corrupt, the site of discharges, bleedings, dangerous to masculinity ... On the other hand, as mother the woman is beneficent, sacred, pure, asexual, norishing; and the physical potential for motherhood -- that same body with its bleeding and mysteries -- is her single destiny and justification for life.

Rich points out the juxtaposition here between motherhood and femininity, noting how men have separated motherhood from womanhood and projected that on to societal standards for women. Plath writes her story from the perspective of the daughter, despite being a mother at the time of the story, which in turn leads to many questions about what Esther thinks of her role in motherhood. Esther struggles with finding an identity outside of motherhood as she fears marriage will destroy her ability to write.

Sakane's article will help me with my essay as it will further my understanding of *The Bell Jar* as well as Sylvia Plath's own life in terms of a woman's place in society. In adjacency with my research on mental illness and motherhood, I will be able to connect Plath's own experience with motherhood and femininity to the broader idea.

Marshall, Elizabeth. "Borderline Girlhoods: Mental Illness, Adolescence, and Femininity in *Girl, Interrupted*." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2006, pp. 117–133., doi:10.1353/uni.2006.0009.

In Elizabeth Marshall's article, "Borderline Girlhoods: Mental Illness, Adolescence, and Femininity in *Girl, Interrupted*," she discusses the importance of the text's association with teenage girls and its representation of a "complex commentary on feminine coming-of-age" (117 Marshall). She also looks at how Kaysen relies on the figure of the mentally ill girl to comment on gendered practices that are meant to define feminine adolescence. Kaysen "returns to, and reorganizes, her girlhood in a way that disrupts the objectivity of psychiatric discourses that seek to press her particular experiences into a generalized trajectory of feminine development" (118 Marshall).

Marshall's first section of her article, "Girls, Theorized," discusses how feminine adolescence has been associated with "white, middle-class norms of femininity and linked to psychological risk" since its invention in the late 19th century (118 Marshall). It is always noted as a time for crisis to emerge and has been written about in numerous different ways -- most famously in Disney's film retellings of princess stories such as *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). Marshall claims that these representations being readily available to girls of that age group romanticizes the concept as a whole for them; however, it also makes larger cultural lessons about the needs of adolescent girls widely available. The importance behind Kaysen's story, however, is that it is a story about adolescent girls written by a woman who went through it.

In the next section of her article, "Girl, Remembered," Marshall claims Kaysen's appeal rests in the "complex ways in which she writes about mental illness" because while she writes for a young adult audience, she swerves from the "impulse to moralize about how people grow" aspect that most young adult memoirs have (119 Marshall). Kaysen instead allows herself to engage with the complexity and contradiction that stems from her experience. Her memoir is about not only her, but marks a cultural snapshot for 1960s psychiatric care as she has the twenty-five year gap between her admittance to McLean and writing the memoir, allowing her to experience second-wave feminism as well as new discoveries in psychiatry. This allows for her memoir to offer a "shift in perspective about adolescent girlhood and madness" (120 Marshall). In *Girl, Interrupted*, Kaysen rewrites her experience to make it about her rather than her case file. Marshall then spends the remainder of the article analyzing and detailing Kaysen's entire novel.

This article is useful to my thesis paper as it can help me understand Susanna Kaysen's novel, *Girl, Interrupted*, on a deeper level. It also holds analysis of Kaysen's experience to other similar ones such as Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Sylvia Plath in her novel *The Bell Jar*. Kaysen's ability to separate herself from society and the gendered norms she is subjected to allow her to analyze herself freely, and thus, allow the adolescent girls reading her novel to do the same.

Ramas, Maria. "Freud's Dora, Dora's Hysteria: The Negation of a Woman's Rebellion." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1980, p. 472., doi:10.2307/3177476.

In Maria Ramas's article, "Freud's Dora, Dora's Hysteria: The Negation of a Woman's Rebellion," she details the importance Dora's case study holds in the history of women's psychiatric care. Beginning with the history of the case study, she goes over what made Dora's case so infamous: the love affair, her repressed homosexuality, and the cast of characters that made it almost a story. She then goes on to say that if one were to analyze the case from a feminist perspective, Dora's story is actually a complex commentary on womanhood and hysteria in the late 19th century. Ramas gives the reader an overview of Dora, real name Ida Bauer, and the situation she finds herself in when her father's best friend, Husband of Frau K, attempts to form a sexual relationship with her. Ida deals with emotional turmoil as the men in her life insist that she is lucky to have been chosen. Theorist Steven Marcus said:

