

**ABJECT REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE DESIRE IN POSTMODERN
BRITISH FEMALE GOTHIC FICTION**

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ABSTRACT

ABJECT REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE DESIRE IN POSTMODERN BRITISH FEMALE GOTHIC FICTION

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The aim of this dissertation is to study postmodern British Female Gothic fiction in terms of its abject representations of female desire which subvert the patriarchal definition of female sexuality as repressed and female identity as the object of desire. The study analyzes texts from postmodern Female Gothic fiction which are feminist rewritings of the traditional Gothic narratives. The conventional Gothic plot is based on the Oedipal development of identity which excludes the (m)other and deprives the female from autonomous subjectivity. The feminist rewritings of the conventional Gothic plot have a subversive aim to recast the Oedipal identity formation and they embrace the (m)other figure in order to blur the strict boundaries between the subject and the object. Besides, these rewritings aim to destroy the image of the victimized heroine within the imprisoning conventional Gothic structures and transgress the cultural, social and sexual definitions of women constructed by patriarchal sexual politics. The study bases its analyses on Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, and Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* as examples in which patriarchal definition of the female desire as passive is destroyed and the female desire as active is promoted by the adoption of abject representations, which challenge the strictly constructed hierarchical relationships between men and women. Basing its argument on Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytical theories, which re-

vision the traditional psychoanalytical theories, this study puts forward that by the emergence of postmodernism, which has overtly provided a ground for the marginalized discourses to get into dialogue with the oppressive ones, the abject representations of female desire have gained a positive characteristic that can liberate female body from the control and authority of the male-dominated ideology. Thus, one can chronologically follow the positive development of abject representations of female sexuality in Rhys's, Carter's and Donoghue's works which promote a liberation for the Gothic heroines from patriarchal psychoanalytical identity development, which render female desire active and female body expressive, which rehistoricize female sexuality from a feminist lens and which call for a new world order built upon an egalitarian basis that destroys hierarchically constructed gender roles. As a result, postmodern British Female Gothic Fiction is proved to be offering a utopian ideal of an egalitarian society, but although utopian and radical, not an impossible one to be realized.

Keywords: Female Gothic, abject, Jean Rhys, Angela Carter, Emma Donoghue.

ÖZ

POSTMODERN İNGİLİZ KADIN GOTİK YAZININDA KADINLIK ARZUSUNUN ABJECT TEMSİLLERİ

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Bu tez postmodern İngiliz Kadın Gotik yazınının ortaya koyduğu kadınlık arzusunun abject temsillerini incelemeyi amaçlar. Bu abject temsiller, ataerkil ideolojinin kadın cinselliğini bastırılmış ve kadın benliğini de bir arzu nesnesi olarak tanımlamasına karşı çıkarak bu geleneksel tanımları yıkmayı hedefler. Bu çalışma postmodern Kadın Gotik yazınına örnek belli başlı metinleri geleneksel Gotik anlatılarının feminist bakış açısıyla yeniden yazılmış olanlarından seçer. Geleneksel Gotik olay örgüsü anneyi ve ötekiyi dışlayan ve kadını bağımsız bir özne olma durumundan alıkoyan benliğin Oedipal gelişimi üzerşne kurulmuştur. Geleneksel Gotik olay örgüsünün feminist bakış açısıyla yeniden yazım örneklerinin yerleşmiş kavramları yıkmaya yönelik bir amacı vardır. Bu da Oedipal benlik oluşumunu baştan şekillendirmek ve anneyi ve ötekiyi kucaklayarak özne ve nesne arasında katı bir biçimde çizilmiş sınırları silmektedir. Bunun yanısıra yeniden yazma stratejisini benimsemiş olan eserler Gotik yapılar içerisine hapsedilerek kurban edilen Gotik kadın kahraman imgesini yıkmayı ve ataerkil cinsel politikalar tarafından ortaya konan kültürel, toplumsal ve cinsel kadın tanımlamalarına karşı çıkmayı amaçlamaktadırlar. Bu çalışma Jean Rhys'in *Wide Sargasso Sea*'sini, Angela Carter'ın *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*'ini, and Emma Donoghue'nun *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*'ini kadınlık arzusunu pasif olarak tanımlayan ataerkil ideolojiyi yıkan ve aktif olarak yeniden yaratan

abject temsilleri  rnekleyen edebi eserler olarak ele alır. Bu abject temsiller kadın ve erkeęi keskin  izgilerle ayıran hiyerarşik yapıya meydan okur. Kuramsal  er evesini Julia Kristeva'nın geleneksel psikanalitik kuramları yeniden yazdığı  alıřmaları  zerine kuran bu tez, marjinal kılınmıř s ylemlerin egemen olan s ylemlerle diyaloga girmesini saęlayan politik bir ortam yaratmıř olan postmodernizmin ortaya  ıkmasıyla, kadınlık arzusunun abject temsillerinin gittik e daha da olumlu  zelliklere b r nerek, kadın bedenini erkek-egemen ideolojinin kontrol nden ve otoritesinden kurtardığını iddia eder. B ylece kadın cinsellięinin abject temsillerinin olumlu geliřimi kronolojik olarak Rhys'in, Carter'ın ve Donoghue'nun eserleri  zerinden takip edilebilir. Bu eserler Gotik kadın kahramanını ataerkil Gotik olay  rg s ne hapsedilmekten kurtarır, kadınlık arzusunu aktif ve kadın bedenini ifade edilebilir kılar, kadın cinsellięi tarihini feminist bakıř a ısıyla yeniden yazar ve cinsiyetler arası eřitlik ilkesi  zerine kurulmuř yeni bir d nya d zenini kurmayı hedefler. Sonu  olarak, postmodern İngiliz Kadın Gotik yazını  topik ve radikal ama ger ekleřmesi imkansız olmayan bir idealin peřinde olduęunu ispatlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın Gotik Yazını, abject, Jean Rhys, Angela Carter, Emma Donoghue

To my mother, Sema Sözer,
who has taught me the self has no boundaries
and
love has no limits

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Aim and the Scope of the Study

This study aims to pursue the literary representations of female desire in the postmodern British Female Gothic fiction. In order to demonstrate the modes of these representations through the prevailing social, cultural and ideological concerns of the period, the Female Gothic tradition is adopted by many women writers with feminist consciousness because of its subversive potential to resist the imposed understandings of sexuality of the period it is produced in, and its capability to reflect important transitions in the representations of female sexuality and the female body that are shaped according to socio-sexual relations. Although there was an attempt to silence discussions of sexuality for both sexes beginning in the eighteenth century, and women writers, being marginalized by patriarchal society, were considered to be twice oppressed according to the history of repressed sexuality (because of the patriarchally constructed gender roles), the feminist studies rapidly developing in the last century in the political environment of postmodernism have provided new definitions of female sexuality. Through these new approaches to female sexuality, it is possible for women writers to construct counter-discourses and counter-identifications in which they subvert negatively imposed understandings of female desire by producing from them positive ones. In this respect, since the attempt to represent desire is closely related to power relations, the Gothic tradition is a productive form in which women writers can enact their discursive practices of desire, subvert the traditional subject/object relations, and disrupt the dominant/submissive roles that are socially constructed as an oppressive system of sexual subordination. Thus, women writers of the Female Gothic have used various strategies to represent the female body and sexuality, and in the Female Gothic works with postmodern narrative characteristics it is observed that women writers of this genre use rewriting as a strategy in order to subvert the conventional Gothic plots of repression using the positions which have been shaped for them by patriarchal discourses. As Susanne Becker states the “two-fold view of Gothic effects in a contemporary feminine

literary culture [are]: (1) continuity: an ongoing elaboration of the large web of women's Gothic intertextualisations; [and] (2) deconstruction: a challenge to the limits of Gothic form – and especially to the myths of feminine shaping that form” (“Postmodern Feminine” 72). Thus, this study argues that, through subversive rewriting, recent women writers of the Female Gothic express female sexual desire rather than repress it and not only do they subvert the culturally constructed representation of female desire but they also represent the sexual enactment of desire and pleasure as literary performances. In this regard, the central focus of this dissertation will be the Female Gothic works with postmodern elements in which women writers utilize this genre in order to rehistoricize female sexuality from a feminist lens through rewriting conventional Gothic texts that position women as victims, subjected to the dominant authority, and confined to patriarchal ideology. In such an attempt they try to resituate the Gothic heroine in relation to the dominant patriarchal order as an autonomous, powerful and transgressive woman who asserts her own desire and refuses to be a victim, by claiming her sexual subjectivity.

The French feminist theorist Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection presented in her seminal work *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980) provides a fruitful approach to such a research on the representations of female desire, with its emphasis on women's marginalized position both in the mainstream society and in traditional psychoanalytical theories. Kristeva deconstructs and then reconstructs the traditional identity formation which excludes the female as the Other to the self and destroys the strictly demarcated hierarchical boundaries between the subject and the object. Thus, she promotes a fluid identity which embraces the Other and through this she disrupts the boundaries between all kinds of binary mechanisms. She calls such a subject, who carries the Other within, a “subject-in-process”. Since the female is rendered Other in traditional psychoanalytical theories, female desire is also relegated to the position of the Other, repressed and marginalized by dominant discourses, and perceived as lack by the patriarchal sexual politics of difference. In this respect, Kristeva's theory of abjection liberates female desire from its conventional definitions as a site of negation, lack, absence, and passivity.

The reason why this study bases its analyses of the abject representations of desire in three Female Gothic works, which are Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), and Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the*

Witch: Old Tales in New Skins (1997), on Kristeva's theory of abjection is that Kristevan approach to the construction of the human subject is a radical one and it has the potential to reveal these literary works' uncompromising nature. The Gothic is a subversive genre which is characterized by excess, transgression and ambiguity. In this respect, the Female Gothic is a doubly subversive genre because it aims to destroy the psychological, social, and cultural constructions of the female who is Otherized in patriarchal terms. Therefore, when Kristeva's theory of the abject is applied to these texts, it is observed that the postmodern Female Gothic works represent a feminist revolt against patriarchal oppressive structures.

Kristeva's psychoanalytical theories are rewritings of Freud's and Lacan's identity formations. According to Freud, the child makes a distinction between self and Other when it realizes that the mother lacks a penis. In the Lacanian perception of the development process of the subject, the child recognizes its difference from the mother when it identifies with its reflection in the mirror at a point between six and eighteen months of age and Lacan calls this phase the mirror stage of development. Kristeva's originality in the psychoanalytical discussion of subjectivity lies in her claim that the separation from the mother starts at an earlier time before the mirror stage. She calls this separation process "abjection". According to Kristeva, by spitting out its mother's milk, by excrement, by even rejecting its mother's embrace, the child tries to develop its borders between "I" and Other. However, Kristeva also maintains that what is abjected continues to be with the self on the threshold of its borders of subjectivity. In this respect, Kristeva's theory of the subject does not draw a clear-cut boundary between the pre-Oedipal and Oedipal stages. Thus, in Kristeva's view, although the child attains its subject position in the symbolic order, it does not completely leave the semiotic behind. In such an approach binary oppositions of Western thinking are destroyed and the polarities are interwoven with one another in order to present a pluralistic perception of subjectivity rather than a rigid monolithic one.

What is defined as abject then is associated with the maternal, the Other, the female and with what is excluded, discarded, marginalized, jettisoned, and expelled. Since in order to become a proper subject the self is to be separated from the Other, the abject poses a threat to this proper subject because it blurs the boundaries between the subject and the object. It also threatens the socio-symbolic order which leans on construction of proper subjects. In this respect, the abject has a subversive and transgressive power that can unsettle the identity

system and disrupt the dominant ideologies which mainstream society promotes in order to sustain its hegemony. Thus, the Female Gothic writers, who aim to destroy the oppressive patriarchal ideology, the identity formation process which marginalizes the female as the Other, and the socio-symbolic boundaries which are built upon binary oppositions, adopt abject figures in order to disturb established norms. Therefore, the Kristevan approach to the abject themes and figures in Rhys's, Carter's and Donoghue's works is helpful in revealing these writers' methods of subversion and transgression explicitly.

In fact, the Oedipal development of identity plays a significant role in the conventional Gothic plots which will be explored in detail in the following chapter. Since the Oedipal stage starts with the separation from the (m)other, the traditional Gothic also discards the mother figure in order to advance the plot in Oedipal terms. In this respect, the mother figure is rather absent or dead in these Gothic works. However, the Female Gothic writers aim to transgress the boundaries of the imprisoning Gothic structures by disrupting established practices. Therefore, in their narratives they destroy the Oedipal myth that excludes the (m)other in the identity formation process. Instead they insert mothers or substitute mothers in their plots in order to emphasize that the maternal bond is never broken. In this respect, Kristeva's attempt at rewriting the traditional psychoanalytical theories also provides a subversive approach to the Gothic conventions because her theory of abjection privileges the maternal bond over the paternal Law. In this respect, when these Female Gothic works are read in the light of Kristevan thinking, their subversive potential is much more clearly observed.

In addition, since the Gothic is a genre which deals with various excessive representations of desire, the Female Gothic writers utilize these representations in order to promote a re-visioned female desire. Their treatment of female sexuality destroys the patriarchal definitions of female desire, subverts the negative constructions of female sexuality development in traditional psychoanalytical theories and liberates the female body from representations of repression constructed by patriarchal norms which aim to deprive women of an awareness of their bodies. The male-dominated psychoanalytical theories depend on a subject-object paradigm in which the subject position is denied to women. In this psychoanalytical structure, the male subject desires the female object and as a result of this, female sexuality is defined as passive and receptive. If female desire becomes active, it

means that the female is claiming the subject position and reversing the subject-object relations. By such a reversal, the female posits a threat to the hierarchically constructed subject/object positions represented by patriarchal male/female identity constructions. In this respect, since the active female sexuality does not have any representation in the symbolic order, it is represented by abject imagery which has the potential to transgress the boundaries of the cultural and social structures that privilege the male principle over the female one. Thus, Rhys's, Carter's and Donoghue's representations of abject female desire provide their heroines with a semiotic tool to express their desire rather than repress it. Since the abject female desire has a subversive and transgressive power which can disrupt hierarchical and oppressive systems as is discussed above, it promises a true liberation for these heroines through destroying imprisoning Gothic structures and confining gender roles. Thus, Kristeva's theory of the abject which is characterized by subversion and transgression of the strictly constructed boundaries is welcomed in this study because it radically lays bare the unsettling and non-conforming nature of these postmodern Female Gothic works.

This dissertation focuses on Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, and Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* firstly because the representations of female desire in these works have a common approach to female sexuality. They all present active female desire in abject forms. Secondly, and more importantly, the feminist writers of these works endow the abject with positive characteristics. That is, since what is relegated to abject is excluded, banished, and Otherized in negative terms, these writers of the postmodern Female Gothic aim to utilize the threat that the abject poses to the patriarchal symbolic order as a subversive power to destroy the hierarchical boundaries of identity and to transgress the patriarchal boundaries of sexual paradigm. Until the emergence of postmodern aesthetics, female desire had been abjected through images such as the evil, the mad, the monstrous, the witch, the animal, and so on with negative implications. In these three works, the writers still adopt the same images, but they are successful in destroying the negative connotations of these images by shaping them with positive characteristics. In this respect, one can chronologically trace the development of abject representations of female desire which gradually attain a more positive and a more revolutionary potential from *Wide Sargasso Sea* through *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* to *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*.

In Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the terrifying, monstrous, animalistic, ghostly, mute image of Bertha is recast through the portrayal of Antoinette. Antoinette is still an abject figure in racial, cultural, social and sexual terms, but in this novel she can speak on behalf of herself, claim her right to express her sexuality, and destroy the patriarchal order by deciding to burn Thornfield down in order to construct a new world order. She affirms her active desire and she does not permit it to be defined in male terms. Her decision to destroy the patriarchal order by fire shows the liberation and the victory of female desire (symbolized by fire itself) over the oppressive and imprisoning structure (symbolized by Rochester's mansion). Antoinette's fire simultaneously destroys and renews the world. In this sense, the ending of *Wide Sargasso Sea* promises regeneration because she does not destroy herself whereas Bertha herself dies in the fire.

Carter moves one step beyond Rhys by uniting the abject and the subject in her representations in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. She adopts abject images in the portrayal of her female characters as well as in the depiction of her male characters. Her dominant image for abject representations is bestiality. By shaping both sexes with animalistic traits, she subverts the patriarchal constructions of male and female sexuality. Excessive male desire finds its representation in animality and in the practice of devouring the female body. However, by allowing her heroines to tame the male who are represented by wild animals such as tigers and wolves, Carter destroys the conventional male image of predator and victimizer. Besides, she also destroys the conventional image of the female as the object of male desire represented by edible food items that can satisfy excessive male desire by turning them into wild animals which are conventionally used to describe men as is revealed above. Thus, Carter shows that female desire can also be represented as active and she liberates her heroines from the conventional representations of female sexuality as passive and receptive. In this respect, Carter subverts the patriarchal notions of sexuality which can be observed in the hierarchically constructed heterosexual couple. By reconstructing the heterosexual relationships on a more egalitarian basis, Carter destroys the gender roles imposed upon both men and women in the symbolic order. As a result, by endowing both the male and the female with subject and abject status simultaneously, Carter offers her readers Kristevan subjects-in-process who can embrace and carry the Other within himself or herself.

When it is compared with the two works mentioned above, *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* is the most radical one. Donoghue also moves one step beyond Carter in her employment of the abject by leaving the heterosexual couple behind and dealing with lesbian desire. Since same-sex desire is also excluded from the symbolic order, Donoghue uses abject representations in order to depict lesbian desire in her work. Since lesbian desire represents a deviance from social, cultural and sexual norms, it is conventionally depicted by negative images and perceived as monstrous and freakish. Donoghue aims to liberate lesbian identity from its marginalized position by recasting these negative images as positive ones. Thus, Donoghue adopts abject figures such as the beast, the evil step-mother, and the witch that can be found in classical fairy tales, associates them with lesbian identities, and reconstructs them with positivity in order to celebrate lesbian desire. In this respect, Donoghue offers her readers “subjects-in-excess” who can transgress sexual boundaries. Thus, *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* is a revolutionary example of the Female Gothic which proposes an alternative and utopian social and sexual space for women outside the hierarchical binary structure of heterosexuality and promotes sisterhood and an alternative community of women.

Kristeva’s theoretical discourse in her works is not an easily accessible one. Kristeva is considered to be a “prolific, eclectic, rigorous, difficult, and occasionally outrageous” (Becker-Leckrone 5) theorist. Her discussions of literary texts do not offer “clear models of how another reader might produce a sustained literary criticism in her spirit. Nor do they explicitly indicate *whether* and *why* one should.” (Becker-Leckrone 4, original emphasis). In his introduction to Kristeva’s *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), Leon S. Roudiez draws attention to the difficulty in reading and understanding Kristeva’s literary theories and he asserts that “Julia Kristeva is a compelling presence that critics and scholars can ignore only at the risk of intellectual sclerosis” (1). In addition, Noëlle McAfee also maintains:

Her various styles of writing do not help. Her earlier works are noted for their highly theoretical, abstract, and nearly turgid prose (namely, her early book, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974)), and some of her later writings are marked by a difficulty of another sort: a kind of poetic inventiveness and multiplicity (such as in “Stabat Mater” (1977) and *Powers of Horror* (1980)). (3)

In this respect, this study will rely on Kristeva's oeuvre, particularly *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* and *Strangers to Ourselves* (1988), but mostly on the secondary sources about Kristeva's theory of abjection which provide a coherent and comprehensible understanding of her works.

Kristeva's theory of abjection is applied to three Female Gothic works which display postmodernist characteristics as was mentioned before: Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, and Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*. Among these works, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* has a hybrid categorization in terms of its position in literary history. That is,

[h]istorically, Rhys belongs to the period of Empire and her own formation as a white Creole is a distinctively colonial one; yet her subversive critique of Englishness and imperialism (focused by her recognition of difference after her arrival in England) should more appropriately be described as a post-colonial impulse. (Howells 20)

Besides, although *Wide Sargasso Sea* is chronologically situated in the modern literary period and therefore considered to be a modern novel, many critics refer to it as a postmodern novel due to Rhys's treatment of colonial themes and her employment of the method of rewriting. For instance, Peter K. Garrett describes Rhys's novel as "a postmodern monster story" (91). Carol Margaret Davison also contends that "*Wide Sargasso Sea* puts a decidedly postcolonial and postmodern spin on *Jane Eyre*" (148). Moreover, Helen Carr argues that

[i]n Jean Rhys's case, her feminized, ex-colonial modernism radically questions the world in which she finds herself: because she writes from a position of dislocation, marginality and feminine disempowerment, she moves closer to postmodernism than some of her contemporaries. (26)

Finally, Caroline Rody explains the postmodernist characteristics of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as follows:

Certainly Rhys's novel presents a postmodern challenge to the boundaries of the text, subverting the authority of authorship and privileging the empowering potential of shared readerly knowledge

of literary tradition. Self-consciously belated in literary history, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is irreverent about textuality in general – as when the madwoman, chafing at her “written” condition, mocks Brontë’s book: “This cardboard where I walk at night is not England”. Treating text as history and history as text, Rhys writes one of the earliest postmodern “metatexts”. (145)

In brief, Rhys does not make use of popular postmodern strategies such as metafiction, self-reflexivity, pastiche, fabulation, magic realism, playfulness, irony, and black humour in her novel. However, since it is characterized by postmodern concept of intertextuality by being a prequel to Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and in the light of the critical approaches provided above, this study also categorizes *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a postmodern novel.

The other two literary works selected to be studied were produced in the postmodern period and therefore reflect the postmodern concerns of their writers’ time. All these three works this study chooses to analyze are characterized by their being rewritings of widely known literary works. Rhys’s novel is a rewriting of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* as is mentioned above. Carter’s and Donoghue’s works are collections of rewritten stories of the popular classical fairy tales. In this respect, all the three works this study chooses to analyze reveal postmodern narrative characteristics as well as Gothic themes which deal with female desire in a deconstructive and subversive manner. Carter, Rhys and Donoghue rewrite not only traditional Gothic plots but also female desire, in a feminist approach.

Chapter 2 starts with a survey of the history of the development of the Gothic tradition in Britain from the eighteenth century onwards with references to widely known Gothic works and to generic and thematic characteristics which shape these works. In order to understand how contemporary Gothic has been shaped through centuries and has come to reflect contemporary approaches to social, cultural, political and sexual structures, such a survey of historical development of the Gothic is needed. The chapter continues with a discussion about the differences between the Male Gothic and the Female Gothic, and with a historical development of the Female Gothic in relation with the critical receptions of the genre. Such a comparative discussion reveals how Female Gothic works subvert the traditional Male Gothic elements which entrap and victimize women within the patriarchal system. The theoretical background of the study is foregrounded with a discussion of

rewriting as a subversive strategy in the postmodern Female Gothic works; and it also envelops Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection and explains how abjection works in the postmodern Female Gothic, particularly in relation to the literary representations of female desire.

Chapter 3 is based on Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and it highlights its intertextual relation with Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in terms of the characteristics of the Female Gothic. This novel has been chosen for this study because "it is one of the first modernist versions of [intertextual Female Gothic] writing that tells the sexual woman's story [Bertha]" (Becker, "Postmodern Feminine" 72). From this point of view, Brontë's representation of Bertha has influenced many women writers' representations of female sexuality. In fact, in *Jane Eyre*, Bertha, has become the projection of social fears of the sexual woman and therefore she is imprisoned and muted by the patriarchal authority in the Gothic plot. Bertha is marginalized and abjected in colonial, racial, economic and sexual terms as well as in terms of Gilbert's and Gubar's "madwoman in the attic" concept in Brontë's work. In this respect, the abject Other in Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* is given a voice to tell her story through intertextual practices and such an attempt indicates that Bertha, who is renamed Antoinette by Rhys, has been granted an autonomous subjectivity to speak for herself this time. Antoinette's split and unfixed identity placed in the abject realm of the Other proposes a challenging potential to the proper subject constructed in patriarchal terms. Rendered monstrous and voiceless by the male gaze, then, Antoinette becomes a rebellious character who refuses to be a victim and who has the courage to express her desire in Rhys's novel. This chapter will focus on abject desire depicted through excessive sexual desire, melancholia, sadism and masochism, the heroine's relationship with the (m)other, and the monstrous representation of the female body. In addition, it will include Kristeva's notion of estrangement and foreignness which is discussed in her theoretical work *Strangers to Ourselves*. According to Kristeva, the abject foreigner is a threat to all socially and culturally constructed institutions because of his or her potential to transgress the boundaries of the strictly constructed unitary and proper order. Besides, Kristeva's approach to melancholia presented in her work *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1989) will also be applied to Antoinette's relationship with her (m)other and the portrayal of her desire revealed through her relationship with Rochester. In Kristeva's opinion, melancholia is associated with female

sexuality. Therefore, Antoinette's melancholia, which stems from the loss of her (m)other, will also contribute to the abject representation of her sexual desire, which transgresses the boundaries of patriarchal definitions of female sexuality. In this respect, Rhys not only subverts the patriarchal notion of racial Other and passive female desire through the portrayal of her foreign character, Antoinette, but also the patriarchal construction of female subjectivity uniting Antoinette with her (m)other through her melancholia in order to celebrate the power of the semiotic.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* in the light of Kristeva's theory of abjection. It starts with a discussion of Carter's indulgence in rewriting, fairy tales, and the Gothic. Then it continues with the close analysis of the stories grouped under three different categories: "The Bloody Chamber" as a rewriting of "Bluebeard", stories of the feline as rewritings of "Beauty and the Beast", and stories of wolves as rewritings of "Little Red Riding Hood", and Lacan and Kristeva's theories of subjectivity. This chapter will show that Carter's attempt at representing female libido through animality liberates the female desire from culturally, socially, and psychoanalytically constructed female identity and sexuality, and renders it active and autonomous. Thus, through reshaping female desire in animal terms, Carter subverts the patriarchal ideology that constructs heterosexual relationships on a hierarchical basis.

Chapter 5 deals with the abject lesbian desire excluded by the compulsory heterosexual norms. Donoghue rewrites classical fairy tales such as "Beauty and the Beast", "Cinderella", "Snow White", and "Rapunzel" through the lesbian heroines' perspectives. She does not propose the expected happy endings of the fairy tales which promote a heterosexual marriage. The lesbian is placed in an unclean, improper and defiling domain with the other abject entities in the symbolic order. This chapter focuses on the lesbian Other who destroys the conventional binary of masculine and feminine and on the lesbian subject who transgresses the social and sexual boundaries of the patriarchal order. In this respect, the lesbian figure is abject, a threat to the established systems of order and she therefore carries within the potential to subvert heterosexist ideology. Thus, through the lesbian figure, Donoghue rebels against the confinement of women within the hierarchically constructed sexual politics.

Chapter 6 reveals the conclusion of this study. It will bring together the results of the analytic chapters showing how the abject representations in the postmodern works of the Female Gothic this study focuses on subvert the patriarchal construction of female desire and female identity and rewrite the history of female sexuality in feminist terms. Besides, it will try to outline how the Female Gothic can develop and how female desire can be represented in literary works of near future.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1 The History of the Development of the Gothic in Britain

The term “Gothic” emerges in many historical and cultural contexts. Through its revivals in certain periods and its influential manifestations in sculpture, painting, architecture, music, performance, cinema, fashion and so on it is understood that the Gothic diversely infused many fields of art. For instance, Gothic architecture of the medieval period shows itself in cathedral, churches, and abbeys basically with pointed arches over windows and doors, with the flying buttress, with tall towers and gargoyles. With the Gothic revival in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these characteristics of Gothic architecture could also be observed in Gothic edifices which were owned by wealthy aristocrats and in ecclesiastical, university and civil buildings as well. For example, Horace Walpole’s Gothic edifice at Strawberry Hill is regarded as the birthplace of Gothic literature. Walpole transformed a modest house into a Gothic castle with its towers, stained glass, and climbing vines and this edifice became an inspiration for his Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*. The development of architecture in Britain shows that Gothic design remained one of the dominant aesthetic trends throughout the centuries.

The Gothic influence can be detected in classical music composed for the church. Most of Bach’s compositions have Gothic influences. Towards the end of the twentieth century, it was rock music which was greatly influenced by Gothic culture. The lyrics and music have a dark atmosphere and reflect a protest against mainstream culture that is intolerant of diversities. Gothic rock has been very popular among teenagers since its emergence in the 1970s and it has created a subculture that brought in a fashion comprising stereotyped as black, eroticized clothes and dark make-up on white foundation for both sexes. Moreover, Gothic culture has influenced cinema as well. In addition to the adaptations of many Gothic classics, directors have adopted Gothic characteristics in horror films which appeal to a popular audience.

In fact, it is really difficult to attach a single definition to this term. Its first usage occurred in referring to a specific tribe, the Visigoths, which is renowned for its victory over parts of the Roman Empire. Having such a reference, “[t]hroughout the history the word ‘Gothic’ has always been chiefly defined in contrasting juxtaposition to the Roman, and a constant factor in its various uses, perhaps the only constant factor, has continued to be its antithesis to the Roman or the classical” (Sowerby 16). Robin Sowerby’s assertion further exemplified by his emphasis on this generalization of the Gothic; in the British literary context, Gothic fiction emerged in the Enlightenment Period as a reaction to the assertion of neoclassical values.

During and after the Renaissance, the classical tradition was aspired due to its long established codes of civilized culture, moral and aesthetic values, and idealized, ordered, unified representations of artistic practices. Thus, the feudal past was regarded as a barbaric and a primitive past which should be rejected. The Gothic was not only a lexical reference to the Visigoths in this sense; it connoted this medieval, feudal and barbarous past and signified values totally opposed to the standards of neoclassicism: irrationality, the sublime, excessive emotions that are mostly of terror, and the supernatural. As David Punter declares, “Where the classical was well-ordered, the Gothic was chaotic; where simple and pure, Gothic was ornate and convoluted; where the classics offered a set of cultural models to be followed, Gothic represented excess and exaggeration, the product of the wild and the uncivilized” (*Terror* Vol 1, 5). Thus, the Gothic has come to signify a remote past which was in a critical dialogue with the present values. Botting reveals the reasons why the present is projected upon a Gothic past below:

The projection of the present onto a Gothic past occurred, however, as part of the wider processes of political, economic, and social upheaval: emerging at a time of bourgeois and industrial revolution, a time of Enlightenment philosophy and increasingly secular views, the eighteenth-century Gothic fascination with a past of chivalry, violence, magical beings and malevolent aristocrats is bound up with the shifts from feudal to commercial practices in which notions of property, government and society were undergoing massive transformations. Along with these shifts, ideas about nature, art and subjectivity were also reassessed. ‘Gothic’ thus resonates as much with anxieties and fears concerning the crises

and changes in the present as with any terrors of the past. (Botting, "Gothic Darkly" 3)

The Gothic novel, then, concerning itself with the present changes in society gained its popularity in the eighteenth century which was the era of the rise of the novel. Punter indicates that the origin of Gothic fiction cannot be separated from the origin of the novel. As Gross declares: "The establishment of the Gothic novel as a popular form is an accomplishment of the novel in English. While German supernatural tales are important in the Gothic's literary heritage, it is a genre formed and nurtured in Britain" (2). Thus, with the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), published with a subtitle "A Gothic Story" for the second edition, the "Gothic" emerged as a critical term. Its followers, in the eighteenth century, were Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story*, Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797) which established the basic characteristics of Gothic novels that would repeat themselves in new disguises without ever disappearing completely. These basic characteristics are defined by Kelly Hurley as below:

[T]he Gothic in these years has been quite variously defined in terms of plot (which features stock characters, like the virtuous, imperiled young heroine, and stock events, like her imprisonment by and flight from demonic yet compelling villain), setting (the gloomy castle; labyrinthine underground spaces; the torture chambers of the Inquisition), theme (the genre's preoccupation with such taboo topics as incest, sexual perversion, insanity, and violence; its depictions of extreme emotional states, like rage, terror, and vengefulness), style (its hyperbolic language; its elaborate attempts to create a brooding, suspenseful atmosphere), narrative strategies (confusion of the story by means of narrative frames and narrative disjunction; the use of densely packed and sensationalist, rather than realistic, plotting), and its affective relations to its readership (whom it attempts to render anxious, fearful, or paranoid). (191)

These basic features of the Gothic novel are adopted by many writers in different perspectives in order to exhibit the clash between society's norms and its deviations. Deviation from the social norms is highlighted with the portrayal of a good and evil dichotomy. Evil figures are used to show how moral norms are destroyed in a degenerating

world and they also alert the readers to the fact that social order is needed to be restored. In relation to the characters displayed in an eighteenth century Gothic novel, Botting gives a list of certain conventional figures which represent deviations from moral codes and customs: “specters, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, monks and nuns, fainting heroines and bandits” (*Gothic* 2). Besides, he states that, with the continuing production of Gothic novels in the nineteenth century, more figures are added to the ones listed above: “scientists, fathers, husbands, madmen, criminals, and the monstrous double signifying duplicity and evil nature” (*Gothic* 2).

In relation to the setting, it is common for Gothic plots to be located in a gloomy castle referring to a feudal and medieval past with its decaying and hidden passages. In this setting, the medieval past haunts the values of the eighteenth century present; supernatural and excessive emotions haunt reason; ambitions, sexual desires, illegitimate power and violence disrupt civilized values; and vice threatens virtue.

Botting expands his definition of the Gothic novel by identifying the differences and similarities of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Gothic novel. He states that in the eighteenth century examples of the Gothic novel there is an emphasis on threatening figures of darkness and evil. These figures are thrown out and order is reestablished at the end. And this is mostly observed in the pattern of rewarding heroines with marriage and punishing villains with imprisonment or murder. In the nineteenth century, largely due to the political and philosophical changes that the French Revolution brought about, and equally largely due to the interest of Romanticism in the individual and the life of the mind, there was an uncertainty about the stability of social conditions. Therefore, the cliché elements of Gothic castles, villains and ghosts of terror and horror gained a new dimension: they became the representations of internal states such as psychological disturbance, hallucination and madness rather than external threats. Since the Gothic is always associated with dark forces, this perception showed “the darker side to Romantic ideals of individuality, imaginative consciousness and creation” (Botting, *Gothic* 10). The emergence of the uncanny representations in this period reflected the uncertain condition of the world and the security provided by the nature of reality was disturbed. The eighteenth century setting with its medieval connotations was turned in the nineteenth century into the city or a gloomy forest or

a family through which the past haunted the present. The past is now the guilt, or the imagination, or a crime that haunts the present. Botting maintains:

Doubles, alter egos, mirrors, and animated representations of the disturbing parts of human identity became the stock devices. Signifying the alienation of the human subject from the culture and language in which s/he was located, these devices increasingly destabilized the boundaries between psyche and reality, opening up an indeterminate zone in which the differences between fantasy and actuality were no longer secure. (*Gothic* 11)

In short, the eighteenth century Gothic novel developed as a reaction to historical events, particularly to urbanization and industrialism. The haunting of the past through supernatural representations functions either to restore a social and moral order or to “dramatize uncertainty and conflicts of the individual subject in relation to a difficult social situation” (Jackson 97). On the other hand, in the nineteenth century Gothic novel, the supernatural elements are explained as the psychological problems of the individual. It is claimed that a loss of faith in the supernatural throughout the centuries can be observed in the change of the use of supernatural elements.

Examples of Gothic fiction in the nineteenth century are Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853), Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). Women writers’ works in the nineteenth century reflect the elements of the Gothic as well as the elements of romance. Lisa Vargo argues that “[t]he Gothic romance offered women the pleasures of a space for expression because its ascendancy is contemporary with the rise of the female writer” (235). The Gothic romance was a great source of entertainment for middle-class female readers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This entertainment depended on its plot:

The plot of Gothic romances always has a dual character; through identification with the heroine, the reader finds in escape fiction a world in which excitement, mystery, danger, and action occur side by side with the domestic activities and social roles that women have traditionally performed. There is no conflict between these two worlds; in fact, they enhance each other. (Mussell 58)

Therefore although women's Gothic romance offers its readers a conflicting stance by inscribing social roles of women while simultaneously providing an escape from these roles, it shows that these two different worlds shape women's lives.

The early twentieth century Gothic novel carried traces of the nineteenth century Gothic novel. Anxiety was reflected upon familiar forms such as cities, houses, occult pasts, scientific experience, psychologically disturbed individuals, and the threatening modern world. In this century, many modern examples of the Gothic carry the traces of science fiction, romance, fantasy and horror. Like J. R. R. Tolkien's fiction, certain occult fantasies express an escape from the twentieth century life. Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938), reflecting the characteristics of romance, has a domestic context which relates the story of a newly-wed wife haunted by the memories of the dead wife of her husband. Botting remarks that Gothic characteristics can be found in other literary texts in the form of a reflection of horror felt about modern structures. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) is an example of this reflection which focuses on the barbarity of white western civilization colonizing the black Africa (*Gothic* 159).

Botting identifies certain common features that remain central to the Gothic novel throughout centuries. Firstly, the Gothic is characterized by a writing of excess. He indicates that "products of imagination and emotional effects exceed reason" (*Gothic* 3). The fascination of the Gothic with boundless imagination demonstrated with excessive passion, excitement, and sensation points at the transgression of social and moral laws. Botting explains that it is basically the concept of the sublime which has evoked this interest in portraying excessive emotion. "The sublime was associated with grandeur and magnificence" (Botting, *Gothic* 3). With its emphasis on greatness, it is used to define the power of nature which cannot be grasped by the human mind. It is claimed that this is the reason why the sublime is associated with infinity, solitude, and awe but at the same time with darkness, with the supernatural, and with "powerful emotions of terror and wonder" (Botting, *Gothic* 4).

In the classic formulation of Kant (to which all theorizations of the sublime return) the effects are the consequence of the mind's confrontation with an idea too large for expression, too self-consuming to be contained in any adequate form of representation, but which idea, as representation, in a momentary surrender of the law of reason the mind nevertheless grasps. (Mishra 143)

This is the reason why the Gothic gives pleasure to the reader with its excessive representations of the sublime while it terrorizes the reader.

Exciting rather than informing, it chilled [readers'] blood, delighted their superstitious fancies and fed uncultivated appetites for marvelous and strange events, instead of instructing readers with moral lessons that inculcated decent and tasteful attitudes to literature and life. Gothic excesses transgressed the proper limits of aesthetics as well as social order in the overflow of emotions that undermined boundaries of life and fiction, fantasy and reality. (Botting, *Gothic* 4)

This exposure of excessive emotions in Gothic works then subverts not only the traditional principles of realist writing, but the mores of social behaviour and civilized manners promoted by society as well. In this respect, the Gothic novel has been a floor open to the marginalized groups in terms of class, race and gender. Particularly, it conveys subversive methods for women writers who question the imposed domestic values and sexual propriety of patriarchal ideology. Entrapped in society's demands, women writers of the Gothic find an outlet to criticize the gender roles which oppress them. This is one of the reasons why the Gothic has been very popular among women writers and readers.

Secondly, Botting further claims that “[u]ncertainties about the nature of power, law, society, family and sexuality dominate Gothic fiction” (*Gothic* 5). These uncertainties imply that ambivalence is an essential characteristic of Gothic novels. “Gothic fiction displays many such areas of emotional ambivalence: ambivalence about specific classes and kinds of people, ambivalence about location of the human species, most prevalently of all, ambivalence about matters to do with sexuality” (Punter, *Terror* Vol 2 190-1). Since sexuality can be used as a means to transgress social norms, sexuality in excessive and ambivalent representations such as incest, same-sex desire, sexual violence, and rape are adopted as themes to question the power of the social norms in society.

Lastly, Botting adds that the excesses and ambivalent representations associated with Gothic works are distinct signs of transgression. They transgress the boundaries of reality with the use of the supernatural and through “encouraging superstitious beliefs Gothic narratives [subvert] rational codes of understanding” (Botting, *Gothic* 6). Gothic narratives

also transgress the dominant moral codes in the social order by dealing with criminal behaviour, usurpation, intrigue, murder and bodily pleasures. In this way, transgression becomes a frightening process for the reader whose values are continuously put to the test by such representations. Yet,

[t]he terrors and horrors of transgression in Gothic writing become a powerful means to reassert the values of society, virtue and propriety: transgression, by crossing the social and aesthetic limits, serves to reinforce or underline their value and necessity, restoring or defining limits ... Transgression, provoking fears of social disintegration, thus enabled the reconstitution of limits and boundaries. Good was affirmed in the contrast with evil; light and reason won out over darkness and superstition. Antitheses, made visible in Gothic transgressions, allowed proper limits and values to be asserted at the closure of narratives in which mysteries were explained or moral resolutions advanced. (Botting, *Gothic* 7-8)

However, Botting indicates that affirming reason and excluding passion show that “both force and emotion [are] a means of regulating conventional hierarchies” (*Gothic* 8). Thus, this aim of securing social boundaries creates a play of ambivalence that “both restores and contests the boundaries” (Botting, *Gothic* 9). This ambivalence provided through oppositions shapes Gothic fiction:

good depends on evil, light on dark, reason on irrationality, in order to define limits. The play means that Gothic is an inscription neither of darkness nor of light, a delineation neither of reason and morality nor of superstition and corruption, neither good nor evil, but both at the same time. Relations between real and fantastic, sacred and profane, supernatural and natural, past and present, civilized and barbaric, rational and fanciful, remain crucial to the Gothic limit and transgression. (Botting, *Gothic* 9)

This production of antitheses through ambivalent, excessive and transgressive representations is essential to the Gothic novel. Botting asserts that emotions evoked in the reader are also ambivalent; this leads the critic to a discussion of terror and horror in Gothic novels. “Objects of terror and horror not only provoke repugnance, disgust and recoil, but also engage readers’ interest, fascinating and attracting them” (Botting, *Gothic* 9). Terror and

horror, in this sense, are two indispensable ingredients of Gothic fiction. Terror refers to the feeling which is experienced together with pleasure because of the opportunity it provides to exclude the object of fear. Botting argues:

terror, in its sublime manifestations, is associated with subjective elevation, with the pleasures of imaginatively transcending or overcoming fear and thereby renewing and heightening a sense of self and social value: threatened with dissolution, the self, like the social limits which define it, reconstitutes its identity against the otherness and loss presented in the moment of terror. (*Gothic* 9)

Horror, on the other hand, leaves the readers' hands tied in the face of an unavoidable threat. "If terror leads to an imaginative expansion of one's sense of self, horror describes the movement of contraction and recoil ... Terror expels after horror glimpses invasion, reconstituting the boundaries that horror has seen dissolve" (Botting, *Gothic* 10). Thus, terror defines itself through exclusion of fear whereas horror defines itself through internalization of fear. In this respect, the writer's choice of the employment of terror and horror also contributes to the ambivalent nature of the Gothic.

