Gender And Monstrosity in 19th and 20th c. British Literature

by

Joyce Heyeh

Submitted to the Board of Study in Literature
School of Humanities
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College
State University of New York
May 2020

Accepted

Lee Schlesinger, Sponsor

Anthony Domestico, Second Reader

Table of Contents

Joyce Heyeh
Sponsor: Lee Schlesinger

Gender And Monstrosity in 19th and 20th c. British Literature

The introduction to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's *Monster Theory* discusses Cohen's seven theses of monstrosity. For the purposes of this paper and throughout it, I plan on only discussing Theses One, Four and Six. I will elaborate more on each theory as it relates to the subjects discussed in this paper. The subjects covered in this paper include: the societal perception of Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and the label of "monster" assigned to him by the society within the novel. From there, this paper will discuss how Catherine is the only character who treats him with kindness and like a human being. The paper's second primary source will be Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which will focus on how Bertha was as a woman before she became a madwoman and how society viewed her. In this section of the paper, I will discuss Cohen's fourth and sixth theses of monstrosity, respectively The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference and Fear of the Monster is Really a Kind of Desire. With these theses, I will discuss how both Bertha's race and gender factor into her monstrosity and perception of her as a monster figure, as well as how the patriarchy constrains her and causes her to become mad as part of her escapism and desire to achieve freedom from the patriarchy. This project will also explore Bertha's personality and characteristics and compare them to Heathcliff's personality and discuss Bertha's gender limitations and the formation of the Madwoman and monster character as a way to escape the confines of the Patriarchy.

The project will also focus on a more modern interpretation of a female monster through the film adaptation of Stephen King's *Carrie,* focusing mainly on menstruation and the "Female Body Horror" concept and fear surrounding female bodies. From there, I will discuss the

character of Medea from Greek tragedies, exploring whether she is depicted as a villain or a heroine within and discuss how despite Medea's powers and perseverance, in Cornielle's version of the Medea character, she must ultimately still surrender to the patriarchy in order to achieve her freedom, signifying that Medea's society is still predominantly a male-dominated one in spite of a strong female lead character.

The paper's third chapter will highlight the female villains of classic fairytales such as the evil stepmother in *Snow White* and discuss an alternate reading to her "villain" status while also comparing her to Bertha and her struggles with identity and fighting with both the good and evil parts of herself. This will be followed by the concept of "monstrous children" as depicted through Angela Carter's twist on Caroll's *Alice In Wonderland* with the creation of Wolf-Alice and how she chooses to embrace her monstrosity. Lewis Carroll's Alice is also regarded as a "Fabulous Monster" by the creatures living in Wonderland. The project will also challenge the notion of a female villain within fairytales being completely "evil". Is she evil or merely a grieving maternal figure?

I will conclude with a brief overview of how the characters I have chosen overlap and blend with their monstrosity before moving to a more general view of how monstrosity behaves in literature. I will also discuss how to be monstrous is to be human and how everyone (fictional character or real-life human being) has a darker side and having that angrier, more sinister side is part of what makes us all human.

Cohen's first thesis The Monster's Body Is A Cultural Body applies to and relates the "monster" figures I have chosen together because Cohen's theory states, "The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety and fantasy, giving them life and an uncanny

independence" (Cohen, 4). The characters chosen for this project all experience a variety of emotions, including fear, desire and anxiety. Some worlds in which the literature is set comes from imagination and fantasy, such as the setting of Wonderland within Lewis Caroll's *Alice In Wonderland*. These fears, anxieties and desires all give the characters motivation or something to fight for, whether that fight is for love, freedom from patriarchal constraints, or being heroic and a "good" character misunderstood by the world who only sees him or her as being villainous and stereotypically evil in nature.

Chapter One

We all behave in monstrous ways; monstrosity goes beyond social class or gender, Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and the Societal Perception of Heathcliff resulting in his "monster" label

By nature, human beings are all monstrous or behave in monstrous ways. Monstrosity is not only defined by social class status or race, it can, in the case of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, be defined by Edgar Linton's jealousy or Catherine's manipulation. Monstrosity crosses social and gender lines and exists within all humans, regardless of that human's origins or how they came to exist in the world.

From the beginning of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights,* the society in the novel never referred to Heathcliff as 'he' or a person, and chose instead to refer to him as "it" which removed any human qualities from Heathcliff given that society sees Heathcliff as and views his nature as more animalistic than human. In her book of criticism *Seduction And Betrayal*, Elizabeth Hardwick compares Heathcliff's disappointment and rage in *Wuthering Heights* to the life of Emily Brontë's brother, Branwell. Hardwick writes, "It is not unreasonable to see the origin of some of Heathcliff's raging disappointment and disgust in Branwell's own excited sense of injury and betrayal. Emily Brontë took toward her brother an attitude of stocial pity and protectiveness" (Hardwick, 4-5). Despite Branwell's alcoholism and incessant ravings, Hardwick writes that Emily Brontë was always patient and cared for him constantly. However, in regards to *Wuthering Heights,* Hardwick criticizes Emily Brontë for having "an unromantic driven egotism in the characters, a lack of moral longings" which she claims is "odd in the work of a daughter of a clergy-man" (Hardwick, 7).

Due to his low class status, the society around Heathcliff viewed him as being inferior and his low class status contributed greatly to the public referring to him as "it" rather than giving him human characteristics. Earnshaw saw Heathcliff "starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb, in the streets of Liverpool where he picked it up and inquired for its owner — Not a soul knew to whom it belonged, he said, and his money and time, being both limited, he thought it better to take it home with him, at once" (Brontë, 35). At first, both Catherine and Hindley "entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room" however after awhile, "Miss Cathy and he were now very thick" (Brontë, 35-36). Catherine and Heathcliff slowly become friends and begin going on adventures and causing mischief together.

One central theme within Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is social class status and how social status affects Catherine's love for Heathcliff and the lowering of her own class status if she chooses to marry him instead of Edgar Linton. "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now; so he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" (Bronte, 78). Catherine believes that herself and Heathcliff are deeply intertwined as human beings to the point where they are almost the same person. However, due to his low class status, it would ultimately be degrading to Catherine if she decides to marry Heathcliff over Edgar Linton. Catherine believes Heathcliff is "more myself than I am" and understands her in a way even she herself cannot. In *Seduction And Betrayal,* Hardwick writes, "*Wuthering Heights* is a virgin's story. Cathy is as hard, careless, and destructive as Heathcliff. She too has a sadistic nature. The love the two feel for each other is a longing for an impossible completion" (Hardwick, 8). Catherine's similarity to Heathcliff is what draws them together and creates an

unbreakable bond between Brontë's central characters. Hardwick argues that what is interesting about Catherine as a character for readers is that Emily Brontë chose to have her and Heathcliff at the center of *Wuthering Heights* and declares that if Charlotte or Anne Brontë had written *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine would have been "a shallow beauty, analyzed and despaired by a reasonable, clever and deprived heroine" (Hardwick, 7). Catherine's wildness and trivial beauty would have been critiqued by Charlotte or Anne's central character, yet Hardwick maintains that the world of *Wuthering Heights* is a "created, imagined world as removed from the governess-novels of the other sisters as any world could be" (Hardwick, 7). Had *Wuthering Heights* been written by Anne or Charlotte Brontë, Catherine's 'wild' personality would have categorized her as being "monstrous" or even a madwoman. However, Emily Brontë explores this wildness, and often embraces it, as shown through how headstrong Catherine is and her captivating use of language to describe the love Catherine feels for Heathcliff and vice versa.

The bond that Catherine and Heathcliff have is unbreakable in Catherine's mind because she believes she has symbolically experienced every hardship Heathcliff has during his lifetime. Catherine attempts to describe this bond she has to Heathcliff by stating, "My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and, if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn into a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it" (Bronte, 79). Everything Heathcliff has experienced in his life, Catherine has also symbolically experienced. "I watched and felt each from the beginning" (79). Ever since knowing Heathcliff, Catherine has watched him as he experienced struggles and discrimination throughout his life and states in this moment to Nelly that she has

felt every hardship Heathcliff has experienced and all the misery Heathcliff felt, Catherine felt. Her sole purpose for continuing to live in the world is Heathcliff. Catherine depends on Heathcliff for her survival so much so that if everything else perished and he remained, she could still continue living. However if he somehow ceased to exist, the universe would become unrecognizable to Catherine and she would no longer wish to remain on the earth since her reason for living is gone. Heathcliff is willing to do anything to win Catherine's love, and she behaves monstrously in that she manipulates the love both Heathcliff and Edgar have for her. When Edgar asks Catherine to choose between himself and Heathcliff, Catherine is unable to and instead chooses to lock herself in her room and refuses food for two days. Catherine knows this will hurt them both, and yet chooses to do this because she is both a coward and selfish in wanting both Heathcliff and Edgar's love and at the same time, being unable to face Edgar and confess that she will always love Heathcliff more because they share one heart and soul in a way she never will with Edgar Linton.