If we try to put ourselves in the place of this girl between her sixteenth and eighteenth years, we can at once recognize that her situation was a desperate one. The three adults to whom she was closest, whom she loved the most in the world, were apparently conspiring separately, in tandem, or in concert -- to deny her the reality of her experience. They were conspiring upon matters that might easily unhinge the mind of a young person; for the three adults were not betraying [Ida's] love and trust alone, they were betraying the structure of the actual world. (476 Ramas)

Because of this, the reader never truly receives Ida's account for how things have taken place. Instead they are force fed the narrative Freud has come up with for her. Ramas notes that instead of Freud explaining Ida's hysteria, sexuality, and actions, he rather explains it away. She claims this is because Freud's main argument is "fundamentally an ideological construct developed in defense of a patriarchal phantasy of femininity and female sexuality" (477 Ramas). This in itself impacts the entirety of Ida's treatment, diagnosis, and the validity of Freud's claims.

Ramas then goes on to explain the importance Ida Bauer's homosexuality holds to the story as Freud does not pursue this discovery nor does he consider it a negative thing. In that way, Freud holds a potentially more progressive stance on a woman's sexuality than many others of the time did. Despite this all, Ramas believes there is evidence to contradict Ida Bauer's supposed homosexuality entirely and takes the remainder of her article to point out contradictions throughout Freud's text. She basis it primarily off of Freud's obsession with the Oedipus/Electra complex and his incessant need to place that as the primary reason for everyone's psychological ailments. Ramas uses this to defend her thesis and prove that women can experience psychological ailments without it being at the hands of a male-related problem.

This article will prove useful in my thesis as I can use it to understand and analyze *Dora* from a feminist perspective. Additionally, it provides a lot of useful information regarding female mental health care during the late 19th century and how women of childbearing age were typically only "fixed" so that they could retain their ability to be satisfactory housewives.

Showalter, Elaine. "On Hysterical Narrative." *Narrative*, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan. 1993, pp. 24–35.

In Elaine Showalter's essay, "On Hysterical Narrative," she discusses the genre of the Hysterical Narrative which was the basis for Freud's *Dora*. The genre typically has to do with sharing the story of a "hysterical" young woman, but now it has become a synonym for women's writing and the woman's novel. Showalter notes that for the "hysterical narrative" there are two sides: the patient's story and the doctor's story; however she notes that

feminist critics, among others, drew attention to the ways that doctors' stories tended to dominate medical discourse, while *patients'* stories were modified; and the decline of "hysteria" as a medical phenomenon can be partly attributed to the understanding of its construction as a narrative. (24)

Classic hysteria is now no longer a diagnosable medical ailment as it was previously used as a blanket diagnosis for women, just as "hysterical narratives" can no longer be applied to modern day literature as it is seen as a "waste-basket term." Showalter mentions writers Julia Kristeva and Juliet Mirchell as women who defend the literary tradition of women's literature being the "discourse of the hysteric" as they believe all women novelists "must be [a] hysteric ... someone who simultaneously accepts and refuses the organization of sexuality under patriarchal capitalism" (25). Based on the number of women who defend it, Showalter wonders if this stigmatizing terminology can be redefined in the interests of feminism.

The "hysterical narrative" pre-dates Freud, as many women writers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman had begun to experiment with hysteria in the 1890s. These writers often used the term "hysteria" to "describe the consciousness of heroines expressing their repressed desires in stories they called 'fantasies,' 'fragments,' or 'dreams'" (25). Freud eventually used this as the basis for his diagnoses during his time. He found that this "hysterical narrative" featured women who were far too hysterical to tell complete stories about themselves, thus leading them to tell distorted information which Freud attributed to sexual repression (26).

As Freud attempted to claim the hysterical for his own diagnoses, one woman in particular tried to fight against this. Dora, from his case study titled *Dora*, refused to cooperate as he projected a version of her activities and feelings that she did not agree with. Freud had argued that Dora "had projected on to him her feelings of erotic attraction for her father and Herr K. and was punishing him with her rejection" (27). Showalter begins to look at the two possibilities: the idea that Freud is the reliable narrator and Dora is in fact hysterical, or the idea that Freud is the one suffering from a power trip in which he becomes the unreliable narrator of Dora's story. The latter seems more evident as within the text, Dora has absolutely no voice -- Freud holds it all for her. Showalter notes that he "never understands her story at all and simply tries to bully her into accepting his version of events ... [Freud] reflects his own obsessions with masturbation, adultery, and homosexuality [onto Dora]" (27). This forces Dora to never be the subject of her own narrative, but rather an object of Freud's.