Botting compares the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century Gothic fiction with respect to their method of handling terror and horror. He observes that the eighteenth century Gothic literature was dependent on terror for its transgressive effects. In this period, Gothic novels promoted a restoration of the limits through expelling the threatening figures of evil: "villains are punished; heroines well married" (Botting, *Gothic* 10). In the nineteenth century, there was a shift towards horror, "the sublime ceded to the uncanny, the latter an effect of uncertainty, of the irruption of fantasies, suppressed wishes and emotional and sexual conflicts" (Botting, *Gothic* 11). The uncanny created uncertain boundaries and therefore the fear that resulted from the inability to make a distinction between the apparent and the real was internalized rather than externalized by the explanation of a supernatural occurrence. At this point, psychological rather than supernatural forces dominated the scene. The individual had no control over his or her emotions and fantasies. Instead, he or she was controlled by pathological disturbances. Developments in science had also empowered human beings by the dark forces of technological innovations which alienated human beings and such an alienation created horror in people as well.

In the twentieth century, Botting concludes, a diffusion of Gothic characteristics is observed in different genres. Science fiction, romantic fiction, popular horror novels, and modernist literature all employed Gothic elements. This time “[t]error and horror are diversely located in alienating bureaucratic and technological reality, in psychiatric hospitals and criminal subcultures, in scientific, future, intergalactic worlds, in fantasy and the occult” (Botting, *Gothic* 13). In the twentieth century Gothic novel, it is observed that

Gothic devices are all signs of the superficiality, deception and duplicity of narratives and verbal or visual images. In a century that has become increasingly skeptical about the values and practices associated with modernity and perceives these values as powerful fictions or grand narratives, new and yet familiar terrors and horrors emerge to present dissolution of all order, meaning and identity in a play of signs, images and texts. One of the principal horrors lurking throughout Gothic fiction is the sense that there is no exit from the darkly illuminating labyrinth of language. (Botting, *Gothic* 14)

With the development of postmodern literary theories, people have woken up to a world of horror which reveals that human identity is lost and multiple identities destroy the ideal unified self; multiple realities and truths offer no center to hold on to or on which to establish cultural, moral, national, and spiritual values; and meaning is always on the run like a criminal never to be caught. What these nightmares indicate is that reality, identity, and meaning are constructed through language. Reality loses its hierarchical stance as the “given” and “natural” and “[i]t is no longer experienced as an ordered and fixed hierarchy, but as a web of interrelating, multiple realities” (Waugh 51). As a result of these perceptions of values encoded long ago, social order comes to be a collective linguistic construct as well. One of the weapons to overcome such horror created by the postmodern context is to emphasize the subversive potential of the Gothic. Thus, through constructing Gothic conventions out of multiple points of view such as class, gender and race, out of multiple political subjectivities, out of the interplay of multiple genres such as science fiction, romance, fairy tale, detective fiction, and fantasy, and out of multiple linguistic games, the contemporary Gothic writers still work with the transgressive and excessive aspects of the genre in order to criticize and

react against the constructed realities produced by structures of knowledge and power which have imprisoned them so far.

2.2 The Female Gothic

The conventional Gothic plot revolves around a virtuous young heroine pursued by an older aristocratic villain and the plot – especially the element of suspense – is based on this chase. The heroine runs and runs across a forest, or through a subterranean labyrinth, or through the dark passages of a dungeon in order to save the virtue guaranteed by her virginity. This physical pursuit sexually threatens the female body, which is associated with purity and innocence; therefore it becomes seductive for the debased villain. The fear of corruption gives the heroine the courage to defend herself. And it is her courage in the defense of her virtue which is rewarded by marriage at the end. This is the most favourite of Gothic scenarios, and it can be exemplified by Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and Lewis's *The Monk*.

Although this is the most commonly adopted version of the Gothic plot, the categorization of the Gothic as Male and Female shows differences in certain aspects. "The two forms reflect the way in which the modern redefinition of sexual relations, based on the idea of the separate spheres, turns the goal of the development of the sexes into antitheses" (Kilgour 37). Andrew Smith and Diana Wallace, in "The Female Gothic: Then and Now" argue that the narrative of "the persecuted heroine in flight from a villainous father and in search of an absent mother" is a typical Female Gothic plot which can be observed in Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance*, whereas "male writers tended towards a plot of masculine transgression of social taboos, exemplified by Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*" (2).

In the Male Gothic plot, basically, the hero rebels against societal structures that oppress him and is liberated in the end. Kilgour defines the structure of this plot as built upon the standard Bildungsroman which presents the male protagonist's story of personhood and individuation. "The basic narrative form is linear, causal, propelled by a genealogical imperative, a story of succession involving conflict based on oedipal and fraternal rivalry" (Kilgour 37). The male protagonist does not have to compromise with society. His aim is to achieve his autonomy and therefore "the male plot is one of teleological development

towards detachment” (Kilgour 37). In short, the male plot of the Gothic follows a revolutionary pattern in which the rebellious hero, alienated from society, refuses to accept social norms. The Male Gothic plot, in this sense, promotes independence.

On the contrary, the traditional Female Gothic plot “suggests a bourgeois aesthetic, as it creates a circle of defamiliarisation and estrangement by the re-establishment of conventional life” (Kilgour 38). In this respect, the traditional female pattern is circular. It pushes the heroine back to where she started from: the patriarchal home. The female protagonist is reconciled with the demands of society and she is “brought safely into a social order which is affirmed in the end” (Kilgour 37): marriage. The traditional female plot, unlike the male plot, offers no liberation from societal structures. The female protagonist is never independent or autonomous; she constructs her identity through relations, through identification with others and especially with the mother. In the end, patriarchy always entraps women no matter how the female protagonist attempts to free herself from patriarchal oppression. In fact, the traditional Female Gothic plot, through its various representations of patriarchal imprisonment, reflects the social reality women are forced to live in. And with the happy end, with marriage “women’s continuing incarceration in the home that is always the man’s castle is assured” (Kilgour 38).

However, although the Female Gothic plot emphasizes the entrapment of the heroine in patriarchal structures, it is also a response to the gender politics of its time. In recent feminist readings, even the passive heroine’s silence and resistance (which show the heroine’s attempt at subverting the domestic ideology) are regarded as a challenge to patriarchal politics. As is observed in the general definitions of the Female Gothic plot above, among all the various elements of Gothic novels stands a striking figure which is resistant and rebellious and therefore doomed to be confined, and that is the female body. It is claimed that one of the dangers of studying the female body and female self represented in a genre is that it can lead the research to fall into the trap of essentialism. In this respect, many critics object to the categorization of the Gothic as male and female, advocating that such an approach emphasizes sexual difference. According to James Watt, there is a “difficulty of speaking about a monolithic category of the ‘Female Gothic’ without falling back upon an essentialist notion of women’s writing which ignores the potential plurality of the text” (110). And he agrees with Jacqueline Howard’s *Reading Gothic Fiction: A Bakhtinian Approach*, a

study which criticizes certain feminist critics such as Ellen Moers and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar for “ensur[ing] that women and their writing remain trapped in the personal, the private, subjective, body and nature as against the political, the public, the objective, mind and culture” (Howard 64).

However, certain other critics argue that such a categorization is productive and that studying the ‘female’ Gothic can provide an insight into the gender politics which is at the core of many Gothic novels, particularly the Gothic novels of woman writers. Anne Williams’s *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (1995) claims that “‘Gothic’ is not one but two; like the human race, it has a ‘male’ and a ‘female’ genre.” (1) She firstly reminds the reader that the Gothic is positioned as the “other” of realism. Particularly through its association with the romance, the Gothic “seems feminine in contrast to the Realistic novel’s focus on manners, morals, society, and consciousness ... To preserve the realistic novel as the High Prose Fiction tradition, critics have regarded the Gothic as long dead, or else (if alive) as irrational ‘feminine’ popular romance” (3). Thus, this reading of the Gothic points at the positioning of the female as the “other” in patriarchal culture. Williams also refers to Helene Cixous’s list of binary oppositions which shows that the female is classified as the other of the male and draws attention to the association of the second terms in this list with the Gothic, terms, according to Cixous, which also culturally define the female: “Activity/passivity, Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature, Day/Night, Father/Mother, Head/heart, Intelligible/sensitive, Logos/Pathos” (90). In this respect, “this association of Gothic with cultural notions of ‘the female’ was the only key required; ‘Gothic’ is an expression (in the Freudian ‘dream-work’ mode) of the ambivalently attractive, ‘female,’ unconscious ‘other’ of eighteenth century male-centered conscious ‘Reason’” (Williams 19). This insight is fundamental in defining the Gothic novel. Williams tries to show that such a categorization in terms of gender is imbedded in the Gothic novel itself¹.

Moreover, the Gothic is considered to be a feminine form of fiction because it is considered to be dealing with emotional subjects. Elizabeth MacAndrew draws attention to the Gothic’s relation with the Sentimental novel, a type often considered as female. The Sentimental novel emphasized virtue and goodness and regarded evil as a destroyer of the

¹ Williams also states that Gothic conventions express not only the female as the other, but many dimensions of otherness such as the “signified”, the “unconscious”, and the “Orient” as well. (19)

harmony of the universe. In this sense, it depicted benevolent characters in beauty and evil ones in ugliness and monstrosity.

The Gothic novel, in making monstrosity the outward show of the terrible inner distortion of man's innate good nature into evil, is thus an expression of the other side of the benevolist ideas reflected in the Sentimental novel. It forms a variant of the Sentimental genre, with related structures, forms, and devices. Sentimental novels reflect an ideal that, coming from God, is possibly realizable; the Gothic represents the distortion of that ideal. (MacAndrew 24)

Female characters in the Sentimental novel are presented as sexual stereotypes which sustain the roles society demands from women. Therefore, women are either represented as emotional, submissive, good-natured, and virtuous, or as evil, immoral, intriguing, corrupt and not conforming to their prescribed role in society, which makes them outcasts. Since the Gothic novel is also framed by a good/evil dichotomy, very much like the Sentimental novel, these representations of women can be observed in the Gothic novel as well.

In addition to this, since the Gothic novel emerged as a reaction to the rationalistic approach of Enlightenment, it emerged as a psychological and an individualistic form. Fleenor remarks that subjective vision is always associated with the female in contrast to social vision which is associated with the male (10). Therefore, the Gothic novel, whether it is written by a man or a woman writer, is also associated with women. In this respect, it can be claimed that the Female Gothic is a twice marginalized genre. As was mentioned above, firstly, the Gothic is a marginalized genre in relation to mainstream literature and culture. Secondly, it is a genre which is dominated by women writers who are marginalized within society. Thus, further categorizing into male and female a sub-genre which is actually associated with the female (due to its frequent adoption by women writers and popularity among women readers, due to its handling of subjects in terms of emotions rather than reason, due to its emphasis on the supernatural rather than reality, due to its generic transgression through its interactive relationship with other genres such as the romance and the Sentimental novel) shows that Gothic fiction envelops essentialist ideas. Essentialism is the view that privileges "essence" and makes generalizations about the characteristics possessed by a group.

Essentialist thinking believes that the general properties of groups, which are biologically, socially, culturally, economically, sexually, racially and ethnically categorized, are universal and unchangeable. Therefore, with its tendency to ignore differences and variations, the essentialist position supports the conservative dominant political ideas.

Cultural feminism, which is “accused of” promoting essentialism, emphasizes “the primacy of women’s culture, which can be understood as a product of nature, nurture or some interplay of the two” (Meyers 8), and it “promotes female solidarity and strives to transcend differences of race, class, and sexual orientation” (Meyers 9). It is claimed that such a perception affirms the hegemony of culture which oppresses women and develops a discourse of “women as victims”. As Helene Meyers articulates, “[p]aradoxically, while cultural feminism seeks to empower women, it often naturalizes them as victims” (10-1). It is argued that this perception is derived from the hierarchical system of thought which renders women weak and submissive to authority and therefore reinforces the image of women as victims. Liberating women from gender hierarchy through reversing the roles of the oppressor and the oppressed is what poststructuralists are opposed to, because they state that even a reversal of the “men/women” binary opposition will still continue to foster the hierarchical system. Since essentialism is believed to be creating a generalization of “women as victims”, it is considered to be setting a trap for feminist thought, because it then acknowledges biological difference as a condition for exercising oppression on women. However, as Meyers indicates, “if cultural feminism tends to underestimate women’s power, agency, and complicity, poststructuralism, which is often attendant ‘gender skepticism’², may overestimate women’s and feminists’ power, agency and complicity. Ultimately, poststructuralism may be as implicated in the female Gothic as cultural feminism”³ (14). Meyers quotes from Jane Roland Martin who asserts that avoidance of essentialism is destined to “reproduce white male knowledge/power and other varieties of white male

² Meyers adopts Susan Bordo’s term developed in “Feminism, Postmodernism and Gender Skepticism” in *Unbearable Weight*.

³ Meyers gives an endnote for the term “implication”: “The term implication suggests that while we necessarily work within [Gothic] systems that cannot be transcended, we are not destined to merely reproduce those systems in exactly the same form and with identical power configurations. Implication leaves room for repetition with a difference making a difference. I view complicity as a *form* of implication in which the agency afforded by relations of power is mobilized to bolster or reproduce *elements* of a [Gothic] system” (160).

power” (qtd. in Meyers 13). She also refers to Atwood to assert that an essentialist perception is necessary for women’s personal and political stance in patriarchal society.

Significantly, the theoretical flight from ‘woman’ and from feminisms that identify with her partakes of the somatophobia endemic to Western philosophy. In *Bodily Harm* (1981), Margaret Atwood reads postfeminism as symptomatic of somatophobia, the fear of the body that is projected onto women. For Atwood, the cure for this cultural disease necessitates a return to, rather than an escape from, the female body. This narrative actively works against unitary stories of male vice and female virtue; indeed, it clearly privileges the multiplicity and fragmented subjectivity associated with poststructuralist thought. However, by revaluing what may be among the most undervalued female attributes – the female body – Atwood refuses gender skepticism. Rather than a Gothic prison, the specifically female body becomes here an emblem of personal and political agency. (Meyers 134)

In this respect, this study, aware of the controversial discussions about the role of essentialism in feminist thought, adopts Gayatri Spivak’s “strategic essentialism” which temporarily highlights the essential characteristics of a marginalized group in order to fight against these conventional definitions. According to Spivak, “strategic essentialism” is “a *strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest” (“Subaltern Studies” 214, original emphasis). In this sense, essentialism is the first step in showing that sexual differences genuinely shape genre distinctions and it further contends that the politics of the female body, which urges the Gothic plot, is needed for categorization of the Female Gothic in order to discuss how gender constructions inflict genre adoptions on writers.

Although the term the “Female Gothic” is a recent one, coined by Ellen Moers in her eminent book, *Literary Women*, published in 1976, the origin of the Female Gothic dates back to the work of Ann Radcliffe in the late eighteenth century and developing through the nineteenth century, it became one of the most significant sub-genres of that century. Moers announces that her definition is a simple one: “What I mean by Female Gothic is easily defined: the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic” (90). Thus, according to Moers, the “Female Gothic” was an umbrella term for women’s Gothic fiction. Her coinage of the term had a big

influence on Gothic criticism because it has marked out that Gothic literature is closely related to gender.

The Female Gothic as a category emerged in the historical and theoretical context of “second-wave” Anglo-American feminist criticism which paid close attention to texts produced by women. Ellen Moers’s two chapters on the Female Gothic identify two types of Female Gothic novel: Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) indicates a mode which will introduce a motif in many Gothic novels following Radcliffe’s work “in which the central figure is a young woman who is simultaneously persecuted victim and courageous heroine” (91), and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* announces the genre’s turn to science fiction and which “seems to be distinctly a *woman’s* mythmaking on the subject of birth precisely because its emphasis is not upon what precedes birth, not upon birth itself, but upon what follows birth: the trauma after birth” (93, original emphasis). Moers argues that Ann Radcliffe finds an idea of female selfhood in the figure of “the traveling woman: the woman who moves, who acts, who copes with vicissitude and adventure” (126). In Radcliffe’s novels, heroines are forced to go on exciting journeys because they are pursued by the villains. They even travel indoors, inside the castles, alone through the passages and secret chambers. “In Mrs. Radcliffe’s hands, the gothic novel became a feminine substitute for the picaresque, where heroines could enjoy all the adventures and alarms that masculine heroes had long experienced, far from home, in fiction” (Moers 126).

Moers’s study also indicates that women are not only entrapped within the “patriarchal” house, that is, in the domestic space, but also within their bodies. This entrapment within the female body is mostly observed in childbirth. Moers draws attention to this by discussing how Shelley challenges the cultural expectations of motherhood and maternal reactions that a mother shows when she first holds her baby in her arms through introducing “revulsion against newborn life, and the drama of guilt, dread and flight surrounding birth and its consequences” (93). She indicates that the subject of birth was first made an issue in realistic forms of literature by male writers such as Zola, Tolstoy, William Carlos Williams, and others. However, Mary Shelley adapted this issue for Gothic and had *Frankenstein’s* result in creating a monster which made him run away in horror. Thus, instead of representing a happy maternal reaction which is culturally imposed, Shelley presented a perception of the newborn as a monster abandoned by its mother. These anxieties about birth

are not only related to reproduction, but to women's creativity as well. In many patriarchal societies, women's writing is also perceived as a monster which should be eliminated. Thus, Moers's study is focused on women writers' entrapment not only within the female body but also within the domestic sphere that patriarchal ideology builds for them. With these critical approaches to two women writers' Gothic novels, Moers's study inspired many critical works in which the Female Gothic was considered to be an arena in which patriarchal oppression as well as the problematic issue of motherhood was discussed.

After Moers's coinage of the term, a number of studies have sought common patterns of narrative strategies and analogous themes among Gothic works by women writers. Moers's *Literary Women* influenced Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) which also concentrated on the lives and experiences of women writers living under the pressure of patriarchy in the nineteenth century. For Gilbert and Gubar, the nineteenth century seemed to be the "first era in which female authorship was no longer in some sense anomalous" (xi). They admit that Moers's work helped them through its demonstration of the existence of a rich female literary subculture of nineteenth century literary women. They claim that different women writers of different genres employ common themes and imagery that establish a literary tradition among women writers.

Images of enclosure and escape, fantasies in which maddened doubles functioned as asocial surrogates for docile selves, metaphors of physical discomfort manifested in frozen landscapes and fiery interiors – such patterns recurred throughout this tradition, along with obsessive depictions of diseases like anorexia, agoraphobia, and claustrophobia. (xi)

Thus, *The Madwoman in the Attic* uncovered a history of nineteenth century women writers' works as well as nineteenth century women's experiences in real life imbued with these Gothic metaphors, which set the background for a struggle to be free from both a literal and a figurative confinement.

In 1983, Fleenor's edited collection, *The Female Gothic* was published. In her introduction to the collection, Fleenor claims that "[s]ince the Gothic has not been part of the literary mainstream, it has been congenial to the woman writer" (7). She declares that the Gothic is chosen by women writers in order to highlight their separation from a culture constructed by a male dominated society.

Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik reveal that the feminist literary approaches of the 1980s to Female Gothic writing perceived their female characters as passive and as victims. This focus changed in the 1990s to a perception of female characters as autonomous, self-governing, powerful and transgressive, because it was thought that acknowledging “women’s lives [as] inevitably one of constraint and incarceration” (Horner and Zlosnik, “Female Gothic” 111) reinforced conventional gender stereotypes. Thus, Female Gothic novels gained a new approach. The feminist critics of the 1990s problematized the earlier feminist perspectives and started to interpret those texts as ones which promised transgression.

Eugenia DeLamotte’s *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of the Nineteenth-Century Gothic* (1990), and Anne Williams’s *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (1995) focus on social and psychological boundaries which are closely connected to one another. DeLamotte “locates the Gothic Myth at the heart of anxiety about the boundaries of the self and explores four contexts in which that anxiety appears in Gothic Romance: self-defense, knowledge, repetition, and transcendence” (viii). And she relates these themes to the Gothic novels written by women.

The ‘nameless dread’ that suffuses their works is often simply a dread of naming. And yet, at a symbolic level, they give voice to all sorts of unnameable – and perhaps unthinkable – discontents with the very ideology they overtly espouse. Those discontents, in their relation to the issues of self-defense, knowledge, repetition, and transcendence, circle continuously around the theme of the boundaries of the self. That theme had a particular significance for women, who were in a variety of ways – socially, psychologically, even epistemologically – set apart, circumscribed, and subject to intrusion. (151)

Anne Williams, also, with her reference to Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) focuses on the boundaries of the self and the material:

According to Kristeva, the things we experience as ‘horrible’ evoke that early anxiety about materiality and the borders of the self: between ‘me’ and ‘improper/unclean’ (in French the word *propre* means both ‘one’s own’ and ‘clean’ as well as the extended ‘propriety’) ... Thus, the conventional sources of Gothic ‘horror’

(such as blood and decaying or newly murdered corpses) echo the 'abject'. (75, original emphasis)

In this respect, representations of boundaries in terms of self, society, and gender in Female Gothic novels and the attempt to transgress them were the focus of these critics' studies.

The relationship between psychoanalysis and the Gothic has also been emphasized through certain studies. Elaine Showalter states that Moers's work was revised by a feminist psychoanalytical approach in the 1970s. "They viewed the Female Gothic as a confrontation not just with maternity, but with the reproduction of mothering" (Showalter 210). She refers to Kahane's "The Gothic Mirror" (1985) which claims that the Female Gothic is closely related to the problematic position of the maternal in society. Kahane says: "What I see repeatedly locked into the forbidden center of the Gothic which draws me inward is the spectral presence of a dead-undead mother, archaic and all-encompassing, a ghost signifying the problematics of femininity which the heroine must confront" ("Gothic Mirror" 336). In the 1980s,

[r]eading the Female Gothic through Freud's *Studies on Hysteria*, 'Dora,' and 'Das Unheimliche,' as well as through Lacan and Kristeva, critics equated the Gothic with the feminine unconscious, and with the effort to bring the body, the semiotic, the imaginary, or the pre-Oedipal [M]Other Tongue into language. (Showalter 211)

These studies put forward a definition of the Female Gothic as a hysterical narrative. In *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1980), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick asserts that "the heroine of the Gothic [is] a classic hysteric, its hero a classic paranoid" (qtd. in Showalter 211). However, Showalter states that " 'hysterical readings' that dehistoricize the Female Gothic make it a timeless universal mode, one that threatens to reinstate the familiar duality linking women with irrationality, the body, and marginality, while men retain reason, the mind, and authority" (Showalter 211).

Michelle A. Massé, in *In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism and the Gothic* (1992), declares that she sees masochism at the center of the Gothic and she discusses the intersections of the Gothic novel, masochism and feminism.

The Gothic, then, is a pointed reminder of cultural amnesia in its insistent representation of the *process* through which a woman becomes a masochist and assigns subjectivity to another. And as long as Western culture's gender arrangements persist – the Gothic will endure ... When a woman is hurt, as she is throughout the Gothic, the damage is not originally self-imposed: we must acknowledge that someone else strikes the first blow. At the same time, however, I want to emphasize not just what is *done* to women but what they then *do* about it. Feminism, which insists that we cannot look away from the body or face of a woman in pain, demands its own reconsideration of the narratives psychoanalysis and fiction offer. This book is a part of that ongoing reconsideration. (3, original emphasis)

Massé thinks that women also help the patriarchal system to stand firm by internalizing values of culture and society. And she finds the psychoanalytic mode the most useful one to discuss such an internalization.

In the critical works of the 1990s, there were still controversial debates about the definition of the Gothic. It can be claimed that the transgressive peculiarity of the Gothic genre shows itself in a difficulty in finding giving precise definitions. First Gothic works, regardless of belonging to male or female writers, were perceived as feminine and female because of their emphasis on emotions and domestic sphere. Then, the Gothic was reclaimed as a genre which was male because it had a villain-hero as the central figure, and the most successful examples were thought to be written by male writers. In the 1990s, in contrast to Moers's earlier definition of the term, the Female Gothic started to be perceived as a kind of genre which is not only attributed to women writers but also to male writers. And both Tamar Heller's *Dead Secrets: Wilkie Collins and the Female Gothic* (1992) and Alison Milbank's *Daughters of the House: Modes of the Gothic in Victorian Fiction* (1992) examine the study of male writers who have adopted the Female Gothic in their writings.

Horner and Zlosnik argue that with the entrance of discussions of poststructuralism, gender studies and queer theory into the debate, there arose a skepticism around the

categorization of the Female Gothic. Since poststructuralism rejects such categorizations and perceives essentialism as an ideological trap, such a term as “Female Gothic” has become a problematic issue. Horner and Zlosnik declare that in the 2000s, women critics have tried to find new ways of analyzing Gothic novels by women, “some have refined and redefined the term by focusing on a particular genre or a particular period, or indeed, challenging its currency” (“Female Gothic” 115). They give the examples of E. J. Clery’s *Women’s Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* (2000), which discusses Reeves’s, Lee’s, Radcliffe’s, Dacre’s and Shelley’s novels as not fitting in the conventional definitions of the Female Gothic, and Angela Wright’s *Gothic Fiction* (2007), which claims that Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* and Sophia Lee’s *The Recess* display hybrid textual characteristics that resist categorization as the Female Gothic. Horner and Zlosnik also refer to Diane Long Hoeveler’s *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* (1995) which claims that many Gothic novels by women “used their supposed sexual ‘weakness’ in order to manipulate matters to their advantage” (116). In relation to this approach, Smith and Wallace also refer to Hoeveler, who thinks that the heroines of Gothic novels “masquerade as blameless victims of a corrupt and oppressive patriarchal society while utilizing passive-aggressive and masochistic strategies to triumph over that system” (2). Suzanne Becker’s study, *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fiction* (1999), in the light of the changing approaches to gender through poststructuralist theories, uses the term “Feminine Gothic” instead of the “Female Gothic” “to signal her focus on the gender of the speaking subject in the text rather than the gender of the author” (Smith and Wallace 2). In addition, Paulina Palmer focuses on lesbian identities in Female Gothic fiction in *Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions* (1999). She thinks that “Gothic and ‘queer’ share a common emphasis on transgressive acts and subjectivities” (8).

Thus, all these critics have attempted to redefine the Female Gothic in accordance with the critical discussions of postfeminism. In short, the importance of the 1990s studies on the Female Gothic can be explained in Smith’s and Wallace’s words: “Above all, perhaps, the 1990s has witnessed the move of the Female Gothic from the margins into the mainstream” (3).

Horner and Zlosnik, in their article “Female Gothic”, share their experiences of teaching the Female Gothic in academic circumstances. They reveal how their approaches to

teaching the Female Gothic have changed through theoretical positionings. They confess that they no longer teach Gothic fiction by women separately; they also include Gothic fiction by male writers in order to provide new readings in relation to current theories of gender identity. However, they conclude their discussion of their teaching experience in the article by indicating that such a categorization as the “Female Gothic” is still needed despite the opposing arguments to essentialist classifications.

Teaching Female Gothic writing also invariably leads to discussion of the social construction of gender (particularly in relation to class and national identity) and to debates concerning the making of the literary canon. It is obvious that all these issues need to be historically situated and that they can be inflected – and perhaps enriched – by some consideration of Male Gothic writing. These emphases presuppose a poststructuralist feminist agenda rather than a postfeminist one. We applaud that as a teaching strategy; it is still needed in an age when women, in general, earn and own less than men throughout the world. So long as women do not have complete equality with men, there is a case for the sort of special focus that teaching Female Gothic allows; if we refuse to ‘think back through our mothers’ we shall create ghosts of our own. (Horner and Zlosnik, “Female Gothic” 117)

These critical works have emphasized the Female Gothic as a category that has a central function in the female literary tradition. Since the Gothic is a genre which destabilizes and overturns social structures in order to criticize institutionalized systems that advocate “normative” values, the Female Gothic provides an opportunity for feminist writers who aim to challenge the patriarchal sexual politics that women are subjected to. Sexuality and narrative can never escape ideology and in this sense they are allies in either reflecting or attempting to destroy the dominant ideology.

Narrative’s intersection of language, psychology, and ideology makes it an appropriate and compelling construct for the negotiation and containment of the contradictions and anxieties that inevitably attend the focal and delusively stable organizations of existence.

Its myriad loci suggest that narrative both operates like ideology and is shaped by ideology. (Roof 213-4)

Therefore, writing about issues of sexuality and the body means entering into a dialogue with the dominant ideology. Fleenor states that the Female Gothic plot ends in entrapment rather than liberation, especially with respect to female sexuality. Because society is constructed upon binary oppositions, “the social division of women into pure and chaste, or as impure and corrupt, defines the basic dichotomy in the Female Gothic” (Fleenor 15). Patriarchy wins control over women’s bodies through these dichotomies. Therefore, Fleenor indicates that the interior space, which can be used as an image of reintegration and unity for women, is employed as a house of horrors, which oppresses women’s autonomy, represses women’s sexuality and legitimizes women’s confinement in the name of domesticity. Women’s bodies are “saved”, but by the hands of patriarchy and through forcing them to conform to the body politics it promotes. Therefore, Fleenor presents a pessimistic approach when she says transcendence is not possible in the Female Gothic.

The Female Gothic is historically defined by the culture in which it has existed and continues to exist. The thread of continuity established in all Gothic is that they all represent an androcentric culture. Women have been subordinate to men and have existed in the private world of the family while men have existed in the public world. Women have gained their identities through whom they marry, not what they do. The dichotomies of male/female, bad woman/good woman create the tensions and contradictions within the Female Gothic. They also suggest concretely how the moral ambiguities of the Gothic novel have come about. Good and evil are located within the female self, and identity is both fixed and shifting as the heroine attempts to establish her identity (16).

In relation to these ideas, Fleenor claims that “the Female Gothic does not establish any new definitions of female sexuality, though they are sadly needed” (15). However, this is not true when representations of female sexuality in the postmodern Female Gothic are taken into consideration. The postmodern feminist writers liberate their heroines from narratives of confinement through depicting a dynamic female heroine who offers a much more radical response to social constructions of femininity. The works this dissertation chooses to study present heroines who have achieved autonomy in their relationship with men. They attempt to celebrate their own sexuality by constructing their own desires and refusing to be trapped in patriarchally enforced roles such as those of the conventional wife and mother, and they

also raise questions in the minds of the readers about the objectification of women. Postmodern feminist writers of the Female Gothic enact new strategies, particularly for the representations of female sexuality, in order to challenge the multiple patriarchal prisons in which women have been kept for so long. Rewriting the traditional plots of the Gothic is certainly the most effective and the most radical strategy used in subverting the patriarchal plot embedded in Gothic narratives. Rewriting as a practice has emerged within the postmodernist aesthetics, and according to Linda Hutcheon what characterizes postmodernist aesthetics is its double-codedness. In this sense, rewriting works through double-codedness as well. Since this dissertation focuses on postmodern Female Gothic works, before understanding how the practice of rewriting works as a subversive strategy in the hands of the feminist writers, certain characteristics shared by the Gothic and postmodernism should be mentioned.

2.3 Rewriting as a Subversive Strategy in the Postmodern Female Gothic

Very much like the Gothic, postmodernism also implies a close connection with the past. Umberto Eco declares that “[t]he postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently” (qtd. in Bondanella 101). As is observed in this quotation, postmodernism is mainly the ironical revision of the past. This ironical approach provides a way of questioning and deconstructing the established notions of cultural, historical, social and ideological formations of institutionalized practices. In other words, postmodernism challenges all the discursive productions of meaning that used power structures, through promoting a plurality of meanings which provides new perspectives on the existing structures in society. Therefore, for women writers (who have adopted Gothic narratives for centuries as well as male writers), postmodernism, with its emphasis on the politics of representation, has provided an opportunity to attack hierarchically constructed realities. The Gothic narrative, emblematic for its being the haunting past, at this point returns as the haunting patriarchal – not past but – present which feminist writers struggle to overcome through revising conventional Gothic plots with a multivocal narration, with the aim of destroying gender discourses that imprison them in the dungeon of the “other”.

Secondly, postmodernism, which challenges the dominant ideology by deconstructing hegemonic stabilities, by its attack on “high” aesthetic values, and by its reaction against fixed, centered and hierarchical constructions, then, also shows similarities to the Gothic genre. Very much like the Gothic, it is based on ambivalence. Hutcheon, in “Beginning to Theorize Postmodernism”, declares that “postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges – be it in literature, painting, sculpture, film, video, dance, television, music, philosophy, aesthetic theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics of historiography” (243-4). This indicates that postmodernism works within the very structures it attempts to subvert.

In general terms, it takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement. It is rather like saying something whilst at the same time putting inverted commas around what is being said. The effect is to highlight, or ‘highlight,’ and to subvert, or ‘subvert,’ and the mode is therefore a ‘knowing’ and an ironic – or even ‘ironic’ – one. Postmodernism’s distinctive character lies in this kind of wholesale ‘nudging’ commitment to doubleness, or duplicity. (Hutcheon, *Politics* 1)

Then, while trying to challenge the modes of representations, postmodern literature utilizes these modes self-consciously. The Gothic genre, in this sense, also works with the very structures it tries to subvert.

Besides, Hutcheon states that postmodernism is “fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical and inescapably political” (“Beginning” 244) and “[w]hat postmodern theory and practice have taught is less that ‘truth’ is illusory than that it is institutional, for we always act and use language in the context of politico-discursive conditions” (“Discourse” 105). In this respect, it is the dominant ideology that shapes society and the way artists represent that process in art. What postmodernism does is to crystallize the relation between ideology and existing power structures. Hutcheon indicates that

postmodernist art and theory have self-consciously acknowledged their ideological positioning in the world, and they have been caused to do so not only in reaction to that provocative assertion of triviality, but also by those previously silenced as ‘ex-centrics’,

both outside and inside the supposedly monolithic culture of the West. ("Discourse" 106)

Thus, postmodernism gives voice to marginalized discourses as the Gothic genre does. Its very function is to deconstruct all the conventions, institutions, authorities, totalitarian and colonizing ideologies. It is in this sense that Sherzer claims "[f]eminism is an essential part of postmodernism" (137). Feminism by its rebellion against oppression represents the voice of the oppressed. Sherzer quotes from Hassan: "We deconstruct, displace, demystify the logocentric, ethnocentric, phallogocentric order of things" (qtd. in Sherzer 156) and she announces that

[t]his general decanonization is what feminism is all about, for feminist texts deconstruct women's oppression and displace the centre of attention away from men in favour of women's culture and possibilities. In this sense, then, a feminist text, but also any ethnic, minority, or Third World text, can be nothing but postmodern. (156)

She concludes that this is only the epistemological and cultural consideration of postmodernism, but another significant characteristic of postmodern thought is its specific literary representational practices. Feminism and the Gothic share a common ground with postmodernism in this sense: an intensive indulgence in representation. Representation had been considered to be a "neutral process" before, and now, through postmodern thought, representation is revealed to be an ideologically constructed process. Although postmodernism breaks away from a theory of agency and therefore seems to resist political practice, it tries "to turn its inevitable ideological grounding into a site of de-naturalising critique" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 3). Hutcheon adopts Barthes's "doxa", a term used by Barthes for indicating a general opinion of society that accepts established forms of representations as taken for granted, unquestionable and natural. "The *doxa* suggests, and indeed embodies, the idea that stable meaning is possible" (Allen 79, original emphasis) and therefore it does not suggest a way of subverting the dominance of these established representations. And Hutcheon announces that "postmodernism works to 'de-doxify' our cultural representations and their undeniable political import" (*Politics* 3) because culture is not the source of these

representations, but rather these representations form culture itself. As Hutcheon observes: “What postmodern theory and practice together suggest is that everything always was ‘cultural’ in this sense, that is always mediated by representation” (*Politics* 34). Thus, the de-doxifying process discusses the unquestioned truths of society provided by cultural representations and this process can be observed in many postmodern Female Gothic works.

The de-doxifying process functions through parody. Parody is one of the basic methods that exhibit how present representations are derived from past ones because parody uses and abuses existing specific forms of representations and cultural conventions in order to de-naturalize them. Hutcheon thinks that parodic postmodern representation is very significant because she emphasizes that “this parodic reprise of the past of art is not nostalgic; it is always critical” (*Politics* 93). It makes us aware of the powers of representation, and how they shape and structure our way of thinking. Postmodernism is characterized by its double-codedness, parody, as a form of ironic representation, is also “doubly coded in political terms: it both legitimizes and subverts that which it parodies” (Hutcheon, *Politics* 101). Thus, postmodern parodic strategies are favored by Female Gothic writers who ironically revisit the past in order to destroy the historical power of cultural representations. Rewriting and an emphasis on intertextuality are among these parodic strategies.

In her work *Desire In Language*, Kristeva claims that a text is “bounded” to the existent discourse. In other words, texts are carved out of previous texts. No text has a textual autonomy, but all texts intersect with one another at infinite points of intersection. Therefore, one can trace every other text in the literary text. Texts are produced under the influence of different discourses that are constructed by the institutional structures and ideological systems which form culture. Therefore, all texts encapsulate the ideological constructions of society. Thus, Kristeva puts forward a cultural textuality instead of an individual, isolated textuality and claims that no text can be separated from its social, cultural and historical circumstances in which it is produced. “If texts are made up of bits and pieces of social text, then the on-going ideological struggles and tensions which characterize language and discourse in society will continue to reverberate in the text itself” (Allen 36). Thus, a text is never independent of the dominant ideology. This means that a text does not promise a unified meaning, but a combination of meanings that reside in ideological discourses.

The concept of text as ideologeme determines the very procedure of a semiotics that, by studying the text as intertextuality, considers it as such within (the text of) society and history. The ideologeme of a text is the focus where knowing rationality grasps the transformation of *utterances* (to which the text is irreducible) into a totality (the text) as well as the insertions of this totality into the historical and social text. (*Desire* 37)

Kristeva's approach to the text shows that the text owns a double meaning: "a meaning in the text itself and a meaning in what she calls 'the historical and social text'" (Allen 37). This notion destroys the belief that there is a meaning inside and there is another meaning outside the text. That is, there is not a rigid boundary drawn between this insideness and outsideness of the meaning of the text. The text's meaning is produced out of pre-existent meanings. Kristeva's theories about language and literature always depend on a principle of ambivalence and fluidity. This view indicates that intertextuality promises a plurality of meanings which operates against the unified, authoritative, conventional approach to the text.

Rewriting draws attention to this intertextual relationship in literary tradition but it also indicates a specific purpose of the practice of the reshaping a previously written text with an ironical and a subversive approach. Within this poststructuralist framework of the literary text which promotes multiple meanings that exceed patriarchally constructed systems of meaning, feminists have attempted "to decode the repressive ideology of the text and its complicity with dominant power" (Morris 139). Since language is ideologically constructed through hierarchical values which appear as "natural" and "real", women have rebelled against the oppression of the symbolic order which imposes fixed gendered identities on them. Rewriting of "grand narratives", canonical texts, stories, patriarchal plots, myths, fairy tales, etc. by feminist authors aims at showing how our way of thinking is shaped by historical and cultural representations reproduced by the literary works. That is, rewriting, as a tool, not only does decode the repressive ideology of the text, but also offers a new way of thinking.

Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. A radical

critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and how we can begin to see and name – and therefore live – afresh. A change in the concept of sexual identity is essential if we are not going to see the old political order reassert itself in every new revolution. We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us. (Rich, *On Lies* 35).

In this respect, rewriting can be described as a “political intertextuality” in Nancy K. Miller’s words. Miller does not endorse the concept of anonymity in intertextual theories which effaces the authorial subject and displays a web of texts intersecting one another presented as if they were free from their authors’ authority. She points out that such an approach ignores gender identities in writing and therefore, intertextuality theories propose no disruption of the totalized aspects of cultural production. Without paying attention to gender, representations reproduced by the patriarchal ideology cannot be deciphered. “When we tear the web of women’s texts we discover in the representations of writing itself the marks of the grossly material, the sometimes brutal traces of the culture of gender; the inscriptions of its political structures” (Miller 83-4). Therefore, she offers “arachnology”⁴, a term based on Barthes’s image of the text as an infinite web spinning itself over the spider, but she reintroduces the spider “as author, as subject, as agent, as gendered body, as producer of the text” (Friedman 158). Miller, through her theory of the text as an “arachnology”, tries to explain that interweaving is an important characteristic of women’s writing, but she also does not forget to underline the significance of the weaving spider, the author, who weaves to overthrow hegemony.

⁴ Miller claims that the metaphors of the spider and the spider’s web and the lace and the lacemaker in Barthes’s theory of the text have female connotations. In this respect, she argues that “if Barthes had been less fond of neologisms, and a feminist, he might have named his theory of the text production an ‘arachnology’. Therefore, the rebellious story of Arachne, becomes associated with female protest and her protest is innate in her act of weaving. Thus, according to Miller, intertextuality with its connotations of weaving has a female nature. Through arachnology she intends to point at the gendered subjectivity in a text and woman’s relation of production to the dominant culture. As a result, arachnology becomes a modeling of feminist poetics that scrutinizes the structures of power, gender and identity in literary works.