Brontë uses nature and seasons changing as a metaphor to depict the difference between Catherine's love for Edgar and her love for Heathcliff. This allows readers to get a glimpse of Catherine's more personal thoughts as the story unfolds."My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees — my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath — a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff — He's always, always in my mind — not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself - but, as my own being" (Bronte, 79-80). Catherine's love for Heathcliff is permanent while her love for Linton is liable to change with the seasons which is why Bronte uses the simile of "foliage in the woods" (79). Her love for Heathcliff is necessary

for Catherine's survival in the world as well as being her only will to continue living. She further solidifies the notion that her love for Heathcliff is all that motivates her to live by stating "I *am* Heathcliff...he's always, always in my mind...as my own being" (79-80). In Catherine's mind, her and Heathcliff are so completely connected that it is difficult to view them as two separate beings. Unlike other characters in the novel who view Heathcliff as a monster because he is of a lower class, violent and unclean, Catherine is able to view Heathcliff for the human he is and is even able to love him deeply because she knows his true nature. She thinks about him more than she thinks about Edgar because her love for Heathcliff is much stronger than the love she feels for Edgar, and she understands Heathcliff more due to their similarities and intertwined being.

Despite being referred to as a "gipsy" and "plough-boy" by Edgar in the past, when Heathcliff returns after leaving for some time, Edgar is unsure of how to address him once he perceives Heathcliff's transformation (Bronte, 92). Through Nelly's eyes, readers can see that Heathcliff's "countenance was much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr, Linton's; it looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation. A half-civilized ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows, and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified, quite divested of roughness" (Bronte, 93). Growing up, Heathcliff has always been wild which is how people began referring to him as a 'gipsy'. His eyes were always described as having or being black fire and there was a ferocity about him. The fact only a "half-civilized ferocity" lurked on Heathcliff's face and "his manner was even dignified, quite divested of roughness" shocks Edgar to the point where he does not know how to address him. "My master's surprise equalled or exceeded mine: he remained for a minute at a loss on how to address the plough-boy, as he had called him...Sit down, sir, he said at length" (Bronte, 93).

Heathcliff's seemingly civilized manner shocks Edgar and Nelly and by calling Heathcliff 'sir,' Linton is now acknowledging this change in Heathcliff and attempting to show respect towards him, which is something Linton never showed to the younger version of Heathcliff when they met. In fact, after Catherine and Heathcliff are caught spying on Edgar and Isabella Linton when they are younger and Catherine is bitten by their bulldog, both Catherine and Heathcliff are brought into the house. Heathcliff is called many names by the Linton household including "frightful thing" by Isabella, "villain", "gipsy", and "wicked boy" by various other family members (Bronte, 48). When Mr. Linton pulls Heathcliff under the chandelier light so his family can see him, Mr. Linton states, "Don't be afraid, it is but a boy - yet the villain scowls so plainly in his face, would it not be a kindness to the country to hang him at once, before he shows his nature in acts, as well as features?" (Bronte, 48). Mr. Linton is quick to assume the worst in Heathcliff just by viewing his counterfeit under the light. He immediately labels him as a villain and states to Mrs. Linton that if Heathcliff were hung, it would be doing a great kindness to the entire country because Linton believes Heathcliff's ferocious nature can only lead to a criminal future and believes it will be better for everyone if he is hanged at once. Isabella Linton (the daughter) does not even refer to Heathcliff as a human being but instead refers to Heathcliff as a "thing" as though he is merely an animal instead of a boy. "Frightful thing! Put him in the cellar, papa" Isabella states which reduces Heathcliff to nothing more than an animal in her mind. When Edgar states that Catherine is Miss Earnshaw, Mrs. Linton does not believe him or believe Catherine would be "scouring the country with a gipsy" (Bronte, 48). Mrs. Linton knows Catherine comes from a well-respected family and does not understand why she would choose to have company like Heathcliff. She further states that Heathcliff is "a wicked boy, at all events

and quite unfit for a decent house! Did you notice his language, Linton? I'm shocked that my children should have heard it" (Bronte, 48). When he was younger, Heathcliff cursed a lot which only added to the public's perception of him as a gipsy and low-life. Mrs. Linton believes Heathcliff is unfit for any well-respected household and belongs back on the street with other gipsies and people of his own kind.

Edgar always viewed Heathcliff as a gipsy and believes he was superior to Heathcliff because he was from a well-respected family instead of taken off the streets by Catherine's father the way Heathcliff was at the start of his life. Thus, seeing Heathcliff as a changed man in front of him many years later understandably shocks Edgar because he has only ever seen Heathcliff as being inferior to himself and does not know how to react now that Heathcliff is a dignified man and someone worthy of being called sir.

In her book of criticism *Seduction and Betrayal,* Hardwick writes, "In *Wuthering Heights*, the characters are struggling with an inner tyranny, a psychic trap more terrible than the cruelty of society. The characters feed upon themselves and each other...The young people of the two families have only the trap of each other and the tyranny of the past" (Hardwick, 7). This description of Brontë's characters portrays multiple characters as being monstrous, rather than just Heathcliff. Hardwick means the characters are all struggling with themselves and an inner sense of suppression or repression, which emerges in the form of vicious dehumanization through language hence the characters' need to "feed upon themselves and each other" and are trapped in past relationships and feelings of inferiority and paranoia. Heathcliff marries Isabella and as a result, separates her from her family and those she loved. He manipulated Isabella into loving him and was also able to achieve his revenge in a way against Edgar for marrying

Heathcliff's true love, Catherine. Heathcliff wanted to hurt Edgar the way he hurt him and found a fitting way to do so, which played into his monstrous personality. The verbal torments Edgar inflicted upon Heathcliff when they were younger make Edgar monstrous as well, regardless of his social standing. His anger toward Heathcliff and constant need to compete for Catherine's love cause both Heathcliff and Edgar to "feed upon themselves and each other" like Hardwick states, because revenge on each other is the only thing that will satisfy their strife to win Catherine's heart and right any wrongs they both believe the other did to them in the past and finally having revenge will in their mind, heal the wounds they have from their intertwined past. In reality, this behavior makes them both monstrous in a different way that Catherine is monstrous because while she manipulates both men for her love, Heathcliff and Edgar Linton's monstrosity stems from their past together and is based off of anger and in Heathcliff's case, constantly being reminded that he will always be inferior to Edgar, and he tirelessly tries to disprove that and show Catherine he is worthy of her love and is not the 'gipsy' and 'villain' he is known as in the public eye.

Monstrosity crosses social and gender lines as shown through Catherine's manipulation of the people she loves, her selfishness in loving Heathcliff and Edgar, Edgar's anger at Heathcliff and Heathcliff's emotion-driven revenge and hatred of Edgar which dates back to when they were all children. As evidenced through these three characters in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, monstrosity can appear in a person through emotions, not merely one's physical appearance or a person's social status, because monstrosity exists inside us all and cannot only be determined by and limited to outward appearance, race, gender or birth origins.

Chapter Two

Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*—Bertha's Gender Limitations and Formation of the Madwoman/Monster Character As A Way To Escape The Patriarchy, Silencing of the Female Voice, *Carrie* and male fear of Female Body Horror, Medea: Heroine or Murderous Villain—Mens' fear of witchcraft and sorcery, Medea's ironic forced submission to the patriarchy in order to gain freedom from it

Gender and race play a large role in determining Antoinette's monstrosity within Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea,* while her desire to escape the confines of patriarchal society are what drive her into becoming a madwoman, or a 'monstrous' being. The society within *Wide Sargasso Sea* views Antoinette as being monstrous due to her Jaminican race, her darker skin and the fact she is a woman, which causes the predominantly white European society within the novel to fear her greatly. Thus, what causes the society around Antoinette to fear her and deem her monstrous stems from both her skin color or race, and the fact she transforms into a madwoman and haunts Thornfield.