This essay from Elaine Showalter will help me significantly with my analysis with Dora because it supports my theory that Dora had no claim to the story Freud told "for her." Additionally, it goes further into feminist theory and connects *Dora* to Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, another piece I am investigating for my paper.

Uroff, Margaret Dickie. "On Reading Sylvia Plath." *College Literature*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1979, pp. 121-128

In Margaret Dickie Uroff's article, "On Reading Sylvia Plath," she surveys the responses to readings of Plath to gauge its impactfulness in the feminist poetry scene. She begins by saying that reader responses to Plath's poetry are "never less than intense" as even the best students debate what Plath's true intentions behind the poem were (121). One thing that Uroff notes is that varying degrees of feminists interpret it differently:

Some mild feminists respond to what they take to be a genuine female voice articulating the rage, the fear, the energy of women. Radical feminists can be counted on to attack that notion, arguing that Plath completely internalized the values of the patriarchy, that she is no friend to women. Male students too have objections. Some attack the inadequacies of Plath's conception of women and of relationships. Others feel that she is not of sufficient stature to be read in a general survey of American literature. Still others feel that she is simply sick and should not be read at all. (121-122)

Uroff notes that these reactions are not from a general study, but from advanced literature classes she has taught, and she knows people unanimously have vast opinions on Plath. She begins to pick apart previous theories about Plath's work, eventually landing on the idea of how Plath's work can be used and dissected from a psychoanalytic view. The truth is that it is nearly impossible for anyone to find the root of Sylvia Plath's meaning in her poetry as she uses her art as a symbolic therapy.

As Plath is picked apart for psychoanalytic views, it is important to note that Plath herself had an in-depth understanding of poetry, thus, she knew exactly how they would come across and were written convoluted with purpose. Looking at the poem "Daddy," it is easy to see the writer's conscious manipulation of the reader, the "compulsive, ritualized suicide attempts" the speaker freely admits to, and her "need for acting out some of her feelings through ritual and even magic" (124). It cannot be extracted as raw data, but instead Plath's work must be looked at as a whole -- as an understanding of her. But, while reading Plath, it is important for the reader to understand that the speaker of her poems and her physical being are separate for the former is a caricaturist, exaggerated version of herself. This allows her to dissect herself along with her audience, allowing her to go from childish to womanly in a matter of moments. Uroff argues that because of this, Plath's poems must be read as a story and not a psychological analysis. The remainder of this essay is Uroff analyzing a few of Plath's other more famous poems.

This essay will benefit me in my research because it provides a basis to start my research on Sylvia Plath. As I have never researched Plath in an educational setting before, knowing Uroff's analysis as well as those she has agreed and disagreed with, it gives me the foundation to find my own interpretation.

The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination, by Sandra M. Gilbert et al., Yale University Press, 2020.

In the second chapter, “Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship” of Sandra M. Gilbert’s essay collection, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, she discusses how women have reclaimed and rewritten their literary history out of patriarchal hands. She begins by mentioning female book characters, specifically the Evil Queen from “Snow White,”

If the Queen’s looking glass speaks with the King’s voice, how do its perpetual kingly admonitions affect the Queen’s own voice? Since his is the chief voice she hears, does the Queen try to sound like the King, imitating his tone, his inflections, his phrasing, his point of view? Or does she “talk back” to him in her own vocabulary, her own timbre, insisting on her own viewpoint? (46 Gilbert)

Many early female authors stuck to replicating or imitating male voices because they knew it would get them farther than a female voice would. Gilbert notes that Western literary history is overwhelmingly male, and even books about women are written primarily by men, thus leading to a large discrepancy in material and facts. Where does the female poet fit into this? The female author? Is there room for her at the table with the great Western male authors?

Gilbert cites Juliet Mitchell’s analysis of Freud’s theory of psychosexual development which claims both the boy and the girl will want to take the father’s place, but “only the boy will one day be allowed to do so” (49 Gilbert). Both sexes repudiate the implications of femininity; however the girl will be subjected to a lower standing than that of her male counterpart solely based on their gender. Feminist critic, Elaine Showalter, suggested that women find their own separate realm of existence where their work can exist without comparison to that of the male literary geniuses -- away from a “male dominated literary culture” (50 Showalter). Gilbert goes on to explain how female authors suffer from severe anxiety related to displaying their craft as they consistently compare themselves to the men around them.

This essay is beneficial to my thesis as it helps me understand women’s overall history in the literary world. Without understanding the basis of everything, it becomes increasingly difficult to understand the layers that build upon.