“Arachnology” is for a “political intertextuality”. By political intertextuality, Miller means placing “oneself at a deliberately oblique (or textual) angle to intervention. Troped as a subversion – a political intertextuality – this positionality remains in the end ... a form of negotiation within the dominant social text, and ultimately, a local operation” (Miller 112). Thus, this method of reading texts through political intertextual awareness not only can be applied to women’s texts but to all the texts that are marginalized by the dominant culture. Although Miller’s views of intertextuality have mostly stemmed from French poststructuralist theory, she separates her views from the declaration of the death of the author through emphasizing the significance of the historical, political and figurative body of the writer.

In short, although intertextuality, rewriting and parody can be used synonymously in certain contexts by some critics, they have eminent differences from one another. It can be claimed that intertextuality is the root which practices of rewriting and parody stem from. Intertextuality refers to a study of texts emphasizing their autonomous and dialogic relationship with one another free from the authority of the author. Rewriting is a political practice of revisiting the written texts underlining their intertextual relations in order to subvert them. And lastly, parody can be claimed to envelop all of these concerns as Hutcheon states: “To parody is not to destroy the past; in fact to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it” (*Poetics* 126).

Thus, rewriting “master narratives” is a fruitful strategy for feminist writers which enables them to assert their cause. Through revising the genres and destroying the strict boundaries between the genres, through rewriting patriarchal myths and images of women and revisiting sexual politics, feminist writers benefit from the multivocal nature of postmodern writing. In fact, rewriting has been criticized for being a repetitive practice which revolves around the same issues and therefore is capable of installing the same values in the culture.

In a culture dominated by codes so pervasive that they appear natural, the intertextual, viewed as the presence of these codes and clichés within culture, can cause a sense of repetition, a saturation of cultural stereotypes, the triumph of the *doxa* over that which would resist and disrupt it. It might seem, then, that in a Postmodern context intertextual codes and practices predominate

because of a loss of any access to reality. (Allen 183, original emphasis)

However, through intertextual referencing feminist writers try to put a stop to this saturation of cultural stereotypes. Their aim is not to repeat them but to subvert them. They deconstruct narratives which are reproduced by political institutions and reveal subtexts which imprison women in patriarchal ideology. Thus, feminist intertextual fiction has become one of the main ways of the expression of the need to revise and recast ideological formations of meaning in feminist terms. The Gothic genre is available for such a practice because repetition is one of the crucial elements of Gothic fiction. As Massé suggests, “In the ‘real’ world of the frame, the woman can exist only in relation to another – usually as a daughter in the beginning and as a bride at the end. Insofar as we credit the shift as progress, we rewrite the Gothic and assure its repetition” (*Name of Love* 11). Thus, in order to prevent repeating such a conventional plot, postmodern feminist Gothic writers employ a subversive repetition which is based on deconstructing the traditional patriarchal conventions of the Gothic genre and they reconstruct the Gothic plot by emphasizing the heroine’s liberation from the dungeons of myths such as “the second sex”, “the maiden”, “the angel in the house”, “the seductress”, “the witch”, “the whore”, etc.

In this respect, for women writers, the influence of postmodernism on Gothic fiction has provided an opportunity to discuss sexual politics constructed by patriarchal ideology. Since the Gothic is a site in which sexual politics is foregrounded, postmodern feminist Gothic writing has become a popular means of discussing the position of women in the patriarchal system. It is widely acclaimed that Gothic fiction is mostly associated with women writers as well as women readers because of its emphasis on excessive emotions positioned against reason.

No other genre is closely linked to the ‘feminine’ in cultural perception. In fact, much of the critical opprobrium with which the genre is burdened derives from what is perceived as the ‘womanish’ qualities of Gothic narrative: the concern with the building and nurturing of families, the precarious balance of modesty and sensuality, and the microscopic investigation of emotional states. While the dominant patriarchal culture might devalue those qualities and the genre which contains them, it also

serves as a representation of anxieties concerning the colonization of women's sexuality and the fears of the female metamorphosis free of male control. (Gross 91)

Therefore, the female body on which sexual politics is constructed is one of the important elements of the Gothic novel which challenges the social boundaries. The Gothic novel in this sense offers a close look on women's problematic relation to society, to culture, to the domestic sphere, to the other bodies as well as to their own bodies, and to the dominant ideology.

Anne Cranny-Francis in her book, *Feminist Fiction: Feminist Uses of Generic Fiction*, announces that one of the most inventive aspects of the contemporary literary production is its concentration on feminist genre fiction. She reveals that feminists adopt certain popular literary forms such as science fiction, detective fiction, fantasy, utopian fiction and romance in order to challenge the established codes of the dominant gender ideology of Western society. Through their adoption of genre fictions, feminist writers not only oppose the portrayal of characters and weaving of the plot in these genres, but they also reconstruct the conventions these genres exhibit.

The conventions of genre fiction are built on the conventions of culture. Since culture is male, the characteristics of any genre reflect patriarchal ideology. For instance, as Cranny-Francis also argues, sexist discourse operates within these genres. This discourse places the two sexes into two separate spheres. Women are pushed into the private space of home to protect the family ideals constructed long ago by Victorian bourgeois ideology and they are forced to deal with occupations such as nurturing, nursing, serving and teaching which help the family ideal continue to rule their lives. On the other hand, men are the dominators of the public space of the external world, particularly society itself and the workplace which enable them to maintain their patriarchal ends and which provide them with the power of defining what society is. It is in this sense that male discourse is always associated with sexist discourse. And this discourse imposes its power on woman by "naturalizing" the representation of her as the "other". One can find this naturalizing process apparent within the literary texts and these literary texts contribute to the production of these patriarchal representations and to the deeply operating system of them in culture.

One of the ways of challenging these gender representations in culture is rewriting these texts from a feminist point of view, as has been mentioned before. This rewriting process provides feminist writers with a tool which makes these dominating structures visible first and then de/reconstructs new structures in feminist terms. In this respect, the Female Gothic is a genre which not only does employ Gothic conventions, but rewrites the conventions of the Gothic genre with a critical approach to explore the issues of female experience in a patriarchal society, sexual difference, and oppression.

Generic fiction, characterized as feminine by a masculinist (political, psychological, artistic) establishment, is now being transformed by feminist ideology. Rather than rejecting the mass culture to which they were relegated (and which, as female, was relegated to them), feminist writers have embraced it, seeing its characteristic popularity as a powerful tool for their own propagandist purposes. They also consolidate the traditional association of women, the feminine, with a major area of cultural production. And it is certainly true that women have published extensively in generic forms. (Cranny-Francis 5)

As we have seen, the practices and conventions which characterize a genre are always ideological; they are not neutral. In order to destroy the ideological function of the genre then, feminist writers' revising process of these conventions has become a political practice. Via revisioning older Gothic conventions, contemporary feminist writers not only benefit from the transgressive aspects of the Gothic genre which equip them with a tool to transcend social and cultural boundaries, but through a second emphasis that postmodernist parody provides, they also present an awareness of their confinement, and in this fashion they subvert gender ideologies.

2.4 Abject Representations of Female Desire in the Postmodern Female Gothic

Parodying the traditional narratives can be one of the most effective ways for feminist writers to attack ideologically constructed representations of the female body. Since problems of sexuality lie at the root of the Gothic novel in its discussion of sexual roles, and since the Gothic is defined as a female tradition in which feminine issues in a patriarchal society are questioned, this study focuses on the postmodern female Gothic narratives in

which representations of sexuality can be overtly problematized through postmodern strategies of deconstruction and subversion. Particularly, this study focuses on the rewritings of traditional Gothic narratives which parody the conventional approaches to female sexuality constructed by patriarchal ideology. Through rewriting, these feminist writers not only de-doxify these representations but also aim to change the system of meanings encoded in culture. By approaching the representations of the female body ironically and critically, feminists try to alert women to the ways in which they are imprisoned in sexist discourses. Thus, as Hutcheon puts it “Parody, rewriting, re-presenting woman is one option which postmodernism offers feminist artists in general” (*Politics* 156).

Since sexuality is one of the taboos that civilized discourse avoids, the Gothic, as a form which gives voice to the “unspeakable”, is very much interested in deviant representations of sexuality. “In fact, gothic fiction offered a testing ground for many unauthorized genders and sexualities, including sodomy, tribadism, romantic friendship (male and female), incest, pedophilia, sadism, masochism, necrophilia, cannibalism, masculinized females, feminized males, miscenegation, and so on” (Haggerty 2). In this respect, female sexuality, which until very recently in the Western tradition has been an “unspeakable” experience of women and if spoken, it has been spoken through a patriarchal mouth, finds a matriarchal voice in the postmodern Female Gothic. Because sexuality has been defined in repressive terms since the assertion of middle class values in the Victorian period, the Gothic genre, which is built on the convention of the return of the repressed, deals with repressed desires. Punter claims that

Gothic fiction is erotic at root: it knows that to channel sexual activity into the narrow confines of conventionality is repressive and, in the end, highly dangerous, that it is a denial of Eros and that Eros so slighted returns in the form of threat and violence. The beast within cannot be killed, but that is because it derives its strength from the pressure with which it is held down by smooth-faced man on the outside. It is our repressions that kill us, because they conjure up forces within which are far stronger than our fragile conventionality can withstand. (*Terror* Vol 2 191)

In this respect, in a society where sexuality is repressed by norms, women, as the oppressed other find themselves doubly repressed in their experience of sexuality. As Fleenor argues,

dread of female physiology and female sexuality is a constant Gothic theme, and the Gothic as written by both women and men reflects it ... Since the Female Gothic has been limited by the patriarchal society in which it has been written by the literature it responds to, it accepts rather than challenges that limited definition of female biology. Female sexuality in these works is limited for the most part to the vagina, to procreation, and to the heroine's relationship with men. (14-5)

In other words, the Female Gothic depicts patriarchal definitions of women's sexuality. In this respect, the traditional circular Female Gothic plot does not apply to the works this study focuses on, regarding their putting forward new definitions of female sexuality. Although the traditional circular plot in the Female Gothic entraps the heroine especially with respect to female sexuality, postmodern feminist Gothic writers enact new strategies for challenging the confinements of patriarchal society. Through rewriting the circular plot with subversive strategies, feminist Gothic writers liberate Gothic heroines from narratives of confinement.

This study is based on a psychoanalytical approach for several reasons. First of all, the relationship between psychoanalysis and the Gothic is a strong one because the Gothic mostly deals with unconscious materials such as desires, fears, fantasy, dreams, and neurotic symptoms. Although psychoanalysis as a methodology of understanding human psychology was first established by Sigmund Freud in 1896, eighteenth and the nineteenth century Gothic texts dwell on many points such as the uncanny, split personality, sadism and masochism, hysteria, paranoia, resentment, the Oedipal complex, etc. whose theory psychoanalysis will choose to develop in order to understand human nature. The unconscious stores excessive emotions, hidden desires, and memories repressed by the conscious mind and it reveals its repressed material through dreams, abnormal behaviour patterns and extreme emotional states. All of these manifestations of the unconscious are peculiar to Gothic narratives. Besides, what is marginalized and repressed by society, in psychoanalytical terms by the

super-ego, finds expression in the Gothic world of supernatural representations such as ghosts, specters, monsters, vampires, and doubles. Thus, the Gothic depicts a dreamy world with its emphasis upon the supernatural and its characters suffer from neurotic disorders in order to transgress what is defined as normal by culture. In this respect, the contribution of these fields to one another is a mutual one. For instance, Freud benefits from certain Gothic works in order to develop his basic theories as it can be observed in his discussion of the uncanny in relation to E. T. A. Hoffmann's story "The Sandman". On the other hand, psychoanalysis also plays a significant role in critical interpretations of Gothic works.

For a long time, Gothic narratives have been analyzed in the light of Freudian psychoanalysis and these studies have proved that Freud's theories of human psychology and the Gothic narratives have much in common. These common aspects can be listed as follows. Firstly, Freud concentrates on infancy as the fundamental period of psychological development and the Gothic narratives are also concerned with the childhood period in their presentation of the protagonists' quest in the form of transition from childhood to adulthood. Secondly, Freud reveals that sexuality lies at the root of the human behaviour and the Gothic narratives also dwell on sexuality in its deviant forms such as incest, rape, same-sex desire, voyeurism, and sadomasochistic relationships. Thirdly, Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex is another significant approach that provides critical readings of the Gothic. It explains the problematic family relationships found at the core of the Gothic plot. Lastly, Freud's emphasis on the psychologically divided self which manifests itself especially in the conflict of the id and the ego or the super-ego is also detected in representations of the double in Gothic works. Thus, the dark forces which shape human psychology and which reside in the unconscious are the main elements of the dark, gloomy and dreamy atmosphere of the Gothic narratives. In short, as Massé argues in her article "Psychoanalysis and the Gothic", "Gothic novels, like psychoanalysis, explore the ostensibly irrational or 'distempered'" (230). Since psychoanalysis and the Gothic emerge from the same point which puts the irrational counter to the rational, they nourish one another in discovering new understandings of human beings and the world. In this respect, "[p]sychoanalysis and the Gothic are cognate historical strands made up of the same human hopes and anxieties and then woven into particular patterns by the movements of socio-cultural change" (Massé, "Psychoanalysis" 231).

Thus, the interactions between psychoanalysis and the Gothic provide a fruitful insight in analyzing Gothic fiction. Psychoanalysis bases its theories on the role of sexuality to define the process of identity formation. It claims that understanding human psychology is only possible through an understanding of sexuality. And since the human being is universally defined as male in patriarchal society, male sexuality is central to providing explanations of human psychology and female sexuality is defined merely in its relationship to male sexuality. Therefore, feminist theorists criticized and rewrote basic psychoanalytical methods with a feminist approach and through this practice they revealed that the understanding of female sexuality is confined to patriarchal ideology. This is the reason why this study adapts a feminist psychoanalytical approach to the postmodern rewritings of Gothic texts by women with the belief that one can find representations of sexuality most pronounced in terms of the dominant ideology in the psychoanalytical field and this dominant ideology can be challenged through deconstructing and subverting social and cultural representations of the female body. Therefore, this study claims that in order to discuss representations of female desire in the postmodern Female Gothic, a feminist psychoanalytical approach is the most beneficial method that lays bare “sexuality as a social construct of male power: defined by men, forced on women, and constitutive in the meaning of gender” (MacKinnon 476). Feminist approaches to psychoanalytical studies not only react to “the hegemony of the social construct ‘desire,’ hence its product, ‘sexuality,’ hence its construct ‘woman’” (MacKinnon 477) but also provide new definitions of the female body and its sexuality which are instrumental in analyzing literary texts written with feminist concerns. As MacKinnon argues:

If women have been substantially deprived not only of their own experience but of terms of their own in which to view it, then a feminist theory of sexuality that seeks to understand women’s situation in order to change it must first identify and criticize the construct ‘sexuality’ as a construct that has circumscribed and defined experience as well as theory. (MacKinnon 477)

The traditional psychoanalytical theories then offer an imprisoning Gothic world for women by oppressing them and rendering them ghosts rather than members of the natural order of life who haunt the male identity with the threat of castration, with the dreadful invitation of their uncanny wombs perceived as the tombs for the male identity, and with the

horror of being the unknowable, the “lack” and the “Other”. In the postmodern period, not only the conventional Gothic plots but also the traditional psychoanalytical theories are deconstructed and rewritten. In this respect, the postmodern Female Gothic subverts the conventional Gothic plot as well as the psychoanalytical approach adopted to analyze this plot.

As discussed before the traditional Gothic plot is based on an Oedipal rivalry, mainly the son’s conflict with any kind of authority: the familial father, patriarchy, or religion. The male protagonist’s rebellion against the authoritative structures is rewarded with individuation. However, in the Female Gothic, the individuation is impossible for the heroine who is socialized by marriage in the end. In fact, the Female Gothic has also been analyzed through revealing the same Oedipal pattern but with respect to the incestuous connotation that lies beneath the sexual threat of a powerful male figure who is supposed to be the protector of the persecuted maiden, but comes out to be a villain who prevents her union with a younger male. This way of reading the Female Gothic through Oedipal dynamics of traditional psychoanalytical theories excludes female desire from the texts as well.

The Oedipal plot the heroine is stuck within reveals a more important aspect of the Gothic pattern. The daughter’s separation from the mother in identity formation process is an unwilling one because the difference between the mother and the daughter is not as clearly drawn as it is for the mother and the son. The son’s desire for the mother is repressed and his identification with the father is affirmed in order to achieve his place in the symbolic order. On the other hand, the daughter does not enter the symbolic order so easily because she is forced to separate from the mother first whom she will identify with in the symbolic stage. Kahane interprets the castle the young woman is imprisoned in as the symbol of the female body and the young woman’s escape from it as an attempt to separate her from the mother. She states that “[p]utting herself outside it, the conventional Gothic heroine puts herself outside female desire and aggressivity. In thus excluding a vital aspect of the self, she is left on the margin both of identity and society” (“Gothic Mirror” 340). Therefore, she thinks that while the heroine explores the limits of identity, she, however, surrenders to a socially acceptable role or is totally destroyed at the end of the conventional Female Gothic.

The basic themes of the conventional Female Gothic are self-fear and self-disgust. These themes are explored through the mysteries the heroine goes through and “terror

depends on *not* seeing clearly” (Kahane, “Gothic Mirror” 343, original emphasis). Kahane observes that in twentieth century Female Gothic the images of self-hatred are freakish which lead to a grotesque tradition. And Moers claims that women writers of the modern Female Gothic tend to give “*visual* form to the fear of self” (107, original emphasis). The spectral mother figure the heroine is confronted with to explore her identity in the conventional Female Gothic is turned into an embodied figure in the twentieth century works.

With that shift, the heroine is imprisoned not in a house but in the female body, which is itself the maternal legacy. The problematics of femininity is thus reduced to the problematics of the female body, perceived as antagonistic to the sense of self, as therefore freakish. Repeatedly, as so much of what we call modern Gothic illustrates, when the unseen is given visual form, when we lose the obscurity of the Gothic darkness, the Gothic focuses on distorted body images and turns into the grotesque. (Kahane, “Gothic Mirror” 343)

In the postmodern period where cultural divisions concerning gender identity are questioned, many feminist writers have attempted to transgress the patriarchal boundaries that have caused social and psychological repression of women. Until the postmodern period, the Female Gothic warned its readers about the threats and traps set by the patriarchal ideology. In the postmodern period, the Female Gothic gained a more radical stance and the feminist writers rewrite and subvert the conventional Gothic plot in order to destroy this imprisoning Gothic structure. Therefore, they emphasize the mother-daughter bond and reverse the Oedipal stage that constructs female identity negatively and female sexuality as passive, castrated, and absent. They also give new definitions of female sexuality with the aim of expressing their sexuality as repressed by patriarchal ideology for a long time.

[T]he Gothic has become a perfect mode for the interrogation of sexual power and sexual pleasure. ... [T]he Gothic disrespects the borderlines of the appropriate, the healthy, or the politically desirable. It resists the authority of the traditional or received and insists, with more or less gleeful energy, on making visible the violence underpinning sexual norms that our culture (including a culture imagined by feminism) holds most sacred. (Bruhm 94)

Thus, the Gothic is the most eligible genre for feminist writers who aspire to discuss female sexuality in feminist terms. In order to escape from the patriarchal confinement of the female body, the postmodern Female Gothic portrayed abject sexuality. By focusing on the female body and its functions excluded by the dominant ideology and therefore already rendered abject, they rewrite the female desire denied within the patriarchal world. Therefore, by exploring the abject representations of the female body in the Female Gothic, it is possible to reveal the construction of “otherness” behind the patriarchal discourses and cultural values of a particular historical period. In the postmodern Female Gothic, it is observed that abject representations of the female body subvert the conventional Gothic plot and express a female sexuality that destroys patriarchally constructed power relationships. Thus, the horror the female body creates in the dominant culture is celebrated as a way of expressing the revolt against the patriarchal confinements that surround female sexuality.

With the publication of Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* in which her theory of the abject is presented, Gothic studies have gained a new approach. Before discussing Kristeva’s theory of the abject, it is important to give the philosophical background of Kristeva’s studies. Kristeva’s controversial theories in various areas such as linguistics, philosophy, theology, politics, art, literary criticism, and psychoanalysis reveal a dialogical relationship between the two concepts culturally constructed as separate, an emphasis on the identity on the threshold and in the process of becoming, which denies a finished state of being, an indulgence in the plurality and non-fixity of language. Her theoretical production is directed at destroying all kinds of monolithic power structures. Although she criticizes feminism as another political discourse which seeks for domination, her critical works attack the hegemony of the sexist discourse of Western culture by deconstructing the patriarchal ideology behind it. In this respect, she is regarded as one of the leading feminists who belongs to the “new holy Trinity of French feminist theory” in Toril Moi’s words along with Cixous and Irigaray.

Kristeva’s psychoanalytical studies emerge with the need to find a place for the speaking subject in political and linguistic analysis. Being raised in Communist Bulgaria and witnessing the French Communist Party’s betrayal of the students’ and workers’ revolt for a more egalitarian society in the light of Marxism in May 1968 France, she thinks that the materialist explanations of the leftist thought are not sufficient to understand the individual

subject. Therefore, she turns to Lacanian psychoanalysis and combines it with her linguistic studies in order to give an account of the “speaking subject” whose “individual emotions are not explicable merely by traditional, political or philosophical formulations; or rather that they are not explicable by those formulations alone” (Robbins 122). She claims that the speaking subject is bound to language and since language is politically constructed, the speaking subject is also a political subject. However, at the same time, psychoanalysis provides this speaking subject with an individual space. (Robbins 123). This individual speaking subject is a split subject “divided between unconscious and conscious motivations, that is, between physiological processes and social constraints” (Roudiez 6). Kristeva claims that the speaking process is bound to body on the one hand, but on the other hand speech is shaped by culture. By drawing attention to the necessity of “both the conscious and the unconscious, both the mind and the body, both the cultural and natural” (Robbins 127), she insists that the interactions between these realms create the meaning. Therefore, Kristeva’s focus is “no longer language (as in structuralism), or discourse (as phenomenology would have it), or even enunciation; rather, it is the discourse of a split subject – this again involves her in psychoanalysis” (Roudiez 6). This concept of split speaking subject also contributes to Kristeva’s emphasis on plurality and the polylogical concept of the text. Like the text itself, the subject is unfixed as well. It is always developing, a “subject-in-process”. This idea of subject-in-process is a significant contribution to the feminist thinking because it puts forward a liberated identity which cannot be pinned down by gender distinctions.

In her *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva rewrites Freud’s and Lacan’s construction of the human subject. According to Kristeva, the necessity of the infant’s separation from the maternal body in order to realize the boundaries between “me” and “m/other” occurs before establishing its place in the symbolic order. However, she disagrees with Lacan’s claim that the infant encounters separation from the maternal body in the mirror stage. She asserts that even before the mirror stage this process starts and the infant develops its borders through excreting, spitting out and vomiting its mother’s milk, and even through rejecting its mother’s embrace. However, “it is so difficult to identify the mother’s borders: he was once in her and now here he is outside her” (McAfee, *Julia Kristeva* 48). Thus, the infant is torn between two needs: on the one hand, it yearns to become one with the maternal body; on the other hand it knows it has to break up with this blissful union in order

to become a self. What Kristeva calls this stage residing between the chora and the mirror stage is abjection.

In this respect, “the first ‘thing’ to be abjected is the mother’s body, the child’s own origin” (McAfee, *Julia Kristeva* 48). Abjecting in this sense does not mean the child’s repressing its desire for the mother in Freudian terms. Although both Freud and Kristeva agree on the conflicting state of the subject’s yearning to be with the mother’s body and the simultaneous fear of losing one’s identity accompanying this desire, Freud claims that in order to be a psychologically healthy individual, desire for the mother should be repressed. If this primary desire returns, it is a sign of a psychological disturbance in the individual. This is valid for all repressed desires because Freud reveals that neurotic disorders stem from the return of what is repressed in the unconscious. On the other hand, Kristeva’s abject remains with the subject, it is never completely denied or buried deeply in the unconscious as Freudian subject’s repressed desires. The abject is a continuous threat on the boundaries of the self reminding it of the stage where the self and the other are one: the lost union with the m/other’s body. Although the child passes through the abjection process successfully, the abject will continue to be with him on the “periphery of the consciousness” (McAfee, *Julia Kristeva* 48). It is the part of oneself which “remains as both an unconscious and a conscious threat to one’s own clean and proper self” (McAfee, *Julia Kristeva* 46). In this respect, the abject remains with the subject throughout its life.

In traditional theories of identity then, the self is constructed as a proper and stable subject through excluding what is unstable, improper, disorderly and “other” to oneself and as a result of this recognition of the boundaries between “self” and “other”, it achieves a unitary⁵ subjectivity. However, the abject is the ambiguous, the state of being in-between, the

⁵ The “unitary subject” refers to Lacanian subject and it should not be confused with Kristeva’s subject-in-process which unites self and other, subject and object, and the semiotic and the symbolic subjectivities. Kristeva gives the definition of the “unitary subject” as follows: “In its most audacious moments current (Lacanian) psychoanalytical theory proposes a theory of the subject as a divided unity which arises from and is determined by lack (void, nothingness, zero, according to the context) and engages in an unsatisfied quest for the impossible, represented by metonymic desire. This subject, which we call the ‘unitary subject’, under the law of One, which turns out to be the Name of the Father, this subject of filiation or subject-son, is in fact the unvoiced part, or if you like the truth, of the subject of science, but also of the subject of the social organism (of the family, the clan, the state, the group). Psychoanalysis teaches us this: that any subject, inasmuch as he or she is social, supposes this unitary and split instance, initially proposed by Freud with the Unconscious/Conscious schema, while

refusal of the boundaries and the revolt against this unity. In this respect, Kristeva's perception of the human subject is different from traditional theories of identity since her theory of abjection promotes a fluid identity, which she calls "subject-in-process" as is discussed before. According to Kristeva, subjectivity is "always a tenuous accomplishment, a dynamic process never completed" (McAfee, *Julia Kristeva* 1) and therefore it anticipates a dynamic relationship between the self and its other rather than the rigid separation of boundaries. Kristeva puts forward a subject that carries the other within itself. Grosz states that

the abject is neither subject nor object, neither image nor 'reality'. It is a consequence of recognizing the impossibility of the identity of either subject or object, and yet the necessary dependence of each on the other. If the object is an externalized correlate of the subject, then the abject is with the fading, emersion, or disappearance of the subject and its imaginary hold over the subject. The abject is that part of the subject (which cannot be categorized as an object) which it attempts to expel. The abject is the symptom of the object's failure to fill the subject or to define and anchor the subject. ("Signification" 87)

The subject's process of abjection can also be projected onto the cultural and social level because socio-symbolic order is also established like the formation of the human identity on exclusion and binary oppositions. In order to become an autonomous subject, the subject has to realize its separation from the others in social, cultural, sexual, religious, racial and ethnical terms. In this sense, socially and culturally marginalized groups can be considered as the abject of the symbolic order. This excluded and marginalized other is fearful for the dominant culture as well as for the subject. Therefore, both on the social and individual level borders are built against the other which is perceived as a threat to the properness. Then, abjection can be regarded as a social projection of what is strived to be excluded by the dominant ideology.

In order to construct a proper society, the patriarchal ideology leans on the construction of proper subjects. "The ability to take up a symbolic position as a social and speaking subject entail the disavowal of its modes of corporeality, especially those

it also points to the role of originary repression in the constitution of subject. ... The unitary subject is the subject instituted by the social censoring" ("The Subject in Process" 133).

representing what is considered unacceptable, unclean, or anti-social” (Grosz, “Signification” 86). Thus, the defiling elements of the body are expelled to construct the body as pure, clean, proper and ordered. While Kristeva discusses the clean and the proper body for the social subject constructed by the dominant culture, she benefits from the anthropologist Mary Douglas’s seminal work, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966). Douglas examines the rituals and cultural practices societies perform and reveals that societies tend to expel what is regarded as polluting their systems. Since the boundaries of the body represent the boundaries of society and culture, Douglas claims that dirt and defilement threaten the body as well as the social system:

Dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder. If we shun dirt, it is not because of craven fear, still less dread and holy terror. Nor do our ideas about disease account for the range of behaviour in cleaning or avoiding dirt. Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize environment. ... In chasing dirt ... we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea. ... Reflection on dirt involves reflection on the relation of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death. (Douglas 2,5)

Douglas’s perception of dirt is closely related to Kristeva’s abjection. Dirt or impurity is marginal to the dominant system like the abject and therefore a threat, and a revolt against the unity of both the subject and the social order. The reactions for such an annihilation of boundaries are horror, anxiety, disgust, repulsion, and loathing. However, simultaneously, the abject is fascinating and irresistible because of its potential of transgressing the boundaries between the self and the other. As Kristeva says: “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (*Powers* 4). Thus, Kristeva emphasizes the fluidity of the boundaries between the binary oppositions such as self/other, masculine/feminine, normal/abnormal, proper/improper, moral/immoral with the aim of showing that each part of the binary is inevitably bound to its other.

Kristeva categorizes the representations of the abject in three groups: food, bodily waste and sexual difference. These categories are the tools which cultures use to develop taboos. Kristeva points out that abjection can be observed in many cultural, social and religious practices and rituals. These practices and rituals of purification exclude the impure and the profane which evoke horror and disgust. Kristeva gives examples from paganism and monotheistic religions, particularly Judaism dietary and biblical prohibitions, and claims that abjection “takes on the form of the *exclusion* of a substance (nutritive or linked to sexuality), the execution of which coincides with the sacred since it sets it up” (*Powers* 17, original emphasis). Every culture has its own classifications of food consumption. In brief, on the cultural level Kristeva is concerned with the social taboos that demarcate borders between the edible and the inedible, the clean and the unclean.

Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk – harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring – I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. “I” want none of that element, sign of their desire: “I” do not want to listen, “I” do not assimilate it, “I” expel it. But since the food is not an “other” for “me,” who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which “I” claim to establish *myself*. (Kristeva, *Powers* 2-3)

As it is seen in the quotation above Kristeva associates the refusal of food with the refusal of parental care. The boundary represented by the skin of the milk between the subject (the child) and the object (food) is the same boundary between the semiotic and the symbolic. The child defies its limits in the very act of feeling repulsion for the skin of the milk and rejects its m/other’s food. In fact, milk is “a food that does not separate but binds” (*Powers* 105) mother to the child. “On this basis, milk connotes incest” (Lechte 164). With its connotation of incest then, milk is spit out by the child who is forming its ego by separating itself from the mother. However, Kristeva claims that by spitting the object, the milk, the child spits itself out as well. Thus, the child’s rejection of the semiotic in order to be the

subject in the symbolic order is a vain attempt because excluding the m/other means expelling itself. Besides, “[o]ral abjection is a refusal of the corporeal limits of the self” (Grosz, “Signification” 90). The skin of the milk represents the child’s own skin which is another boundary between its corporeality and the world. The annihilation of this boundary signifies death for it.

Bodily waste is also another category which reminds the subject of its materiality. Faeces, urine, vomit, spit, sperm, menstrual blood, etc. are culturally regarded as bodily fluids and waste which evoke disgust, revulsion and horror in the proper, clean and unified⁶ subject because they are regarded as the threats which have the potentiality to disrupt the boundaries of the body by reminding it of “its necessary dependence on an outside, its liability to collapse into this outside (this is what death implies), to the perilous division between the body’s inside and outside” (Grosz, *Volatile* 193). Grosz elaborates on Kristeva’s theory and she argues that food and bodily fluids reach and leave the subject through the body’s surfaces, hollows, crevices and orifices which are erotogenic zones such as mouth, eyes, anus, ears and genitals. These zones are boundaries between

what is inside the body, and thus part of the subject, and what is outside the body and thus an object for the subject ... The erotogenic rim which locates the sexual drive in a particular bodily zone is a hole, a gap or lack seeking an object to satisfy it. Ideally, the processes of incorporating the object into the subject’s body through its ‘rims’ stop up the lack ... Abjection results when the object does not adequately fill the rim. A gap re-emerges, a hole which imperils the subject’s identity, for it threatens to draw the subject rather than objects into it. (Grosz, “Signification” 88)

This is the reason why very much like the semiotic stage, abjection is perceived as a negativity, a refusal and a necessary rejection for the subject to take its place in the symbolic order. The subject has to build up its borders in order not to fall into the hole that the abject opens. Filth and defilement dwell on the border of identities and therefore, they symbolize the separation from the mother. As the mother is a threat to boundaries, these bodily fluids, with their ambiguous nature of being both inside and outside, are a threat to separation. For

⁶ In McAfee’s words: “An I is the fiction of a unified subjectivity, even though one is always already split” (“Abject Strangers” 130).

instance, faeces imply the borders between the clean and the unclean. It is dirty and therefore it cannot be a part of the subject; it is a repulsive object which is outside. On the other hand, since it is thrown out from the inside of the subject, it cannot be permanently expelled. Thus, defilement signifies the boundary between the “semiotic authority (mother) and symbolic law (father)” (Kristeva, *Powers* 73). The body has the ability to regenerate itself inside, but what is thrown out is decay that is filthy. Thus, bodily fluids form this transgressive relationship between the subject and the object because they are neither fully embodied by the subject’s body and nor can never be completely expelled from it. In this sense, the subject resides in the waste which cannot be permanently externalized.

These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit – *cadere* [to fall], cadaver. (Kristeva, *Powers* 3)

These bodily wastes remind the body of its mortality. And Kristeva claims that what reminds the body of its mortality most horrifyingly is the corpse, the abject in its ultimate form, because it dissolves the boundaries between life and death. The subject faces the ultimate Other in the form of a corpse signifying death “infecting” the body, the life.

If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel, ‘I’ is expelled. The border has become an object. How can I be without border? (Kristeva, *Powers* 3-4)

Thus, the abject in the form of a corpse annihilates the boundaries between self and other and reminds the subject that one day he will cease to exist.

The abjection of bodily fluids can be also discussed in relation to the third category of abjection: sexual difference. Grosz argues that fluids, contrary to the solids, do not have any shape or form: “they assert the priority of the body over subjectivity; they demonstrate the limits of subjectivity in the body, the irreducible specificity of particular bodies” (*Volatile* 194). Fluidity is against the ordered and the unified. Since they do not have clear-cut

boundaries like the solids, they are hierarchically positioned as marginal. Irigaray also points out that the patriarchal representation works through the logic of metaphor which requires a mechanics of solids. "Solid mechanics and rationality have maintained a relationship of very long standing, one against which fluids have never stopped arguing" (Irigaray 113). Therefore, Irigaray claims that metonymy which works through a mechanics of fluids disrupts patriarchal representation. She asserts that fluids do not have any borders; they do not replace one another, but they merge with each other. In this respect, the representation of order founded on demarcations can continue by excluding fluidity. Thus, "men demarcate their own bodies as clean and proper" (Grosz, *Volatile* 201), while women are regarded as unclean and unstable in cultural patriarchal discourse because their bodily autonomy is culturally based on a system of fluids. In this respect, for Kristeva, women's corporeality with its uncontrollability and its formlessness because of its association with fluidity and with its indefinable limits as in the case of pregnancy is abject which both attracts and creates revulsion.

In relation to this signification, Kristeva's third category of the abject, sexual difference is based on the discussion of the female body. The body in the pre-oedipal stage resides in the abject, in a threshold between the subject and the object that knows no sexually hierarchized order of bodies. This space is characterized by ambiguity with its hold both upon the subject and the object. Thus, abjection, resisting separation, signifies the subject's dependence on the other. In addition, it reminds the subject not only of its own materiality and mortality but its sexuality as well. Kristeva's understanding of the body depends on examining the differences between the sexes because the corporeal functions of the subject are different in terms of biological sex. However, she also points out that the subject's sexual development is not only bound to its physical aspect but to how this physical aspect is perceived in social, cultural, political, and historical conditions as well.

The symbolic order demands the child's separation from the maternal body which is at the same time a female body. In this respect, the female body becomes the abject body which has to be expelled in order to achieve subjectivity. It is widely known that in psychoanalytical theories, female sexuality is defined by its relation to the phallus and it is not perceived as an autonomous entity. Thus, rather than trying to know what the "female" is, psychoanalytical studies have tried to construct "a femininity" in patriarchal terms and

attribute this femininity to the female body. Thus, the female is culturally and socially marginalized, oppressed and excluded in the patriarchal society. In this respect, the female body is associated with the abject which represents the subject's and society's repulsion towards a threat that has the potentiality to disrupt its boundaries.

The female body is the abject body because of its fluidity and procreative functions. For instance, menstrual blood is a signification of sexual difference. Menstrual blood evokes repulsion because it is associated with injury and the wound and it is also perceived as dirt.

The representation of female sexuality as an uncontrollable flow, as seepage associated with what is unclean, coupled with the idea of female sexuality as a vessel, a container, a home empty or lacking in itself but fillable from the outside, has enabled men to associate women with infection, with disease, with the idea of festering putrefaction, no longer contained simply in female genitals but at any or all points of the female body. (Grosz, *Volatile* 206)

Menstruation is abject because it is directly linked with the maternal. It is a boundary which separates the male from the female and the maternal body and at the same time it is a natural bodily cycle that gives life. In order to become a part of the symbolic order, the maternal should be rejected. In this respect, menstrual blood that displays the potential of giving birth should be discarded by the subject in order to achieve its unity. This is the reason why menstrual blood is associated with opposition to the symbolic order. It is ambiguous, maternal, female, fluid, filthy and therefore abject.

When discussing the abject bodily fluids, Kristeva couples menstrual blood and excrement: "those *two* defilements stem from the *maternal* and/or feminine, of which the maternal is the real support" (Powers 71, original emphasis). Excrement, like the menstrual blood, is also related to the semiotic stage where the body is in no need to define its borders as clean and unclean. When the subject moves to the symbolic stage, it is forced to regulate its bodily fluids through toilet training. This is the stage where bodily waste is culturally taught to be shameful and disgusting. Then, the subject learns to expel excrement and then to clean up itself and to build up its borders between the clean and the unclean again. Excrement is coming from the inside, but being dirty and thrown outside, it cannot be a part of the

subject anymore. Therefore, excrement, very much like the menstrual blood belonging to the semiotic stage is a threat to the ordered, proper body.

Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death. Menstrual blood, on the contrary, stands for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual); it threatens the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and, through internalization, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference. (Kristeva, *Powers* 71)

Kristeva perceives a difference between excrement and menstrual blood in the sense that excrement can be assumed to be externalized and cast off; however, menstrual blood cannot be expelled because it demarcates the borders between two sexes through internalization. It cannot be escaped from.

Pregnancy is also an abject phenomenon because of its implication of ambiguity: when pregnant the female body is neither one, nor two. Pregnant body is against unity and form. It revolts against a single subjectivity. In this respect, it is subversive. It is in the process of becoming; it is never finished. The pregnant body blurs the boundaries between the self and the other.

Unlike the male body, the proper female body is penetrable, changes shape, swells, gives birth, contracts, lactates, bleeds. ... [W]oman's body signifies the human potential to return to a more primitive state of being, her image is accordingly manipulated, shaped, altered, stereotyped to the point to the dangers that threaten civilization from all sides. (Creed 87)

All these abject entities explored in detail above show that excluding what is perceived as other is impossible. As Kristeva says: "We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it – on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger" (*Powers* 9). In this sense, the Gothic genre, the other of realist tradition, is also positioned as the abject of the literary canon.

Kristeva's concept of abjection and the Gothic tradition have many points in common. The Gothic is also interested in what is thrown off, what lies on the borders of both

identity and society, what is marginalized and perceived as pervert by the dominant society. One of Kristeva's definitions of abjection shows the relation between the abject and the Gothic in this sense:

The abject is related to perversion. The sense of abjection that I experience is anchored in the superego. The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them. (*Powers* 15)

The Gothic also attacks the constraints and taboos of society by its ambiguous representations, by its potential to exceed conventions, and by its promise of transgression of the secured social boundaries. Its symbolic mechanisms functioning through ghosts, monsters, dead-and-alive creatures, and supernatural forms display cultural and personal anxieties, social conflicts and historical dilemmas of different eras. It unfolds the fear that threatens the unity of both society and identity and the forbidden desires and longings that lie beneath the construction of personal and social entities. In this respect, Kristeva's theory of abjection, which claims that what is cast off simultaneously evokes fear and fascination, parallels the social, cultural and psychological threats and desires the Gothic tradition has dealt with for centuries.

Through the Gothic, we remind ourselves, albeit in disguise, that something like a return to the confusion and loss of identity in being half-inside and half-outside the mother, and thus entirely dead nor clearly alive, may await us behind any foundation, paternal or otherwise, on which we try, by breaking it up, to build a brave new world. (Hogle 4)

The characteristics of the Gothic, then, highlight the aspiration of ambiguity and multiplicity of the primordial state when the self and the other are one and show all kinds of boundaries can be transgressed in order to construct a new egalitarian world. One of the main social problems that the Gothic handles is the gender distinctions which draw clear-cut boundaries between the masculine and feminine roles. The Gothic also undermines the power structures that construct these gender distinctions. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Gothic is concerned with the oppression and the patriarchal definition of woman as "other".

The Gothic often shows its readers that the anomalous foundations they seek to abject have become culturally associated with the otherness of femininity, a *maternal* multiplicity basic to us all. Social gender divisions have been designed to deny, even as they make us desire, this boundary-blurring source of ourselves that initially stems, the Gothic reveals, from the body of a woman. (Hogle 10, original emphasis)

What Hogle puts forward above is that any kind of abjection carried out on personal, social, cultural, and sexual levels is linked to the primal abjection of the mother, “the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be” (Kristeva, *Powers* 10). Therefore, he claims that the Gothic is based on a deep feminine level which is “one major form of primordial dissolution that can obscure the boundaries between all western oppositions, not just masculine-feminine” (Hogle 11). The Gothic, then, while presenting all kinds of oppositions, reveals that these oppositions are interdependent. What is otherized is still a part of the subject that strives to carry out this separation process. The two hierarchically constructed elements of a binary opposition can never be completely separated from each other. Thus, the Gothic deals with these deviations from the norms in order to blur the boundaries between these oppositions. This fluidity of the boundaries echoes Kristevan abject that promotes a transgressive relationship between all oppositions constructed by western culture.