Doubling is a prevalent theme in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, particularly towards the end of the novel when "Bertha" begins to become a complete madwoman. It begins with Antoinette's recurring dreams about a fire and every time she becomes the madwoman, she dissociates and loses her memory about the acts she commits and believes it is a dream.

When she attacks her brother Richard as the madwoman, she has no memory of the attack when Grace Poole asks her about it. Antoinette simply states, "If I had been wearing my red dress Richard would have known me" and when Antonitee looked at her red dress, "it was as if the fire had spread across the room. It was beautiful and it reminded me of something I must do" (110-111). Every time Antoinette has the "dream", she learns something new about what she believes she needs to do, and knows that fire is an important part. "That was the third time I had

my dream, and it ended. I know now that the flight of steps leads to this room where I lie watching the woman sleep with her head on her arms. In my dream, I waited till she began to snore, then I got up, took the keys and let myself out with a candle in my hand. It was easier this time than ever before and I walked as though I was flying" (111). In these "dreams". Antoniette is actually the madwoman and takes the keys to let herself out of the room after Grace Poole is asleep. Antoniette believes she has a higher purpose and it isn't until she thinks she sees the ghost of "the woman with the streaming hair" that Antoniette's purpose becomes clear (111). "I went into the hall again with the tall candle in my hand. It was then that I saw her—the ghost. The woman with the streaming hair. She was surrounded by a gilt frame but I knew her" (111-112). Rhys uses the symbolism of having the madwoman in a gilt frame to represent the fact she is untouchable until Antoinette fully realizes and embraces that part of herself. Before Antoinette sees the "ghost", she believes "someone was following me, someone was chasing me, laughing" (111). Antoinette is haunted by the ghost woman but does not realize the ghost is part of herself and even makes sure to never look behind her while she's walking because she "did not want to see that ghost of a woman who they say haunt this place" (111). She believes she is completely separate from the ghost woman and Antoniette even fears the ghost woman and never wants to encounter her.

In her review titled *"Monsters and Madwomen"* of Gilbert and Gubar's book *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Shirley Foster states that Gilbert and Gubar believe "because women writers have been caught in the male-projected angel/monster paradigm—that is, they are forced to see themselves either as submissive, loving "angels in the house" or as monstrous evil creatures striving against patriarchal authority—they create melodramatic, mad characters who,

coexisting with their more conventional heroines, act as authorial doubles' (95). Creating a madwoman would allow Brontë to symbolically escape from the patriarchy through her writing. Given the time period, Charlotte Brontë and Jean Rhys could not fully express themselves within society, and were expected to submit to the patriarchy and remain in the household. Thus, Brontë created a character who is normal in the beginning but has a familial history of madness, and is eventually able to rebel against and break free of the patriarchal bonds of society confining a woman through embracing her 'destiny' and becoming a madwoman herself.

Antoniette regains power and control over the patriarchy by burning down the house at the end of the novel. She has always been oppressed and by physically burning down the house and embracing her madness, she is at her most powerful and feared by the people around her because they believe she is a monster. When Rochester gives her the name Bertha, he is controlling her in that moment by literally giving her another name and when he repeatedly calls her Bertha, he is stripping her of her actual identity as Antoniette and attempting to mold her into someone she is not. "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name" (88). By renaming her Bertha, Rochester is silencing Antoinette as a character. As mentioned in the introduction, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's fourth thesis of monstrosity is titled: The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference. In this thesis, Cohen states, "...for the most part monstrous difference tends to be cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual" (Cohen, 7). Renaming Antoinette as Bertha makes it seem as though she was never Jamacian in the first place, and the fact she is Jamacian and a woman is a huge part of what makes her monstrous to other characters. Rochester seeks to tame her wildness and repress her Jamacian identity through changing her name to the more American "Bertha". Cohen elaborates claiming,

"From the classical period into the twentieth century, race has been almost as powerful a catalyst to the creation of monsters as culture, gender, and sexuality" (Cohen, 10). Many poeple likened non-white skin to being sinful and that darker skin was viewed as being monstrous and played a role in determining the assumptions of monstrosity within this time frame.

Pliny, the Roman naturalist "assumed nonwhite skin to be symptomatic of a complete difference in temperature and attributed Africa's darkness to climate; the intense heat, he said, had burned the Africans' skin and malformed their bodies" (Cohen, 10). Furthermore, an anonymous commentator to Theodulus's Ecloga stated that "Ethiopians, that is, sinners. Indeed, sinners can rightly be compared to Ethiopians, who are black men presenting a terrifying appearance to those beholding them" (Cohen, 10). Jamaicans were treated as "the other" by their white colonists and created barriers for Antoinette as a character, because of the dark skin tone of Jamacians. They were viewed as being inferior to the Europeans who seeked to control them as a people and enslaved them. Since Antoinette was female and her skin was so dark in comparison, the public society around her in the novel easily victimized her and deemed her entirely monstrous and sinful, especially after the events associated with Bertha as a madwoman. Women were to be feared and Antoinette's long dark hair only seemed to prove her society right in viewing Bertha a dangerous and monstrous madwoman.

Cohen's sixth thesis of monstrosity is: Fear of the Monster is Really a Kind of Desire. He states, "The same creatures who terrify can evoke potent escapist fantasies; the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster all the more appealing" (Cohen, 17). Though the character of a madwoman is scary to think about, it also provides readers with an alternate reality of sorts and a way of escaping their mundane lives and entering one of intrigue and

mystery. Readers are able to escape their problems and get a glimpse into the problems of characters within fictional stories and imagined settings. Cohen continues, "We distrust and loathe the monster at the same time we envy its freedom, and perhaps its sublime despair" (Cohen, 17). Antoinette experiences despair at her patriarchal constraints, which prevent her from achieving any desires due to how the dominating male-driven society binds and limits her. She is therefore forced to embrace her madness as a way of escaping from these restrictions and finally gaining freedom over those who seeked to repress her spirit as well as her character in its entirety.

While some conservative authors write stories which represent female desires and dreams as being dangerous to their female characters, feminist authors in contrast, encourage their young readers to pursue their dreams through showing that it is possible through the quests and obstacles their female characters encounter and overcome. In her essay "Escape from Wonderland: Disney and the Female Imagination", Deborah Ross uses Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* as a lens in her essay to illustrate the different plot patterns of stories and fairytales directed towards young girls. Ross states, "From that time till the present, conservative authors have used romance and novels to teach girls that their dreams are dangerous and of little relevance to their daily lives. Progressive or feminist authors, on the other hand, have encouraged young women readers' belief in fantasy to help them visualize what they want, perhaps as a first step toward going after it" (Ross, 55). In Antoinette's case, she is attempting to fulfill a destiny and is trapped in a loveless marriage with a controlling husband. In Andersen's story, Ariel is "willing to spend all she has: her voice, her health, and eventually her life. She buys new legs, from which blood oozes with every step, by letting the sea witch cut out her

tongue" (Ross, 58). Furthermore, "the permanent loss of her voice means playing dumb in more ways than one, as she can only listen demurely…" alludes to the symbolic and literal silencing of the female voice and in the case of Bertha, the silencing of females within a mainly patriarchal society and solidifying the inferior role of women in comparison to men. Antoinette longs to escape the patriarchy and must sacrifice something for her freedom, similar to the way Ariel sacrifices her voice for human legs. In Antoinette's case, her sanity is sacrificed to achieve her own freedom and escape Rochester and a loveless marriage.

In her essay "Monster Pains: Masochism, Menstruation, and Identification in the Horror Film.", Aviva Briefel argues that while masochism is crucial to the creation of male monsters, "the female counterpart to the act of self-mutilation is menstruation, a narrative event that positions the audience in an uncomfortably close relationship to the female monster" (16). Male monsters begin their violent acts with acts of self-mutilation, and Briefel argues that "when the female monster engages in masochistic acts, she does so either by coercion from an outside force or as a way of terminating her monstrosity" (21). This is the opposite of how Rhys portrays Antoinette/Bertha and the reasoning behind her actions in *Wide Sargasso Sea.* Bertha becomes a madwoman and burns down the house as an act of rebellion against the patriarchy and does not commit any truly heinous acts. However, Bertha is forced to become a madwoman because of Rochester's controlling ways, so in that sense, she is coerced into the madness because of her controlling husband and how he treats her.

Briefel further argues that "the female monster denies us the space and numbness afforded by the male monster's masochism" (22). Briefel cites the film *Carrie* and states that the audience is meant to share a "suffocating intimacy" with Carrie through her telekinesis power.

Carrie's telekinesis is "an unwanted power that projects her into the surrounding world" (22-23). As a result, the audience sympathizes with Carrie and "we are firmly situated in the body of the suffering teenager" (22). The audience feels what Carrie feels and "Carrie reacts to her suffering as one might, by crying and screaming, rather than by enjoying or controlling her pain. Because Carrie is unable to stop feeling pain, she cannot use it as effectively as her male counterparts, whose violence often displays an obsessive control" (22). She is forced to react through her emotions, the way women and female monsters are expected to, instead of reacting physically and violently, which is how society allows male monsters to react. Briefel believes "the female monster denies us the space and numbness afforded by the male monster's masochism" because the audience identifies with Carrie and experiences all that she experiences. Briefel argues that "the menstrual plot draws both male and female viewers into a painful identification with the monster" (24). The fact that horror originates from inside the female body is what allows audiences to identify with the monster figure.

This connects to the sympathy audiences feel towards a female character or the monstrous female body because in a way, audiences become one with the character, and experience all of the highs and lows the character does and follows the character as she attempts to navigate through life. Briefel cites Shelley Stamp Lindsey's essay on *Carrie*, and quotes Lindsey, "In charting Carrie's path to mature womanhood, the film presents female sexuality as monstrous and constructs femininity as a subject position impossible to occupy". While Lindsey believes the monstrous female body is "impossible to occupy" and understand completely, Briefel refutes Lindsey's argument by stating, "I would argue that the female monstrous body is completely knowable, that it is one of the main sites of predictability in these films. The viewer

is trained to expect that once the female body bleeds, it will breed a very predictable form of horror" (24). She goes on to state, "This predictability compounds our identification with the female monster—her changes and pain become our own" (24). The audience expects that once a female 'monster' bleeds, the act of bleeding leaving the female body is a form of horror in and of itself.

Masochistic males alienate audiences and thus, male monster characters and the audience are not as deeply interwoven as female monsters and their relationship to the audience. Briefel credits this to the randomness of sudden violence and masochistic tendencies stating, "The randomness of the masochistic moment shocks us into alienation and forces us to step back from what is to come; we experience the fear of the chase, but with the understanding that we are not really a part of it" (24). In contrast with female monsters, male monster characters keep audiences at a distance because the audience is unable to fully relate to the violent acts that the male monster commits throughout a novel or film. The main characteristic of male monsters or villains is violence, and audiences are not able to glimpse their innermost thoughts the way they can with female monsters.

Briefel argues that from the audience's perspective, the male monster's predictability "has little to do with the monsters themselves, whose mystery and terror depend on our distance from them. On the other hand, the menstrual plt displaces this generic predictability onto the female monster's body, forcing us to realize that we know her cramps and cycles as much as if they were her own" (24). The act of having one's period is extremely relatable to female audiences, whereas it is difficult for female audiences to relate to masochistic male characters because there is no distinguishing or particularly relatable experience between female audience

members and male monsters. The direct connection between female monsters menstruating (or the simple act of bleeding) and human women is obvious and part of why audiences are more able to relate to the female monsters in films. Thus, the "uncomfortably close" relationship audiences have with female monsters allows audience members to sympathize more with female monsters than with male monsters (17).

In Carolyn Durham's article "Medea: Hero or Heroine?", Durham states that Medea becomes female again after her act of heroism which is actually a murder. "Medea's ultimate act of heroism results in the murder of her children. When Medea is masculine, she is good, but when she is bad, even though this results only from carrying male characteristics to an extreme, she becomes female again" (57). This ties into the patriarchal belief that women are wild, mad and are to be feared when they are too powerful. The instant Medea commits a crime, she is "bad" again and all the masculine qualities she once had that made her good immediately disappear and she becomes a woman again who is capable of such crimes as murdering her own children.

This violent and bloody act of murder contrasts the belief that males are the only people capable of violence and that the woman's place is in the home, staying silent and submissive to her husband. The act of murder is Medea's way of rebelling against patriarchial constrainsts and she herself understand that "her own unnatural acts, her willingness to betray her father and to kill her brother, and not her magic powers, were the essential factors in the successful quest for the golden fleece" (57). In Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman* in the *Attic,* "Medea's fearful powers originate in her "grotto", the witch's cave whose womb shape makes it the central seat of female power" (58). The womb shape is a direct relation to the female body and a source of pure

feminine power. However, Durham argues that in Medea's case, "female power is viewed as destructive, Medea uses for her own purposes that most maternal power of life and death over men" (58). By killing her sons, medea is exerting female power in a way men fear and has the ability to take the force of life away from mankind. The violent act of murdering her children labels Medea as a character to be feared, because men believe women should not behave so unnaturally or commit any acts of violence, especially against their own family. However, Medea once again becomes traditionally "female" in the eyes of Jason who desires her to play the role of a scapegoat and "to assume all of Jason's crimes so that he stands cleansed and innocent" (58). In Corneille's version of the *Medea* play, Creon tells Medea,

"Give him back his innocence by going away from here;
Bear to other regions your insolent anger;
Your herbs, your poisons, your pitiless heart,
And all that ever made Jason guilty." (III.ii.467-70).

Despite being an extremely powerful and feared woman, in the end, Medea bows down to the patriarchy and agrees to Creon's terms and leaves Jason. This act of submission is what labels her as a "traditional female" again, according to Judith Fetterly. Durham argues that "in *Medea,* Corneille appears to value maleness even if incarnated in women, and devalue femaleness even if represented by men" (58). She comes to the conclusion that "the assumption that women can achieve the stature of protagonists in masculine genres—or, at least , the assumption that they can achieve such stature with any frequency—may be too optimistic" (59).

Medea is able to achieve some form of individual identity as a murderess, or is at least able to break away from a patriarchal society by having men fear her, but ultimately still leaves Jason in the end because a male authoritative figure tells her to. Medea exerts her power through violent murders and poisonings, however ultimately must still listen to the same patriarchal society she is attempting to escape from.

In this way, Medea's desire to escape the patriarchy mirrors that of Antoinette's. While Medea is able to use magic and is a sorceress and Antoinette is human, they both desire the same goal which is to escape the confines of the patriarchy and gain freedom to be unrestrained by rules or obligations. Medea's "pitiless heart" as well as her murderous deeds deem her 'monstrous' yet Jason's manipulation and the way he forces Medea to be compliant and become the scapegoat reveals his monstrosity as well. He seeks to control Medea the way Rochester controlled Antoinette by changing her name to Bertha and essentially ignoring and burying her past identity and heritage entirely. By submitting to the patriarchy in order to ironically, leave it and keep her powers intact, Corneille's version of Medea gives up her love of Jason in exchange for her freedom but not before being forced to comply with said patriarchy. Though Medea was not able to achieve one last defining act against the patriarchy the way Bertha did by setting fire to Thornfield and everything it represented, Medea was able to gain her freedom in a way that did not require her sacrificing her life by dying the way Antoinette was forced to as the madwoman burning down Thornfield.

While both women behaved monstrously, the patriarchy is the true monster and seemingly inescapable 'character' within these stories. Both Medea and Antoinette did behave in ways considered monstrous, however the patriarchal society is ultimately what caused them to

turn into ‘monsters’ because trying to escape the patriarchy as ordinary ‘silent’ women simply had no effect. Thus, both Medea and Antoinette resorted to drastic measures such as murdering your own children and surrendering to madness in order to finally dissolve the shackles of patriarchy which tethered them to their controlling society for so long.