As Kristeva declares, abjection “draws me toward the place where meaning collapses” (*Powers* 2). This breakdown in meaning caused by the problematization of the stability of the boundaries between subjects and objects engenders horror and repulsion while at the same time it engenders fascination because the collapse in meaning indicates a potential of creating new meanings through disruption of the boundaries. The fluidity of abjection reveals itself through the process of the transgression of the hegemonic structures. In this respect, abjection can be perceived as a political strategy for disrupting and transgressing hegemonic structures constructed by phallic value.

Social groupings in terms of gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity and religion are formed through abjection. What is excluded and marginalized by the dominant ideology can be regarded as the waste of society that threatens the stable identities of the dominant group because marginalized groups do not conform to the logic of patriarchy. Dominant groups

render the marginalized ones abject and covertly reveal that what they otherize establish their subjectivity because the subject is dependent on what it expels in order to define itself and preserve its borders.

The construction of gender is also based on this exclusion and traditional psychoanalytical theories are an indication of this. Traditional psychoanalytical theories marginalize femininity by abandoning the female in the pre-Oedipal stage and privilege masculinity and announce the Oedipal identity as universal. By defining the female as lack, absence and incomplete, psychoanalysis constructs a site of excess for women. However, although the abjection of the feminine is a negation which exposes the banishment of the female in identity formation, it also carries the potential to subvert these strictly drawn boundaries of identity. Therefore, many feminist writers adopt abjection to transgress the patriarchal boundaries that imprison women. By offering abject representations, they show both how patriarchy otherizes women and how women can revolt against the patriarchal representations.

The Female Gothic, being a twice marginalized genre firstly excluded by realist literature and secondly condemned by the conventional Gothic tradition by male authors, is an attack at patriarchal hegemony. It was emphasized before that the Gothic is regarded as a revolutionary genre due to its peculiarities of excess, ambivalence, and transgression that function to subvert the conventional and traditional codes of society. “A ‘revolution’ does not merely cross forbidden boundaries; etymologically the word means to ‘turn around.’ If we remember this meaning, Female Gothic is the more revolutionary of the two traditions. In writing as ‘other’ it does not simply break the rules, it creates a new game with different rules altogether” (Williams 172). Written from the “other’s” point of view, the Female Gothic then explores the marginalized position of women in an oppressive society in order to reveal how the patriarchal ideology constructs boundaries for the female identity and female sexuality.

This study claims that Kristeva’s theory of abjection provides a fruitful approach for exploring the representations of female body and its functions in Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, and Emma Donoghue’s *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*. The abject overtly manifests itself in these postmodern Female Gothic texts. The works this dissertation focuses on adopt abject sexualities which portray female bodies in physical excess and disgust. Sexualities which are

defined as perverse and abnormal by the symbolic order such as incest, same-sex desire, sadist and masochistic relationships, hysterical identity, violent sexuality, voyeurism, cannibalism, bestiality are abject sexualities. By defining female sexuality through these abject representations, these writers aim at defining a female sexuality in feminist terms. Abject female sexuality destroys the patriarchally constructed notion of female sexuality as passive and receptive. Instead it promotes an active female desire which deviates from the social norms. Through rewriting the traditional Gothic plot then, these writers attempt at transgressing the socially and culturally defined boundaries and they subvert the traditional Gothic plot which presents an oppressive world that imprisons women within patriarchal structures and portrays female characters as victims. The appropriation of the abject in these Female Gothic texts liberates female desire by placing it in the pre-Oedipal stage where there are no boundaries. By this attempt, the female characters embrace the abject and move to the realm where the subject and the object are one. Thus, Kristeva's abjection characterizes these postmodern female gothic texts as transgressive and therefore subversive. As Kristeva summarizes the subversive characteristic of the abject: "And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master" (*Powers* 2).

CHAPTER 3

JEAN RHYS'S *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

"The world is a Gothic place for the second sex"

Helene Meyers

3.1 Jean Rhys and Her Work

Born on the Caribbean island of Dominica, the daughter of a Welsh father and a white Creole mother, Jean Rhys's West Indian roots influenced both her life and her fiction. She moved to England when she was sixteen, leaving behind her childhood in the black community of Dominica; thereafter she always felt that she was leading the life of an exile. Lucy Wilson claims that "Rhys was truly a woman without a country" (68). Thus, many critics, drawing attention to the autobiographical sources in Rhys's works, have discussed the dominant themes of displacement, isolation, alienation, and rootlessness in her works in relation to her real life experiences. Like many of her female protagonists, Rhys was also torn between her two national identities, both European and Caribbean, in search of a motherland to which she could feel she belonged. Pierrette Frickey argues:

Rhys's double identity as a writer – European because four of her novels are set exclusively in Europe where she lived most of her life, and West Indian since she was born in and wrote about the Caribbean in *Wide Sargasso Sea* – is responsible for the polarization of criticism. In claiming Rhys as their own, Caribbean critics call worldwide attention to the uniquely West Indian character of her entire work while European and American critics tend to focus upon the plight of the Rhysian heroine in a society alien to her and to the modernism of Rhys's fiction. (1)

As is revealed above, Rhys's fiction is characterized by ambivalence as well. In fact, one of the most significant aspects of Rhys's fiction is its exploration of racial and national issues from a universal perspective. That is, by dealing with oppressive communities and oppressed minorities, and with racial, cultural and social distinctions, Rhys carries the

problematics of post-colonial society on a universal basis in order to show how binary power structures suppress identities. As Helen Carr argues: “Her fiction, dealing as it does with those who belong nowhere, between cultures, between histories, describes an existence which is becoming paradigmatic of late twentieth century life” (xiv). Thus, by depicting in-between characters Rhys does not assert one group’s superiority over the other. On the contrary, she reveals that truth is always two-sided because her aim is to reconcile differences.

Although she did not perceive of herself as a feminist, Rhys wrote against the traditional notions of femininity. She produced stories about women who are entrapped within domestic and social structures and through their struggles and pain she criticized the patriarchal system that victimizes women. In this respect, Rhys’s fiction deals with imprisoning patriarchal sexual politics which constructs female identities as the Other and which forces women to repress their sexualities. Thus, Rhys portrayed oppression not only in racial, social and cultural terms as is revealed above but also in terms of gender. Through this attempt, she aimed to show that patriarchal sexual politics is closely linked to social and cultural power structures. Due to this multilayered thematic structure in her novels, Rhys’s novels are characterized by multivoiced discourse through which many marginalized discourses come together and form a collective protest.

Rhys’s first published work is a collection of short stories titled *The Left Bank and Other Stories* (1927). She also published two collections of short stories in the later days of her writing career: *Tigers are Better Looking* (1968) and *Sleep It Off, Lady* (1976). Her most acclaimed works are her novels, which are *Quartet* (1928), *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1930), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939). Finally, her masterpiece, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), provided her with a world-wide reputation. Her fiction is mostly characterized by autobiographical events and intertextual references to well-known literary works, among which *Wide Sargasso Sea* is known for its peculiarity of being a prequel to Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.

In all these works, Rhys portrays her heroines within similar social and psychological states. In order to highlight the common characteristics of her heroines, most critics employ the umbrella term “Rhys Women”. In all the novels mentioned above, Rhys portrays depressed, lonely, vulnerable, desperate, and rootless women who lack a sense of belonging to a land but at the same time are struggling to find a territory in which they can take shelter.

Being isolated in their male-dominated communities, Rhys women question their status in the symbolic order as well as their selves that cannot identify with the patriarchally constructed cultural and social definitions. As Carr suggests: “The vulnerability, inventedness and multiplicity of identity are constant and central themes in Jean Rhys’s writing: who am I? what am I? what are they making of me? are questions that in different ways all her heroines try to answer, not with much satisfaction” (xiii). In fact, many critics criticize Rhys’s portrayal of her heroines because of

[t]he chronic submissiveness, the almost constitutional sadness, ... the black melancholy. ... [They are] helpless, impotent observers of their own fates. ... These are not novels about redressing balances, re-establishing patterns, realigning moral and economic forces. They are, on the contrary, about the *effects*, particularly on the female consciousness, of imbalance, unhappiness, fear of failure, fear of success. Rhys’s writing represents a particular kind of psychological quest, which is dependent for its entire force and resonance on the motionlessness, the de-motivation, of her heroines. (Roe 229, 230, 231, original emphasis)

Thus, Rhys women’s devastated psychological states stem from their social, cultural, and gendered surroundings. They are both financially and emotionally dependent on men, imprisoned in failed marriages, and are unable to have the control of their lives in a patriarchal society which oppresses them. They are forced to perform culturally constructed feminine roles, and although they try to express themselves, their voices are not heard by the representatives of the symbolic order. And as a result of this oppression, they either drink and sleep too much, or go insane or attempt suicide in order to forget their painful experiences.

Rhys women are isolated figures in oppressive social structures and in equally oppressive patriarchal familial structures. Many critics accuse Rhys of portraying her women as characters victimized by patriarchal ideology and of offering no liberating solutions for them. However, Paula Le Gallez declares that the “ ‘Rhys woman’, far from being as passive as she looks, is passive only in a culturally determined way, and ... underlying this attitude is an ironic awareness that the quality is actually part of the feminine condition in the society in which she lives” (4). In this respect, Rhys’s attempt to endow her women characters with rage and hate reveals that her heroines are trying to make their voices heard through

excessive forms of reactions. Although her women characters are considered to be passive, fighting the patriarchal ideology through such reactions show that they are active. However, since they are multiply oppressed by social, cultural, national, racial, familial and sexual power structures, their responses are limited to hate and anger. That is, they cannot find any way other than these expressions in a strict male-dominated society. Howells defends Rhys's method of portrayal of her heroines as follows:

The double bind repeatedly rehearsed in her fictions is that despite their awareness of the social structures within which they are trapped, her heroines do not attempt to break out; instead they assiduously try to stay within the conditions of their entrapment, where every new instance of betrayal represents another expulsion from paradise. ... These fictions do not offer solutions to women's dilemmas, but they are radical investigations of social and psychological constructions of gender as Rhys writes in suppressed female narratives which deconstruct ready-made definitions of Woman in favour of representations of individual women. (13)

The themes Rhys adopted in her novels actually reflect Rhys's sense of her own marginality and exclusion. She exposed women's experience on the margins of society and the marriage institution with which she had been closely involved. In this sense, Rhys herself was an abject figure in many ways. Her identity as a white Creole in England, her position as the female Other in her disappointing relationships with men as well as in patriarchal society, and her exclusion as a woman and a post-colonial writer in the male-dominated literary canon underline her abject state. She was even "regarded as a witch by the villagers in Cheriton Fitz Paine in Devon" (Howells 9) in which she lived for some time. There was only one way that Rhys could find in order to overcome her abjectness and this was writing. In her unfinished autobiography published after her death *Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography* (1979), she wrote: "I must write. If I stop writing my life will have been an abject failure. It is that already to other people. But it could be an abject failure to myself. I will not have earned death" (163). Thus, "abjection" has become one of the dominant themes in her novels. She portrayed abject themes and abject characters in her novels because this was the only way to fight being abjected by dominant values.

3.2 Jean Rhys and the Female Gothic

Since the Gothic genre provides a textual voice for marginalized discourses, Rhys, a writer who explored marginalization on both social and psychological levels, utilized the Gothic in order to reveal how the Otherizing process works through various kinds of oppression. Her novels deal with engulfment in a confined space, with the racially and sexually oppressed Other, with split selves, with female madness and with Bluebeard plots. They echo the Gothic conventions which can be found in many Gothic novels. Rhys's methods of subverting the traditional Gothic plot were also controversial. Howells, reminding her readers that Rhys dealt with the conventional Gothic themes of "[s]ublimation', 'complicity' and 'exclusion' ... where fantasies of innocence and protection mesh with fantasies of sexual dread and victimization" (19), draws attention to Rhys's contribution to the conventional Gothic motifs which victimize women. She adds:

So it is not surprising to find that the situations and scenarios of traditional Gothic should reappear in these stories of women dying or being broken up; of women attempting to commit suicide or drinking themselves to death, trying to forget their insights and their hurts; of women deprived of their biological status and producing only abortions and dead babies, and finally of women deprived of their sanity. It is a dreadful catalogue of desperation and pain, with one possible ending which Rhys unambiguously achieves only after her 'resurrection' from nearly thirty years of silence: female revenge and self-destruction. (19)

Rhys used the conventional elements of the Gothic in order to discuss the female subject's position which is rendered as Other and as an object in many political circumstances. In this respect, although her methods are not radically subversive, she still manages to subvert oppressive structures, particularly colonial imperialism and patriarchal sexual politics, to an extent. For instance, she revealed that women's condition is one of an exchange object continually bought and sold on a patriarchal market. As Howells argues:

Indeed in her deliberately nontheoretical way Rhys explores the same territory that contemporary feminist theories have arrived at fifty years later. Through her stories of doomed dissenting women, she exposes the interests at stake in male centred psychoanalytic

constructs of the feminine, just as she explores collaborative sexual fantasies where women are perceived and perceive themselves as objects of the male gaze. (12)

Thus, although her employment of subversion is not as powerful as Carter's (because Carter attempted to destroy the notion of female victimization completely by subverting the oppressive Gothic structure in her works), "Rhys's novels present the female victim complex as a distinctive construct of the feminine, where Gothic fantasizing becomes itself a mechanism of defence against reality" (Howells 20).

In fact, Rhys's subversion becomes radical in her last work, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a novel which tries to resist patriarchal sexual politics in its attempt to destroy the Oedipal narrative of the traditional Gothic through its presentation of abject themes. In regard to this approach, Rhys not only rebels against the traditional Gothic structures, but also against one of the most successful Female Gothic novels, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. This is because, although *Jane Eyre* is considered to be one of the milestones in the literary history of the Female Gothic which has developed a more feminist approach to female identity and sexuality, at the same time it achieves this canonical stance in the Female Gothic tradition at the expense of victimizing Bertha, the mad white Creole wife of Rochester. In an interview Rhys said:

When I read *Jane Eyre* as a child, I thought, why should she think Creole women are lunatics and all that? What a shame to make Rochester's first wife, Bertha, the awful madwoman, and I immediately thought I'd write the story as it might really have been. She seemed such a poor ghost. I thought I'd try to write her a life. Charlotte Brontë must have had strong feelings about the West Indies because she brings the West Indies into a lot of her books, like *Villette*. Of course, once upon a time, the West Indies were rich, and very much more talked about than they are now. (Vreeland 235)

With such an attempt, Rhys "decodes" the repressed identity and sexuality of Bertha, and writes a life for her. Thus, Bertha, who was not allowed to speak for herself in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, is given a voice as Antoinette through Rhys's narrative, which has the potential to subvert the colonial ideology that dominates the text. Besides, through imagining a past life

for Bertha, Rhys also imagines a past life for Rochester, whose resemblance to Bluebeard is explicitly revealed. Rhys does not name the man Antoinette marries as Rochester. She presents her Gothic hero as unnamed. However, for practical reasons Rhys's hero will be referred as Rochester throughout the chapter.

In her novel, Rhys shows how Rochester has prepared the grounds for Bertha's imprisonment. In other words, Rhys not only unveils the social and cultural structures which aim to victimize Bertha, but also the patriarchal sexual politics represented by the Gothic villain, Rochester. In this respect, Rhys read and rewrote *Jane Eyre* in order to show her readers how a text – even a text which is considered to be ahead of its time with its feminist concerns – can marginalize and oppress the female through representing her as mad. In the end of her novel, Rhys saves Antoinette (Bertha) whom Brontë preferred to victimize, by liberating her and allowing her to destroy the oppressive patriarchal system through her decision to burn down Thornfield Hall.

Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* is as popular and successful as its hypotext, *Jane Eyre* which is considered to be the prototype of the modern Gothic by many critics due to its utilization of the Gothic motifs and themes in a radical way when the literary context of its period is taken into consideration. Brontë reworked the elements of the Female Gothic by her attempt to subvert the boundaries of the self and society by depicting a white woman's psychological, social, cultural, and moral dilemmas in the Victorian period.

In recent feminist *Jane Eyre* criticism, it can be claimed that the most discussed figure is Bertha, whose representation is interpreted in psychological, sexual, social, cultural, historical, colonial and racial terms by many critics. Among these critics, there is a large group who analyzes Bertha's function as a representation of repressed sexuality. For instance, according to Helene Moglen "She is the monstrous embodiment of psychosexual conflicts which are intrinsic to the romantic predicament – paralleled and unconscious in both Jane and Rochester." (124). Thus, Moglen identifies the function of Bertha's sexual representation as a repressed desire not only in Jane, but also in Rochester.

In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar explain the reason why *Jane Eyre* shocked the Victorian readers and became one of the eminent milestones in women writers' literary history by claiming that it had many feminist concerns which attack the cultural, social and moral customs and norms of its time. They mostly focus on the rebellious nature of

Jane and state that “what horrified the Victorians was Jane’s anger. ... For while mythologizing of repressed rage may parallel the mythologizing of repressed sexuality, it is far more dangerous to the order of society” (338). In this respect, Gilbert and Gubar read Bertha’s function in the novel as a mirror image of Jane’s repressed Other: “Most important, her confrontation, not with Rochester, but with Rochester’s mad wife Bertha, is the book’s central confrontation, an encounter ... not with her own sexuality but with her own imprisoned ‘hunger, rebellion, and rage’” (339).

While Gilbert and Gubar interpret Bertha as “Jane’s dark double” (360), who has become an outlet for Jane’s repressed rage, fears and sexuality, from a feminist psychoanalytical perspective, in the context of colonialist ideology Bertha is in fact the embodiment of colonial repression and anxieties. Spivak adds a new dimension to the portrayal of Bertha by revealing that Bertha is Jane’s racial Other: “a figure produced by the axiomatics of imperialism” (“Three Women’s Texts” 247). In other words, Bertha is locked up in British imperialist and colonialist ideology.

In “Bertha and the Critics”, Laurence Lerner refers to the critics mentioned above along with other ones and categorizes “Bertha-criticism” in three groups: “Bertha as representing Jane’s repressed sexual desire, Bertha as representing Jane’s suppressed anger ... and Bertha-Antoinette as representing the colonial subject” (279). He also perceives Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a kind of critical approach to *Jane Eyre* which focuses on Bertha’s colonial subject state. Lerner thinks that all these analyses are based on “repression and release” model and he argues as follows:

If we accept that Bertha symbolizes hidden forces in Jane, then identify these forces as sexual and not social, as desire and not independence, thus ignoring important explicit elements in the book and defusing its ‘hunger, rebellion and rage’, then we are reading ideologically. (286)

In this respect, in her critical approach to *Jane Eyre* through her rewriting process, Rhys combines all the elements of criticism Bertha has received since she appeared in Brontë’s novel. Since the Kristevan abject also unites psychological and social approaches, the analysis of the function of abjection in *Wide Sargasso Sea* not only reveals how female desire is abjected in psychoanalytical terms, but also the female subject’s construction in

social, cultural, and racial terms. Therefore, my approach to Antoinette is not only dependent on her representation as a sexually abject character, but also on her abject representation in social, cultural, and racial terms. Before moving onto these various representations of the abject in Rhys's novel, it is also important to focus on the representation of sexuality in the portrayal of Bertha in Brontë's novel.

3.3 Me Bertha, You Jane!: Abject Representations of Female Desire in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

The psychological, social, cultural and racial dimensions of the portrayals of Jane and Bertha are discussed above in brief. This section will focus on how Brontë represented female desire in her novel through her adoption of a double-voiced discourse by depicting two opposite images of women: the "angel in the house" represented by Jane, and the "madwoman in the attic" represented by Bertha. Through these two opposite embodiments of female desire, Brontë reveals "the dilemma of feminine sexuality" (Wolff 217) of her period.

Cynthia Griffin Wolff, in her article "The Radcliffean Gothic Model: A Form for Feminine Sexuality", states that "[t]he Gothic tale ... reinforces a woman's sense of herself as an essentially sexual creature, something that society has often been at pains to deny" (209). Female sexuality has mostly been depicted as repressed because acknowledgement of expressed female sexuality has posed a threat to the patriarchal symbolic order built upon hierarchically constructed male and female sexual relationships. Therefore, being oppressed by patriarchal sexual politics, looking at the writings of women it seems that they were forced to remain silent and had to leave the ground for the male who had the authority to talk about their bodies. They defined female sexuality in relation to male sexuality. While female bodies were shown as lack, passive and receptive male bodies were visible, and active.

Brontë also dealt with these issues by her portrayal of two opposite images of female desire through Jane and Bertha. Wolff explains Jane's sexual dilemma as follows:

If Jane (or any woman) would repossess herself of sexuality, then the primitive, narcissistic, amoral element of raw passion must be tamed. A "real" woman must be able to function in the "real" world, and she must domesticate even her sexuality in some degree. It becomes Jane's task then to find a median position between

complete denial of sexuality and unchecked expression of desire.
(219)

Jane's sexual dilemma can be observed through her relationship with Brontë's version of the demon lover figure of the traditional Gothic novels, Rochester. The plot reveals that if Jane claims her sexual passion for him, she can end up like Rochester's mad wife. In order to tame her passion then, Jane will leave Rochester as soon as she learns that he is already married to the madwoman in the attic. She will come back to Rochester only when she comes to terms with her passionate desire for him. St John Rivers's marriage proposal will enable Jane to acknowledge her desire for Rochester and she decides to find him. Therefore, when Jane finds Rochester, it also means that she will gain the opportunity to express her passionate desire for him freely. However, the patriarchal symbolic order cannot allow such an active female sexuality to be experienced. As Wolff argues above, in "real" life Jane has to be a "real" woman who is able to domesticate her sexuality. This is the reason why she meets a maimed and blind Rochester in the end of Brontë's novel. Yet, such an ending is appropriate for solving Jane's dilemma of feminine sexuality because only through Rochester's symbolically castrated representation will Jane be able to tame her passions. Consequently, Jane learns to function in the rigid symbolic order as an "angel in the house" by domesticating her sexual desire as is demanded by patriarchal sexual politics.

The potent figure of Bertha expresses the active female sexual desire. Bertha is depicted as a monstrous figure in accordance with imperialist perception of race and patriarchal definition of female sexuality and she inhabits the fantastic world of the Gothic. There is no place for such a woman in the "real" world. Therefore, she is a mysterious and ghostly figure who haunts Jane and manages to prevent Jane's marriage with Rochester by tearing her wedding veil. Bertha is dangerous, sexually threatening, rageful to be imprisoned, and she is determined to take her revenge from Rochester who is the representative of patriarchal order.

Becker, in order to define "a typical Gothic image of the sexual woman" (71), gives the example of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* presented as the "'madwoman in the attic'... 'clothed hyena', crazy, imprisoned, ... voiceless, 'monster' (71-2)" through her husband Rochester's gaze. She states that

this view – and the resulting imprisonment – is related to social fears of the sexual woman and her ‘passions’, adult sexuality, affirmation of physical pleasure, expression of desire. The figure of Bertha Mason has thus become a prototype of the sexual woman in the feminine Gothic: affirmative femininity turned into the monstrous – or, in narratological terms, into a voiceless textual *object*, controlled by the male gaze. This imprisoned position of the sexual woman figure has become one of the most powerful horrors that shape feminine Gothic texts. (72, original emphasis)

As is discussed in the previous chapter, the sexual woman is dangerous for the patriarchal system because she has the power to destroy the male-dominated values and culturally constructed binary oppositions which reinforce the hegemony of the patriarchal ideology. It has been also emphasized that in order to celebrate this subversive power, many Female Gothic works have portrayed abject representations of female desire with the aim of transgressing the boundaries that imprison the female body in oppressive forms.

Becker reveals that this prevailing theme of imprisonment of the sexual woman, dominant in the earlier examples of the Female Gothic, began to be radically discussed when the silenced madwoman figure “reappeared in contemporary feminine fictions as a changed textual figure: the female speaking subject” (72). Rochester’s “mad” wife, Bertha, imprisoned in the attic of Thornfield Hall, was one of the first silenced women to be given a voice by Jean Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Thus, Becker draws attention to the intertextualisation in women’s writing which has provided many feminist writers to revolt against patriarchal structures that have silenced women through oppression. It is through the employment of rewriting strategies that the sexual woman figure has been granted a subjectivity to speak about her own body. What Becker reveals is one of the important reasons why *Wide Sargasso Sea* is chosen to be discussed in this study. Firstly, Rhys’s novel is characterized by parody, which indicates that it has the potential to subvert establish norms. Secondly, Rhys’s Antoinette has been an inspirational figure for many Female Gothic writers who challenge the myths of the feminine constructed by patriarchal hegemony. In this sense, Antoinette has led the way for many postmodern sexual female characters who are portrayed in order to upset culturally constructed gender norms. Since the sexual woman is perceived as abject in traditional psychoanalytical theories, Antoinette is also portrayed as an abject figure in many respects in order to stress how oppressive the symbolic order can be for a woman to

express and to experience her desire freely. As Becker also contends: “the sexual woman figure ... represents a specific challenging potential in these texts: a double or split or unfixed subjectivity” (Becker 72). In this respect, Antoinette also presents an unfixed subjectivity that can reveal an identification with the Other when it is examined in the light of the Kristevan theory of subjectivity.

An oft-cited passage in discussions about Brontë’s portrayal of Bertha reveals the abject Otherness of Bertha through her representation as an animal:

In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (291)

The sexual woman is given animalistic imagery because if she is portrayed as a human, she has the power to disrupt patriarchal sexual politics. Therefore, she is degraded to an animal category in order to emphasize her Otherness, her exclusion by the symbolic order, and her secondary position in the binary opposition of male/female. As is observed, this degradation is not a positive one in Brontë’s work because Bertha is portrayed as a wild animal to be kept behind bars. If she is freed, she can destroy the patriarchal order. Thus, what Rhys aims to do in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is to free this animalistic sexual woman and unite her with her wild (m)other nature in order to destroy the oppressive male culture. The rest of this chapter will focus on the abject representations in *Wide Sargasso Sea* that serve Rhys’s aim.

Wide Sargasso Sea is composed of three parts. The first part, narrated by Antoinette, reveals Antoinette’s childhood and how Antoinette becomes a marginalized character in her familial, cultural and social community. The second part is narrated by Rochester, focusing on his marriage to Antoinette and revealing how Rochester strives to oppress his wife’s active female desire. His narration is interrupted by Antoinette’s voice at certain points, which undermines his narration. And lastly, the third part is narrated again by Antoinette, (renamed Bertha by Rochester), who is determined to burn down Thornfield Hall, which is a

representative of patriarchal ideology. It deals with the imprisonment of Antoinette/Bertha in Thornfield Hall which bridges the setting between Rhys's text and Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

From the very first pages of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, starting from the outer sphere represented by Jamaican society, moving toward the inner sphere represented by Antoinette's family, and then lastly focusing on the female subject represented by Antoinette, Rhys step by step reveals the conflict between the subject and its abject Other. In other words, Rhys lays bare the conflicts between national, racial, and ethnic identities by peeling off the strictly constructed layers of cultural, social and national communities one by one in order to draw attention to the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed and how these hierarchical positions can be reversed by power structures. Then, Rhys narrowing the circle of social abjection to the abject female figures represented by Annette, Antoinette, and Christophine, displays the patriarchal oppression in familial structures. Lastly, she focuses on the heterosexual relationship which is constructed upon the same patriarchal ideology which seeks to imprison the female body that threatens the male-dominated structure of heterosexuality.

3. 4 "Still, stubbornly we try to crack the nut/In which the riddle of our race is shut"⁷: Cultural, Social and Racial Abjection in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

As is discussed in Chapter 2, Kristeva develops a concept of an ambiguous, fluid and split subject which embraces the Other: the "subject-in-process" which builds subjectivity on a continuous relationship between the subject and its Other. In this sense, Kristeva's model of the subject is a heterogeneous one which resists excluding what is regarded as Other to oneself. Kristeva asserts that the Other is a threat to the fixed boundaries of human identity shaped by traditional psychoanalytical theories. The traditional notion of identity is based on hierarchically constructed binary oppositions such as self/other, male/female, white/black, normal/abnormal, sane/insane, rational/emotional, pure/impure, and so on. In this respect, on the social level, identities, which are racially, ethnically, nationally, and sexually marginalized by mainstream society, are also oppressed by being defined in the latter terms listed in the binary divisions above. Therefore, if one is for a society built upon a more

⁷ From "Doom of Exiles" in *Collected Poems* by Sylvia Plath (p. 318).

egalitarian basis, he or she should welcome the marginalized Other who is considered to pose a threat to the social and cultural structures of his or her community.

In relation to this approach discussed above, the abject Other is not only a threat to the stable boundaries of the individual self, but also a danger to the stability of social systems. Then, by abjecting minorities in terms of racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual norms, mainstream society sustains its power to oppress eccentric identities. The Kristevan abjection process can be observed in the marginalization process of national and political identities as well. Kristeva carries her theory of abjection on a social and political level in her seminal work, *Strangers to Ourselves*. However, although she does not provide her readers with a clear identification of her concept of “foreigner” with the term abject, she nevertheless situates marginalized groups in the abject realm residing outside social, political and cultural systems of order. In other words, “foreignness” is also relegated to the position of the abject Other in the dominant culture. Kristeva suggests that

strange is the experience of the abyss separating me from the other who shocks me – I do not even perceive him, perhaps he crushes me because I negate him. Confronting the foreigner whom I reject and with whom at the same time I identify, I lose my boundaries, I no longer have a container, the memory of experiences when I had been abandoned overwhelm me, I lose my composure. I feel “lost,” “indistinct,” “hazy”. (*Strangers* 187)

Here Kristeva’s definition of the subject’s confrontation with the “foreigner” is very similar to the subject’s confrontation with the abject. In order to create itself and recognize the difference between the subject and the object, the child puts an end to the blissful stage formed by the symbiotic relationship with the mother by abjecting her. However, the child cannot forget its experience in this blissful stage and cannot completely repress its desire for the (m)other. Thus, the abject (m)other continually haunts its borders of subjectivity and invites it to the maternal space. This creates fear in the subject, because returning to the maternal womb means annihilation of his or her identity, but it also simultaneously creates a desire for the (m)other because he or she wants to return to that blissful stage where there are no differences. Kristeva proposes to overcome this fear and desire as lack in the subject by embracing the abject (m)other and by constructing tenuous borders through which self and

Other can communicate with one another and consequently become two instead of one. This is the reason why Kristeva's subject-in-process is a fluid and a plural concept of identity.

In parallel to the ideas presented above, the "foreigner", which Kristeva also identifies as the "stranger", is the Other within every subject. In other words, the foreigner reminds the subject of his or her separation from the (m)other by its very difference. The foreigner, very like the abject, evokes the same reactions in the subject – fear, horror, nausea, but simultaneously desire, fascination, and longing. Therefore, the foreigner is a threat to the subject's rigidly constructed national, racial and ethnic identity which continuously haunts its borders of subjectivity. Thus, only if a subject can come to terms with the stranger within him or her and become a subject-in-process, can he or she embrace the stranger the dominant society excludes.

Kristeva asks: "Can the 'foreigner,' who was the 'enemy' in primitive societies, disappear from modern societies? ... [S]hall we be, intimately and subjectively, able to live with the others, to live as *others*, without ostracism but also without leveling?" (*Strangers* 2, original emphasis). By asking these questions while introducing her concept of the "foreigner" Kristeva revolts against the clearly demarcated boundaries of societal structures. In order to destroy the social system based on differences, she promotes the integration of the marginalized minorities into mainstream society.

Living with the other, with the foreigner, confronts us with the possibility or not of *being an other*. It is not simply – humanistically – a matter of our being able to accept the other, but of being *in his place*, and this means to imagine and make oneself other for oneself. (*Strangers* 13, original emphasis)

Thus, Kristeva asserts that one should sympathize with the foreigner by putting himself or herself in his or her shoes and by imagining himself or herself as the Other. As is observed in Kristeva's theory of the abject, the Other is a constitutive part of the subject. In other words, definition of the Other is necessary for the identity process because one cannot achieve subjectivity in the symbolic order without constructing boundaries between self and Other. Yet, at the same time, in order to become a subject-in-process in Kristevan sense one should destroy these rigid boundaries between self and Other, and then embrace this Other to develop a sense of self on the threshold between the semiotic and the symbolic realms. From

this perspective, the foreigner is also a constitutive part of national, racial, religious, and ethnic identities that form the symbolic order. The dominant political identity defines itself by building its borders against the foreigner and by marginalizing him or her. Therefore, the foreigner also plays the role of the abject for political subjectivity. In this respect, confronting and reconciling with the foreigner promises a political subject-in-process who overcomes the racial, national, and ethnic differences and welcomes the political identity of the foreigner.

As McAfee maintains: “In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva examines the estrangement we feel within ourselves and with the foreigners around us” (“Abject Strangers” 124). In this respect, Kristeva discusses foreignness on two levels: psychological and social. She wants to emphasize that reconciliation with a foreigner in society starts with a reconciliation with the stranger Other within ourselves. Kristeva argues:

My discontent in living with the other – my strangeness, his strangeness – rests on the perturbed logic that governs this strange bundle of drive and language of nature and symbol, constituted by the unconscious, always already shaped by the other. It is through unraveling transference – the major dynamics of otherness, of love/hatred for the other, of the foreign component of our psyche – that, on the basis of the other, I become reconciled with my own otherness-foreignness, that I play on it and live by it. Psychoanalysis is then experienced as a journey into the strangeness of the other and of oneself, toward an ethics of respect for the irreconcilable. How could one tolerate a foreigner if one did not know one was a stranger to oneself? (*Strangers* 181-2)

Kristeva indicates that every one is a foreigner to himself or herself because there is a territory which always remains unknown for the subject and this territory is called the unconscious. Kristeva reminds her readers that it is Freud who first introduced the stranger within the subject by his theory of the unconscious which is inhabited by the Other: “Uncanny foreignness is within us: we are our own foreigners, we are divided” (*Strangers* 181). Thus, Kristeva expresses that foreignness is an integral part of our subjectivity. If a person can discover the Other in himself or herself and confront it, then he or she can overcome the binaries and differences of the personified abject figures in racial, national, cultural and sexual terms.

Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which deals with the themes of alienation, estrangement, anxiety, fear, loss, loneliness, desire, and split, national, racial, sexual identities on both psychological and societal levels, welcomes a Kristevan reading in terms of its representations of the abject and the foreign/stranger Other. Through these representations, Rhys exposes the imprisoning and oppressive structures of the symbolic order for the Other, endows her women characters with an awareness of these structures, portrays their revolt against them, and equips them with certain excessive forms of reactions such as rage, hate, and revenge as mediums to express themselves.

Jamaica had a long history as a British colony for three centuries and its natives were enslaved by the English during this period. Thus, although the Jamaican people gained their independence and broke free from slavery with the Emancipation Act in 1834, the domination of the English was still immense on their culture and society. In this respect, the post-Emancipation period in Jamaica is culturally a chaotic one because there is a reversal in power structures, and the economic and social distinctions between the two races are blurred. Teresa F. O'Connor defines these parameters as follows:

[P]rior to Emancipation, there was a clearer understanding between the blacks and the whites. I do not mean to imply that in *Wide Sargasso Sea* there is a harking back to the "good old days" of slavery but rather that those caught in the middle of this historical and social change, unable to redefine themselves, unable to deal with the reversals, without an old order and yet with a new order that seems to suddenly involve "strangers," are at a loss. (201)

Rhys starts her novel by announcing that "[t]hey say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did" (3). With such an introduction, she defines white people (the colonizer English) as the oppressor who cause trouble for the natives (the black people of Jamaica) of the land. Edward Kamau Brathwaite observes that what Jamaican society was suffering from in that period was a racial and cultural conflict between the whites and the blacks rather than an administrative struggle between the English and the Jamaicans.

The single most important factor in the development of Jamaican society was not the imported influence of the Mother country or the local administrative activity of the white elite, but a cultural action – material, psychological and spiritual – based upon the stimulus/response of individuals within the society to their

environment and – as white/black, culturally discrete groups – to each other. The scope and quality of this response and interaction were dictated by the circumstances of the society's foundation and composition – a 'new' construct, made up of newcomers to the landscape and cultural strangers each to the other; one group dominant, the other legally and subordinately slaves. (Brathwaite 152)

In this respect, as Rhys also depicts, Jamaican people's resistance to slavery and colonialism was a cultural one. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Rhys displays this conflict between the white and black community through the Creole Cosway family's relations with black Jamaicans. The Cosway family lives on Coulibri Estate isolated from Spanish Town where their white relatives live. Annette, whose husband died long ago and who is living on Coulibri Estate with her daughter Antoinette, her son Pierre and a few black servants, has lost her authority in the black community because she is in a financial decline. Besides, as a daughter of a slave owner before the Emancipation she is not welcomed by the black community either. Now that Annette is not rich and has lost the social status provided by wealth, black people project their rage against white people's oppression onto her. As Antoinette says: "She still rode about every morning not caring that the black people stood about in groups to jeer at her, especially after her riding clothes grew shabby (they notice clothes, they know about money)" (4). Annette's worn out clothes reflect her deprivation and black people, observing her state, do not feel that her white identity is superior to them. Therefore, the black community answers back to their oppression in their own country by oppressing Antoinette's family through physical and psychological attacks. Annette expresses their banishment from society by announcing that they are "marooned" (4). This announcement highlights the Cosway family's exclusion from their society. Mary Lou Emery gives a historical definition of "maroon" as follows:

In Caribbean history, the term *Maroon* has come to refer primarily to the African and African American slaves who escaped from the plantations to hidden and nearly inaccessible parts of the islands. There they formed communities, defended themselves against soldiers, and carried out fierce and often successful guerilla warfare against the colonialists. ... By the middle of the sixteenth century, the word had taken on connotations of being 'wild,' 'fierce,' and 'unbroken'.

...

In Jamaica, the Maroons launched their attacks on the colonialists from the most inaccessible parts of the island – the “cockpit” country – and their heroic military feats are often attributed to the magical, spiritual powers of their leaders, especially those skilled in obeah. (40)

As is observed in the quotation above, the term “Maroon” is used for the oppressed blacks who took shelter in the marginalized places of the country in order to form a community to fight back against the colonialist. Then, Annette’s identifying herself and her family with the Maroons shows that the Cosway family also feels oppressed. Now that the power structures are reversed, it is now black people’s turn to exert their power on the white community. It is in this sense the members of the Cosway family is relegated to the position of the abject Other by the black community and the members have become “foreigners” in Kristevan terms. However, they do not put up a fight against the blacks in order to defend themselves. They feel alienated and lead an aloof life on their estate. As was discussed before, the foreigner, very like the abject, is a threat to the boundaries of the established system and it has a subversive power to destroy hegemonic structures. In this sense, although the Cosway family does not actively defend itself by fighting against the blacks, it still poses a threat to the black community. By marginalizing minorities, mainstream society represses its fear of the threat posed by the abject Other. Emery also emphasizes this aspect of the Maroons who were rebellious against colonialist oppression, who were fighting for their freedom, who inhabited the wild territories of their country, and who were using the power of magic (which is an incomprehensible practice for the symbolic order) in order to camouflage themselves when they were attacking the colonialists. In this respect,

[i]nadvertently Annette alludes to places in the island’s history that Antoinette might inhabit and the wild, unexplored parts of the island that may help her to survive. And she suggests the possible kinship with Christophine, who, as an obeah woman, practices a magic that enables survival in dangerous and hostile environments. (Emery 40)

Annette’s identification with the Maroons, then, posits an alternative subjectivity for Antoinette who is alienated socially, culturally, racially and sexually in Jamaican society. Although Antoinette does not battle with the blacks, her attempt to take shelter in the hidden

places of her environment shows that she needs to hide herself from the oppressive group in her society. After her first encounter with her abjection in society, Antoinette will also find a sense of belonging in the wild as the Maroons did. Antoinette says:

I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches. Let sleeping dogs lie. One day a little girl followed me singing. 'Go away white cockroach, go away, go away.' I walked fast, but she walked faster. 'White cockroach, go away, go away. Nobody want you. Go away.' (8)

The passage above stresses how Antoinette is exiled from black community. After being chased by the girl who calls her a "white cockroach", Antoinette feels frightened and takes shelter in the garden of Coulibri Estate which symbolizes the unexplored parts of the island in which the Maroons took refuge.

When I was safely home I sat close to the wall at the end of the garden. It was covered with green moss soft as velvet and I never wanted to move again. Everything would be worse if I moved. Christophine found me there when it was nearly dark, and I was so stiff she had to help me to get up. (8)

Antoinette's finding her "self" in the "wilderness" of Jamaica is symbolized by the garden which has "gone wild" (4) at this point in the novel. In the course of the novel, her close bond with the wild nature of Jamaica will be depicted more clearly and it will provide her with the rage and courage to rebel against the oppressive society she is living in, as the maroons did in the past. Antoinette's foreignness in society can be explained in Kristeva's words:

Who is a foreigner?

The one who does not belong to the group, who is not "*one of them*," the *other*.

The foreigner, as it has often been noted, can only be defined in negative fashion.

Negative with respect to what? The other of what group?