Chapter Three

Evil Stepmother Figure In *Snow White*—is she evil or a grieving maternal figure? "Monstrous Children"; Can monstrosity be embraced? Angela Carter's "Wolf-Alice" and how she embraces her monstrous side, Lewis Carroll's Alice regarded as a "Fabulous Monster" in Wonderland

Are fairytale villains truly evil or are they given this label because they are misunderstood by the characters around them? Can children be viewed as monstrous and willing to live as more monstrous than human? These are the questions being asked in this section and I will begin by using Shuli Barzali's essay "Reading 'Snow White': The Mother's Story.", which offers an alternative reading to the villainous character of the Evil Queen in *Snow White*. From there, the paper will discuss the concept of dueling personalities within characters, specifically a character's "good" vs. "evil" sides. This will be followed by the notion of monstrous children such as Angela Carter's version of Caroll's Alice which depicts the kind Alice as a monstrous "Wolf-Alice". After all, children can possess as many monstrous tendencies as an adult character and may be more fearless in embracing their monstrosity and in Wolf-Alice's case, a human child could even prefer living like a so-called "monster" as opposed to living like a normal human. This section will discuss an alternate reading of a character known to readers as being traditionally "evil" and the interpretation used will seek to portray her in a different light as someone more maternal and grieving. Angela Carter's character of Wolf-Alice proves that even if you were born human and not born a monster or a creature who isn't human, you are not limited to your humanity. You can embrace a more wild, unrestrained side of yourself and choose to live like that. What others may view as monstrous behavior, Wolf-Alice views as being free.

Typically, in fairytales, the role of the stepmother is an evil one, and she is a person who brings nothing but suffering to the princess or female character of the story. However, some critics have offered the reading of the "evil" stepmother as a maternal figure grieving over the fact that her child is growing up and becoming independent. This alternate reading challenges the idea of stepmothers always being the villainous character in otherwise joyful stories with a happy ending. They represent an obstacle in the hero or heroine's life and unless the evil is defeated, the villain and obstacle will hinder the happy endings of those who are virtuous and heroic in the story. Along with evil villains, in certain stories such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland* and Angela's Carter's novel *The Blood Chamber*, children and girls in particular can be viewed as monstrous by the characters around them.

In her essay "Reading 'Snow White': The Mother's Story.", Barzali argues that the story of Snow White is "the story of two women, a mother and a daughter; a mother who cannot grow up and a daughter who must" (534). Barzali states that within the story and its conflict, the patriarchal society imposes two opposing images upon women. These opposing images are the roles of the angel and the monster. "The monster may not only be concealed *behind* the angel, she may actually turn out to reside *within* (or in the lower half of) the angel" (519). Thus, the two images can be intertwined and "Snow White epitomizes an image of femininity—"patriarchy's angelic daughter"—that the rebellious queen actively rejects" (519). Snow White is obedient which is favored by the patriarchy hence "patriachy's daughter" while the queen's rejection of docile femininity and consequently, the patriarchy, causes the queen to be immortalized in text as a monstrous and evil being. Essentially, be a good, obedient girl or society will see that disobedience and rebellion is punished through giving said rebellious character the label of

"evil" and that character will be deemed a monster and someone to be feared by all other characters in the story.

Dueling halves of one personality is a common theme within literature and this does not exclude fairytales. In fact, in Barzali's essay, she has two characters embody each of the dueling sides of a personality; Snow White as the "good" side of a person, and the Evil Queen representing a person's darker and more sinister side. Barzilai goes on to state that "the competition between Snow White and the queen turns into a struggle for survival between two halves of a single personality" (520). This relates to the struggle Bertha experiences with the two sides of herself in *Wide Sargasso Sea*—the mad and therefore free woman and the patriarchy-bred submissive, dutiful wife. When the evil queen finds out Snow White is more beautiful than herself, "it is only then that the queen undergoes a change of heart and she begins to rage against her growing step-daughter" (527). In a similar way, Bertha's madness is her way of raging and rebelling against the patriarchy and its goal to silence women and force them to become docile and obedient. In order to break away from the constricting patriarchy, Bertha is forced to embrace her 'monster' side and give up her submissive 'angel' side. The Evil Queen's jealousy over Snow White's increasing beauty is part of what makes her monstrous and transforms her from Barzali's reading of a maternal mother figure, into the Evil Stepmother figure known to readers today. Feelings such as anger, jealousy and hatred are all part of what makes a person "monstrous" and the Queen is capable of feeling all of these emotions upon learning of Snow White's beauty. As a result, the Queen's monstrosity shows as she surrenders into the more sinister side of herself which was always present within her, despite how suppressed it was throughout her time as a mother.

In her essay, Barzali also touches upon maternal loss of a child and in this case, the loss the Queen feels when Snow White leaves her to live with the dwarves, thereby relinquishing the power and control the Queen believed she had over Snow White and her actions. In order to describe the maternal loss the evil queen feels when Snow White goes to live with the dwarfs, Barzali brings in Freudian theory which states, "The mirror images the mother's wound. The child of her own making finds completion without her" (530). When Snow White goes to live with the seven dwarfs, she physically separates herself from the Queen and frees herself from her more sinister side. Barzali writes, "this distancing is a symbol of maternal loss. It signals the disruption of a dream of exclusive and everlasting attachment" (530). Snow White no longer needs the maternal figure in her life and without feeling needed, the queen is lost and can no longer maintain the control she once had over Snow White and her actions.

Often, adult characters within fairytales and children's literature are viewed as the monstrous ones, however, children can be just as if nor more monstrous in nature than their adult counterparts as evidenced through the different versions of Lewis Carroll's Alice. This part of the project will briefly discuss Angela Carter's version of Alice in *Wolf-Alice*, the short story within Carter's collection of fiction titled *The Bloody Chamber*. This spin on Caroll's Alice depicts her as being a feral child, one who is raised by wolves and as a result already deemed a monstrous character. Furthermore, Carter allies "Wolf-Alice" with a man who masquerades around as a wolf-man and through this union, both characters are viewed as monstrous and repulsive in nature.

In her essay "Fearless Children and Fabulous Monsters: Angela Carter, Lewis Carroll, and Beastly Girls." , Veronica Schanoes argues that for authors Angela Carter and Lewis Carroll,

"To live on the wrong side of the mirror is to become a monster" (31) and that "to be a monster is to be out of one's own place, to be on the wrong side of the mirror" (31). Schanoes cites the moment Lewis Carroll's version of Alice emerges from the looking-glass, writing that Alice discovers that she becomes the monster or beast in the story. Schanoes quotes Carroll, "This is a child!" the White King's messenger tells the unicorn. The Unicorn responds by exclaiming, "I always thought that they were fabulous monsters!" The Unicorn introduces Alice to the Lion by stating, "It's a fabulous monster!" (Schanoes, 31). Throughout the rest of the chapter, Alice is referred to as a monster by other creatures. The other creatures in Wonderland have no experience seeing children with their own eyes, and because the Unicorn first deemed Alice monstrous, so she is in the eyes of Wonderland's other inhabitants. The Lion in particular, is unsure what to make of Alice and is confused at what she is, stating "Are you animal—or vegetable—or mineral?" and calls her "Monster" only, as opposed to the Unicorn's description of "fabulous monster" (Carroll, 195). The Lion has never seen a child and thus, is unaware of what one looks like and assumes she is another kind of strange creature or inanimate object. Alice is given the title "Monster" by Wonderland's other inhabitants because she is different from anything the other creatures have seen and is automatically viewed as being 'other' or strange in nature and existence. Alice is considered monstrous because of how odd and abnormal human beings are to the other creatures who reside in Wonderland, who have never laid eyes upon another human, much less a little girl.

Angela Carter's version of Alice is more feral and wild, hence "Wolf-Alice". She is unrestrained in nature, thereby representing a more mature, fearless and uncivilized version of Carroll's original Alice. Despite the fact she is a human, she behaves in a wolf-like manner,

choosing to howl instead of speaking and running like a wolf on all fours. Schanoes states that "both Carter and Carroll emphasize the affinity between children and monsters: Carter by allying Wolf-Alice with a man who masquerades as a wolf-man but is a Duke by day and Carroll by emphasizing the relative nature of the category of the monster" (31). Wolf-Alice is an animal in every sense except physical appearance, given that she is a human woman. In all other ways, she behaves exactly the way a wolf would. This unusual behavior makes her appear monstrous to those around her , except in the eyes of the Wolf-man. In contrast to Carroll's version of Alice going through the looking-glass, Carter writes that the wolf-man passes through the looking-glass instead of Wolf-Alice and the wolf-man ultimately finds himself on the wrong side of the mirror. "His eyes open to devour the world in which he sees, nowhere, a reflection of himself, he passed through the mirror and now, henceforward, lives as if upon the other side of things" (Carter, "Wolf-Alice", 222). The self-proclaimed "Wolf-man" eats corpses and "does not cast an image in the mirror" (Schanoes, 31). When the moon appears, the Wolf-Man becomes ravenous and consumes human flesh and corpses like a cannibal. Since he does not cast a reflection in the mirror, Carter's Wolf-Man character lost any sense of identity until Wolf-Alice restored him back to health after he was shot by villagers. In spite of her monstrous wolf nature, Wolf-Alice is capable of saving others, and perhaps felt the need to save the Wolf-Man because of how similar they are in nature—both characters are outcasts in a way because of how they behave.

Angela Carter's decision to give Alice the name "Wolf-Alice" combines both her monstrosity and humanity into one hyphenated name. The hyphenated name embodies both Alice's wolf side and the side of her which is a human girl, symbolizing how Wolf-Alice fully

embraces the side of her which is viewed as monstrous and even prefers living like an animal rather than as a human. Whereas Rhys' version of Bertha as Antoinette attempts to fight against becoming the madwoman and has difficulty even accepting that herself and the madwoman are the same person, Alice is content to live like a wolf and maintain her wolf mannerisms which deems her monstrous to the other villagers in the story. Carter's Alice welcomes her monstrosity and does not see any reason to stop behaving in wolf-like ways. In this way, she is fearless and could care less what the villagers think of her way of life, which is a rather refreshing way of thinking about the roles of children within classic fairytales or stories.

In most fairytales or stories of children's literature, the children in them are written as docile and sweet, however Angela Carter's alternate reading of Caroll's Alice depicts a human child capable of monstrous deeds and one who is able to embrace her monstrosity rather than fight against her darker side. Children such as Wolf-Alice are able to accept their monstrosity and some children like Caroll's Alice may be more willing to go along with others' branding them as "monster". After all, Alice never corrected The Lion when he repeatedly called her "Monster" throughout the chapter. The contrast between a kind child and a monstrous one is an intriguing theme because it offers readers (and in particular young readers) a chance to see both sides of humanity—the righteous, good side and the evil monstrous side every human being possesses within themselves in real life and in a storybook.

Conclusion

To Be Monstrous Is To Be Human

Through these various characters and their similar and different stories regarding monstrosity, this project has depicted numerous reasons for a character to become monstrous, reveal their monstrosity, and/or be freed as a result of their monstrosity. Throughout literature, various humans and creatures alike have some monstrosity within themselves, whether it is a human creating a monster or stories of characters behaving in monstrous ways in order to achieve a particular dream or goal and doing whatever is necessary to ensure their desires remain attainable and achievable in the end. Everyone has a darker side or moments where they are pushed to the brink of their kindness and are so close to revealing that darker side to others around them. Adults and children alike have both a good, happy side, and an angrier, darker side. Darker emotions are what make someone human because it is impossible to always be kind and happy. That kind of constant happiness only exists in fairytales, and as this paper has shown, even fairytales have an extremely dark side and endless twists which turn seemingly one-dimensional characters into three-dimensional characters through their stories on the page.

Title: **Gender And Monstrosity in 19th and 20th c. British Literature**

Sponsor: Lee Schlesinger

Works Cited

Barzilai, Shuli. “Reading ‘Snow White’: The Mother's Story.” *Signs*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1990, pp. 515–534. *JSTOR*

Briefel, Aviva. “Monster Pains: Masochism, Menstruation, and Identification in the Horror Film.” *Film Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 3, 2005, pp. 16–27. *JSTOR*.

Brontë Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. Barnes & Noble, 2011. Print.

Carroll, Lewis, and John Tenniel. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through The Looking-glass*. N.p.: Barnes & Noble, 2015. p. 195. Print.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)." Introduction. *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Minnesota: U of Minnesota, 1997. pp. 4, 7, 10, 17. Print.

Durham, Carolyn A. “Medea: Hero or Heroine?” Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies, vol. 8, no. 1, 1984, pp. 54–59. *JSTOR.*

Foster, Shirley. “Monsters and Madwomen.” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1980, pp. 94–96. *JSTOR*

Hardwick, Elizabeth. "The Brontës." *Seduction and Betrayal: Women and Literature.* New York: Vintage a Division of Random House, 1975. pp. 4-8. Print.

Krebs, Paula M. “Folklore, Fear, and the Feminine: Ghosts and Old Wives' Tales in ‘*Wuthering Heights*.’” *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1998, pp. 41–52. *JSTOR*.

Levy, Eric P. "The Psychology of Loneliness in '*Wuthering Heights*.'" *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1996, pp. 158–177. *JSTOR*.

Manguel, Alberto. "Return to Wonderland." *The Threepenny Review*, no. 126, 2011, pp. 5–6. *JSTOR*.

Novak, Maximillian E. "Gothic Fiction and the Grotesque." Novel: *A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1979, pp. 50–67. *JSTOR*.

Rena-Dozier, Emily. "Gothic Criticisms: '*Wuthering Heights*' And Nineteenth-Century Literary History." ELH, vol.77, no.3, 2010, pp. 757-775. JSTOR.

Rhys, Jean, and Judith L. Raiskin. *Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. N.p.: W.W. Norton, 1999. Print.

Roper, Valerie P. "Woman As Storyteller In *'Wide Sargasso Sea'" Caribbean Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 1/2, 1988, pp. 19–36. *JSTOR*.

Ross, Deborah. "Escape from Wonderland: Disney and the Female Imagination." *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2004, pp. 53–66. *JSTOR*.

Schanoes, Veronica. "Fearless Children and Fabulous Monsters: Angela Carter, Lewis Carroll, and Beastly Girls." *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2012, pp. 30–44. *JSTOR*.

Watson, Melvin R. "'*Wuthering Heights*' and the Critics." *The Trollopian*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1949, pp. 243–263. *JSTOR*.

Williams, Christy. "Who's Wicked Now? The Stepmother as Fairy-Tale Heroine." *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2010, pp. 255–271. *JSTOR*.

Annotation #1

Williams, Christy. “Who's Wicked Now? The Stepmother as Fairy-Tale Heroine.” *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2010, pp. 255–271. *JSTOR*.

In her essay "Who's Wicked Now? The Stepmother as Fairy-Tale Heroine", Williams uses Robert Coover's novel *Stepmother* to examine the role of someone who is normally perceived as being "evil" in fairytales and offers a different reading and states that she is merely trying to save her daughter. "The characters are trapped by the plot, but the reader is shown how complex fairy-tales can be and is led to question the authority of the popularized conventions" (17). The stepmother is kind to her daughter, but "that kindness is also a part of her larger struggle against naturalized, traditional authority" (12). The stepmother is still bound by older conventions and ways of life which are hard to let go of. In creating a kind character who has only had wicked pre-decessors. Coover allows readers to see a different side of the stepmother persona. Williams states, “Coover does not make the fairytale into something else, but shows it for what is: a complex genre that authoritatively disseminates narratives about how we construct our lives" (13).

This source is useful to me because I will be able to use Coover's idea of the Stepmother with comparisons to Bertha in Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. I will be able to compare the female "monster" with the idea of being wicked or evil. I agree with Williams about how "writers can rewrite the popular fairytale and still write fairytales, and their heroines need not walk the same paths as their foremothers in order to reach the story's happy ending" (17). Writers can change parts about a fairytale and have the previously perceived as evil characters become good and kind without taking away anything from the original aspects of the fairytale. I will be able to take the idea of the good stepmother and compare it to Bertha's life before she became a madwoman

and write about how she was a good person and that circumstances transformed her into the "monster" or madwoman she becomes in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

Annotation #2

Ross, Deborah. "Escape from Wonderland: Disney and the Female Imagination." *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2004, pp. 53–66. *JSTOR*.

Ross uses Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* as a lens in her essay to illustrate the different plot patterns of stories and fairytales directed towards young girls. Ross states, "From that time till the present, conservative authors have used romance and novels to teach girls that their dreams are dangerous and of little relevance to their daily lives. Progressive or feminist authors, on the other hand, have encouraged young women readers' belief in fantasy to help them visualize what they want, perhaps as a first step toward going after it" (Ross, 55). She highlights this point by contrasting Hans Christian Andersen's tragic story of *The Little Mermaid* with the Disney movie version. In Andersen's story, Ariel is "willing to spend all she has: her voice, her health, and eventually her life. She buys new legs, from which blood oozes with every step, by letting the sea witch cut out her tongue" (Ross, 58). Furthermore, "the permanent loss of her voice means playing dumb in more ways than one, as she can only listen demurely…" alludes to the symbolic and literal silencing of the female voice. In the Disney movie, Ariel is attracted to the human world, Ross believes, because Ariel "believes it to be a utopia of free movement: she dreams of legs first for jumping and dancing and strolling, and only secondarily for marriage" (59).