If one goes back through time and social structures, the foreigner is the other of the family, the clan, the tribe. At first, he blends with the enemy. External to my religion, too, he could have been the heathen, the heretic. Not having made an oath of fealty to

my lord, he was born on another land, foreign to the kingdom or the empire. (*Strangers* 95, original emphasis)

Thus, Antoinette is also identified as “not one of them” and she is isolated from her country. After depicting the racial abjection of Antoinette’s family by the black community, Rhys also identifies the marginalized position of Antoinette and her mother in the white community through the first person narration of Antoinette, in the second sentence of the novel: “But we were not in their ranks” (3). Here Antoinette refers to the fact that the Cosway family is not accepted by the white ranks either. Thus, from the very beginning the theme of being expelled and excluded by society is presented. In fact, Antoinette and her mother are white Creoles whose origins are rooted in French-dominated Martinique. Martinique is also an island which has a cosmopolitan culture that combines French and Caribbean influences. This also shows that Annette’s roots are lying in a cosmopolitan society which is based on a binary category: majority/minority. Exclusion and oppression of minority groups differ from society to society. As Kristeva says:

[A]ll that would be left for foreigners would be to join together? Foreigners of the world unite? Things are not so simple. For one must take into consideration the domination/exclusion fantasy characteristic of everyone: just because one is a foreigner does not mean one is without one’s own foreigner, and the faith that abated at the source is suddenly rekindled at the journey’s end in order to make up from whole cloth an identity the more exclusive as it had once been lost. In France, Italians call the Spaniards foreigners, the Spaniards take it out on the Portuguese, the Portuguese on the Arabs or the Jews, the Arabs on the blacks, and so forth and vice versa... (*Strangers* 24)

As Kristeva shows above, excluding the Other in the name of foreigner is a chain process. In this respect, on the one hand, the members of the Cosway family are excluded by the black community of Jamaica because of their racial difference; they are white as well as poor which means that they are deprived of the power money brings. On the other hand, although they are white, they are not welcomed by the white community in Jamaica either. The white community’s expelling Annette can be observed in the rumours about her marriage with Mr Mason in Spanish town.

‘A fantastic marriage and he will regret it. Why should a very wealthy man who could take his pick of all the girls in the West Indies, and many in England too probably?’ ‘Why *probably*?’ the other voice said. ‘*Certainly*.’ ‘Then why should he marry a widow without a penny to her name and Coulibri a wreck of a place? Emancipation troubles killed old Cosway? Nonsense – the estate was going downhill for years before that. He drank himself to death. Many’s the time when – well! And all those women! She never did anything to stop him – she encouraged him. Presents and smiles for the bastards every Christmas. Old customs? Some old customs are better dead and buried. Her new husband will have to spend a pretty penny before the house is fit to live in – leaks like a sieve. ... As for those children – the boy an idiot kept out of sight and mind and the girl going the same way in my opinion – a *lowering* expression.’ (13, original emphasis)

The white community’s thoughts about Annette reveal that she is not accepted by white people either. In this respect, both Antoinette and Annette are multiply otherized in their social environment. Thus, Antoinette’s and her mother’s national and racial subjectivities are characterized by ambiguity and in-betweenness which can be identified as abject qualities. McAfee constructs the analogy between foreignness and abject as follows:

By applying the notion of abjection to the formation of nation-states, we can explain the fascination and horror a nation-state develops toward foreigners. A nation-state constitutes its boundaries by excluding what is other. But insofar as the other (someone who constitutes/threatens identity) resides *within* the nation state, the foreign *object* becomes the foreign *abject*. The foreigner must be abjected, if not physically, then psychically. ... The foreigner forever haunts the nation’s subjective self because it signals the return of the abject – the return of presubjectivity. (McAfee, “Abject Strangers” 124, original emphasis)

When Annette regains her “colonial” position in the eyes of the Jamaican natives by her wealthy marriage to an English man, the rage against her grows. Annette can feel the black people’s hate for her and she wants to leave Coulibri by saying that “it is not safe” (18) to stay in Coulibri any more. Antoinette also thinks that their life was better before her mother’s marriage:

In some ways it was better before he came though he'd rescued us from poverty and misery. 'Only just in time too.' The black people did not hate us quite so much when we were poor. We were white but we had not escaped and soon we would be dead for we had no money left. What was there to hate? (17-8)

However, Mr Mason does not want to leave this place. He says:

'Annette, be reasonable. You were the widow of a slave-owner, the daughter of a slave-owner, and you had been living here alone, with two children, for nearly five years when we met. Things were at their worst then. But you were never molested, never harmed.'

'How do you know that I was not harmed?' she said. 'We were so poor then,' she told him, 'we were something to laugh at. But we are not poor now,' she said. 'You are not a poor man. ... They talk about us without stopping. They invent stories about you, and lies about me. They try to find out what we eat every day.' (16)

Annette wants to leave Coulibri because she is afraid of the black people's rage. In fact, Annette does not feel the same rage towards the blacks. Although she is rendered the abject Other in Jamaican society, she is a subject-in-process who can embrace her Other, and in this context, her Other is the black people. Her husband says:

'You imagine enmity which doesn't exist. Always one extreme or the other. Didn't you fly at me like a little wild cat when I said nigger? Not nigger, nor even Negro. Black people I must say.'

'You don't like, or even recognize, the good in them,' she said, 'and you won't believe in the other side.'

'They're too damn lazy to be dangerous,' said Mr Mason. I know that.'

'They are more alive than you are, lazy or not, and they can be dangerous and cruel for reasons you wouldn't understand.'

'No, I don't understand,' Mr Mason always said. 'I don't understand at all.' (16-7)

As is seen in the quotation above, Annette's subjectivity is not shaped by the dominant system. That is, she is for a union of self and Other. In this sense, she has saved herself from the oppression of patriarchal values which force individuals to form their identities on difference. Annette can carry the abject Other within her. This is the reason why

she does not want her husband to call black people degrading names such as Negro and nigger. She is aware of the fact that these words imply discrimination and underline black people's difference through racial binary oppositions. In this respect, the conversation above between Annette and her husband can be interpreted as a conversation between the semiotic and the symbolic. The semiotic stage knows no difference between self and Other as can be observed in a mother and child relationship which is symbiotic in that phase, and Annette is expressing her notions about black people from a semiotic stance. However, being oppressed for so long, black people do not have the same sympathy for the Cosway family. As a result of their hatred, they take their revenge upon white people by burning the Coulibri Estate.

One night Antoinette is woken up by her mother's panic-stricken voice telling her to pack up. There is a group of black people outside surrounding their house and shouting "like animals howling" (22). The degrading image of animal attributed to black people is a common one in racist societies. As with women, such an image lowers human's status in the symbolic order and renders them secondary to the subjects of the dominant order. In a rage, the crowd around the house sets the house on fire. McAfee announces that "National(istic) abjection breeds the worst kind of violence and inhumanity. Racism, fascism, and genocide are the extreme dangers, but even the lesser abjections, such as attempts to legislate a national language, are no more humane" ("Abject Strangers" 124). Black people have become violent because of living as a stranger in their own homeland. Their resentment can be felt in their cries: "Somebody yelled, 'But look the black Englishman! Look the white niggers!'", and then they were all yelling. 'Look the white niggers! Look the damn white niggers!'" (25). One of them shouts: "So black and white, they burn the same, eh?" (26). All these violent reactions are given because black people have suffered a lot under racial oppression. Now, they want revenge for what they have been forced to experience in their native land. Their cruel attack kills Annette's invalid son, Pierre and Annette, Antoinette, Mr Mason, and Aunt Cora are stoned. In fact, they are saved from being lynched by the fierce crowd because of their superstitious beliefs. When the crowd sees the Masons' pet parrot die in the fire, believing that killing a parrot brings ill fortune, they leave the burning Coulibri immediately.

After this event and losing their estate, the Mason family falls apart. Annette, overcome with grief for her son's death goes mad, Mr Mason leaves his wife to her fate, and

Antoinette is sent to a convent where she will stay until her stepfather arranges a marriage for her with Rochester.

Antoinette's experiences the abject Other within herself and in a racially divided society as well. She develops a friendship with Tia, a black girl, who is the daughter of Christophine's friend. One day Antoinette is given some money by Christophine and she drops it when she is taking her dress off to swim, Tia sees the pennies and bets Antoinette – for her money – that she cannot turn a somersault under water. Antoinette relates this childish game, which reflects Antoinette's confrontation with the Other, as follows:

But after one somersault I still turned and came up choking. Tia laughed and told me that it certainly look like I drown dead that time. Then she picked up the money.

'I did do it,' I said when I could speak but she shook her head. I hadn't done it good and besides pennies didn't buy much. Why did I look at her like that?

'Keep them then, you cheating nigger,' I said, for I was tired, and the water I had swallowed made me feel sick. 'I can get more if I want to.'

That's not what she hear, she said. She hear all we poor like beggar. ... Plenty white people in Jamaica. Real white people, they got gold money. They didn't look at us, nobody see them come near us. Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger. (9)

Tia's denial of Antoinette's successful somersault and taking her money show how the "underlying racial and economic situation perverts human affection and friendship" (O'Connor 199). Antoinette's choking indicates that she is experiencing abjection in this scene. When a subject confronts the abject Other, this is how he or she feels because he or she is reminded of the separation from the (m)other that he or she went through in order to attain his or her subject status in the symbolic order. Choking, vomiting, and spitting are all reactions that a child has when he or she rejects his or her mother's milk in order to break away from the symbiotic relationship with the mother. In this respect, such reactions are related to one's process of building borders between "me" and "not-me". Antoinette is very much affected by her friend's betrayal and reveals her difference from the Other by calling her "a cheating nigger". This indicates that Antoinette is in the process of constructing her borders between her self and Other in racial terms and this is the reason why she looks at Tia

shocked. Besides, the water Antoinette has swallowed makes her sick. This sickness can also be interpreted as a reaction that a subject gives when he or she faces the abject. Recognizing the boundaries between self and Other causes such symptoms according to Kristeva. Thus, through Tia's unjust behaviour, Antoinette recognizes the difference between her self and Tia and constructs her subjectivity on this "difference" which forms the most essential perception in the process of identity formation, according to traditional psychoanalytical theories of identity.

Tia's insults also reveal the situation of white people in Jamaican society. She emphasizes that white people have become "white niggers", which means that the hierarchical binary opposition of white and black has been reversed and white people are the marginalized Other now. It is in this sense that the "black nigger" is in a better position in society than the "white nigger". Now Antoinette realizes that she has been jettisoned by the racial community represented by Tia whom she regarded as her one and only friend.

In the meantime, leaving her own dress behind for Antoinette, Tia runs away with Antoinette's dress "starched, ironed, clean that morning" (10). Antoinette has to wear Tia's worn out dress and walks to her house "in the blazing sun feeling sick, hating her" (10). Antoinette's confrontation with the abject Other still influences on her and her sickness gradually becomes immense. Besides, the foreigner – the abject Other – makes her feel rage and hate. As Kristeva declares:

Foreigner: a choked up rage deep down in my throat, a black angel clouding transparency, opaque, unfathomable sput. The image of hatred and of the other, a foreigner is neither the romantic victim of our clannish indolence nor the intruder responsible for all the ills of the polis. Neither the apocalypse on the move nor the instant adversary to be eliminated for the sake of appeasing the group. Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns "we" into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible, The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities. (1)

Kristeva defines the subject's reaction to the foreigner as a rage choked down in one's throat. In this respect, the foreigner is an image of hatred. However, Kristeva also emphasizes that the foreigner resides in the subject. Similar to the abject Other, the foreigner is an indispensable part of the self. Thus, Kristeva implies that by recognizing the foreigner in ourselves, we can overcome the rage we feel toward the foreigner in our social communities. The process of embracing the foreigner in oneself is similar to the process of embracing the Other in oneself. This is how an individual becomes a subject-in-process. In other words, when a subject learns to carry the Other and the foreigner within himself or herself, he or she can overcome the differences and binary oppositions imposed upon the subject by the dominant ideology.

In this respect, although Antoinette experiences abjection and recognizes the differences between herself and Tia, her coming home with Tia's clothes on indicates that she has entered into the abject realm and become the abject Other. When Annette sees Antoinette, she notices that Antoinette is behaving "very oddly" and her dress is "dirtier than usual" (10). As we have seen, dirtiness is also categorized as abject. Dirt represents a potential threat to the clean and proper social body which constructs its borders through various social and cultural practices because it is the dominant culture which determines what is clean or unclean. As Douglas announces: "where there is no differentiation there is no defilement" (161). However, the differentiation principle is what the symbolic order is based on. Therefore, when Antoinette enters Coulibri Estate wearing Tia's dirty clothes, her mother's visitors – representatives of the symbolic order – from the white community laugh at Antoinette and exclude her by their contempt for her. In Kristeva's context, dirt has a subversive power and it signifies non-conformity. That is, dirt disrupts the boundaries of the social order built on cleanliness and it evokes avoidance, anxiety, and repulsion for the beholder. This is the reason why Annette orders Christophine to find a clean dress for her daughter and to burn the dirty one. Antoinette also observes her mother's behaviour toward her: "My mother walked over to the window. ('Marooned' said her straight narrow back, her carefully coiled hair. 'Marooned.')" (10-1). In this scene as well, Antoinette once more feels marooned and her abjected position in the symbolic order is once more underlined. Annette's turning her back to Antoinette shows that she is avoiding her daughter's abject state. Her ordering Christophine to find for her daughter a clean dress highlights her attempt at

purifying the abject. However, Antoinette's old muslin dress does not fit her any longer. When she forces the dress on, it tears. As Emery conveys "Antoinette's previous identity no longer fits. She is becoming someone else" (39). In brief, Antoinette becomes abject by identifying with her abject Other.

The dream motif in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is also employed to emphasize Antoinette's Otherness through racial, national, cultural, social, familial, sexual, and psychological perspectives, and Rhys will present three dreams of Antoinette in order to reflect these concerns. Antoinette's first dream, after her experience with her abject Other represented by Tia, emphasizes Antoinette's association with the wilderness and the maroons once more. Antoinette says: "I dreamed that I was walking in the forest. Not alone. Someone who hated me was with me, out of sight. I could hear heavy footsteps coming closer and though I struggled and screamed I could not move. I woke crying" (11). Antoinette's abjection is reflected through the images of wilderness once again. Wild nature is the place where she feels safe, protected and at home. In this respect, the forest represents the maternal space in which there is no separation and differentiation between self and Other. However, in her dream this maternal space is threatened by heavy footsteps following her. These are the footsteps of the symbolic order, which will be personified by Rochester in the rest of the novel, demanding from her to take her place in the symbolic order.

Mary Daly, in her seminal work *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978) portrays an association of the wild with woman's self in a radical way and in this sense she composes a feminist manifesto. Antoinette's finding her female self in the wilderness can be explained in the light of Daly's definition of the wild as a woman's space and female power.

Wild means "not amenable to control, restraint, or domestication: UNRULY, UNGOVERNABLE, RECKLESS." It means "(of a ship) hard to steer." It means "exceeding normal or conventional bounds in thought, design, conception, execution, or nature: EXTRAVAGANT, FANTASTIC, VISIONARY." It means "not acculturated to an advanced civilization: RUDE, UNCIVILIZED, BARBARIC." It means: "not yielding to a governmental authority: SAVAGE, INTRACTABLE, REBELLIOUS." It means "characteristic of, appropriate to, or expressive of wilderness, wildlife, or people [*sic*] in a simple or uncivilized society or environment."

Wild means “deviating from a natural or expected course, goal, or practice; acting, appearing, or being manifested in an unexpected, undesired, or unpredictable manner: RANDOM, ERRATIC.” It means “not accounted for by any known theories.”

...

Wild is the name of the Self in women, of the enspiriting Sister Self. The wildness of our Selves is visible to wild-eyes, to the inner eyes which ask the deepest “whys,” the interconnected “whys” that have not been fragmented by the fathers’ “mother tongues,” nor by their seductive images or –ologies. These are the “whys” undreamt of in their philosophies, but which lie sleeping, sometimes half-awake, in the wild minds of women. These are the *whys* of untamed wisdom. (343-4, original emphasis)

Daly here associates the wild with what departs from norms. It is a powerful metaphorical space for women, which promises true liberation from the oppressive social and cultural order. Its association with the uncivilized, the ungovernable, the savage, and the rebellious connotes the abject which has the power to destroy rigid established systems. In this respect, Antoinette’s taking shelter in Coulibri’s unruly garden, the wild places she inhabits in her dreams, and the untamed nature of Jamaica indicates that she is reviving her female self. The wild is the space from which she gains her power and at the end of the novel she will express her rage at being totally marginalized by rebelling against the patriarchal order represented by Rochester.

Antoinette’s abjection and her earlier identification with Tia, her Other, are more clearly developed in the scene which depicts Coulibri Estate’s destruction by fire. While watching Coulibri burning down, Antoinette notices Tia standing not so far off the estate.

I ran to her, for she was all that was left of my life as it had been. We had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. Not. When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. *It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass.* (27-8, emphasis mine)

As is observed above, Antoinette is running to Tia in order to embrace her abject Other literally. As was discussed before, in Lacanian psychology, the mirror stage is a phase

in which the child recognizes his or her image in the mirror and develops the boundaries between the mother and himself or herself. In this respect, the mirror stage is characterized by differentiation. The Other plays a major role in the subjectivity development process. A person attains his or her position as a subject in the symbolic order by defining the boundaries between self and Other. In this respect, although Tia is represented as the Other of Antoinette who will provide Antoinette with necessary equipment to develop her subjectivity in opposition to Tia's Otherness, Antoinette identifies with her and she sees herself in her. Tia becomes the mirror image of Antoinette. As O'Connor argues:

Despite what their desires might be, they are determined to act and to be participants in situations which are determined by circumstances outside themselves. They are the same and the complete opposites of each other – mirrors in which everything is both reflected and reversed. (O'Connor 200)

Therefore, identifying with the Other, Antoinette chooses to remain outside the symbolic order as the abject Other. However, in the rest of the novel, she will be forced to become a subject in the symbolic order firstly by being sent to a convent, secondly by becoming an exchange object on the market of patriarchal system through her marriage to Rochester, and lastly by being torn apart from the wild and being imprisoned in the attic of Thornfield Hall. Yet, at the end of the novel she will take her revenge on the entrapping structures of the dominant ideology by celebrating her abjection through her decision to burn down Thornfield Hall.

Before discussing the representations of the abject maternal figures through the portrayals of Annette and Christophine, and the representations of abject female desire through the portrayal of Antoinette's relationship with Rochester, it is important to reflect on Antoinette's social abjection in the convent which also represents the symbolic order.

After Tia's attack, Antoinette is badly injured, and when she comes to herself after six weeks, she sees that she is abandoned by her mother and left to Aunt Cora's care. Soon she is taken to the convent by her Aunt Cora. Although the convent can be identified as a female space, it is ruled by a patriarchal ideology because the Church is one of the main transcendental signifiers of patriarchal power. As Antoinette reveals, the convent represents the symbolic order that is based on binary oppositions.

Everything was brightness, or dark. The walls, the blazing colours of the flowers in the garden, the nuns' habits were bright, but their veils, the Crucifix hanging from their waists, the shadow of trees were black. That was how it was, light and dark, sun and shadow, Heaven and Hell. (38)

In relation to this patriarchal representation of the convent, the convent, which can also be associated with the maternal space, will not be a home for Antoinette. Her first day in the convent starts with her crying after being chased and humiliated by a black girl saying that she is the daughter of a crazy mother. When she finally takes shelter in the convent, she is offered a glass of milk by a nun. She says: "I tried to drink it, but I choked" (33). This scene clearly underlines Antoinette's obligatory separation from her mother. Not only is she separated from her biological mother choking on milk, but she is also aware of the fact that she is separated from the maternal space provided by nuns because it is ruled by the hegemony of patriarchal ideology.

For instance, the classes Antoinette attends teach patriarchal definitions of women rather than biblical knowledge. In one of those classes, her teacher, Mother St Justine reads the lives of the saints to her students by drawing their attention to rich and beautiful images of women saints rather than revealing their spiritual teachings: " '...more lovely and more richly dressed than he had ever seen her in life,' drones Mother St Justine' ... 'And Theophilus was converted to Christianity,' says Mother St Justine, reading very rapidly now, 'and became one of the Holy Martyrs.'" (35). Mother St Justine herself is not interested in how Christianity has spread. Therefore, she skips those religious passages and instead focuses on the romantic and luxurious scenes depicted in the life stories of the saints. Antoinette's isolation from the community is once more emphasized through her experiences in these classes. For instance, she is not interested in religious teachings or in the admirable feminine appearances of women in these stories. She observes her surroundings, sees the relics and "the skeleton of a girl of fourteen under the altar of the convent chapel" (34) which is introduced to them as their saint and she wonders how "the nuns get them out here ... In a cabin trunk? Specially packed for the hold? How?" (35). When Mother St Justine tells her students the miracle of a rose which never fades and still exists, Antoinette asks "Oh, but where? Where?" (35). In this respect, Antoinette's questions show that her way of thinking is

completely different from that of the community of the convent, and this isolates her as an eccentric figure.

The association of the convent with patriarchal imprisoning structures can also be observed in Mother St Justine's interest in her students' physical appearances rather than their spiritual developments. Antoinette says:

She shuts the book with a clap and talks about pushing down the cuticles of our nails when we wash our hands. ... she slides on to order and chastity, that flawless crystal that, once broken, can never be mended. Also deportment. Like everyone else, she has fallen under the spell of the de Plana sisters and holds them up as an example to the class ... They sit so poised and imperturbable while she points out the excellence of Miss Hélène's coiffure, achieved without a looking-glass. (35)

As is observed above, Mother St Justine cannot help admiring the women saints' beauty and luxurious lives and adopts the teachings of religion as a method to shape her students with these images. In this sense, the convent is used as a metaphor to represent patriarchal definitions of women who should look good, be clean and chaste, but who should strip themselves of vanity.

Although Antoinette adapts herself to the daily routines of the convent, she still questions her life in this place. She asks herself: "But what about happiness, I thought at first, is there no happiness? There must be. Oh happiness of course, happiness, as well" (37). Antoinette, always feeling alienated in social and cultural communities and not satisfied with her life prays to die. Then, she remembers that it is a sin to pray like that. She says:

So I prayed for a long time about that too, but the thought came, so many things are sins, why? Another sin, to think that. However, happily, Sister Marie Augustine says thoughts are not sins, if they are driven away at once. You say Lord save me, I perish. I find it very comforting to know exactly what must be done. All the same, I did not pray so often after that and soon, hardly at all. I felt bolder, happier, more free. But not so safe. (38)

By questioning the set of rules and belief systems, Antoinette is portrayed as a marginalized figure. She can only feel free and happy when she places herself outside these rigid thinking structures. She has her own subjective and relative truths which clash with the

strict and totalizing truths of her community. She feels isolated because her worldview is a threat to the established norms. However, although she feels brave and more free, neither her family, nor the convent and religion can make her feel safe. Thus, Antoinette's literal and metaphorical homelessness is once again highlighted by her experiences in the convent.

In conclusion, Rhys's abject portrayal of her female characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* reveals how women are imprisoned by established structures and norms. Thus, building the first part of her novel on social and racial abjection, Rhys hints that entrapping structures for women can be multiple. Both Annette's and Antoinette's experiences with their Others represented in racial terms are employed to emphasize that not only the blacks but also the whites are abjected by patriarchal power structures. However, it will be observed that Rhys's depiction of her women characters as abject entities moves beyond social concerns. That is, envelops their psychological abjection experienced in their relationships with each other as mother and daughter, with men, and with the Other residing in their subjectivities.

The following part of this chapter will dwell on familial abjection in terms of mother and daughter bond and then sexual abjection experienced with men. Kristeva defines the life of a foreigner as a "life made up of ordeals" in which there is "neither routine nor rest" (*Strangers* 6-7). In the light of such an approach, it can be claimed that both Annette's and Antoinette's lives are full of ordeals which finally throw them in the semiotic represented by their madness. Although their ending up in madness shows that there is no place for women's autonomous subjectivities shaped outside the symbolic order, it also represents an expression of rage and rebelliousness which has the potential to destroy male oppression.

3.5 "Have all beautiful things sad destinies?": Maternal Abjection in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Deborah Kelly Kloepfer, in her work *The Unspeakable Mother: Forbidden Discourse in Jean Rhys and H.D.*, argues that "[I]n speaking the mother, Rhys chooses ... to speak through another text, a 'mother' text, *Jane Eyre*, inventing a history for Bertha Mason, who appears early in the narrative as the child called Antoinette" (142). By constructing a mother-daughter relationship between *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Kloepfer also introduces one of the significant figures in Rhys's novel: the mother.

The mother or the mother substitute is an important motif in Gothic fiction. In her article, “The Missing Mother: The Meanings of Maternal Absence in the Gothic Mode”, Ruth Bienstock Anolik writes:

The typical Gothic mother is absent: dead, imprisoned or somehow abjected ... The mothers of most Gothic heroines are dead long before the readers meet their daughters ... [T]he figure of the mother exerts social control and order, providing the resistance to deviance that is beneficial to society and but detrimental to narrative. (25, 27)

In this respect, conventional Gothic novels in which the mother is mostly rendered absent develop the plot with the purpose of victimizing young women in domestic structures who find themselves unprotected and helpless without their mothers in a patriarchal world. Besides, the absence of the mother in Gothic narrative lays bare the patriarchal construction of subjectivity of Freud’s and Lacan’s psychoanalytical theories which exclude the maternal for the sake of building the symbolic order. For instance, although Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is a subversive Gothic novel in many respects, Brontë adopts a conventional Gothic plot and portrays Jane as an orphan, in order to advance her narrative.

On the contrary, Rhys inserts in her novel an influential mother figure who shapes her daughter’s personality, identity, and even her destiny. In this sense, Rhys rewrites the Gothic plot by portraying a mother as abject and subverts Gothic narrative by privileging the semiotic instead of the symbolic. Anolik explains the function of the abject mother in the Gothic novel as follows:

Yet given the subversive tendencies of the Gothic, the representations of abjection of the maternal in the Gothic text can just as readily be seen as a challenge to the reader to consider the abjection of the mother as a dangerous cultural movement to exile a figure that unsettles cultural categories. (30)

Therefore, Rhys’s employment of the abject mother figure has a disruptive function which unsettles social, cultural, racial categories as well as traditional psychoanalytical ones. And this section of the study will analyze the abject mother’s influence on her daughter, who becomes an abject figure residing in the semiotic outside the symbolic order although she is

not welcomed by her mother. It will also analyze Rochester's attempts at abjecting the (m)other in order to stabilize his place in the symbolic order.

Thus, Antoinette's depiction as an abject figure is not only limited to her social and racial environment. Her distant relationship with her mother, Annette, also plays a significant role in her developing a sense of alienation. Annette's detached behaviour, her negligent attitude toward Antoinette in favor of her son, and her gradually developing madness have a great influence on Antoinette, which makes her a more isolated and withdrawn figure.

Antoinette's relationship with her mother is one of abjection. Although she experiences abjection because of her mother's rejection of her, she also cannot totally separate herself from her mother. The child has to build its borders between itself and the (m)other in order to become a separate being. However, since it experienced a complete identification with the (m)other in the semiotic stage, it is not easy for the child to develop these borders. The child develops a desire to become one with the (m)other and such a union with the mother is not based on difference but on unification. In this respect, the child is in conflict. It needs to separate from the (m)other (who is a part of itself at the same time) in order to develop its subjectivity, while simultaneously it yearns to become one with the (m)other again because the (m)other constitutes an important part of its self. In the light of these theoretical assumptions, Antoinette is also in just such a conflict. While she is continually being excluded by her mother, which urges her to construct her boundaries between self and (m)other, she also develops a desire to become one with the (m)other. Antoinette is separated from her mother, but throughout the novel she also strives to revive her union with Annette through Christophine (the black (m)other figure), through the wild nature of the island (which represents Annette and the maternal space), lastly through following her mother's steps in marriage and in madness.

At the very beginning of the novel, Antoinette reveals that she "got used to a solitary life" (3). When Annette learns that her invalid son, Pierre, will not recover, she totally isolates herself from her environment. Antoinette says: "[S]he changed. Suddenly, not gradually. She grew thin and silent, and at last she refused to leave the house at all" (4). Antoinette, like every child, needs her mother's love and attention. However, her mother does not seem to care about her at all. Antoinette silently observes her mother from a distance:

A frown came between her black eyebrows, deep – it might have been, cut with a knife. I hated this frown and once I touched her forehead trying to smooth it. But she pushed me away, not roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her. She wanted to sit with Pierre or walk where she pleased without being pestered, she wanted peace and quiet. I was old enough to look after myself. ‘Oh, let me alone,’ she would say, ‘let me alone,’ and after I knew that she talked aloud to herself I was a little afraid of her. (5)

Antoinette is aware of the fact that her bond with her mother is broken forever, never to be mended.

Once I would have gone back quietly to watch her asleep on the blue sofa – once I made excuses to be near her when she brushed her hair, a soft black cloak to cover me, hide me, keep me safe.

But not any longer. Not any more. (7-8).

Thus, from the very beginning of the novel, Antoinette’s relationship with her mother is portrayed as being in a process of separation. In the quotations given above, it is observed that this process has started and no matter how hard Antoinette tries, she cannot construct an affectionate relationship with her mother. Annette’s unstable mental state also negatively contributes to their already loosely formed familial ties. In fact, Annette completely breaks down after the fire at Coulibri Estate. Since Mr Mason has turned a deaf ear to Annette’s warnings about the coming trouble stemming from the black community’s rage toward the Cosway family and since he has refused to leave the estate, Annette blames her husband for causing her son’s death. In fact, the imprisoning structures of the patriarchal Gothic plot, represented by Mr Mason at this point, entrap Annette in a house which will be destroyed and then in a madness which will destroy her. Oppressed firstly by her gender, secondly by her Martinique origin, Annette suffers from oppression in marriage institution as well as in society. She is financially and socially dependent on her husband’s social status. Therefore, her husband’s decision to stay in Jamaica, despite his wife’s rightful anxieties about their safety, results in the Mason family’s ruin. In fact, Annette’s imprisonment by her husband in Coulibri is symbolized by Annette’s pet parrot whose wings are clipped by Mr Mason in order to prevent it from flying. Antoinette says: “After Mr Mason clipped his wings he grew

very bad tempered, and though he would sit quietly on my mother's shoulder, he darted at everyone who came near her and pecked their feet" (24). The parrot's reactions are very similar to those of Annette. After getting married, she also gradually becomes bad tempered because of her husband's oppression. Moreover, she becomes alienated and isolated from her society by being abjected. When Coulibri is set on fire by the blacks, Annette strives to save the parrot she identifies with. However, she cannot save its life. The parrot tries to fly away from the fire, but since its wings are clipped, it falls into it. The death of the parrot also foreshadows Annette's mental breakdown after the fire and her early death.

Within the conventional psychoanalytic framework, the mother is otherized and repressed and she has no subjectivity of her own. When her role in the child's identity development is described, it is presented in relation either to the father or to the child. In this respect, her role in identity process is diminished to being the object of desire and an exchange item in Oedipal terms who is bought and sold between the child and the father. Her desire is perceived as lack because she does not have the position of the subject to claim her desire. From this perspective, the child forms its subjectivity by silencing the mother and attaining the language of the symbolic order. As Marianne Hirsch states:

The mother herself is and remains absent even to herself. The place she inhabits is vacant. Although she produces and upholds the subject, she herself remains the matrix, the other, the origin. And the child's own narrative – the narrative of our culture – rests on that "othering". (168)

Hirsch reveals that the mother's silence conceals her anger because her subjectivity is denied by culture. She emphasizes that

anger may well be what defines subjectivity whenever the subject is denied speech. This formulation points to connections between maternal subjectivity and the subjectivity of oppressed or colonized people. ... And to be angry is to assert one's own self, not to subordinate it to the development of another's self. A mother cannot articulate anger as a mother; to do so she must step out of a culturally circumscribed role which commands mothers to be caring and nurturing to others, even at the expense of themselves. (170)

Annette's anger and distance toward her daughter also can be interpreted as a suppressed silence closely related to her being oppressed in both social and familial environment. In this respect, Annette steps outside the cultural norms of motherhood in order to express her anger against the dominant system. Her oppression by dominant discourses leads her to express her anger in aloof, reserved and isolated behaviour.

In fact, Antoinette's separation process is completed after the destruction of Coulibri Estate. Antoinette was left to Aunt Cora's care because her mother, having lost her son in the fire tragedy, became mentally unstable and moved to another part of the country. When Antoinette recovers and visits her mother, she observes that Annette is not herself anymore. Antoinette reveals the scene in which a complete separation from the mother takes place as follows:

I put my arms round her and kissed her. She held me so tightly that I couldn't breathe and I thought, 'It's not her.' Then, 'It must be her.' She looked at the door, then at me, then at the door again. I could not say 'He is dead,' so I shook my head. 'But I am here, I am here,' I said, and she said, 'No,' quietly. Then 'No no no' very loudly and *flung* me from her. I fell against the partition and hurt myself. (30, emphasis mine)

After this, Antoinette gives up her efforts to unite with her mother and breaks away from her completely both literally and in Oedipal terms. Her mother's distant attitudes toward her indicate that she has lost her (m)other and she will never be able to return to the symbiotic blissful relationship with her mother in the pre-Oedipal phase. In this sense, still preserving her desire to be one with her (m)other as she was once in the semiotic phase of the subjectivity process, she tries to unite with her mother as can be observed in the quotations above show. Consequently, Antoinette's separation from her mother makes her a melancholic woman.

Kristeva, declares that melancholia emerges as a result of the heavy feeling of loss of the mother and makes one feel "wounded, incomplete, empty" (Kristeva, *Black Sun* 12). McAfee explains Kristeva's definition of the melancholic person in the quotation below:

[S]he would feel personally wounded – the loss she suffered was of part of herself, insofar as the wound was suffered before she

could distinguish her mother from herself. The wound manifested itself linguistically, disrupting her ability to symbolize and to name. This is one of the primary symptoms of depression that Kristeva zeroes in on: the loss of interest, even inability, in speaking. Melancholia is a noncommunicable grief; the melancholic is wrapped up in her sadness; it is hers alone, something she cannot share in the social/symbolic realm. Of course, this is precisely the malady: a wound accruing when one is still in infancy. (61)

In this respect, a person who suffers from melancholia cannot be a subject in the symbolic because he or she is still mourning for the loss of the mother. Thus, he or she remains within the abject realm. His or her residing in the abject realm as well as being overwhelmed with melancholia positions him or her outside the symbolic order. Then, melancholia can also be defined in parallel to abjection not only because of its emergence in relation to the maternal issues but also because of its capacity to blur the boundaries of subjectivity. As Kristeva suggests: "The terms melancholia and depression refer to a composite that might be called melancholy/depressive, whose borders are in fact blurred" (*Black Sun* 10). Therefore, the melancholic suffers from a "noncommunicable grief" which cannot find its expression in the symbolic language. Antoinette also feels this grief, isolates herself from the community, and she cannot find a way to express her sadness in the symbolic order. She is most of the times possessed by "a feeling of dismay, sadness, loss" (40).

Antoinette will see her mother for the last time in her life in a wretched state. Mr Mason has abandoned Annette in a house which is kept by black servants and Annette, completely losing her mind, has become a drunkard. Rhys's female characters develop an addiction to alcohol in order to forget their painful memories. Annette has started drinking in order to forget her sufferings deriving from her harsh experiences in the white and the black communities, from her inability to overcome her son's death and from her husband's unconcerned attitude toward her. When she moves from Coulibri to another estate, she completely loses her ties with the past and becomes an object of desire who is exploited by the blacks. Antoinette tells how her mother has been forced to lead a corrupt life in the house:

'One day I made up my mind to go to her, by myself. Before I reached her house I heard her crying. I thought I will kill anyone who is hurting my mother. I dismounted and ran quickly on

to the veranda where I could look into the room. I remember the dress she was wearing – an evening dress cut very low, and she was barefooted. There was a fat black man with a glass of rum in his hand. He said, “Drink it and you will forget.” She drank it without stopping. He poured her some more and she took the glass and laughed and threw it over her shoulder. It smashed to pieces. “Clean it up,” the man said to the woman, “or she’ll walk in it.” ... I saw the man lift her up out of the chair and kiss her. I saw his mouth fasten on hers and she went all soft and limp in his arms and he laughed ... When I saw that I ran away’. (104)

Antoinette still cares for her mother. Throughout the novel it is observed that Antoinette can internalize all her “Others” although she is badly treated by them. For instance, she does not bear a grudge for her black Other, Tia. Her house is burnt down by the blacks, but she does not turn away from the black community. On the contrary, she likes spending time with them. Although she had a lonely childhood without maternal care, protection and love, she does not feel resentment against her mother. Therefore, thinking that her mother is in danger when she hears her crying, she runs to the house to save her. However, she sees that her mother has completely lost her mind. Annette has become a victim of a black man who sexually abuses her. Antoinette cannot stand watching her like that, so she runs away. And later when she is still in the convent, she learns that her mother is dead.

This mad and abject figure of Annette will shape Antoinette’s life. She will try to revive her maternal bond through her relationship with Christophine and even through her relationship with Rochester. However, no one will be able to compensate for her maternal loss. Therefore, in the end she will unite with her mother by becoming her. Her mother totally breaks down after losing her son, and Antoinette will sink into a deep melancholia which will result in madness after losing Rochester’s love. She will both physically and mentally become like her mother. Rochester sees “the frown between her thick eyebrows, deep as if it has been cut with a knife” (107), which shows that she has adopted her mother’s frown which she once tried to smooth. Grace Poole watches her sitting “shivering and she is so thin” (141), which shows that Antoinette has also grown thin as her mother did after Pierre’s death. Antoinette will start drinking when she learns about her husband’s betrayal, which shows that she also tries to forget her pain as her mother did. She will identify with her mother when she feels abused by Rochester as Annette was abused by the black servant. Since she was a child,

she could do nothing to save her mother from the black man, but she will attack Rochester to save herself. When he talks about justice, although he is guilty of betraying his wife, he says:

‘Justice,’ ... ‘I’ve heard that word. It is a cold word. I tried it out ... I wrote it down several times and always it looked like a damn cold lie to me. There is no justice ... My mother whom you talk about, what justice did she have? My mother sitting in the rocking-chair speaking about dead horses and dead grooms and a black devil kissing her sad mouth. Like you kissed mine.’ (114-5)

All these instances show that Antoinette can only reconstruct her maternal bond by becoming like her mother. Although they both experience pain in their lives, they will unite in the semiotic which is represented by madness. Since madness is a psychological state which denies the norms of the symbolic order, they will always remain as abject figures. Thus, the conventional Gothic plot, which presents an Oedipal drama and celebrates women’s entrance into the symbolic order by “rewarding” its heroines with marriage at the end, is subverted by Rhys who celebrates the abject mother figure as a means to lay bare the methods of the symbolic order which oppress, repress, dominate, and exclude the semiotic in order to sustain its power and domination on women. Thus, Rhys shows that not only do the cultural, social, and racial parameters victimize women, but also the traditional psychoanalytical theories which define female identity seek to victimize women in order to reinforce the patriarchal ideology.

However, until she is united with her mother in the semiotic, Antoinette will try to recover her maternal bond through certain figures. One of them is Christophine, Annette’s Martinique black maid, to whom she runs in order to feel motherly affection. Christophine’s Martinique origin is also another parallel drawn between Annette and Christophine, which emphasizes her role as a mother for Antoinette.

In fact, Christophine is an abject figure as well, not only in the sense of her racial difference (“she was much blacker” (6)), but also in her association with obeah. Obeah, a practice which is outside the norms and rational explanations of the symbolic order, renders Christophine an abject figure. Antoinette describes Christophine’s room as follows:

I was certain that hidden in the room (behind the old black press?) there was a dead man's dried hand, white chicken feathers, a cock with its throat cut, dying slowly, slowly. Drop by drop the blood was falling into a red basin and I imagined I could hear it. No one had ever spoken to me about obeah – but I knew what I would find if I dared to look. Then Christophine came in smiling and pleased to see me. Nothing alarming ever happened and I forgot, or told myself I had forgotten. (15)

Christophine's room is full of abject entities which evoke repulsion. "A dead man's dried hand", "a cock with its throat cut" and blood are all representations which blur the boundaries between what is alive and what is dead. In this sense, Christophine's room throws Antoinette into an abject realm which reminds her of her separation from the mother's body. Thus, Antoinette's confrontation with the abject in Christophine's room is one of the first implications that positions Christophine as a mother figure. It also foreshadows Antoinette's indulgence in obeah which will be discussed later.

Christophine is Antoinette's mother substitute who feeds and dresses her, who sings patois songs to her in the evenings, and whom Antoinette needs to have beside her when she visits Annette after the fire. When Annette rejected her daughter, it was Christophine who consoled her. Christophine's being a mother figure for Antoinette emphasizes the abjection of Antoinette because her identification with the (m)other through Christophine once again underlines her capability of embracing the Other. Throughout the novel, it is observed that Antoinette's abject Otherness will be represented through women with black origins starting with Tia, Christophine and in the second part of the novel with Amélié, a black maid, with whom Rochester betrays Antoinette.

Christophine as a racial Other is presented through Rochester's narration. When Rochester first meets Christophine, who is introduced to him by Antoinette as her nurse, he observes: "She was blacker than most and her clothes, even the handkerchief round her head, were subdued in colour. She looked at me steadily, not with approval, I thought" (51). In fact, Christophine knows that Rochester, as a white English man who marries Antoinette in order to usurp her property, is a colonizer who regards black people as slaves. This is the reason why she observes Rochester suspiciously. Rochester relegates Christophine to the position of the abject Other by focusing on her bodily difference. His aversion toward her can be felt when he asks Antoinette:

‘Why do you hug and kiss Christophine?’

...

‘Why not?’

‘I wouldn’t hug and kiss them,’ ... ‘I couldn’t.’ (67-8)

In addition, Rochester associates Christophine with dirt. The conversation below between Rochester and Antoinette explicitly shows Rochester’s xenophobia. It is observed that he adopts all the conventional descriptions of the racial Other which reveal his imperialist personality.

‘[H]er language is horrible and she might hold her dress up. It must get very dirty, yards of it trailing on the floor.’

‘When they don’t hold their dress up it’s for respect,’ said Antoinette. ‘Or for feast days or going to Mass.’

...

‘Whatever the reason it is not a clean habit.’

‘It is. You don’t understand at all. They don’t care about getting a dress dirty because it shows it isn’t the only dress they have. Don’t you like Christophine?’

‘She is a worthy person no doubt. I can’t say I like her language.’

‘It doesn’t mean anything,’ said Antoinette.

‘And she looks so lazy. She dawdles about.’