This source is useful because in her society, Bertha is naturally silenced due to the fact that she is a woman and is only able to express herself fully when she becomes a madwoman because she is finally completely free and no longer silenced by the patriarchy or tied down to a man through a loveless marriage. In Lennox's *The Female Quixote,* the main character Arabella avidly reads romances such as the "largely female-centered romances of d'Urfe and Scudery, which focus more on love than on questing, and in which males are present mainly either to carry

off or rescue heroines" (55). Arabella seems to take these stories about the power of women literally and as a result does not adjust well to a woman's real lot in life which is "to be ignored, submitting always to others' convenience" (55). Her reading "sets her up to make many ridiculous mistakes, and ultimately to be humbled, or humiliated, when she learns her own real unimportance" (55).

Ross further argues that "*The Female Quixote* thus presents contradictory impressions about the worthiness of the heroine's desires, the degree to which those desires are ultimately fulfilled or frustrated" (56). She states that the Disney heroines' fantasies "reveal desires for many things, including novelty, excitement, power, sex and knowledge. Some of these desires are ridiculed, others respected, some are fulfilled, others surrendered" (56). I found it effective how Ross contrasted the story of Arabella with that of both Andersen's story and Disney movie version of Ariel's story in order to depict the various desires of heroines from different time periods and the effect of having those desires had on each heroine and how those desires affected their life as a whole.

Annotation #3

Rena-Dozier, Emily. "Gothic Criticisms: '*Wuthering Heights*' and Nineteenth-Century Literary History." ELH, vol.77, no.3, 2010, pp. 757-775. JSTOR.

In her essay, Dozier argues that "the British novel in the nineteenth century, it was generally agreed, was the domestic novel, and in order for the domestic novel to have triumphed, the gothic had to be defeated….*Wuthering Heights*, however, carefully breaks down this opposition between gothic and domestic modes by illustrating the ways in which the domestic is predicated on acts of violence" (760). Dozier goes on to mention the story of Emily and her dog, Keeper, and how she brutally beat him. After Keeper is found sleeping on the best bed, "Down-stairs came Emily, dragging after her the unwilling Keeper, his hind legs set in a heavy attitude of resistance….[S]he let him go, planted in a dark corner at the bottom of the stairs...her bare clenched fist struck against his fierce red eyes…she punished him till his eyes were swelled up and the half-blind, stupefied beast was led to his lair" (764). Despite the abuse, her dog Keeper still loved her dearly and the story proves "the gothic understanding that violence is at the heart of the domestic, and yet at the same time insisting that not violence, but loyalty, is the point of the narrative" (764).

In Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë,* she compares the story of Keeper and Emily to *Wuthering Heights* staying, "Keeper stands in for Heathcliff, and Emily Brontë becomes the amalgam of Cathy and Hindley, at once loving the intruder and treating it with extreme cruelty" (766). I will be able to use this source to shape my writing about the public's perception of Heathcliff, starting with his own 'family's' perception. Hindley hates Heathcliff deeply and treats him incredibly cruelly when Heathcliff lives with them while Catherine in contrast, befriends and eventually grows to love Heathcliff and states to Nelly that they are one person. In his book *Novels and Novelists,* Jeaffreson states about Emily, "a wild unearthly spirit dwelt

within her, and ever and again it flashed forth through her eyes in a fashion that made beholders tremble" (767). Dozier argues that Emily "appears in nineteenth-century literary history as part of a story about dogs and violence, disturbing the idea of domestic tranquility by highlighting the violent traumas required by the enforcement of domestication" (770). Dozier compares the story of Emily and Keeper to *Wuthering Heights* stating that it is "at once a testament to the power of *Wuthering Heights* and an indication of a desire to tame the iconoclastic energies of the novel into a story of domestication" (773). The domestic beliefs in the novel and the idea of the domestic woman are challenged through the wild character of Catherine and by repeatedly beating and bullying Heathcliff, Hindley is attempting to tame and domesticate Heathcliff given his wildness and public's referral to Heathcliff as a 'gipsy.'

Annotation #4

Durham, Carolyn A. "Medea: Hero or Heroine?" Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies, vol. 8, no. 1, 1984, pp. 54–59. JSTOR.

In her article, Durham argues that Medea "never achieves the representative stature of the tragic hero" despite the fact that she is the main character in three plays (54). Durham states that the heroine Medea in Euripides' *The Medea* "might qualify as the most human of the three dramatic characters. She is carefully departicularized, stripped of her legendary powers and aura, to become not simply an ordinary woman, but in fact, everywoman" and "Euripides portrays Medea as the stereotypically perfect female within the male power structure of his dramatic universe. In the opening scene of the play, the Nurse characterizes her mistress as the good wife; Medea is supportive, submissive…" (55). This part of the source will be useful to me because I will be able to compare Medea to Rhys' version of Bertha in *Wide Sargasso Sea.* Initially, Bertha seems like the typical high-class, obedient woman within a patriarchal society. I could also use this description of Medea to contrast her with Catherine and the wildness of Catherine. Despite being raised in a wealthy family, Catherine chooses to spend time with Heathcliff, befriends him and becomes untamed and wild as a result of this friendship and eventually grows to love Heathcliff.

Durham states that Medea becomes female again after her act of heroism which is actually a murder. "Medea's ultimate act of heroism results in the murder of her children. When Medea is masculine, she is good, but when she is bad, even though this results only from carrying male characteristics to an extreme, she becomes female again" (57). This ties into the patriarchal belief that women are wild, mad and are to be feared when they are too powerful. The instant Medea commits a crime, she is "bad" again and all the masculine qualities she once had

that made her good immediately disappear and she becomes a woman again who is capable of such crimes as murdering her own children.

Annotation #5

Foster, Shirley. "Monsters and Madwomen." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1980, pp. 94–96. *JSTOR*

Foster begins her review by quoting from a letter Charlotte Brontë wrote to G.H. Lewes. "I wish all reviewers believed 'Currer Bell' to be a man; they would be more just to him. You will, I know, keep measuring me by some standard of what you deem becoming to my sex". Foster states that a source of anxiety for female writers is "the fear that if she writes in a truly "female" way (That is, expressing directly her rage or frustration about women's restrictive roles and situations) she will be denigrated according to conventional—and patriarchal—social, sexual and literary values" (94).

Next, Foster describes the argument Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar are making in their novel *The Madwoman in the Attic.* Gilbert and Gubar believe nineteenth-century women writers seek to "come to terms with their own uniquely female feelings of fragmentation, their own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be (78). Gilbert and Gubar believe that "because women writers have been caught in the male-projected angel/monster paradigm—that is, they are forced to see themselves either as submissive, loving "angels in the house" or as monstrous evil creatures striving against patriarchal authority—they create melodramatic, mad characters who, coexisting with their more conventional heroines, act as authorial doubles' (95). This could help me write about how the patriarchy changed Bertha as a person and how she wanted freedom and being a madwoman finally allowed her to achieve the complete freedom she longed for.

Finally, Foster believes Gilbert and Gubar overstate their case due to their "feminist critical approach" (95). She states that *The Madwoman in the Attic* "has not found a convincing

way of unifying its material through its central thesis, and is flawed by contradictions and hard-wrenched interpretations" (96).

Annotation #6

Briefel, Aviva. "Monster Pains: Masochism, Menstruation, and Identification in the Horror Film." *Film Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 3, 2005, pp. 16–27. *JSTOR*.

In her essay, Briefel argues that while masochism is crucial to the creation of male monsters, "the female counterpart to the act of self-mutilation is menstruation, a narrative event that positions the audience in an uncomfortably close relationship to the female monster" (16). Male monsters begin their violent acts with acts of self-mutilation, and Briefel argues that "when the female monster engages in masochistic acts, she does so either by coercion from an outside force or as a way of terminating her monstrosity" (21). This is the opposite of how Rhys portrays Bertha and the reasoning behind her actions in *Wide Sargasso Sea.* Bertha becomes a madwoman and burns down the house as an act of rebellion against the patriarchy and does not commit any truly heinous acts. However, Bertha is forced to become mad because of Rochester's controlling ways, so in that sense, she is coerced into the madness because of her husband and how he treats her.