‘Again you are mistaken. She seems slow, but every move she makes is right so it’s quick in the end.’ (62-3)

Rochester’s association of dirt with Christophine displays the conventional implications of the racial Other who is what the proper subject is not in cultural terms. Iris Marion Young explains the abjection of the racial Other by the dominant culture below:

Much of the oppressive experience of cultural imperialism occurs in mundane contexts of interaction – in the gestures, speech, tone of voice, movements and reactions of other. Pulses of attraction and aversion modulate all interactions, with specific consequences for experience of the body. When the dominant culture defines some groups as different, as the other, the members of those groups are imprisoned in their bodies. Dominant discourse defines them in terms of bodily characteristics, and constructs these bodies as *ugly, dirty, defiled, impure, contaminated or sick*. Those who experience such an epidermalizing of their world, moreover, discover their status by means of the embodied behavior of others:

in their gestures, a certain nervousness that they exhibit, their avoidance of eye contact, the distance they keep.

The experience of racial oppression entails in part existing as a group defined as *having ugly bodies, and being feared, avoided, or hated on that account.* (123, emphasis mine)

Rochester shows these reactions in avoiding Christophine, in feeling aversion for her, and in oppressing her through condemning her to the secondary position in hierarchically constructed binary oppositions. As O'Connor suggests: "Rochester does not give credence to their [black people's] potential for dignity, generosity, intelligence and wisdom" (159). He is a representative of the symbolic order and the proper subject of patriarchal society, who constructs his subjectivity by excluding what is Other to his self. Since such a subjectivity is based on binary oppositions, Rochester also demarcates his boundaries between self and Other in the light of this patriarchal principle. On the other hand, Antoinette is an abject figure in the symbolic order because she does not construct her identity by exclusion. In contrast to Rochester, she can identify with the racial Other. Since Rochester's borders of the self are rigidly constructed, he cannot understand Antoinette, particularly when she lays bare her identification with Christophine: "I'll get up when I wish to. I'm very lazy you know. Like Christophine. I often stay in bed all day" (63). With this declaration, Antoinette identifies herself with the patriarchal construction of the black Other as lazy. As Antoinette represents the abject female who can also identify with her black nurse, she has the potential to blur Rochester's boundaries between self and Other. In this sense, she poses a threat to Rochester's patriarchally constructed identity. Therefore, throughout the novel it will be observed that Rochester will try to preserve his boundaries by excluding not only black people, but also Antoinette who represents the abject Other for him.

Rochester not only focuses on Christophine's physical difference, but he also condemns her language by saying that he does not like it. McAfee suggests that "[a]ll our attempts to use language neatly, clearly, and in an orderly way are handmaidens of our attempts to be neat, clearly demarcated, orderly subjects" (13). The subject's entrance into the symbolic stage is signified by his or her acquirement of the symbolic language which is the paternal language. Being a member of the symbolic order, Rochester's signifying process is also paternal. Therefore, Rochester rejects Christophine's language firstly because it is the language of the racial Other. In rejection of it Rochester tries to control and colonize the

language of the island symbolically through Christophine. Secondly, it signifies the semiotic language which is the (m)other's language. As Kloefer argues: "Antoinette and Christophine use this language of gesticulation and rhythm between them. ... [T]he sounds of patois are connected to the maternal voice" (147). Rochester is very much disturbed by "the debased French patois" (47), particularly when Antoinette uses it, because he does not want to acknowledge his wife's difference. That is, he wants to control his wife as well because he is aware of the fact that his wife's identification with black people poses a threat to his colonial identity. Rochester, imprisoning his wife in his male gaze, says:

All day she'd be like any other girl, smile at herself in her looking-glass (*do you like this scent?*), try to teach me her songs, for they haunted me.

Adieu foulard, adieu madras, or Ma belle ka di maman li. My beautiful girl said to her mother. (No it is not like that. Now listen. It is this way). She'd be silent, or angry for no reason, and chatter to Christophine in patois. (67, original emphasis)

The songs Antoinette sings haunt Rochester because they reveal the power of the abject. Antoinette is trying to teach him these songs in order to blur the rigid boundaries of Rochester's subjectivity. As Becker-Leckrone argues:

[A]bjection offers rich territory for exploring the eccentricity of human subjectivity, giving Kristeva a further opportunity to argue that the dynamics at the margins of self and culture significantly shape – indeed serve as the foundations for – their symbolic 'norms'. (30)

Thus, Rochester's horror of the racial Other and the semiotic language reveals how his subjectivity is constructed by the symbolic principle: exclusion. Rhys once again portrays the hierarchical relationships between binary oppositions. Rochester, a representative of the unitary subject of the symbolic order, the paternal Law which erases the (m)other principle in the formation of subjectivity process, and the colonist English of the patriarchal ideology is invited to the abject realm by his wife's abject Otherness, by Granbois (in its association with Annette it represents the maternal space), and by Christophine's racial identity and patois. However, he is not like Antoinette who blurs her boundaries of subjectivity and who merges with the (m)other in order to become a subject-in-process. Therefore, in the course of the

novel, he will continually confront the abject, but he will try to expel it in certain ways in order to preserve his symbolic identity.

The rhythmic and short syllabled patois also emphasizes the maternal bond between Antoinette and Christophine because it is presented throughout the novel as the (m)other tongue. In other words, it represents the pre-Oedipal language of the semiotic which is associated with rhythmic, musical, metaphoric, and spasmodic sounds. Kristeva places the semiotic in the chora which is “connotative of the mother’s body – an unrepresentable body” (Lechte 129). The chora is a psychic space which is characterized by the child’s drives which can find its expression in baby babbles. Therefore, the semiotic chora is regarded as the language of the mother by Kristeva. Kristeva gives rhythmic and metaphoric poetic language as an example for the semiotic.

Therefore, Antoinette prefers to speak patois, which is characterized by the qualities listed above, when she is in need of maternal care. For instance, when Rochester betrays Antoinette, Antoinette begs Christophine saying: “O Pheena, Pheena, help me” (121). When Antoinette was a child, she used to call Christophine by this name, “Pheena”, and this shows that Antoinette wants to return to the semiotic by using her childhood words as well as positioning Christophine as her mother.

Christophine visits Rochester after learning that he has broken Antoinette’s heart by betraying her and she will try to persuade Rochester to love Antoinette again. In this scene, observing that Antoinette loves Rochester so much and is therefore in pain, Christophine acts like a mother figure who trying to protect her daughter and heal her wounds. First she defends Antoinette by saying that what Rochester has learned from Daniel is a lie. Then, she will verbally attack him by accusing him of stealing Antoinette’s money, of being jealous of her because she is better than him, and of treating her like a doll by calling her Marionette in order to provoke her. Lastly, she begs Rochester to love her: “I know that girl. She will never ask you for love again, she will die first. But I Christophine I beg you. She love you so much. She thirsty for you. Wait, and perhaps you can love her again. A little, like she say. A little. Like you can love” (123). Although Christophine tries hard to soften Rochester, he will not surrender to her maternal power. Moreover, he will separate Christophine and Antoinette forever by taking Antoinette to England.

Rhys subverts the traditional Gothic fiction that excludes mother figures for the development of the plot by employing a twice marginalized woman both as a black woman and as a mother figure. By employing such a figure, Rhys not only provides Antoinette with a maternal support to show that her maternal bond is never broken, but also to reveal Rochester's self-centered, patriarchal, and colonist character.

In addition to Christophine, Antoinette also tries to construct her maternal bond through the nature of Jamaica. Antoinette's identification with the Maroons, who took shelter in the unexplored parts of the island with the wilderness was discussed in detail in the previous section of this chapter. Since Antoinette first hears of this identification of their family with the Maroons from her mother, she also associates the wild nature with her mother.

In fact, Antoinette feels that she belongs nowhere; she can neither feel at home in Jamaican society, nor even in her own house. Her exclusion by her mother, by her society, and by Tia wounds her. Therefore, she decides to stay away from people.

And if the razor grass cut my legs and arms I would think
'It's better than people.' Black ants or red ones, tall nests
swarming white ants, rain that soaked me to the skin – once I saw a
snake. *All better than people.*

Better. Better, better than people. ... I was somewhere else,
something else. *Not myself any longer.* (12, emphasis mine)

Antoinette thinks that nature cannot hurt her as people can. Therefore, for Antoinette nature represents a space where she can feel at home. In this respect, nature becomes a semiotic space in which the child feels protected and sheltered as if it were in her mother's womb.

In addition to Annette's providing for her daughter an identification with the wild through her use of the term "marooned", the association of the wild nature of the island with the maternal space is also emphasized through Antoinette's identification of the island with her mother. For instance, when Antoinette says that Mr Mason is "so without a doubt English. And my mother, so without a doubt not English" (19), she underlines Mr Mason's and Annette's positions as the oppressor and the oppressed, and as the colonizer and the colonized. Mr Mason represents both the paternal Law who imprisons Annette within marriage confinements and also the colonizer with his English origin who oppresses Creole

Annette. Mr Mason's exploitation of the island can be observed through his attitudes toward the blacks and his plantations on the island which usurp the black people's labour force. In this sense, Annette and the island are relegated to the same position: exploited Others.

In fact, Antoinette associates all the excluded and marginalized places in her life with her mother, which also reflects the marginalization of the maternal in social, cultural, patriarchal, and psychological terms. Coulibri Estate becomes one of those marginalized places, particularly when it is burnt down by black people. For Antoinette, Coulibri Estate is associated with Annette. When Antoinette reveals her mother's past to Rochester in order to show him the reasons why she ended up in madness, she says: "[S]he was part of Coulibri, and if Coulibri had been destroyed and gone out of my life, it seemed natural that she should go too" (103). Thus, Antoinette never returns to Coulibri because it was burnt down, and she cannot be with her mother again because her mother went mad and then died. When Antoinette marries Rochester, they move to Granbois, which is a small estate on the Windward Islands that belonged to Annette, and Antoinette reveals the importance of Granbois for her by underlining its association with her mother, saying: "I love it more than anywhere in the world. As if it were a person. More than a person" (65). In this sense, Granbois also represents the maternal space with its association with Annette in which Antoinette wants to reside.

As is discussed above, the wild nature of the island represents the (m)other, the semiotic stage, the womb for Antoinette and a space which can give her a sense of belonging. However, with its association with the maternal, the wild nature of the island is a threat to Rochester. Since he has constructed his subjectivity in patriarchal terms by excluding the mother principle, he does not want to retrieve his maternal bond because returning to the mother's womb means loss of identity for him. In traditional psychoanalytical theories, in order to construct its identity the child has to separate from the mother. Therefore, returning to the maternal space results in one's losing his or her identity because in the maternal space the child perceives itself as one with the mother. There is no difference between the child and the mother. While for Antoinette the island is the familiar, protective, and peaceful for Rochester it is hostile, strange, unfamiliar, and a menacing space. In this respect, the wild nature has negative effects on Rochester. He feels alienated in the island's nature because he has already constructed his subjectivity and developed his borders between self and (m)other.

Since he repressed his identification with the mother and became a subject of the Oedipal stage, he feels like a stranger in this maternal place. Rochester says: "It was often raining when I woke during the night, a light capricious shower, dancing playful rain, or hushed, muted, growing louder, more persistent, more powerful, and inexorable sound. But always music, a music I had never heard before" (66-7). The semiotic sounds of the island are persistent, powerful and they are inviting him to the chora in order to become a subject-in-process who can embrace the Other. These semiotic sounds form a music which he thinks he has never heard before because he has managed to separate from the (m)other.

Besides, the maternal nature of the island signifies *vagina dentata* for Rochester. When he first observes the island, he describes it as follows: "There was a soft warm wind blowing but I understood why the porter had called it a wild place. Not only wild but menacing. Those hills would close in on you" (49). According to Rochester, the island is a dangerous place and it has jaws represented by the hills waiting to close upon him. Barbara Creed defines the *vagina dentata* myth as follows: "

The myth about woman as a castrator clearly points to male fears and phantasies about the female genitals as a trap, a black hole which threatens to swallow them up and cut them into pieces. The *vagina dentata* is the mouth of hell – a terrifying symbol of woman as the 'devil's gateway'. (106, original emphasis)

In this sense, the island has a threatening force for Rochester which can swallow up his male identity. For Rochester, the maternal body represented by nature becomes an abject entity which has the potential to threaten his boundaries between self and Other. As Kelly Oliver writes: "It is a horrifying, devouring body [maternal body]. It is a body that evokes rage and fear" (60).

The island signifying the mother's body and femininity is also depicted by Rochester as a place which is unseen and unrepresentable. "It was a beautiful place – wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret. I'd find myself thinking, 'What I see is nothing – I want what it *hides* – that is not nothing'" (64). The Freudian theory of sexual difference is based on the visibility of difference. In other words, it is the "eye" that defines absence and presence. Freud looks at woman and he sees nothing. The female sexual organ cannot be discovered because it is on the inside whereas

the male organ, being on the outside, is there to be seen. "This conceptual absence maps onto accounts of the vagina that represent it as something that is physically concealed, a naturally 'hidden' part of the woman's body" (Braun and Wilkinson 20). In this respect, Rochester, looks at nature and sees nothing because it is a female body which offers nothing to be seen. However, Rochester is sure that it hides something and he wants to see it. This attitude also underlines Rochester's adoption of the patriarchal definition of the female body.

Thus, Rhys portrays the landscapes in her novel from two points of view: Antoinette's and Rochester's. From Antoinette's point of view nature is depicted with positive images; it is protective, embracing, and all-giving. Since Antoinette is an abject figure she associates nature with the semiotic and tries to revive her maternal bond through taking shelter in it and feeling that she belongs to it. On the contrary, from Rochester's point of view nature is depicted with negative images; it is menacing, unknown, castrating, annihilating and threatening one's identity. Nature seen from Antoinette's eyes celebrates the maternal principle and a union with the Other, and asserts that the maternal bond is never broken. Nature seen from Rochester's eyes is a threat to the paternal law and it has the potential to destroy one's borders of identity separating self and Other. In this respect, nature is abject for Rochester. And as a patriarchal identity, Rochester excludes the nature as the Other and reinforces his position in the symbolic order by denying the maternal bond. As Sylvie Gambaudo argues:

As the maternal represents the link between the subject and its naturalness (birth, nature, survival instinct), abjection marks the moment the individual moves from nature (instinct) to culture (symbol). What is abject manifests itself in the symbolic subject as that which draws the boundary between nature and culture and which the subject finds disgusting. (Gambaudo 119)

In this sense, Antoinette represents nature, whereas Rochester represents patriarchally constructed concept of culture. And by attributing positive images to nature and negative images to culture, Rhys destroys the binary opposition between culture and nature in the patriarchal symbolic order which privileges culture in order to have the power to construct identities culturally. Therefore, Rhys through Antoinette's and Rochester's story manifests that when identities are not constructed culturally and but experienced naturally,

they become much more liberated and closer to the (m)other which helps them to embrace their Others in a more egalitarian principle.

In conclusion, by adopting an abject mother figure and an abject daughter figure, Rhys places her heroines in the semiotic in order to destroy the binary oppositions between the semiotic and the symbolic subjectivities. Thus, providing Antoinette with an identification of abject maternal figures, Rhys nurtures Antoinette's sense of belonging which is one of the essential needs of a human being. And providing Rochester with a fear of the abject maternal figures, Rhys reveals that without an identification with the Other one can never find peace which is again one of the essential needs of a human being. Thus, Rhys aims to show that even if a person is separated from the (m)other literally, it is possible for him or her to reconstruct the maternal bond through identifying with the Other and she asserts that it is only by returning to the mother one can separate himself or herself from the oppression of the patriarchal symbolic order.

3.6 “Who Knows What’s Up in the Attic?”⁸: Abject Representations of Female Desire in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Toward the end of Part One of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette is visited by her stepfather, Mr Mason, who tells her that he will have some visitors from England soon. He also invites Antoinette to stay with him during his guests' visit saying that she can leave the convent, wear what she wants, socialize with these visitors, dance, and enjoy herself. Antoinette has received a patriarchal education in the convent. She has been taught to perform the feminine roles which patriarchal religion promotes, and now it is time for her to be a member of the symbolic order and perform these roles in mainstream society. Therefore, Mr Mason tries to persuade her to leave the convent. Antoinette asks Mr Mason if he is sure that these visitors will certainly come, and Mr Mason tells her that one of them will certainly come. And in the second part of the novel, it will be seen that this visitor is Rochester of *Jane Eyre*, who is coming to Jamaica for an arranged marriage with Antoinette. Since Part Two is narrated from Rochester's point of view, Antoinette's relationship with him will also be

⁸ “Who Knows What’s Up in the Attic?” is a short story of Jean Rhys published in *Sleep It Off Lady*.

presented from his point of view apart from a few pages which are saved for Antoinette's voice. O'Connor states that

Rochester's voice, which we first hear only at the beginning of Part Two, suddenly and immediately brings in a new note of cynicism, sarcasm, hate, bitterness, and interest in pecuniary matters. ... Rochester's narration begins in a jaded voice and uses the vocabulary of war. He begins: 'So it was all over, the advance and retreat, the doubts and hesitations'. (158)

O'Connor draws attention to an important point in Rochester's personality. His use of the vocabulary of war shows that he has a typical colonist mind which stresses that he has come to Jamaica in order to colonize the white Creole Antoinette through marriage. In the course of the novel, he will be portrayed as a patriarchal figure who is oppressive, dominant, aggressive, controlling, prejudiced and exclusionary. Antoinette is firstly presented through his eyes on their journey to Granbois as follows:

I watched her critically. She wore a tricorne hat which became her. At least it shadowed the eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. *Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either.* And when did I begin to notice all this about my wife Antoinette? After we left Spanish Town I suppose. Or did I notice it before and refuse to admit what I saw? Not I had much time to notice anything. I was married a month after I arrived in Jamaica and for nearly three weeks of that time I was in bed with fever. (46-7, emphasis mine)

Rochester's description of Antoinette above underlines Antoinette's difference and ambiguous identity which makes her seem like a stranger to Rochester. He looks at Antoinette as if he were seeing her for the first time and he thinks that he has not noticed these aspects of Antoinette before. Since Rochester is a representative of the patriarchal system, his gaze is characterized by difference. At a certain part in the novel, Antoinette, who knows nowhere but the West Indies, will ask Rochester whether the world is beautiful or not. Rochester says:

'But you don't know the world,' I teased her.

‘No, only here, and Jamaica of course. Coulibri, Spanish Town. I don’t know the other island at all. Is the world beautiful, then?’

And how to answer that? ‘It’s different,’ I said. (65)

Rochester, with his colonist ideology, thinking that the world is constituted only by his own country, England, tells Antoinette that the world is different. The proper subject of the symbolic order can make meaning of the world only through symbolic language which is based on differentiality principle. Therefore, by paying attention to his wife’s national or rather racial identity which is ambiguous for him (because she is neither English nor European), Rochester shows that he only counts English and European identities as national identities. In this respect, the analogy between England as a representative of the patriarchal symbolic order and Jamaica as a representative of the maternal space is once more underlined. Antoinette’s hybrid identity is not recognized by Rochester because she is “different”, that is, she is the national and also the racial Other with her Creole origin. Thus, from the very beginning of Rochester’s narration Antoinette is relegated to the racial abject Other by Rochester and Rochester is presented through his binary thinking. Rochester’s and Antoinette’s marriage is an arranged one through which Antoinette functionally becomes a member of the symbolic order, but it will be soon revealed that even in the patriarchal marriage institution she will remain an abject figure.

Rochester is a victim of primogeniture which demands that “all of the father’s property [should be] bequeathed to the first son” (Anolik 32). In patriarchal economy, such a victimization of the younger son can also be compensated by providing his marriage to a wealthy woman. However, at the same time, this patriarchal economy proves that the patriarchal English law usurps women’s property and wealth by marriage. This law limits the rights of women to possession claiming that all of the wife’s property will be the husband’s when she gets married. In fact, this is one of the most common methods to dominate women in male-dominated societies. And many conventional Gothic novels have portrayed the imprisonment of women by this economic imperative carried out by marriage. Rhys also adopts this theme in order to reveal how patriarchal society oppresses women in financial terms within the patriarchal marriage institution.

Antoinette was reluctant to get married to Rochester at first. Before the wedding ceremony, Richard Mason visits Rochester and tells him that Antoinette does not want to get married. Rochester, feeling insulted by a Creole girl who dares to reject a favorable suitor like him, is determined to learn Antoinette's reasons for refusing him.

'What is the matter, Antoinette? What have I done?'

She said nothing.

'You don't wish to marry me?'

'No'. She spoke in a very low voice.

'But why?'

'I'm afraid of what may happen.'

...

'You don't know anything about me,' she said.

'I'll trust you if you'll trust me. Is that a bargain? You will make me very unhappy if you send me away without telling me what I have done to displease you. I will go with a sad heart.'

'Your sad heart,' she said, and touched my face. I kissed her fervently, promising her peace, happiness, safety.' (56-7)

Antoinette instinctively feels that Rochester will ruin her. She knows also from her mother's marriage how a man can deprive a woman of her freedom. In a patriarchal society, marriage means imprisonment for a woman. As O'Connor states: "In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the woman is no more or no less than a colony, to be caught and possessed, enclosed and controlled by the male governor – a conclusion that leaves a void, empty of love and meaning" (O'Connor 217). Although Rochester behaves gently to her in the conversation above, his distance can be felt at the same time. Before the wedding, Rochester observes his surroundings prepared for the wedding and thinks to himself: "it meant nothing to me. Nor did she, the girl I was to marry" (55). Rochester's indifference toward Antoinette is given right from the start. He is not really interested in Antoinette and he does not make any efforts to know her. His promise also discloses how he defines his relationships in terms of trade as well his adoption of patriarchal ideology. Thus, the promise he makes by using the terms of trade does not persuade the readers who are approaching the novel from an intertextual standpoint bearing in their minds the ill fortune of Bertha although it persuades Antoinette.

After the wedding, Antoinette, who did not want to get married to Rochester a short time ago, gives herself completely to Rochester. O'Connor observes that "she innocently offers the kind of personal servitude to him that all of Rhys's women offer to their lovers"

(164). In order to support her point, O'Connor refers to the scene in which Antoinette says to Rochester: "You look like a king, an emperor" (52) when Rochester wears the crown made of frangipani wreath. Antoinette adores her husband and then in a short period of time she becomes sexually infatuated by him. It is this awakening to her own sexuality which makes Antoinette feel devoted to Rochester. However, this sexual awakening will be punished with imprisonment. Since there is no room for an active female desire in traditional psychoanalytical theories as well as in patriarchal culture, Rochester will feel threatened by his wife's active sexuality and he will seek a way to control it. It is at this point that Rhys will interrupt the conventional Gothic plot and subvert it by liberating Antoinette at the end of her novel and by rewarding her with a celebration of the maternal principle. In order to pinpoint the subversive nature of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys's representation of female desire will be analyzed in the light of Kristeva's theory of melancholia.

Antoinette's sexuality can be analyzed in the light of Kristevan melancholia because Kristeva associates melancholia with feminine sexuality, which in fact represents an extreme abjection. With the application of Kristeva's theory of melancholia to the portrayal of Antoinette who embodies active female desire, Antoinette's sexual relationship with Rochester will also show that Antoinette is suffering from melancholia and she is still mourning her mother's loss.

The construction of female sexuality has always been problematic in the field of traditional psychoanalysis because the (m)other's body is positioned as the object of desire for both sexes. Since desire of both sexes is oriented toward the mother's body, the definition of female desire in relation to the mother's body is problematic for the girl child who separates from the (m)other only to identify with her again. Kristeva also focuses on this problematic relationship of the (m)other and the girl child in the process of female sexual identity and she reveals how it is difficult for the girl child to separate from the (m)other who shares the same physical and psychic space in terms of her biological sex with her daughter. Particularly the women who suffer from melancholia experience this maternal loss more profoundly. Firstly, Kristeva discusses how melancholy emerges in both sexes. She maintains that

the power of the events that create my depression is often out of proportion to the disaster that suddenly overwhelms me. What is more, the disenchantment that I experience here and now, cruel as it may be, appears, under scrutiny, to awaken echoes of old traumas, to which I realize I have never been able to resign myself. I can thus discover antecedents to my current breakdown in a loss, death, or grief over someone or something that I once loved. The disappearance of that essential being continues to deprive me of what is most worthwhile in me; I live it as a wound or deprivation, discovering just the same that my grief is but the deferment of the hatred or desire for ascendancy that I nurture with respect to the one who betrayed or abandoned me. My depression points to my not knowing how to lose – I have perhaps been unable to find a valid compensation for the loss? It follows that any loss entails the loss of my being – and of Being itself. (*Black Sun* 4-5)

Thus, Kristeva defines melancholia/depression⁹ as mourning over any loss of love object and she links this feeling of loss to the primary loss of the maternal. In her opinion, a person becomes depressive because of a loss he or she has experienced in his or her life-time and this loss reminds him or her of the initial melancholia he or she encountered in the identity process due to the loss of the (m)other. In this sense, a person's suffering from depression indicates that he or she does not know how to lose his or her (m)other, or, in other words how to separate from the (m)other, because he or she is still holding on to the (m)other. However, as Kristeva maintains above, at the same time, such a dependence on the (m)other creates depression which is in fact considered to be a deferment of the hatred or desire felt for the person (the mother or any love object which replaces her), who has abandoned the individual. Kristeva further argues:

"I love that object," is what the person seems to say about the lost object, "but even more so I hate it; because I love it, and in order not to lose it, I imbed it in myself; but because I hate it, that other within myself is a bad self, I am bad, I am non-existent, I shall kill myself". The complaint against oneself would therefore be a complaint against another, and putting oneself to death but a tragic disguise for massacring an other. (*Black Sun* 11)

⁹ Kristeva uses these two terms "melancholia" and "depression" interchangeably.

As Kristeva argues, melancholia blurs the boundaries between self and Other because since the subject cannot leave his or her hold on the lost object, he or she carries it within himself or herself. In fact, he or she becomes one with the lost object as if he or she were residing in the semiotic where there are no boundaries between the mother and the child. Thus, since melancholia is considered to be a disguise for the hatred and the rage the melancholic feels for the lost object in traditional psychoanalytical theories, if the melancholic cannot direct this rage toward the lost object (because the lost object is his or her “own” (m)other), then the melancholic directs it toward himself or herself knowing that he or she is the (m)other herself within the space of their symbiotic relationship. Such hatred is ambivalent because while the melancholic hates the lost object, he or she starts to hate himself or herself as well. This is the reason why the melancholic feels suicidal according to traditional psychoanalytical theories. That is, since he or she cannot commit matricide, he or she attempts to kill himself or herself, who represents the (m)other and who feels one with the (m)other. In this sense, suicide also conceals this guilty desire to kill the (m)other. In the attempt of matricide or killing oneself resides the intention of separating from the (m)other in order to develop a proper subjectivity in the symbolic order. In this view, if a person cannot commit matricide by replacing his or her mother with another love object that will draw boundaries between self and Other, he or she can constantly suffer from melancholia. And this renders the melancholic an abject figure outside the symbolic order. However, Kristeva thinks that there is more to these depressed feelings:

Far from being a hidden attack on an other who is thought to be hostile because he is frustrating, sadness would point to a primitive self – wounded, incomplete, empty. Persons thus affected do not consider themselves wronged but afflicted with a fundamental law, a congenital deficiency. Their sorrow doesn’t conceal the guilt or the sin felt because of having secretly plotted revenge on the ambivalent object. Their sadness would be rather the most archaic expression of an unsymbolizable, unnameable narcissistic wound, so precocious that no outside agent (subject or agent) can be used as a referent. For such narcissistic depressed persons, sadness is really the sole object; more precisely it is a substitute object they become attached to, an object they tame and cherish for the lack of another. In such a case, suicide is not a disguised act of war but a merging with sadness and, beyond it, with that impossible love,

never reached, always elsewhere, such as the promises of nothingness, of death. (*Black Sun* 12-3)

Then, in Kristeva's opinion, suicide is not an expression of rage felt for an Other which is directed to oneself, but a merging with the sadness felt for the lost object. In this paradigm, the lost object becomes sadness itself. Therefore in merging with sadness through suicide, one aims to unite with the (m)other. If Rhys's portrayal of Antoinette is taken into consideration in the light of this discussion, one can also observe her sadness which expresses itself at times by a suicidal tendency. And this shows Antoinette's attempt to revive her maternal bond and to unite with her mother again. In the convent Antoinette prayed to be dead; her melancholia becomes apparent when she openly talks about death and her thoughts about suicide will find more expression in her relationship to Rochester.

Kristeva explains the relation between desire and melancholia as follows:

The depressed narcissist mourns not an Object but the Thing¹⁰. Let me posit the "Thing" as the real that does not lend itself to signification, the center of attraction and repulsion, seat of the sexuality from which the object of desire will become separated.

Of this Nerval provides a dazzling metaphor that suggests an insistence without presence, a light without representation: the Thing is an imagined sun, bright and black at the same time. "It is a well-known fact that one never sees the sun in a dream, although one is often aware of some far brighter light."¹¹ (*Black Sun* 13)

Thus, Kristeva argues above that the Thing is not separable from the subject. The Thing cannot be signified either. In terms of sexuality, the Thing does not represent an object of desire from which the subject should be separated. In other words, the subject and the

¹⁰ Kristeva adds a footnote in order to explain what she means by "the Thing". I will not quote her long footnote here, but only a part of it which can reveal her basic assumption: "I shall speak of the *Thing* as being the 'something' that, seen by the already constituted subject looking back, appears as the unspecified, the unseparated, the elusive, even in its determination of actual sexual matter. I shall restrict the term *Object* to the space-time constant that is verified by a statement uttered by a subject in control of that statement" (*Black Sun*, 262n7).

¹¹ Kristeva provides the source of her quotation as follows: "Gérard de Nerval, *Aurelia*, in *Selected Writings*, trans. Geoffrey Wagner (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), p.130." (*Black Sun*, 262n8).

object do not have to be separated by strict boundaries as the subject who embodies desire and as the object who receives the subject's desire. The metaphor of the black sun exposes how the Thing can be conceptualized. In the light of this approach, the Thing becomes a concept through which the boundaries of the subject and the object are destroyed. Although Kristeva does not make an explicit analogy between her concept of the "Thing" and the "abject", the "Thing", similar to the "abject", threatens the rigid boundaries of the proper subject. In this respect, the "Thing" also serves the same function as the abject which destroys the boundaries between self and Other, and transforms the traditional proper subject into a "subject-in-process". A parallel approach to these two terms can be overtly observed in Kristeva's description of the abject in her *Powers of Horror*: "The abject is the mourning for an 'object' that has always already been lost" (15). Therefore, when this study situates Antoinette in Kristevan melancholia, it simultaneously displays her abjection through her melancholia. Kristeva continues her definition of the melancholic as follows:

Ever since that archaic attachment the depressed person has the impression of having been deprived of an unnameable, supreme good, of something unrepresentable, that perhaps only devouring might represent, or an *invocation* might point out, but no word could signify. Consequently, for such a person, no erotic object could replace the irreplaceable perception of a place or preobject confining the libido or severing the bonds of desire. Knowingly disinherited of the Thing, the depressed person wanders in pursuit of continuously disappointing adventures and loves; or else retreats, disconsolate and aphasic, alone with the unnamed Thing. (*Black Sun* 13, original emphasis)

Antoinette also wanders in pursuit of adventures which prove to be disappointing. She could not feel that she belonged to the convent although it is full of mother figures who could have helped her to overcome her melancholia. She also tried to revive her maternal bond through Aunt Cora who soon left her and went to England. There was Christophine as a mother figure, but she was separated from her as well when she was in the convent. During her marriage she will unite with Christophine once again only for them to fall apart forever. Her marriage with Rochester will constitute a very significant part of her life, particularly in relation to her melancholia, but her marriage will also fail. Therefore, from this point of view, Antoinette will lead her life "alone with the unnamed Thing" (*Black Sun* 13). The similarity

between the “Thing” and the “abject” has been noted, therefore Antoinette’s abjection in cultural, social, racial, and familial terms can also be interpreted in this sense as her ordeals experienced “alone with the unnamed Thing”. In other words, it can be claimed that her melancholic portrait is a reflection of her abject portrait.

Kristeva announces that “[t]he depressed person is a radical, sullen atheist” (*Black Sun* 5) who is deprived of meaning, deprived of values. For [him or her], to fear or to ignore the Beyond would be self-deprecating” (*Black Sun* 14). Identified as a melancholic and an abject figure in this study, Antoinette also reveals her atheism in one of the conversations she makes with Rochester:

‘You are always calling on God,’ she said. ‘Do you believe in God?’

‘Of course, of course I believe in the power and wisdom of my creator.’

She raised her eyebrows and the corners of her mouth turned down in a questioning mocking way.

...

‘And you,’ I said. ‘Do you believe in God?’

‘It doesn’t matter,’ she answered calmly, ‘what I believe or you believe, because we can do nothing about it, we are like these.’
(98)

Antoinette, very like the melancholic person Kristeva defines, is not interested in the Beyond. She does not care for beliefs because she is deprived of those values, particularly the religious ones, imposed upon people by patriarchal ideology. Therefore, her isolation from the dominant norms can also be detected in her declaration above, while Rochester’s commitment to the patriarchal norms is underlined.

After giving such an introduction to melancholia, Kristeva provides her readers with an analysis of feminine depression which, she claims, defines female sexuality. First of all, Kristeva asserts that in order to become an autonomous subject, for both man and woman it is necessary to break away from the mother. However, Kristeva’s theory of melancholia presents a slight but important difference from her concept of abjection at this point. Oliver defines this distinction as follows:

In *Black Sun* Kristeva describes feminine sexuality as something akin to an extreme form of abjection. It is not merely the case that the maternal body must be abjected so that the child will not abject herself. Now the maternal body must be killed so that the child will not kill herself. (62)

Thus, the subject should first kill the maternal body in order to love an object and transform the “Thing” into an object. In this view, if a person cannot perform this matricide which is essential to the subjectivity development (because killing the mother is not easy after experiencing such a symbiotic relationship with her), then

the depressive or melancholic putting to death of the self is what follows, instead of matricide. In order to protect mother I kill myself ... Thus my hatred is safe and my matricidal guilt erased. I make of Her an image of Death so as not to be shattered through the hatred I bear against myself when I identify with her ... Thus the feminine image of death is not only a screen for my fear of castration, but also an image of safety catch for the matricidal drive that, without such a representation, would pulverize me into melancholia if it did not drive me to crime. No, it is She who is death-bearing, therefore I do not kill myself in order to kill her but I attack her, harass her, represent her... (*Black Sun* 28)

However, for a woman “such an inversion of matricidal drive into a death-bearing maternal image is more difficult, if not impossible” (*Black Sun* 28) according to Kristeva. Since a woman identifies with the maternal in bodily terms, killing the mother indicates killing herself. In this respect, matricide means a more radical suicide for a woman when it is compared with a man. Therefore, she cannot mourn loss of the mother as a man does who finds a way to separate from the (m)other by identifying with the father. Kristeva declares:

Indeed, how can She be that bloodthirsty Fury, since I am She (sexually and narcissistically), She is I? Consequently, the hatred I bear her is not oriented toward the outside but is locked up within myself. There is no hatred, only an implosive mood that walls itself in and kills me secretly, very slowly, through permanent bitterness, bouts of sadness. (*Black Sun* 29)

Besides, even if a woman manages to kill the maternal at the expense of suicide, she cannot easily replace her love object. For instance, while a man kills the mother and then

finds another woman to replace her as his erotic object, a woman has to kill the mother and then eroticize the “other sex” as her love object to replace her mother. Even if she accomplishes this, “she carries the maternal Thing with her locked like a corpse in the crypt of her psyche” (Oliver 63).

In the light of the theoretical background provided above for the formation of female sexuality and emergence of melancholia, it is observed that Antoinette also passes through these stages. Oliver argues: “[s]omehow the Thing must become an Object and the child’s erotic relation to this Thing must become desire” (63). Therefore, at least for a short period of time Antoinette manages to kill the maternal and eroticizes her loss by eroticizing the other sex, who is Rochester. However, since matricide means a form of suicide for the female subjectivity, Antoinette’s insistent talk on death indicates she is still mourning the loss of her mother. Rochester describes Antoinette’s behaviours as inconsistent: “At this she’d laugh for a long time and never tell me why she laughed. But at night how different, even her voice was changed. Always this talk of death” (68). In fact, by developing an active female desire for Rochester after having sex with him, which will be a threat for Rochester’s patriarchally constructed sexual identity, Antoinette gains her desire to live. She says:

Why did you make me want to live? Why did you do that to me?’

‘Because I wished it. Isn’t that enough?’

‘Yes, it is enough. But if one day you didn’t wish it. What should I do then? Suppose you took this happiness away when I wasn’t looking...’

‘And lose my own? Who’d be so foolish?’

‘I am not used to happiness,’ she said. ‘It makes me afraid.’

‘Never be afraid. Or if you are tell no one.’

‘I understand. But trying does not help me.’ (68)

Antoinette develops a will to live through her desire for Rochester. Antoinette, an abject figure who can identify with the Other, has experienced the loss of her every “Other”: her mother, Tia, and even Christophine although only for a period of time. Now that she has completely given herself to her sexual Other, she is also afraid of losing Rochester because losing him means losing her love object which compensates for her mother’s loss. And this will take her back to the mourning process. However, Rochester, with his strictly constructed

borders of identity who cannot embrace his Other, does not understand his wife's feelings and he never will. Therefore, he makes another promise as he did on their wedding day trying to guarantee that he will not leave her. He is again making false promises with his bargaining attitude. He implies that since he does not want to lose his own happiness, he will certainly provide Antoinette's happiness. It is also observed that Rochester has a secretive attitude right from the start. The advice he gives to Antoinette to keep her fears to herself and to avoid sharing them with anyone else shows that he also adopts the same principle. As he also says: "How old was I when I learned to hide what I felt? A very small boy. Six, five, even earlier. It was necessary, I was told, and that view I have always accepted" (77). This declaration shows that Rochester obeys social norms without questioning them. He is the typical subject of the patriarchal symbolic order who strives to live by its commands. Therefore, he keeps his thoughts to himself, a personal habit which indicates that he is not as honest as Antoinette in his actions and expression of feelings. Moreover, he manages to control and dominate Antoinette by hiding his real thoughts and feelings from her. In fact, his secretive personality will be one of the important causes which will lead Antoinette to a breakdown.

Although both Rochester and Antoinette talk over the same subject, which is death, their perceptions are different.

If I could die. Now, when I am happy. Would you do that? You wouldn't have to kill me. Say die and I will die. You don't believe me? Then try, try, say die and watch me die.'

'Die then! Die!' I watched her die many times. *In my way, not hers.* In sunlight, in shadow, by moonlight, by candlelight. In the long afternoons when the house was empty. Only *the sun* was there to keep us company. We shut him out. And why not? Very soon she was as eager for what's called loving as I was – more lost and drowned afterwards.

She said, 'Here I can do as I like,' not I, and then I said it too. It seemed right in that lonely place. 'Here I can do as I like.'
(68, my emphasis)

While Antoinette is expressing her love for Rochester and her happiness in her marriage from a melancholic point of view, she simultaneously associates her desire for Rochester with death. Thus, from the quotation above it is understood that Antoinette's desire for Rochester is a substitute for her desire for the (m)other whom she has lost. By expressing

her desire to die, she implicitly declares her desire to unite with her (m)other in Kristevan sense. In fact, Rochester also associates her desire to die with sexuality. However, his perception does not include such a merging with the (m)other because he is the patriarchal subject of the symbolic order who has constructed his boundaries between self and Other rigidly. Therefore, when he indicates that Antoinette dies many times in his way, he reveals that he has possessed her female body as an object of his desire who can satisfy his sexual appetite. However, at the same time Rochester starts to develop an awareness of Antoinette's active desire when he observes that she is eager for having sex and this will threaten his authority over the female body which is relegated to the object position in hierarchically constructed heterosexual relationships. Although he seems content with Antoinette's active sexuality at this point in the novel, when he receives a letter from Daniel Cosway informing him about his wife's past, he will feel threatened by his wife's active sexuality.

On the other hand, through Rochester's emphasis on their having the sun keeping them company and on shutting the sun out while he is having sex with Antoinette, one can draw an analogy between Kristeva's theory of melancholic female sexuality and Antoinette's melancholic desire. Kristeva refers to Nerval's metaphor of the sun which she adopts to define the "Thing" that attaches itself to female desire. Rochester and Antoinette shut the sun out, but its bright light can still be felt in their bedroom. In this sense, this scene can be interpreted as Antoinette's constant mourning for the "Thing", the "abject", which represents her "self" as well as her desire to become one with the Other. In this context, it is Rochester with whom Antoinette wants to become one because she has replaced her maternal loss with her eroticization of the other sex, Rochester. Rochester continues to think:

Die then. Sleep. It is all that I can give you...wonder if she ever guessed how near she came to dying. *In her way, not mine.* It was not a safe game to play – in that place. Desire, Hatred, Life, Death came very close in the darkness. Better not know how close. Better not think, never for a moment. Not close. The same... 'You are safe,' I'd say to her and to myself. 'Shut your eyes. Rest.' (70, my emphasis)

The quotation above provided by Rochester's narration puts forward "desire, hatred, life, and death" relations in Kristevan melancholia. In the melancholic state, a person hides

his or her hatred toward the abandoning object behind his or her sadness and associates his or her sadness with a desire for the lost object. He or she has to kill the lost object in order to live in the symbolic order. Therefore, these four concepts Rochester adopts to define Antoinette highlight her melancholic state as well. At this point, after describing his way of killing Antoinette through having sex with her, Rochester starts to describe Antoinette's own way of dying. Antoinette's way of dying is closely associated with her melancholia as was discussed before. In this sense, while for Rochester her active sexuality becomes a means to satisfy his male sexual appetite, for Antoinette it means to revive her bond with her mother who is her first object of desire in terms of psychoanalytical theories of identity. This is what still makes Antoinette an abject figure outside the symbolic order. She resists becoming a member of the symbolic order and attaining her subjectivity which will be constructed by differentiation and by building borders between the subject and the object. In this respect, her melancholic female sexuality and her association of sexuality with death imply that she wants to remain in the semiotic. Kristeva argues that depression stems from not knowing how to lose the (m)other and also from not being able "to find a valid compensation for the loss". From this point of view, it is understood that Antoinette cannot commit matricide and replace her (m)other with an eroticized object (Rochester) completely because she is always anxious that she might soon lose Rochester. Rochester is a subject of the patriarchal symbolic order who has no tolerance for the Other and who does not show any capacity to embrace his Other. This can be observed in his relationships with the Other sex, Antoinette, as well as the black community.

Wolff, by referring to Freud's theories of sexuality, draws a general outline for men's perception of women in the traditional Gothic plot. Since Rochester is portrayed as a typical Gothic hero in both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, his sexual identity and his perception of women are shaped by patriarchal ideology. Therefore his relationship with Antoinette can be explained by the conventional constructions of images of woman in his mind. Wolff claims that men define love by two distinct perceptions: "an affectionate (and asexual) element; and a passionate sexual element" (207). She adds to these elements two stereotypes of woman that become the patriarchal projections of men's deeper feelings of guilt and anger felt in these two different spheres of love:

‘good’ women whom they idealize and who have no sensual desire (and for whom, of course, the men themselves feel no sexual longings); and ‘bad’ women who are sexual by nature (and with whom it is permissible – perhaps even expected – to have sexual relations). This imaginative construct has come to be called the ‘Virgin/Whore’ syndrome. (208)

Rochester’s sexual desire is defined by patriarchal prescriptions. In this respect, his mind is also shaped by this “Virgin/Whore” syndrome. Since he thinks that a sexual woman cannot be loved because active female desire constructs women as bad, he declares to himself that he does not love Antoinette; he only sexually desires her.

‘You are safe,’ I’d say. She’d liked that – to be told ‘you are safe.’ Or I’d touch her face gently and touch tears. Tears – nothing! Words – less than nothing. As for the happiness I gave her, that was worse than nothing. I did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did.

One afternoon the sight of a dress which she’d left lying on her bedroom floor made me breathless and savage with desire. When I was exhausted I turned away from her and slept, still without a word or a caress. I woke up and she was kissing me – soft light kisses. (69)

Rochester reveals above his thirst for Antoinette which is used as a metaphor for male sexual appetite. Even the sight of Antoinette’s dress can make him “savage with desire”, which underlines Rochester’s extreme male desire for the female body. In this sense, Rochester performs the conventional male sexual subject who perceives the female as an object of desire and who can imprison her within his gaze as a sexual slave through asserting his power on her.

Antoinette’s identity is constructed on the concept of loss, which has been observed in many aspects (social, cultural, racial, and familial) until this point of the study. This is the reason why she always tries to make Rochester promise that he will not leave her. And this is the reason why she always feels melancholic, which is evident in her insistent talking about death. Therefore, her active sexual desire can only find its expression through eroticizing her love object, Rochester, but it simultaneously reminds her of her mother’s loss as well as the loss of her self. Thus, as Kristeva suggests: “the depressed subject has remained a prisoner of

the nonlost object (the Thing)” (47). In fact, when she loses Rochester completely, she will be a constant abject figure because the loss of her love object will trigger her initial maternal loss which she cannot distance her “self” from and it will completely draw her to the mourning of her maternal loss. As Oliver maintains:

The loss of object seems beyond remedy. In what Kristeva calls “feminine castration” woman has much more at stake than man. ... For the woman there is more at stake than bodily integrity or gratification of desire. For her it is a question of losing herself. It is a question of losing desire itself. It is a question of *becoming* Lack. (Oliver 63, original emphasis).

Antoinette’s process of the loss of her love object starts when Rochester receives Daniel Cosway’s letter telling him that the Mason family is cursed with madness and his wife is a corrupt woman who has had a relationship with her cousin Sandi. Daniel also writes:

But I hear too that the girl is beautiful like her mother was beautiful, and you bewitch with her. She is in your blood and your bones. By night and by day. But you, an honourable man, know well that for marriage more is needed than all this. Which does not last. Old Mason bewitch so with her mother and look what happen to him. Sir I pray I am in time to warn you what to do. (72-3)

Daniel describes both Antoinette and Annette as witches who bewitch men with their beauty and sexuality when he says particularly Antoinette penetrates into Rochester’s blood and bones by night and day. Thus, by identifying Antoinette as an abject figure by calling her a beautiful witch, Daniel emphasizes how a sexual woman is excluded from patriarchal society by being labeled as a witch. Since Rochester also serves this patriarchal ideology, he believes what Daniel says without questioning it.

Then, Daniel ends his letter by inviting Rochester to his place in order to talk these matters in detail. When Rochester reads the letter, he thinks to himself: “It was as if I’d expected it, been waiting for it” (74). It is observed from this sentence that Rochester does not trust Antoinette. He does not even think that a man whom he only knows by name from the letter might be wrong. Although Antoinette has proved herself to Rochester by being an honest, generous and all-giving woman who shares her painful childhood memories, her

mother's past, and her feelings for Rochester with him, Rochester will not act as his wife does. Rochester is suspicious of everything around him. He does not trust his wife, the black servants in his house, or even the nature of the island. Thus, the island with its wild nature in which Rochester feels disturbed, his arranged marriage with a white Creole woman, his resentment for his father and brother who are responsible for this marriage, his wife's active sexuality which is outside patriarchal sexual norms therefore which is out of his control, and the black servants with their racial Otherness all join together and make Rochester believe what Daniel says. He falls from grace willingly and reflects his hostility toward Antoinette by taking his revenge on his natural surrounding which represents not only his mother's body but also his wife's body at the same time which has replaced his maternal object of desire in the pre-Oedipal period and has become his object of desire in the symbolic order in Oedipal terms. In this sense, the wild nature which makes him feel displaced is a reflection of Antoinette's sexual body by which he feels threatened.

I passed an orchid with long sprays of golden-brown flowers. One of them touched my cheek and I remembered picking some for her one day. 'They are like you,' I told her. Now I stopped, broke a spray off and trampled it into the mud. This brought me to my senses. (74)

Horner and Zlosnik also interpret Rochester's rage against nature as a rage against Antoinette's female body.

He is fearful of the landscape of Antoinette's body which, like the landscape of Jamaica, threatens his socially constructed 'masculine' self. The sensuality of both Antoinette's body and her land disrupt and undermine the binary opposition which equates active sexual desire with 'masculinity' and sexual passivity with 'femininity' in Victorian England. Thus Rochester's own identity is undermined by his experiences in the West Indies since they threaten a sexual polarity essential to his sense of self. (*Landscapes* 174)

Antoinette, being an abject figure, threatens Rochester's strictly constructed boundaries between self and Other. However, he manages to prevent his borders from dissolving by excluding Antoinette. When he reaches home, seeing Antoinette and Amelié in

a catfight, he thinks that he has found another concrete proof for Antoinette's developing madness. Her talks about death, her active sexuality, her rage and her behaviours which do not match with the patriarchal roles of women convince Rochester that he has married a mad woman.

At this point, Rochester's narration is interrupted by Antoinette's visit to Christophine. Antoinette visits Christophine in order to take advice from her for the problems she experiences with Rochester in their relationship. She complains about Rochester's distant behaviours and she is sure that he does not love her anymore. The first and immediate advice Christophine gives to Antoinette is to "pack up and go" (82). However, Antoinette, feeling so much love for Rochester, does not like the idea because leaving him means leaving her love object with whom she has replaced her lost (m)other. Therefore, she insists that Christophine show her another way. Christophine, being a wise and experienced woman, says: "'When man don't love you, more you try, more he hate you, man like that. If you love them they treat you bad, if you don't love them they after you night and day bothering your soul case out'" (82). When Antoinette decisively tells her that she cannot leave her husband, Christophine announces: "All women, all colours, nothing but fools. Three children I have. One living in this world, each one a different father, but no husband, I thank my God, I keep my money. I don't give it to any worthless man." (83). In fact, it can be argued that Christophine is a feminist woman in a sense. Her advice revealed above shows her independent nature. She does not depend on any man financially and she advises Antoinette to do the same. And she tries to persuade Antoinette to leave Rochester reminding her that she has her own money, so she can financially support herself. Antoinette says:

'He will not come after me. And you must understand I am not rich now, I have no money of my own at all, everything I had belongs to him'

'What you tell me there?' she said sharply.

'That is English law.' (83)

She is surprised when she learns that the English law binds Antoinette to her husband financially. This also once again underlines the difference between the white community and the black community. England, as a representative of patriarchal ideology, turns her women into slaves to their husbands by making them financially depend on men. Jamaica as a

representative of the maternal space provides an opportunity for her women to be free from their husbands and to keep their money to themselves. It is England, not Jamaica herself that exploits black women as slaves. Thus, knowing that in a patriarchal society freedom of a woman depends on her financial state, Christophine gives Antoinette practical advice in order to save herself from her husband's control over her. Christophine's care for Antoinette not only underlines her motherly attitude to Antoinette but also her spirit of sisterhood which encourages Antoinette to become an autonomous strong woman standing on her own feet. Christophine says:

‘Listen to me now and I advise you what to do. Tell your husband you feeling sick, you want to see your cousin in Martinique. Ask him pretty for some of your own money, the man not bad-hearted, he give it. When you get away, stay away. Ask more. He give again and well satisfy. In the end he come to find out what you do, how you get on without him, and if he see you fat and happy he want you back. Men like that. Better not stay in that old house. Go from that house, I tell you’. (83)

In fact, although Christophine is abjected by the symbolic order, it can be claimed that she is the only one who is a subject-in-process in Kristevan terms. She can embrace her Other and she does not differentiate between black and white or black Creole and white Creole. She loves Antoinette as if she were her own daughter and she tries to help her whenever she needs. Although Christophine knows that Rochester does not like her because she is black, when Antoinette visits her to consult her about her relationship with Rochester, she defines Rochester by saying that “the man not bad-hearted” (83) as is observed in the quotation above. This implication shows that Christophine is unprejudiced in all her relationships. For instance, when Amelié treats Antoinette disrespectfully by mockingly implying that Rochester seems tired of his honeymoon, Christophine does not defend her against Antoinette for the sake of her racial identity. On the contrary, she scolds her and orders her to mind her own business.

Thus, being a reasonable person, Christophine provides Antoinette with the best solutions she can find for Antoinette's problems. However, Antoinette turns down all Christophine's plans; she is not convinced that this advice will make Rochester love her more and at last she confesses the hidden reason behind her visit. She wants Christophine to make

Rochester love her again by practicing obeah. Christophine is a practical and reasonable woman. She tells Antoinette that she cannot make people love or hate by obeah: ““So you believe in that tim-tim story about obeah, you hear when you so high? All that foolishness and folly. Too besides, that is not for *béké*. Bad, bad trouble come when *béké* meddle with that”” (85). However, Antoinette begs her desperately. Then, Christophine, feeling sorry for Antoinette, makes an agreement with her. Christophine thinks that Rochester must have been very much influenced by what people around say about Antoinette and her mother’s madness and persuades Antoinette to talk frankly to him and tell all the things about her mother and herself. On the condition that Antoinette talks to Rochester, Christophine promises to practice obeah.

Obeying Christophine’s advice, Antoinette decides to learn the reason why Rochester is treating her like that by asking him: “Why do you hate me?” (97). Rochester, capable of hiding secrets from his wife, evades answering her question: “I do not hate you, I am most distressed about to you, I am distraught,” I said, But this was untrue, I was not distraught, I was calm, it was the first time I had felt calm or self-possessed for many a long day” (97). In fact, while Antoinette was with Christophine, Rochester also made a visit to Daniel. Being hesitant and suspicious of everything around him up to this point, particularly of his wife, Rochester now feels that he has found out the information he was looking for thanks to Daniel, and with such knowledge he is ready to take total control over his wife. He will use what he has learned from Daniel as a power to dominate Antoinette.

Rochester learns from Daniel that Antoinette had an affair with Sandi, who is Daniel’s half-brother Alexander’s son. Alexander is also one of Mr Cosway’s illegitimate sons. Then Sandi is a distant cousin of Antoinette. Daniel cunningly says:

‘Your wife know Sandi since long time. Ask her and she tell you. But not everything I think.’ He laughed. ‘Oh no, not everything. I see them when they think nobody see them. I see her when she ... You going eh?’ He darted to the doorway.

‘No, you don’t go before I tell you the last thing. You want me to shut my mouth about what I know. She start with Sandi. They fool you well about that girl. She look you straight in the eye and talk sweet talk – and it’s lies she tell you. Lies. Her mother was so. They say she worse than her mother, and she hardly more than a child’. (96).

Upon hearing all these, Rochester gets out of Daniel's house angrily. Before he visits Daniel, he questions Amelié, who brings Daniel's letters to him. When Amelié reveals what she knows about Daniel, she also implies that Antoinette and Sandi had a relationship in the past. She mentions the rumours she has heard about them:

‘I hear one time that Miss Antoinette and his son Mr Sandi get married, but all that foolishness. Miss Antoinette a white girl with a lot of money, she won't marry with a coloured man even though he don't look like a coloured man. You ask Miss Antoinette, she tell you’ (92).

Then Amelié leaves Rochester's room by saying: “‘I am sorry for you’” (93). Amelié's implications about Antoinette's relationship with Sandi and Daniel's claim that he has seen them together make Rochester feel confused. Since Rochester is disturbed by his wife's sexual desire, what he has learned does not seem simply rumours to him. This is the reason why the distance between Rochester and Antoinette increases and causes Rochester to feel right about his suspicions. Thus, when Antoinette starts to tell her mother's life story to Rochester frankly, Rochester prefers to believe what Daniel says and he does not sympathize with her.

In fact, Rochester's fear of Antoinette's sexuality has led him to reflect such hostility toward Antoinette. Being a typical patriarch, he cannot associate Antoinette's frankness and her active desire with patriarchally constructed gender roles, and therefore he excludes her and he isolates himself from her. Besides, his wife's affair with Sandi also disturbs him because in his male-dominated world a woman's free sexuality is not accepted. Rochester's Virgin/Whore syndrome was mentioned before. Therefore, his wife, who should be chaste, virgin and pure, turns out to be an infamous, corrupt and unchaste woman in Rochester's opinion. This is the reason why he thinks he has been deceived by Richard Mason.

At this point, Rochester is determined to annihilate Antoinette's identity and sexuality and to dominate her in order not to be deceived by her once again. He starts to exert his power on her first by changing her name. By renaming Antoinette Bertha, not only does he identify Antoinette with her “mad” mother, but he also claims his authority on her. As Antoinette says to Christophine: “‘When he passes my door he says. “Goodnight, Bertha.” He never calls me Antoinette now. He has found out it was my mother's name’” (86). Thus,

by transforming Antoinette into her mother, Rochester writes her a fate which is similar to Annette's. Particularly when Antoinette tells him her mother's life story, he decides that the mother and the daughter are the same.

After this revelation, Rochester decides that both Annette and Antoinette share the same predicament. Antoinette also had an illegitimate relationship with half-black Sandi, she also likes drinking, and she also acts like mad very like her mother. Therefore, he does not hesitate to call Antoinette by her mother's name in order to imprison her in her mother's madness, corruption and alcoholism. Antoinette reacts to Rochester's attempt at changing her name: "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's obeh too." As Veronica M. Gregg suggests: "the husband uses his own brand of obeh in trying to change her identity by changing her name to Bertha" (160). In fact, a short time after this conversation, Rochester will assume the role of Mr Mason and he will take Antoinette to England and imprison her in a house as Mr Mason did to Annette. Thus, Rochester's obeh will be realized when Antoinette finds herself imprisoned in this house gradually losing her mind very like her mother.

In fact, Rochester is the stereotypical Gothic villain whom Joanna Russ describes as

a dark, magnetic, powerful brooding, sardonic *Super-Male*, who treats her brusquely, derogates her, scolds her, and otherwise shows anger or contempt for her. The Heroine is vehemently attracted to him and usually just as vehemently repelled or frightened – she is not sure of her feelings for him, his feelings for her, and whether 1) loves her; 2) hates her; 3) is using her; or 4) is trying to kill her. (Russ 96)

In accordance with Russ's ideas above, Rhys also portrays Rochester as a Gothic villain in order to emphasize how men try to dominate and victimize women in patriarchal societies. When he was first introduced in the novel, although his patriarchal concerns were apparent, he was too much of an indecisive person not knowing how to act, how to react, and how to speak. That is, coming from England, a "civilized" country with its crowded streets, houses and industrialized texture, he was bewildered with the wild and disorderly nature of the West Indies, with the black community whose culture he despises, and with a passionate Creole wife who does not conform to the culturally constructed conventional roles of women. Therefore, Rochester was portrayed as an observer or as a critical audience so to speak for a

period in the novel at first who was waiting for his turn to perform his role as a villain in the Gothic plot. As O'Connor also argues:

Rochester reveals often that both in Jamaica and at Granbois he is biding his time, waiting to act. Exactly why he feels hesitant to move is not clear. Perhaps he still carries with him a vestige of gentility which makes it necessary for him to rationalize selfish and cruel behaviour. But he early and constantly reveals that he is waiting for the time when he can assume control. (160-1)

When Rochester feels that he has gained his authority and control over the events he experiences – he interprets everything in his own way, he is deaf to truths – he starts to act like the active Gothic villain of the conventional Gothic plot. Since the traditional Gothic plot is based on the Oedipal drama, his male identity is also depicted in traditional psychoanalytical terms. It is interesting to note that while Rhys portrays her female characters as abject figures whose subversive functions in the novel are revealed more clearly in the light of Kristeva's theory of the abject, she has portrayed Rochester in terms of the Freudian subject who is shaped by Freud's patriarchal approach to human psychology until he spends a night with Amelié. Rochester's reactions toward the wild nature on the island are Freudian in the sense that nature represents the mother's body with its conventional representations: a devouring womb, a tomb for male identity, a threat to male sexuality in terms of castration and the semiotic language which is regarded as meaningless and unrepresentable in symbolic norms. In other words, the (m)other is projected upon the wild nature of Granbois. Besides, nature represents the female Other, Antoinette's sexuality, which is unpredictable, wild, passionate, eager, active, forceful, instinctive, independent, and polygamous. All Rochester's confrontations with the abject Other have resulted in a powerful urge to develop his boundaries between self and Other. Although feeling threatened by these encounters with the abject Other, he has remained strict. Thus, the abject Other has helped him to reinforce his male identity and secure his position in the symbolic order.

However, Rochester's desire for the (m)other's body simultaneously accompanied with his fear of the (m)other's body will explicitly surface with his confrontation with the abject Other. When he has a sexual relationship with the most abject Other for Rochester, Amelié, who is a black woman, a maid, and an embodiment of active sexual desire, his

boundaries between self and Other will be blurred for a short period of time. The patriarchal ground beneath his feet will be shaken and he will become much more aggressive in order to preserve his subjectivity in the symbolic order.

After drinking the glass of wine Antoinette offers to him, he finds himself in bed with Amélié. At first, he does not notice that he is in the same bed with her. Rochester says:

I woke in the dark after *dreaming that I was buried alive*, and when I was awake the feeling of suffocation persisted. Something was lying across my mouth; hair with a sweet heavy smell. I threw it off but I still could not breathe. ... I was cold too, deathly cold and sick and in pain. I got out of the bed without looking at her, staggered into my dressing-room and saw myself in the glass. I turned away at once. I could not vomit. I only retched painfully. (107, emphasis mine)

Rochester wakes up with an uncanny feeling. He has a dream in which he was buried alive. Since Rochester was portrayed as a typical Freudian subject, his dream is also very Freudian which reveals one of the metaphorical examples Freud used in order to explain his theory of the uncanny. In this respect, Rhys again inserts in her Female Gothic plot a convention of the traditional Gothic plot: employment of uncanny elements in order to symbolize the activities of the unconscious. She uses this motif in order to expose Rochester's fear of castration and the maternal body. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the Freudian uncanny and the Kristevan abject have certain common points. Both theories dwell on the subject's longing for uniting with the (m)other and emphasize the simultaneous fear of losing one's identity which accompanies this desire. The distinction between Freudian uncanny and Kristevan abject is that while Freud promotes a repression of this maternal desire, Kristeva promotes an embracement of this maternal desire which unites the pre-Oedipal and Oedipal stages in a subject to create a subject-in-process rather than strictly separating them. In this respect, while repression is associated with burying the maternal in the unconscious, abjection is associated with a conscious reaction which helps the subject to develop a consciousness in which self and (m)other can get united again.

Rochester's uncanny dream of being buried alive reveals his repressed sexual desire for the (m)other. Rochester's fear of the (m)other is projected upon nature. In this respect, the maternal is a problematic concept for Rochester who constructs his identity on the patriarchal

principle. Freud, the father of the interpretation of dreams, announces: “It was not for a long time that I learned to appreciate the significance of the phantasies and unconscious thought relating to life in the womb. They contain the explanation of the curious dread, felt by so many people, of being buried alive” (376n2). From this view the conventional image of womb becoming a tomb emerges. Since Rochester does not remember his night with Amelié in the morning, it can be said that he has repressed his sexual desire for the (m)other by totally forgetting about it and then by blaming both Antoinette and Christophine for practicing obeah on him. Rochester cannot come to terms with his desire for Amelié because she represents the racial Other whom he despises and feels aversion for. Therefore, denying his desire for the black Amelié by claiming that he has had sex with her under the spell of obeah is the only way for him to explain his desire for her “logically”. Thus, his dream of being buried alive represents his repressed fear of losing his identity in uniting with the (m)other through Amelié.

However, when he wakes up from this uncanny dream, since he has repressed his desire for the racial Other, he is not aware of what he has experienced that night. As soon as he realizes that he cannot breathe because of the hair lying across his mouth, he turns and to his horror he sees it is Amelié who is lying right beside him. He gets out of the bed avoiding looking at her. Since Amelié is his racial Other, he feels repulsion for her and he goes to his dressing-room feeling dizzy. He looks in the mirror which represents the mirror in Lacan’s mirror stage and he turns away at once. In fact, what Rochester is experiencing at this point is abjection. Thus, his Freudian identity starts to fight with Kristevan abjection. His dizziness and his nausea show that he is thrown into the abject realm because these reactions are given when a subject confronts the abject. His boundaries between self and Other are blurred. This is the reason why he cannot see himself in the mirror. The mirror which reflects the image of the subject in Lacanian psychology and which proves him that he is a separate being, not his (m)other, does not provide the same information anymore. He wants to vomit but he cannot. He is on the verge of becoming a Kristevan subject-in-process, but Rhys suddenly makes him choose his patriarchal path. Rhys is determined to make a Gothic villain of him. Therefore, Rochester “was able to go over to the window and vomit. It seemed like hours before this stopped” (107). By vomiting and abjecting the black Other, he constructs his boundaries between self and Other again and guarantees that he will remain a subject in the symbolic

order. It is only then he can remember the night he has spent with Amélié and come to the conclusion that he is captivated by obeah.

That night Amélié enters Rochester's room to serve him some food and finds him sitting on his bed. She sits beside him, cuts some of the food up and feeds Rochester as if he were a child. It can be claimed that with her motherly attitude, Amélié represents the (m)other for Rochester at this point. Rochester relates that night as follows:

There was a spark of gaiety in her eyes, but when I laughed she put her hand over my mouth apprehensively. I pulled her down beside me and we were both laughing. That is what I remember most about the encounter. She was so gay, so natural and something of this gaiety she must have given to me, for I had not one moment of remorse. Nor was I anxious to know what was happening behind the thin partition which divided us from my wife's bedroom. (109)

It can be observed that it is Amélié's gaiety which attracts Rochester. Her caring motherly attitude and her laughter are the things which he thinks he cannot receive from Antoinette. Since he has been withdrawn from Antoinette recently because of the suspicions he has in his mind, he satisfies his sexual desire by having sex with Amélié. However, in the morning he feels differently: "Another complication. Impossible. And her skin was darker, her lips thicker than I had thought" (109). This declaration also indicates how Rochester feels threatened by the racial Other.

Since Amélié is also a free sexual woman, Rochester treats Amélié as an object of male desire, particularly when he gives her some money while she is leaving. Thus, Rochester's relationship with Amélié also displays his Virgin/Whore syndrome once again. For a patriarchal man like Rochester, a sexually active woman is labeled as a whore. And he asserts this perception by giving money to Amélié after having sex with her.

Antoinette leaves the house after witnessing her husband's betrayal and she does not come back for days. When she returns, she shuts herself in her room drinking and sleeping. She is drinking a lot because she wants to forget the pain she feels stemming from her husband's betrayal. In fact, Antoinette totally sinks into melancholia. She has lost her love object, Rochester, whom she eroticized to kill her (m)other in Kristevan terms. However, when she loses Rochester, she remembers her primary loss of the (m)other and she starts to

mourn her lost love object which replaces her lost (m)other. Her deep melancholia can be observed in Rochester's focalization below:

When I saw her I was too shocked to speak. Her hair hung uncombed and dull into her eyes which were inflamed and staring, her face was very flushed and looked swollen. Her feet were bare. However when she spoke her voice was low, almost inaudible. (114)

Antoinette, calling Christophine to her side and speaking patois to herself, tries to revive her maternal bond and forget about her maternal loss which is also represented by the loss of her love object, Rochester.

I could see Antoinette stretched on the bed quite still. Like a doll. Even when she threatened me with the bottle she had a marionette quality. '*Ti moun,*' I heard and '*Doudou ché,*' at the end of a head handkerchief made a finger on the wall. '*Do do l'enfant do.*' (117)

Regressing from the symbolic represented by Rochester, Antoinette takes shelter in the semiotic by shutting herself in her room. She is grieving for her loss in the semiotic language represented by patois. Kristeva defines the melancholic's linguistic reaction to loss as follows:

Language retardation partakes of the same pattern: speech delivery is slow, silences are long and frequent, rhythms slacken, intonations become monotonous, and the very syntactic structures ... are often characterized by nonrecoverable elisions (objects or verbs that are omitted and cannot be restored on the basis of the context). (*Black Sun* 34)

However, when Antoinette comes out of her room to take a bottle of rum and meets Rochester, she will unveil her melancholia which covers her hatred and rage toward the lost one who abandoned her. Full of anger, she tells Rochester how he has destroyed her.

Do you know what you've done to me? It's not the girl, not the girl. But I loved this place and you have made it into a place I hate. I used to think that if everything else went out of my life I would still have this, and now you have spoilt it. It's just somewhere elsewhere I have been unhappy, and all the other

things are nothing to what has happened here. I hate it now like I hate you and before I die I will show you how much I hate you.’ (115).

Since Antoinette loses her love object, she realizes once again that she has lost her (m)other as well. This is the reason why she thinks that she does not belong to Granbois anymore, which represents her mother, the maternal space and the semiotic. Until Rochester betrays her, she has always thought that she can lose everything, but she will not lose her maternal bond she has constructed through Granbois. Since melancholia points at a close attachment to the (m)other, the semiotic phase in the psychoanalytical subject’s life and the maternal space in which the subject and the object become one, according to Kristeva overcoming melancholia is only possible by matricide. And matricide can take place by replacing the (m)other by a love object. However, if this love object is lost as well, the person remembers his or her primary loss of the (m)other. Unable to replace her, he or she mourns the lost (m)other. This is what Antoinette experiences at this point. As Kristeva maintains: “Conscious of our being doomed to lose our loves, we grieve perhaps even more, when we glimpse in our lover the shadow of a long lost former loved one” (*Black Sun* 5). If a person cannot kill the (m)other, he or she will remain in the semiotic and mourn his or her maternal loss constantly. A melancholic person’s sadness hides the rage, the hatred, and the anguish felt toward the person who abandons the individual. In the quotation above, Antoinette’s rage, hatred and pain are evident because she feels devastated by being abandoned by Rochester. Therefore, in the Kristevan sense, not only does she express her rage and hatred toward Rochester who has left her, but also she reveals her anger toward her (m)other who rejected, excluded and then abandoned her. Her rage is so extreme that she even applies physical violence when Rochester tries to hold her wrist in order to prevent her from drinking.

I managed to hold her wrist with one hand and the rum with the other, but when I felt her teeth in my arm I dropped the bottle. ... But I was angry now and she saw it. She smashed another bottle against the wall and stood with the broken glass in her hand and murder in her eyes.

‘Just you touch me once. You’ll soon see if I’m a dam’ coward like you are.’

Then she cursed me comprehensively, my eyes, my mouth, every member of my body, and it was like a dream ... this red-

eyed wild-haired stranger who was my wife shouting obscenities at me. (116)

At this point, Rhys adopts Brontë's Bertha who also attacks Rochester in rage in *Jane Eyre*. As was revealed before, Brontë's Bertha was portrayed with animal imagery in order to depict her active sexuality as well as her resentment for being imprisoned. In the scene above too Antoinette attacks Rochester like an animal which bites his arm. She is also depicted like a savage animal when Rochester observes her as a "red-eyed wild haired stranger". Thus, Antoinette's abject Otherness is underlined by these animalistic images as well which show that Antoinette has transgressed the boundaries between self and Other through her rage. Her hatred and rage toward Rochester will soon find its expression in her attempt to burn the house she is imprisoned in. Rochester, taking Antoinette away from her maternal island to England which represents patriarchal symbolic order, imprisons her in a house claiming his power on her.

Part Three starts with the narration of Grace Poole of *Jane Eyre*, who is the servant hired by Rochester to take care of Antoinette during her imprisonment in England. In this part of the novel, Antoinette is portrayed as a mad figure, but she is not like Bertha in *Jane Eyre* whose madness is presented from Rochester's and Jane's points of view with exclusionary remarks. On the contrary, the reader can enter the mind of Antoinette and follow her line of thoughts which will render Rhys's Gothic plot a subversive one declaring war on the patriarchal order.

At first, Antoinette is presented through her inner voice which is questioning the reasons why she has been imprisoned by Rochester in Thornfield.

I get out of bed and go close to watch them and to wonder why I have been brought here. For what reason? There must be a reason. What is it that I must do? When I first came I thought it would be for a day, two days, a week perhaps. I thought that when I saw him and spoke to him I would be wise as serpents, harmless as doves. 'I give you all I have freely,' I would say, 'and I will not trouble you again if you will let me go.' But he never came. (142)

Antoinette is looking for a reason for her entrapment, but she cannot find any. Thus, she shows that the abject figure is destined to be punished in the patriarchal symbolic order

because it denies and revolts against the norms that patriarchal ideology promotes. Antoinette feels completely abandoned now because Rochester never visits her. Because of her loneliness and pain, she hallucinates that she hosts certain visitors in order not to feel completely abandoned in the world. Rochester was her love object through which she tried to cure her melancholy. Now that she is completely left alone by him, she is reminded of her maternal loss which sinks her down into a deep melancholia. She still tries to revive her maternal bond through these illusionary visitors from her past in order not to forget who she is.

When Antoinette observes the room she is imprisoned in, she sees a tapestry in which she sees her mother in an evening gown with bare feet. This image of her mother is the last memory she has about her. When Antoinette last saw her mother, she was in an evening gown with bare feet, talking to herself, drinking, and being sexually exploited by her black servant. This also shows that Antoinette is now completely thinking about her mother, and gradually and rapidly becoming her mother, who was once victimized by an oppressive marriage, who was imprisoned in a house left to the care of a black servant, and who started to live in her own imagination.

When Antoinette last saw her mother talking to herself, she heard that her mother was also hosting guests in her hallucinatory world. "She was walking up and down and said, 'But this is a very pleasant surprise, Mr Luttrell. Godfrey, take Mr Luttrell's horse'" (104). Mr Luttrell was Annette's "neighbor and her only friend" (3) before she got married. Mr Luttrell got tired of waiting for the "compensation the English promised when Emancipation Act was passed" (3), and he committed suicide because he could not afford to live. Now, very like her mother, Antoinette also remembers her life before Rochester and she has hallucinations like her. One day she imagines that she is visited by Sandi, her only friend, who saved her from a black girl's and a boy's physical attack when she was a child: "'I'll talk to that boy,' he said. 'He won't bother you again.' In the distance I could see my enemy's red hair, but he hadn't a chance. Sandi caught him up before he reached the corner" (32). Sandi was the only friend who protected her from danger and who cared for her. Now, she remembers the past when she was with Sandi and talked to him:

'Will you come with me?' he said. 'No,' I said. 'I cannot.'
'So this is good-bye?'

‘Yes, this is good-bye.’
 ‘But I can’t leave you like this,’ he said, ‘you are
 unhappy.’
 ‘You are wasting time,’ I said, ‘when we have so little.’
 (148)

Her conversation with Sandi in her imagination above reveals that even Sandi, who once saved her from danger, cannot save her from the house she is imprisoned in. Antoinette is desperate, but she seems to acknowledge her condition. These hallucinations reveal that she is rehearsing her mother’s ending up in madness and she is in the process of becoming her mother.

Antoinette has real world visitors as well. However, she does not prefer to remember them. Grace Poole reminds her of her experience with Richard Mason, her stepbrother, who comes to see her.

‘When he came in,’ said Grace Poole, ‘he didn’t recognize
 you.’
 ...
 ‘You rushed of him with a knife and when he got the knife
 away you bit his arm. ... So you don’t remember that you attacked
 this gentleman with a knife? ... ‘I was in the room but I didn’t hear
 all he said except “I cannot interfere legally between yourself and
 your husband.” It was when he said “legally” that you flew at him
 and when he twisted the knife out of your hand you bit him’. (147)

Antoinette’s melancholy, which hides the hatred and the rage felt against the abandoning loved one, is gradually leaving its place to these hidden feelings. She attacks Richard when he says “legally” because it is the English law which has made her a slave to Rochester by depriving her of all her money and property in the name of marriage. And it is the English law which still makes her a possession and the prisoner of the man she hates. Therefore, when she attacks Richard, in fact she attacks the patriarchal system which victimizes women in the marriage institution.

Then, Antoinette suddenly starts to ask about a red dress she has. She asks Grace: “‘ Have you hidden my red dress too? ... ‘Nobody’s hidden your dress,’ she said. ‘It’s hanging in the press.’” (147). Antoinette is obsessed with this dress because it represents her only true bond: the maternal bond. This association can be observed when she says: “The

scent that came from the dress was very faint at first, then it grew stronger. The smell of vetiver and frangipani, of cinnamon and dust and lime trees when they are flowering. The smell of the sun and the smell of the rain” (148). Her red dress reminds her of the nature of Granbois which represents her mother, her past, and her identity which is formed by identifying with the Other. The red dress gives her the courage to liberate herself from her current state. Antoinette says:

I let the dress fall on the floor, and looked from the fire to the dress and from the dress to the fire. ... But I looked at the dress on the floor and it was as if the fire had spread across the room. It was beautiful and it reminded me of something I must do. I will remember I thought. I will remember quite soon now. (149)

The red color of the dress connotes the bright colour of a fire. Therefore, she now remembers why she has been brought to Thornfield. She must burn the house and destroy this patriarchal prison. In this respect, the red dress she is obsessed with represents the decision she makes about burning down Thornfield. Besides, Rhys uses the motif of dress throughout the novel as a representation for identity. As was discussed earlier, when Antoinette enters Coulibri Estate wearing Tia’s dress, Annette wants her to change her dress because the dress she wears has turned her into the abject racial Other. When Antoinette tries to wear one of her old dresses, she finds out that it does not fit her any more. Through the use of the motif of dress then, Rhys implies that Antoinette has transformed into the abject racial Other. At this point, the red dress also indicates a transformation of identity into a new one. Antoinette has been an all-embracing figure by internalizing her Others and the Other has always been a mirror for her in which she can see her reflection. However, the Other sex, Rochester, could not provide a reflection for her with which she can identify because he is a representative of patriarchal ideology.

Besides, the red dress with its connotation of fire reminds Antoinette of the fire which has destroyed Coulibri. The destruction of Coulibri represents the black community’s revolt against the white community. Thus, at this point, Antoinette identifies with the black people’s rage against oppression. She decides to revolt against Rochester’s patriarchal and colonist hegemony. She has lost her all-embracing attitude toward Rochester because Rochester is a cruel patriarch with whom she cannot identify. Therefore, when she has her

last dream in the attic, she feels that she is chased by a ghost of a woman. This ghost is Antoinette's reflection in Rochester's mirror, Bertha of *Jane Eyre*, who is defined by Rochester as sexually corrupt and mad. This is the reason why she does not look behind her because she does not want to see her.

Soon she finds herself in Aunt Cora's room full of burning candles. She hates them and knocks them all down. The flame from one of these candles catches the curtains and the room starts to burn. This scene also employs Antoinette's one of mother figures in the embodiment of Aunt Cora which foreshadows that she will be saved from the destructive power of her own fire by the maternal help.

It was then that I saw her – the ghost. The woman with streaming hair. She was surrounded by a gilt frame but I knew her. I dropped the candle I was carrying and it caught the end of a tablecloth and I saw flames shoot up. As I ran or perhaps floated or flew I called help me Christophine help me and looking behind me I saw that I had been helped. There was a wall of fire protecting me but it was too hot, it scorched me and I went away from it. (151)

When Antoinette meets the ghost, she realizes that she knows her. She knows her because it is Rochester's Bertha whose image was imposed upon her through Rochester's attempt which can be observed in his insistence on calling Antoinette Bertha. It is then she sets the whole Thornfield on fire. She hears screams coming from the house. Then her whole life flashes before her eyes. She sees her childhood, she sees Annette's parrot, she hears "the man who hated [her] was calling too, Bertha! Bertha!" (152).

It might bear me, I thought, if I jumped to those hard stones. But when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri. Tia was there. She beckoned to me and when I hesitated, she laughed. I heard her say. You frightened? And I heard the man's voice, Bertha! Bertha! All this I saw and heard in a fraction of a second. And the sky so red. Someone screamed and I thought, Why did I scream? I called 'Tia!' and jumped and woke. (152)

She sees Tia in her dream because Tia was the one whom Antoinette ran to after witnessing Coulibri destroyed by fire. Besides, she admires Tia's strength and it is her wild nature in which she finds courage to carry out her mission. When Antoinette was a child and

friends with Tia, she described her as follows: “Tia would light a fire (fires always lit for her, sharp stones did not hurt her bare feet, I never saw her cry)” (8). Thus, since Antoinette identified with Tia in her childhood, now she becomes one with her and adopting Tia’s power of fire, she sets Thornfield on fire.

Then I got up, took the keys and unlocked the door. I was outside holding my candle. Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do. There must have been a draught for the flame flickered and I thought it was out. But I shielded it with my hand and it burned up again to light me along the dark passage.
(152)

At the very beginning of Part Three Antoinette was questioning the reason why she is imprisoned in Thornfield. As the quotation reveals above now she knows why she has been brought to Thornfield. She has a more important mission. She has to destroy Thornfield by setting a fire to it. This is how Rhys’s novel ends. The reader is left with the image of a woman with a candle in her hand walking along the dark passage of Thornfield Hall in order to realize her dream.

In conclusion, Antoinette decides to burn Thornfield in order to take her revenge on Rochester. Until the end of the novel, being an abject Other herself, Antoinette has confronted many Others defined in racial, social, cultural, psychological, and sexual terms and embraced them. However, except for Christophine, who is a subject-in-process in a sense, no abject Other has welcomed her as she embraced them because they are subject to and their lives are shaped by colonial imperialist patriarchal ideology. Antoinette begged for her mother’s attention, but Annette continually rejected her and pretended that she did not even notice her. She ran to her black Other Tia to embrace her after the destruction of Coulibri, but Tia rejected her and threw her a stone like an enemy. She was betrayed by her own maid, her female Other Amélié, but she never asked her to give herself an account of what she did. Lastly, she internalized her sexual Other, Rochester, but she received nothing but indifference and betrayal from him. Consequently, she never felt resentment for what her Others did to her but she did for what Rochester did to her.

Antoinette’s hatred and rage for Rochester gradually grows bigger when she is imprisoned by him in Thornfield. Although her confrontations with her Others have resulted

in her isolating, alienating, and withdrawing herself from them and her social environment, at this point she does not deal with such emotions. Now she has hatred and rage in her hand as real as the candle she holds in her hand to burn down the house. She is determined to fight back her sexual Other, Rochester. Then, such a question can be put forward: Why does she choose Rochester among her other Others to direct her hatred toward?

Firstly, while Annette, Tia, Amélié, and Christophine are her abject Others who are socially, culturally, racially, and genderly Otherized and abjected, Rochester represents the Other sex who is the emblem of the patriarchal symbolic order. In other words, while her female Others inhabit the semiotic, Rochester with his strictly constructed boundaries between self and Other is a representative of the symbolic order. Besides, with his patriarchal values Rochester is a threat to the semiotic values because he is the one who is abjecting every single female (Antoinette, Annette, Christophine, and Amélié) in the novel by excluding them with his patriarchally constructed images of women such as: the black, mad, whore, witch, and the castrating mother. Thus, when Antoinette decides to burn the house, she decides to destroy all these patriarchal images of women which are used to abject women in order to sustain the prevalence of the patriarchal symbolic order.