Briefel further argues that "the female monster denies us the space and numbness afforded by the male monster's masochism" (22). Briefel cites the film *Carrie* and states that the audience is meant to share a "suffocating intimacy" with Carrie through her telekinesis. Carrie's telekinesis is "an unwanted power that projects her into the surrounding world" (22-23). Briefel states that as a result, the audience sympathizes with Carrie and "we are firmly situated in the body of the suffering teenager" (22). The audience feels what Carrie feels and "Carrie reacts to her suffering as one might, by crying and screaming, rather than by enjoying or controlling her pain. Because Carrie is unable to stop feeling pain, she cannot use it as effectively as her male counterparts, whose violence often displays an obsessive control" (22). She is forced to react

through her emotions, the way women and female monsters are expected to, instead of reacting physically and violently, which is the way society allows male monsters to react.

Annotation #7

Novak, Maximillian E. "Gothic Fiction and the Grotesque." Novel: *A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1979, pp. 50–67. *JSTOR*.

Novak argues that "the demons of the Gothic — real, imagined, or fabricated — represent a sudden revelation of the uncontrolled forces of the mind" (58). He states that the grotesque villain is "the character who represents will and power in Gothic fiction" (59). I can apply Novak's argument about the gothic villain to the way Heathcliff is perceived by society. Society views Heathcliff as animalistic, demonic and someone to be feared. By being feared, Heathcliff holds a certain amount of power over society. Novak states of gothic villains. "they evoke the world of psychological terror" (59). The fact that Heathcliff was found on the streets instead of being raised in a home terrifies the society around him and causes the people to believe he is wild and undignified. Heathcliff's wildness is what labels him as a monster in the novel. He is unpredictable and lacks proper manners while Catherine and Linton in contrast, are educated and polite.

I will also be able to apply Novak's arguments to Bertha in Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Madwomen are feared within the patriarchal society because men could not fathom women having more power than them. Bertha's descent into madness and her ability to be completely free from the patriarchy shows how powerful she can become once she embraces her madness. As a madwoman, the power Bertha has becomes apparent when she does something drastic, like burning the house down at the end of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which is symbolic because women were supposed to be obedient to their husbands and remain in the household as the domestic wife, cooking, cleaning, and caring for her children. However, by burning down the house,

Bertha is rejecting that societal view of women and the pressures society places on a woman to be silent and submissive to their male counterparts.

Annotation #8

Barzilai, Shuli. “Reading ‘Snow White’: The Mother's Story.” *Signs*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1990, pp. 515–534. *JSTOR.*

In her essay, Barzali argues that the story of Snow White is “the story of two women, a mother and a daughter; a mother who cannot grow up and a daughter who must” (534). Barzali states that within the story and its conflict, the patriarchal society imposes two opposing images upon women. These opposing images are the angel and the monster. “The monster may not only be concealed *behind* the angel, she may actually turn out to reside *within* (or in the lower half of) the angel” (519). Thus, the two images can be intertwined and “Snow White epitomizes an image of femininity—”patriarchy’s angelic daughter”—that the rebellious queen actively rejects” (519).

Barzilai goes on to state that “the competition between Snow White and the queen turns into a struggle for survival between two halves of a single personality” (520). This source will help me expand further on the struggle Bertha experiences with the two sides of herself in *Wide Sargasso Sea*—the mad and therefore free woman and the patriarchy-bred submissive, dutiful wife. When the evil queen finds out Snow white is more beautiful than herself, “it is only then that the queen undergoes a change of heart and she begins to rage against her growing step-daughter” (527). In a similar way, Bertha’s madness is her way of raging and rebelling against the patriarchy and its goal to silence women. In order to break away from the constricting patriarchy, Bertha is forced to embrace her ‘monster’ side and give up her submissive ‘angel’ side.

Barzali brings Freud in to describe the maternal loss the evil queen feels when Snow White goes to live with the dwarfs. “The mirror images the mother’s wound. The child of her own making finds completion without her” (530). When Snow White goes to live with the seven dwarfs, “this distancing is a symbol of maternal loss. It signals the disruption of a dream of exclusive and everlasting attachment” (530). Snow White no longer needs the maternal figure in her life and without being needed, the queen is lost and can no longer have control over Snow white and her actions.

Annotation #9

Schanoes, Veronica. “Fearless Children and Fabulous Monsters: Angela Carter, Lewis Carroll, and Beastly Girls.” *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2012, pp. 30–44. *JSTOR*.

Schanoes argues that for authors Angela Carter and Lewis Carroll, “To live on the wrong side of the mirror is to become a monster” (31) and that “to be a monster is to be out of one’s own place, to be on the wrong side of the mirror” (31). When Lewis Carroll’s Alice emerges from the looking-glass, she discovers that she becomes the monster or beast in the story. “This is a child!” the White King’s messenger tells the unicorn. The Unicorn responds by exclaiming, “I always thought that they were fabulous monsters!” The Unicorn introduces Alice to the Lion by stating, “It’s a fabulous monster!” (31). Throughout the rest of the chapter, Alice is referred to as a monster by other creatures. Angela Carter’s version of Alice is wolf-Alice, a story about a girl raised by wolves and is a more mature version of Carroll’s Alice.

Schanoes states that “both Carter and Carroll emphasize the affinity between children and monsters: Carter by allying Wolf-Alice with a man who masquerades as a wolf-man and Carroll by emphasizing the relative nature of the category of the monster” (31). I will be able to use this source to describe villains and evil stepmothers in fairytales and how humans are perceived as monsters by other characters in the story.

In contrast to Carroll’s version of Alice going through the looking-glass, Carter has the wolf-man go through the looking-glass instead of wolf-Alice and the wolf-man ultimately finds himself on the wrong side of the mirror. “His eyes open to devour the world in which he sees, nowhere, a reflection of himself, he passed through the mirror and now, henceforward, lives as if

upon the other side of things" (Carter, "Wolf-Alice", 222). The man eats corpses and "does not cast an image in the mirror" (31).

Annotation #10

Manguel, Alberto. "Return to Wonderland." *The Threepenny Review*, no. 126, 2011, pp. 5–6. *JSTOR*.

In his article, Manguel argues that for her journey through Wonderland, Alice's only weapon is language and that she uses language to stand up for what she believes in and uses it to help her distinguish between what is real and what is imagined. Manguel states that "it is with words that Alice discovers the difference between what things are and what they appear to be" (5). I will be able to use this source to contrast the way language helps Alice and how Bertha in Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* abandons language in becoming mad and leaves behind everything that once made her human, choosing instead to growl and groan like an animal. Manguel suggest that "while we may try to find logic in madness, as the Duchess does by finding a morla in everything, however absurd, but the truth is, as the Cheshire Cat tells Alice, that we don't have a choice in the matter, whichever path we follow, we will find ourselves among mad people" (5). The Chesire Cat further states that "we must use language as best we can to keep a grip on what we deem to be our sanity" (5). The use of language helps Alice to rationalize and understand the world of Wonderland and gives her the courage to stand up for what she believes in, which symbolically leads to her waking up from the dream and leaving Wonderland.

Manguel states, "Because of this supreme act of civil disobedience, Alice is allowed to wake from her dream" (6). This symbolic awakening from a dream due to speaking one's mind further proves that a woman or female at any age (even a child like Alice) is expected to remain silent, even in an imagined world like Wonderland. A child known as a 'fantastic beast' by the

other occupants in Wonderland is not allowed to express any opinions and if she does, the consequence is being unable to return to Wonderland. The physical act of standing up at the end of the novel and her refusal to hold her tongue represents Alice's courageous nature and how she will speak up for what she believes in, no matter what the consequences are. "Alice knows instinctively that logic is our way of making sense of nonsense and uncovering its secret rules, and she applies it ruthlessly, even among her elders and betters" (6). Her fearlessness and ability to stand up for what she believes in, even as a child, sets her apart from other female characters in literature (like Bertha pre-madness who have no choice but to remain silent and submissive to the patriarchal figures within their society.