Secondly, suffering from the loss of her mother, in Kristevan terms Antoinette has chosen to commit matricide by replacing her mother with a love object, Rochester. However, she soon understands that he will not compensate for such a loss with his dedication to patriarchal values. He continually seeks to dominate her. He aims to annihilate her semiotic language, patois. He wants to have control on her active female desire. Moreover, he attempts to break off her maternal bond by separating her from Christophine as well as by destroying the meaning of Granbois for her. Antoinette sinks into deep melancholy when she loses Rochester because this loss reminds her of her primary loss of the (m)other. However, when Rochester takes his final step and imprisons Antoinette in the house, in a sense he also unconsciously prepares his own end because by trying to destroy Antoinette's bond with the semiotic completely, he helped Antoinette to come out of her melancholic mood and claim her rage. The semiotic is powerful; the symbolic order can attempt to repress it, but it can never annihilate it. The semiotic has the potential to threaten and haunt the symbolic order by abject entities. Therefore, if the symbolic prefers not to unite with the semiotic in the embodiment of the subject-in-process, then it is possible for the semiotic to assert its power

and revolt against the patriarchal and oppressive symbolic order through expressions of rage and hatred. Thus, the semiotic proves that the power of the abject is the “power of horror” for the symbolic order. This is what Rhys does in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. She endows her heroine with the power of the abject and gives her a flickering candlelight to burn down Thornfield, the prison of patriarchy, the male-dominated society, and the patriarchal ideology in a formless, disorderly, and fluid semiotic flame. She destroys the patriarchal identity formation by uniting her heroine with her mother. Now that Antoinette is ready to kill her love object, she does not have to commit matricide. She can murder Rochester, return to her initial maternal loss and celebrate her melancholia. This does not mean that melancholia will have a destructive function in her life. As Oliver maintains:

She [Kristeva] suggests that part of the reason why feminine sexuality is melancholy is because within our heterosexist culture a woman cannot have a mother-substitute as an object of desire in the way that a man can. In other words, feminine sexuality is melancholy because it is fundamentally homosexual and must be kept a secret within a heterosexist culture. It is possible, however, that if the dependence on the maternal body can be separated from the dependence on the mother, then the necessary ‘matricide’ can take place and a woman can lose the maternal body as maternal container or maternal Thing and love her mother’s body, her own body, as the body of a woman. Unlike Freud, who maintains that in order to develop normally females must change their love objects and erogenous zones by denying their original love objects and erogenous zones, Kristeva suggests that females must admit, even (re)embrace those original loves and pleasures. (Oliver 84)

In fact, the quotation above describes how Rhys also manages to endow her novel with a subversive power. By enabling Antoinette to revive her maternal bond with various mother figures, she separates her from the dependence on her mother’s body. Then, the heroine’s uniting with her mother through becoming her mother does not indicate that Antoinette is dependent on her own mother’s body. After her experiences with her mother substitutes, Antoinette manages to combine her mother’s body and her body with the body of a woman. Thus, Antoinette (re)embraces her original maternal body as well as the collective maternal body. In this respect, the image of Antoinette with a candle in her hand which the

reader is left with at the end of the novel implies that Antoinette is on the verge of becoming a subject-in-process. This shows the difference of her Otherness from the rest of the characters' Otherness portrayed in the novel. She has the potential to become a subject-in-process, while the remaining characters will suffer from their Otherness because of the oppression of the patriarchal ideology over them. By such an ending, Rhys provides a radical prequel to Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Thus, Rhys subverts Brontë's Gothic plot as well as all the traditional Gothic plots which attempt at erasing the female principle by victimizing, imprisoning, entrapping, and murdering daughters and mothers within the confinements of patriarchal social, cultural, racial, sexual, domestic, and familial structures.

CHAPTER 4

ANGELA CARTER'S *THE BLOODY CHAMBER AND OTHER STORIES*

"My family have always behaved anecdotally, and I do perceive every event as having the potentiality for being retold"

Angela Carter

4.1 Angela Carter and Her Work

In her introduction to *Expletives Deleted: Selected Writings* Carter stated that her life was shaped by her gender.

I spent a good many years being told what I ought to think, and how I ought to behave, and how I ought to write, even, because I was a woman and men thought they had the right to tell me how to feel, but then I stopped listening to them and tried to figure it out for myself but they didn't stop talking, oh, dear no. So I started answering back. How simple, not to say simplistic, this all sounds; and yet it is true. (*Expletives* 5)

Thus, Carter's works reveal a dialogue with the oppressive male-dominated world which assumes an authority on women by telling them how to live. Carter's feminist concerns can be observed in her many works which are composed of novels, short stories, children's stories, poetry, journalism, political writings, radio plays, film scripts and criticism. In her article "Notes from the Front Line", she reveals how the women's movement has influenced her personality and writings. She thinks that "growing into feminism was part of the process of maturing" (*Shaking* 37). Through the feminist teaching then she learned that her femininity was a fiction of patriarchal ideology and the cultural myths surrounding women produced a reality that they could not fit in. Therefore, she committed herself to the "demythologising business", in order to create a political consciousness to see into the cultural constructions of sexuality of Western civilization.

Carter's works are endowed with great imagination, wit, and humor which help her to challenge the conventions of both patriarchal ideology and strictly classified fictional

genres. In her fiction a reader can find a rich variety of literary genres and modes blended altogether such as science fiction, fantasy, magic realism, fable, folklore, fairy tale, romance, the Gothic, and porn. Her fascination with eroticism both delights and disturbs her readers because the mostly violent representations of sexuality in her works expose the hierarchical power relations between the two sexes. Her study on pornography, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979), is a radical analysis of Sade's works, which are appreciated by Carter because of their indulgence in female sexuality regardless of its reproductive functions. Besides, Carter claimed that Sade's representation of sexuality provides a profound insight into the patriarchal culture that constructs binary oppositions of aggression and submission, activity and passivity, subject and object, sadism and masochism, predator and prey, victimizer and victim in sexual relationships. She states that "[s]ince all pornography derives directly from myth ... [a]ny glimpse of a real man or a real woman is absent from these representations of the archetypal male and female" (*Sadeian* 6). Thus, when she was trying to reconstruct sexual desire in feminist terms, she employed Sade's female characters' characteristics in order to attack patriarchal constructions of woman, particularly Juliette's, whose active, independent, aggressive, victimizing, rational, monstrous, and sexual nature contribute a great deal to the portrayal of her heroines.

What is central to Carter's work is rewriting. By retelling she aimed to change the conventional perceptions of people and transform dominant cultural understandings, particularly of gender. Through seeing universally accepted notions from a different angle, Carter aspired to uncover the ideologies of old narratives and to open new ways of plural thinking via new narratives. As Carter herself contended: "I am all putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode" (*Shaking* 37). In this respect, Carter blew up all kinds of oppressive boundaries that define the world in her rewritings. While she is doing this, Carter "is always on the side of the less powerful against the powerful, and in her context, as she freely admits, she is mainly concerned with women's experience" (Eaglestone 204). Therefore, her works deal with patriarchally entrapped heroines' struggles to liberate themselves from phallogocentric logic by asserting their own will.

In brief, Carter's unique fiction has been examined in many provocative critical works so far and it still has many things to say. Rushdie's heartfelt articulation of Carter's

writing career proves this: “she was the most individual, independent, and idiosyncratic of writers; dismissed by many in her lifetime as a marginal, cultish figure, an exotic hothouse flower, she has become the contemporary writer most studied at British universities – a victory over the mainstream she would have enjoyed” (xiv). Carter’s works dealing with radical issues have become the milestone of contemporary literature and influenced many young writers of her following generation.

4.2 Angela Carter and the Gothic

One of Carter’s epigraphs to *Heroes and Villains* (1969) is from Leslie A. Fiedler’s *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960): “The Gothic mode is essentially a form of parody, a way of assailing clichés by exaggerating them to the limit of grotesqueness” (424). Carter’s parodic rewriting and the Gothic tradition in her novels and stories form major features of Carter’s postmodern narrative style. Such a combination indicates that her writing is characterized by double parody. In other words, in Fiedler’s opinion, the Gothic is already a parodic genre and in addition Carter parodies the conventions of the Gothic. That is, she rewrites the traditional Gothic plot, subverts the popular Gothic figures and re-visions Gothic trappings in terms of sexual politics. Thus, her works are shaped by this characteristic of double parody.

After spending two years in Japan, Carter returned to England in 1972. She said that she found herself in a new country. “It was like a waking up, it was a rude awakening. We live in Gothic times. Now, to understand and to interpret is the main thing; but my method of investigation is changing” (*Burning* 459-60). Here Carter draws attention to the postmodern condition of the contemporary Western world in which the familiar old world has become uncanny. The postmodern condition of the world shares common characteristics with the Gothic world. Indeterminacy caused by the deconstruction of the opposing structures, epistemological and ontological uncertainty, skepticism caused by the loss of subjectivity and meaning have all created a frightening unstable and uncanny world built on blurred boundaries¹².

¹² Postmodern tendencies in literature have developed more apparently starting from the 1950s. Particularly with the poststructuralist movement, which arose from the re-evaluation of the values in

On the other hand, Botting interprets Carter's comment as "an account of the way that genres once consigned to cultural margins have begun to prevail over their canonized counterparts" ("Aftergothic" 285). In fact, through postmodern practices marginalized genres of the past have become the dominant ones in contemporary literary fiction. Botting states that Gothic fictions of contemporary literature are a manifestation of the absence of a prohibitive force. He indicates that the conventional older Gothic tales celebrate the restoration of normative boundaries by destroying monstrous figures. However, in contemporary Gothic

they [monstrous figures] retain a fascinating, attractive appeal: no longer objects of hate or fear, monstrous others become sites of identification, sympathy, desire, and self-recognition. Excluded figures once represented as malevolent, disturbed, or deviant monsters are rendered more humane while the systems that exclude them assume terrifying, persecutory, and inhuman shapes. The reversal, with its residual Romantic identification with outcast and rebel, alongside its feeling for liberation and individual freedom, makes transgression a positive act and diffuses the negative charge of spectral paternal prohibition. Transgression becomes just another permitted social activity. (Botting, "Aftergothic" 286)

In this respect, the Gothic times of the present celebrate the monstrous figures rather than promoting the destruction of them. Thus, destabilizing rather than restoring the established norms is the dominant political stance in the contemporary Gothic. Carter makes use of the Gothic elements in a more rebellious way by reversing the structures and representations found in the conventional Gothic.

The Gothic genre itself is subversive, giving expression to what is culturally occluded such as sexual fantasy and female desire. However, Carter's novels are frequently subversions of the genre; themes and ideas first explored – albeit however crudely – in Gothic writing are re-examined, challenged and expanded. (Peach 28)

most parts of the Western societal structures due to the Social Revolution of 1968 in France, postmodernism reached its peak in art.

Thus, Carter's subversive rewritings have their root in the Gothic tradition. Her oft-cited "Afterword" to *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* (1974)¹³, in which she informs her readers about her fascination with the Gothic and its influence on her writing, is considered as Carter's literary manifesto by many critics.

Though it took me a long time to realise why I liked them, I'd always been fond of Poe, and Hoffman – Gothic tales, cruel tales, tales of wonder, fabulous narratives that deal directly with the imagery of the unconscious – mirrors; the externalised self; forsaken castles; haunted forests; forbidden sexual objects. (*Burning* 459)

In most of Carter's novels, the thematic concerns she lists above can be observed. She confesses that Poe's influence on her works is enormous. She borrows Poe's violent and cruel imagery in order to shock the reader and make him or her aware of the both social and psychological problems caused by gender distinction. Particularly, she aims to expose the sexual exploitation between the sexes stemming from power relations. Carter argues:

The Gothic tradition in which Poe writes grandly ignores the value systems of our institutions; it deals entirely with the profane. Its great themes are incest and cannibalism. Character and events are exaggerated beyond reality, to become symbols, ideas, passions. Its style will tend to be ornate, unnatural – thus operate against the perennial human desire to believe the word as fact. Its only humour is black humour. It retains a singular moral function – that of provoking unease. (*Burning* 459)

Carter appreciated Poe's works because of their indulgence in the profane which provoked unease. Carter herself also favors the profane because of its subversive potential and her novels deal with many profane Gothic themes and motifs such as metamorphosis, automaton, animality, incest, rape, violence, sadism, masochism, cannibalism, female victimization and so on. Her use of these Gothic elements is closely related to her idea of gender. Through re-visioning these Gothic themes, she discusses how women are objectified and commodified by the patriarchal ideology. She attacks the cultural construction of gender

¹³ The "Afterword" appeared only in the first edition of *Fireworks*. It is re-printed in posthumously published *Burning Your Boats: The Collected Short Stories* (1995).

and patriarchal myths of women. Furthermore, she reveals how sexual power in the hands of men manipulates women as if they are living dolls. Therefore, the use of perversion and pornography has been a radical tool for Carter to expose male sexual deviance and thus save the female body from being represented by patriarchal sexual imagery. While she is examining these mythic representations of sexual relations, Carter puts forward excessive, bizarre and violent representations with a sense of horror.

Violence against women has long been a characteristic of much horror writing, as well as pornography. The essential powerlessness of the virginal, entrapped, victimized girl is a stock feature of pornography as it is of gothic horror, which deals with taboos ... Angela Carter is a clever manipulator of the techniques of horror, terror and the gothic. She takes the impetus and the structure of gothic-based romance tales for women and reappropriates them for a sexual politics which demythologizes myths of the sexual powerlessness and victim role for women. She uses their structure to turn their usual dénouements on their heads. (Wisker, "On Angela Carter" 245-6)

Thus, Carter's interest in Gothicism mainly depends on her interest in subversion of patriarchal sexual politics. Her use of exaggeration, distortion, transgression, deconstruction, and abjection liberate her characters from sexual roles and social norms and define hierarchically constructed heterosexual relationships on equal terms. She destroys the roles of the oppressor and the oppressed in gender relations and attack the institutionalized systems that promote patriarchal values as normative. With all these objectives, Carter has found a battle ground in the Gothic to make her feminist ideals fight against established norms.

4.3 Angela Carter and the Fairy Tale

The Gothic and the fairy tale tradition share many common characteristics. First of all, they are both related to fantasy. Secondly, they both deal with the same themes – such as marvelous and supernatural events, metamorphosis, cannibalism, excessive desire, monstrous representations, murder, violence, the dichotomies of good and evil, virtue and vice, innocent and wicked, rich and poor, beautiful and ugly, predator and prey. Thirdly, they both have formulaic plot structures which promote the happy ending through an "and-they-lived-

happily-ever-after” pattern. Fourthly, their settings also show similarities such as the gloomy castle, the secret chamber, and the labyrinthine and imprisoning structures. Fifthly, they portray stereotypical characters such as the usurper father, the wicked mother or stepmother, the sexually threatening villain, the tempting Devil, the persecuted heroine, and the victim. Bridgwater claims that “[t]he ‘Gothic fairy tale’ is a sub-genre of the female Gothic” (86). Therefore, Carter’s interest in rewriting Gothic trappings has met a rich origin in the Gothic fairy tales.

In his “Introduction” to *Burning Your Boats: The Collected Short Stories*, Rushdie declares that “*The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* is Carter’s masterwork: the book in which her high perfervid mode is perfectly married to her stories’ need” (xi). When Carter published this revolutionary collection of stories composed of rewritten versions of the classical tales with a feminist twist, she had already translated Charles Perrault’s *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé avec des Moralités* (1697) in 1977 and Perrault’s tales played an important role on Carter’s intertextual project. Carter thought that “[t]he limited trajectory of the short narrative concentrates its meaning. Sign and sense can fuse to an extent impossible to achieve among the multiplying ambiguities of an extended narrative” (*Burning* 459). Thus, her talent in producing new stories from the old ones is received with considerable appreciation. Carter has become renowned for her feminist re-visionings of these traditional fairy tales which reveal an awareness of sexual roles sinisterly encoded in us through nursery stories.

The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories is endowed with the feminist criticisms of patriarchy of the 1960s and 1970s. The stories “draw on a feminist discourse – or at least an awareness that feminism is challenging sexist constructions” (Makinen 6). Carter blends elements of fantasy, the Gothic and the fairy tales for proposing a radical content. What Carter intended to do by subverting the classical fairy tales was to show how women were sexually exploited as the objects of male desire. She observed that in traditional psychoanalytical theories woman is constructed as the Other who has no desire of her own. Thus, woman is forced to be passive, virtuous, pure, docile, obedient, submissive and sexless in an oppressive culture. In her collection of stories, Carter granted her heroines a desire of their own that threatened the hierarchically constructed heterosexual paradigm.

Since the traditional fairy tales embody the sexist ideology and try to impose conventional female roles on women since their childhood, certain feminist critics claim that the rewritings of these tales cannot escape repeating the same ideological pattern. For instance, Patricia Duncker accuses Carter of

rewriting the tales within the strait-jacket of their original structures ... [Carter] re-produces rather than alters the original, deeply, rigidly sexist psychology of the erotic ... Carter's tales are, supposedly, celebrations of erotic desire ... Heterosexual feminists have not yet invented an alternative, anti-sexist language of the erotic. Carter envisages women's sensuality simply as a response to male arousal. She has no conception of women's sexuality as autonomous desire. (6-7)

However, Makinen conversely argues that "it is the critics who cannot see beyond the sexist binary opposition ... When the form is used to critique the inscribed ideology, I would argue, then the form is subtly adapted to inscribe a new set of assumptions" (4-5). She states that Carter utilizes irony in order to deconstruct binary oppositions. Moreover, Makinen argues that "Carter's tales do not simply 'rewrite' the old tales by fixing roles of active sexuality for their female protagonists – they 're-write' them by playing with and upon (if not preying upon) the earlier misogynistic version" (5). Thus, Carter's ironical humor is a feminist strategy which awakes the reader to the traditional gender roles embedded in the original tale, and at the same time it offers new deconstructive perceptions of culturally constructed female identity, female sexuality and female experience.

In the stories of *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, Carter attacks the conventional roles of women. She does not deny her heroines the freedom to be sexually active and even to be violent on certain occasions in order to destroy their culturally constructed passivity. Dealing with themes of violence and perversity in representation of women characters is perceived as dangerous by the critics who claim that these representations serve to reinforce the patriarchal ideology, as was discussed above through Duncker's comments. However, as Makinen contends,

to deny their existence is surely to incarcerate women back within a partial, sanitized image only slightly less constricted than the Victorian angel in the house ... In all of the tales, not only is

femininity constructed as active, sensual, desiring and unruly – but successful transactions are founded on an equality and the transforming powers of recognizing the reciprocal claims of the other. (9)

In this respect, Carter's retellings of the classical popular fairy tales express hostility towards cultural myths of sexuality in the patriarchal system. They bring forth the issue of power which defines sexual relationships in hierarchical terms. By promoting a utopian ideal of constructing heterosexual relationships on equal terms, Carter attempts to restore what is denied to women oppressed by patriarchal authority. Thus, in order to transgress the boundaries of phallogentric society, she adopts abject representations of sexuality in her stories. Through granting her characters abject states, she celebrates fluid and plural identities rather than fixed and unified ones. She endows her heroines with an autonomous desire liberated from definitions of traditional psychoanalytical theories.

By presenting subversive characters, Carter criticized the ideological power that excludes these marginal characters. She subverts traditional gender relations by portraying monstrous, animalistic, eccentric and perverse figures. These figures are found repulsive and disgusting by the mainstream society. However, at the same time they are fascinating because they revolt against the hegemonic structures. Thus, these characters are what the dominant ideology tries to repress and exclude. They are perceived as a threat to the symbolic order because they have the power to dissolve its clearly demarcated boundaries.

Carter's abject representations are mainly based on characters with animal traits. Simpson thinks that Carter's fascination with animalistic figures stem from her need to avoid from basing her stories on dialogues. Simpson says: "Dialogue came less naturally to her and she avoided it for years, joking that the advantage of including animal protagonists in her work was that she did not have to make them talk" (x). Thus, by adopting rich imagery, Carter provides a more shocking reversal of the hierarchical structures.

Abject representations of female desire and female sexuality in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* will be discussed by analyzing the five stories selected from Carter's collection. The reason why this study focuses on the selected five stories is that Carter's treatment of abjection is most overtly observed in these rewritings. The first story, "The Bloody Chamber" will be analyzed solely as a rewriting of "Bluebeard". The two stories that

follow, “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride” which are rewritings of “Beauty and the Beast”, will be discussed as stories which are woven around the characters who adopt abject characteristics by the employment of representations of feline. Finally, the analysis of the last two stories of the collection, “The Company of Wolves” and “Wolf-Alice”, will be based on the symbolic functions of werewolves in Carter’s treatment of abjection as their titles indicate.

This chapter provides a close analysis of the abject motifs such as bestiality, cannibalism, metamorphosis, violent sexuality, sadism and masochism, voyeurism (the male gaze), female body as meat, objectification of the female body as an exchange material, and Kristeva’s concept of the subject-in-process which can be observed throughout this collection of stories.

4.4 “It Will Have Blood, They Say; Blood Will Have Blood”¹⁴: Abject Representations of Female Desire in Angela Carter’s “The Bloody Chamber”

As revealed in Chapter 2, the basic concerns of the Female Gothic have always been domestic. Women writers of the Female Gothic attack the domestic ideology which entraps women in patriarchal structures. Until the postmodern period, writers of the Female Gothic have dealt with the problematics of women’s oppressed position in the patriarchal order in a less radical way. That is, they have tried to liberate their women characters by making them question the male-dominated society they live in, gender roles culturally and socially imposed upon them, the female identity constructed by patriarchal ideology, and the male sexual threat which objectifies their bodies. However, by affirming a happy end with marriage in their novels, these Female Gothic writers have not been able to free their heroines completely from patriarchal oppression because these happy endings imply that the heroines will once again start to experience oppression in the marriage institution and they will be positioned back in a territory where patriarchal domestic ideology still reigns.

In the postmodern period, women writers, who are provided with an opportunity to attack patriarchal politics through the subversion of the traditional Gothic plot, have found more expressive and overt tactics to fight against the structures that have imprisoned women

¹⁴ *Macbeth* Act III Scene IV Line 124

so far. They try to destroy gender distinctions by promoting transgressive, excessive and subversive representations which shake the ground patriarchal society is founded upon. In this respect, they have attempted to rewrite conventional Gothic texts from a feminist lens and challenged patriarchal Gothic plot that imprisons women characters within the castles, within the marriages, within the family and within their bodies.

Since rewriting is a process which first outlines the original text in order to reshape it in new terms, many writers who indulge in the postmodern rewriting practice are accused of establishing the ideology of the rewritten text in the name of subverting it. Carter is one of those writers who have received negative criticisms expressing disappointment with her indulgence in domestic motifs. Her dialogue with the enclosing domesticity, violence, passivity, sadism and masochism in heterosexual relationships is considered to be proposing a controversial criticism of patriarchal ideology. However, in order to show the patriarchal oppression that women suffer from in heterosexual relationships, Carter has to make such textual explorations. Only after these can she come up with a new world order that emancipates women. In other words, Carter's rewriting of fairy tales do not contribute to the patriarchal ideology. On the contrary, her subversive method of writing not only transfers the women characters from a silenced position into an expressive one, but also transforms the ideology of the traditional fairy tales through intertextual re-visioning.

Carter rebels against the sexist ideology the fairy tales promote. She rewrites female desire and sexuality which are rendered passive and repressed through Gothic elements in these tales. Thus, what Carter does in "The Bloody Chamber" is to reshape the traditional Gothic plot in a subversive way in order to foreground her feminist perspectives about female identity liberated from enclosures of patriarchal order. In order to provide a deep understanding of her subversive method in "The Bloody Chamber", Kristeva's theory of the abject will be applied, uncovering the hidden dark secrets that lie in this bloody chamber.

In Angela Carter's works, most of the traditional Gothic motifs are subverted. In her well-known story, "The Bloody Chamber", which is a rewritten version of Charles Perrault's "Bluebeard" from a feminist lens, Carter, through her use of eroticism, awakens her heroine to her own sexuality which is denied to women characters of the conventional Gothic. The heroine's discovery of her sexuality positions her at a threshold between life and death because while the Marquis makes the heroine realize her sexual potential by treating her as an

object of desire, he threatens her life as well by attempting to murder her. However, he will not manage to victimize her because the heroine's life will be saved by her mother at the end of the story. By rewriting such an end to "Bluebeard plot", Carter once again subverts the conventional Gothic plot which discards the mother figure. Carolyn Dever argues:

From the implications of maternal death in the Gothic novel, the mother is constructed as an emblem of the safety, unity, and order that existed before the very dangerous chaos of the child's Gothic plot. ... Gothic novels rely on fractured domestic structures in order to construct the erotic crises that eventually produce stability. (24)

In this respect, Carter inserts a mother figure with the potential described above in her story which Perrault avoids in order to promote the male Gothic plot that victimizes women. Carter portrays a courageous, autonomous, and a marginal mother figure as a power to destroy the symbolic order and as a prerequisite to be a "subject-in-process" who overcomes the binaries by affirming the (m)other in herself with the aim of transgressing the boundaries of the traditional Gothic.

In "The Bloody Chamber", Carter adopts the same Gothic plot structure that Perrault uses in his fairy tale. The seventeen-year-old heroine, a talented piano-player, newly wed with a rich Marquis much older than her, is put to the test of loyalty by her husband through being entrusted a bunch of keys which includes a key to a chamber the Marquis strictly forbids his wife to enter. However, tempted by her husband's cautionary and secretive attitude, the heroine decides to explore that locked room in order to discover the real life that keeps him rather distant and reserved and she finds the dead bodies of his three previous wives there. Horrified at what she sees, she realizes that she will share the same fate with them and the reader is drawn into suspense wondering what will befall her although he or she is persuaded with the flashback narrative recounted through the heroine's perspective, an indication that she will survive in the end.

"The Bloody Chamber" has also intertextual connections with Daphne du Maurier's renowned Gothic novel, *Rebecca*. Like the earlier work, the heroine is not named in the story and like du Maurier's narrator-heroine, Carter's heroine also starts her narration with a flashback which reminds her of her memories in the castle. Being naïve and inexperienced,

she is also married to a secretive and impervious man very much like du Maurier's Maxim. That is, when she gets married to the Marquis, she is not aware of her husband's real personality, very much like Maxim's wife.

The heroine begins her narrative by remembering her wedding night on a train with her husband leaving Paris, her girlhood, and the "enclosed quietude of [her] mother's apartment" behind and stepping "into the unguessable country of marriage" (1). Although the narrator-heroine stresses her sorrow about her separation from her mother by revealing that for an instant she "felt a pang of loss as if, when he put the gold band on [her] finger, [she] had, in some way, ceased to be her child in becoming his wife" (1), she also confesses that with the ring, "a fire opal the size of a pigeon's egg" (4), and with "the imponderable weight of his desire" which was a force she says she "might not withstand" (4), "[she] could not say that [she] felt one single twinge of regret for the world of tartines and maman that now receded from [her] as if drawn away on a string, like a child's toy" (7).

The heroine's separation from her mother by getting married symbolizes the heroine's achievement of the status of the subject in the symbolic order. At this point, the heroine performs the patriarchally constructed conventional roles of woman who gives up her own aspirations for attaining a social status and for securing her financial position by getting married to a wealthy man of a higher rank who is "rich as Croesus" (5). The heroine abandons her potential career as a piano player by canceling her concert programmes and instead directs her attention to the expensive dresses, perfume, and jewellery her husband provides her with.

The heroine's mother is not a stereotypical mother whose only expectations for her daughter lie in marriage. The heroine defines her mother, who has an "adventurous girlhood in Indo-China" (1), as follows:

My eagle-featured, indomitable mother; what other student at the Conservatoire could boast that her mother had outfaced a junkful of Chinese pirates, nursed a village through a visitation of the plague, shot a man-eating tiger with her own hand and all before she was as old as I? (1-2)

The heroine's mother, as revealed above, has a free spirit and she has led a life of her own free from the demands of patriarchal society. She had "gladly, scandalously, defiantly beggared herself for love" (2). As Cheryl Renfroe suggests:

Earlier in her life, the mother married for love, not money, and has, as an adult, shown more than the socially accepted level of daring and self-reliance. Presumably, the mother's own past initiatory experiences have caused her to reject certain of society's long-standing edicts for women. (97-8)

Thus, the heroine's mother is a self-assertive and strong woman and being suspicious of the Marquis's intentions, she questions her daughter's decision to marry him: "Are you sure you love him?" "I'm sure I want to marry him", I said. And would say no more. She sighed, as if it was with reluctance that she might at last banish the spectre of poverty from its habitual place at our meagre table" (2). The heroine's answer to her mother's question indicates that she is marrying the Marquis for financial reasons because she knows that he is "[t]he richest man in France" (8). This scene and the heroine's references to the Marquis's wealth throughout the course of the story shows how women are entrapped and oppressed in marriage institution by the economic power of the male. Carter deals with this issue in her work on Sade's heroines:

[R]elationships between the sexes are determined by history and by the historical fact of the economic dependence of women upon men. This fact is now very largely a fact of the past and, even in the past, was only true for certain social groups and then only at certain periods. Today, most women work before, during and after marriage. Nevertheless, the economic dependence of women remains a believed fiction. (Carter, *Sadeian* 6-7)

In this respect, the Marquis's gifts connote male oppression of women through economic dependence. As the heroine admits: "His wedding gift, clasped round my throat. A choker of rubies, two inches wide, like an extraordinarily precious slit throat ... the flashing crimson jewels round her throat, bright as arterial blood" (6). Although the heroine is very much impressed by the gifts the Marquis gives her, the jewellery she receives are associated with imprisonment and murder which foreshadow the heroine's ordeal in the Marquis's castle. The necklace of rubies symbolizes how male economic power objectifies the female as a

possession. And the theme of objectification of women will be much more apparent when the Marquis objectifies his wife by imposing upon her a pornographic role and makes her a slave to his sadistic desires.

The Marquis is much older than the heroine and this indicates that he is experienced: “there were streaks of pure silver in his dark mane. But his strange, heavy, almost waxen face was not lined by experience. Rather, experience seemed to have washed it perfectly smooth” (3). This shows that experience and years have left no remark on his face. In this sense, the Marquis is depicted like a devilish figure who is not affected by the passing years.

In fact, although the Marquis is a representative of the symbolic order who has the power and the wealth at his hand to exert power on women, who perceives women as objects of desire and who separates the heroine from her mother by marrying her, he is an abject figure. Firstly, he is attributed animal characteristics. The heroine draws attention to his leonine shape of his head, and also to his eyes which disturb her “by their absolute absence of light” (3). The Marquis’s association with animal characteristics reveals that he is an abject figure who destabilizes the bodily boundaries and erodes the binaries between the subject and the object. His animalistic side will be much more apparent when he starts to treat his wife as an object to satisfy his sexual desire.

Besides, the Marquis’s abjection is emphasized by his deep attachment to his dead mother’s memory. The opal wedding ring the Marquis gives to the heroine which “had been his own mother’s ring, and his grandmother’s, and her mother’s before that, given to an ancestor by Catherine de Medici ... every bride that came to the castle wore it” (4). This ancestral ring given to all the brides the Marquis has married indicates that he is trying to replace his desire for the mother with a desire for his wife. However, he continuously fails because he has been already married three times, to three beautiful women: “a Romanian countess, a lady of high fashion” who died in a boating accident – another intertextual reference to *Rebecca* – a very beautiful model for a famous painting who died because of her addiction to absinthe, and a renowned opera diva who “dies very young” (4-5). And the heroine is going to be the Marquis’s fourth wife. Every single marriage the Marquis has experienced signifies his attempt to separate from his mother and to become a part of the symbolic order. However, since he has got married for several times, it is understood that he cannot fulfill his desire for the mother. In this sense, it can be claimed that the Marquis has

remained in the pre-Oedipal period and the ring he gives to his wives reflects his attempt to abject his mother in order to achieve the state of the subject in the symbolic order.

Now the Marquis invites “the poor widow’s child with [her] mouse-coloured hair that still bore the kinks of the plaits from which it had so recently been freed, [her] bony hips, [and her] nervous, pianist’s fingers ... to join this gallery of beautiful women” (5). The heroine lacks self-confidence and feels lucky to be the wife of such a powerful man. Since she is seventeen and knows “nothing of the world” (4), she becomes easy prey for the Marquis’s evil intentions. In fact, in conventional Gothic terms, it is her “innocence that captivated him” (16).

The Marquis’s power of seducing women easily is revealed through the heroine’s portrayal of him which is loaded with sexual overtones:

I know it must seem a curious analogy, a man with a flower, but sometimes he seemed to me like a lily. Yes, A lily. Possessed of that strange, ominous calm of a sentient vegetable, like one of those cobra-headed, funereal lilies whose white sheaths are curled out of a flesh as thick and tensely yielding to the touch as vellum. (3-4)

The image of the lily is associated with distant and reserved male subjectivity. By resembling the Marquis to a flower, the heroine, aware of this odd analogy, creates a tempting image of the Marquis with his distant aura. With her depiction of the lilies as cobra-headed, the heroine creates an implication of the male phallus which reveals the image’s connotation of male sexuality. However, these flowers are also funeral lilies and this signifies that the male sexual desire is aggressive and murderous. As Paul Magrs suggests: “The lily stands for an entirely narcissistic male sexuality which can blinker itself as to its own nature and believe itself integral and complete, sufficient unto itself. Or it can appear that way. Carter’s seducers reinvent themselves in order to entrap the people they need” (191). Thus, the Marquis’s being a seducer is emphasized by this image and the heroine’s attraction to him can be observed through her creative analogy. It is not only to the Marquis that the heroine yields, but also to the patriarchal ideology that the Marquis is representative of.

The male gaze and the heroine's subjection to it underline the heroine's subordinate role to the symbolic order. The Marquis's voyeuristic gaze is emphasized to announce his attempt to have total control over his wife. In fact, "he treats his new wife purely as a commodity, an ornament, and a sexual feast for the eyes" (Wisker, "Revenge" 122). The heroine says:

I saw him watching me in the gilded mirrors with the assessing eye of a connoisseur inspecting horseflesh, or even of a housewife in the market, inspecting cuts on the slab I'd never seen, or else had never acknowledged, that regard of his before, the sheer carnal avarice of it; and it was strangely magnified by the monocle lodged in his left eye. When I saw him look at me with lust, I dropped my eyes but, in glancing away from him, I caught sight of myself in the mirror. And I saw myself, suddenly, as he saw me, my pale face, the way the muscles in my neck stuck out like thin wire. I saw how much that cruel necklace became me. And, for the first time in my innocent and confined life, I sensed in myself a potentiality for corruption that took my breath away. (6)

Here Carter inserts her theme of objectifying women as meat which will be developed more in violent representations in the following stories of *The Bloody Chamber* collection. Carter discusses the meaning of "flesh" in the English language by revealing that flesh refers to what is alive and human, and meat refers to what is "dead, inert, animal and intended for consumption" (*Sadeian* 137). Therefore, the scene above hints at "[c]annibalism, the most elementary act of exploitation, that of turning the other directly into a comestible; of seeing the other in the most primitive terms of use" (Carter, *Sadeian* 140). In this respect, the heroine's body is turned into meat by the male gaze and she submissively becomes the object of male desire. Her abjected position as a woman is brought forth in this scene because her flesh is treated as a food item. In this image, the boundaries between food and the female body are annihilated. Eating human flesh evokes repugnance, however by eroticizing the female body as meat to be devoured evokes desire. This indicates that the heroine is moving towards an abject state where there are no boundaries between the subject and the object. In this respect, the heroine's potential to transgress the borders she is surrounded with is foreshadowed. In fact, the heroine is also aroused by being considered as meat for the

Marquis's appetite. This is the reason why she defines her sexual awakening as corruption. Although there is some implication of the heroine's transgressive nature, at this point she is still collaborating with patriarchal rules. She does not yet have an active and autonomous female desire, at this stage of the story.

In Freud's texts, particularly in "The Uncanny", as Moi suggests, the "gaze" is presented as a phallic activity which is linked to the anal desire for sadistic mastery of the object. "As long as the master's scopophilia (i.e. 'love of looking') remains satisfied, his domination is secure" (Moi 133). This is the reason why female sexuality is threatening to the male sexual theories because she has "nothing to be seen". The female sexual organ cannot be discovered because it is on the inside whereas the male organ, being on the outside, is there to be seen. Thus, according to Irigaray, woman becomes a "reproduction" of man, of his own reflection; she is the man's other, his negative or mirror-image; she is the "absence", the "dark continent", at best "a lesser man".

Within this logic, the predominance of the visual, and of the discrimination and individualization of form, is particularly foreign to female eroticism. Woman takes pleasure more from touching than from looking and her entry into a dominant scopic economy signifies, again, her consignment to passivity: she is to be the beautiful object of contemplation. While her body finds itself thus eroticized, and called to a double movement of exhibition and of chaste retreat in order to stimulate the drives of the 'subject,' her sexual organ represents *the horror of nothing to see*. A defect in this systematics of representation and desire. A hole in its scopophilic lens. It is already evident in Greek statuary that this nothing-to-see has to be excluded, rejected, from such a scene of representation. Woman's genitals are simply absent, masked, sewn back up inside their 'crack'. (Irigaray 25-6, original emphasis)

Seeing is a privileged activity which leads to believing. So, what you cannot see cannot be present in this patriarchal logic. As Robbins contends in relation to the quotation above: "For Western culture, says Irigaray, seeing is the place of privilege. What you can't see – or what you can't see easily – can't be there" (152). Then, if the woman does not have a sexual organ that she can speak of, there is not a way of expressing a sexuality of her own. Thus, Irigaray draws attention to the fact that the problem with female sexuality lies in the system of representations which privileges sight and renders women to be the objects of

men's desire. Therefore, all representations of the female body are produced by the male gaze.

However, the heroine's "potentiality for corruption" indicates that the heroine is aware of her own attraction to being an object of gaze. According to the conventional dichotomy of male sexuality as active and female sexuality as passive, "the man will excel in gazing, while the woman will come to find her pleasure in being the object of gaze" (Massé, *Name of Love* 56). Thus, at this stage the heroine's discovery of her own sexuality is framed according to patriarchal benefits. As Manley also argues: "At this point in her story, she accepts the stereotypical patriarchal view of a young girl in relationship to an experienced man; he is to initiate her and to enjoy his conquest" (86).

In "The Bloody Chamber" not only the Marquis's eyes, but also the mirrors surrounding the couple's matrimonial bed reflecting "a dozen husbands approach[ing] in a dozen mirrors ... impale[ing] a dozen brides" (10,14), and even "the gargoyles carved on its surfaces of ebony" (10) render the heroine an objectified spectacle. The heroine's being an object of male desire is emphasized by the heroine's change in her narrative point of view. She refers to herself in the third person when she describes her reflections in the mirrors around the bed. "The young bride, who had become that multitude of girls I saw in the mirrors, identical in their chic navy blue tailor-mades, for travelling, madame, or walking. A maid had dealt with the furs. Henceforth, a maid would deal with everything" (10). The Marquis's sadistic desire is revealed when he says: "'See,' he said, gesturing towards those elegant girls. 'I have acquired a whole harem for myself!'" (10). Thus, the Marquis perceives his wife as a sexual commodity who is bought for his harem. As Carter writes: "The marriage bed is a particularly delusive refuge from the world because all wives of necessity fuck by contract" (*Sadeian* 9). The heroine is bewildered at the Marquis's perception of her as a sexual object in a harem. She says:

Off comes the skirt; and, next, the blouse of apricot linen that cost more than the dress I had for first communion ... his movements seemed to me deliberately coarse, vulgar. The blood rushed to my face again, and stayed there.

And yet, you see, I guessed it might be so - that we should have a formal disrobing of the bride, a ritual from the brothel. Sheltered as my life had been, how could I have failed, even in the

world of prim bohemia in which I lived, to have heard hints of *his* world? (10-11).

At this point, the heroine starts to realize that the Marquis has a kind of living which she cannot understand because of her naivety. The heroine's wedding night is not the one every regular bride dreams of. Her husband's making love to her makes her feel like a prostitute and it is humiliating for her. The pornographic implications in the scene above are used to reveal the Marquis's indulgence in pornography as well as the heroine's fascination with such an experience. What the Marquis makes her experience can be associated with the feelings evoked by the abject. She simultaneously feels horror, repugnance, but also attraction at the sight of the Marquis. The heroine says:

And I began to shudder, like a racehorse before a race, yet also with a kind of fear, for I felt both a strange, impersonal arousal at the thought of love and at the same time a repugnance I could not stifle for his white, heavy flesh that had too much in common with the armfuls of arum lilies that filled my bedroom in great glass jars, those undertakers' lilies with the heavy pollen that powders your fingers as if you had dipped them in turmeric. The lilies I always associate with him; that are white. And stain you. (11).

Her loss of virginity is described as a fight in bed. The Marquis's violent treatment of the heroine makes her suspicious about her husband's real nature. She is in an ambiguous state. She cannot decide whether she has married a cruel man or not.

He lay beside me, felled like an oak, breathing stertorously, as if he had been fighting with me. In the course of that one-sided struggle, I had seen his deathly composure shatter like a porcelain vase flung against a wall; I had heard him shriek and blaspheme at the orgasm; I had bled. And perhaps I had seen his face without its mask; and perhaps I had not. Yet I had been infinitely dishevelled by the loss of my virginity. (14)

Until she finds out the bloody chamber, the heroine will feel content to be the Marquis's object of desire in their matrimonial bed. However, after being left alone in "the faery solitude" (8) of the castle on her wedding night (by a call from an agent in New York

needing her husband for an urgent business to attend to), her growing appetite for the sexual encounters with her husband will show that her sexuality is awakened. Although this is initiated by the Marquis, she develops an active and autonomous desire which makes her yearn to sleep with him. Yet her cravings for him are imbued with abject characteristics. “I lay in bed alone. And I longed for him. And he disgusted me” (19). Through this declaration, the heroine’s masochistic engagement in pornographic exploitation is highlighted once again.

Carter’s characters in her rewritings do not conform to the strictly separated binary oppositions presented in the traditional fairy tales. That is, one cannot find a female character in her stories who is completely victimized, objectified, and pacified. She portrays ambivalent characters who do not have clearly demarcated boundaries. As is seen in “The Bloody Chamber”, the heroine’s innocence, inexperienced nature, and ignorance are combined with her attraction to the Marquis derived from sexual desire and her willingly accepted role of an object for his sexual appetite.

I was not afraid of him; but of myself. I seemed reborn in his unreflective eyes, reborn in unfamiliar shapes. I hardly recognized myself from his descriptions of me and yet, and yet – might there not be a grain of beastly truth in them? And, in the red firelight, I blushed again, unnoticed, to think he might have chosen me because, in my innocence, he sensed a rare talent for corruption. (17)

The patriarchal Gothic plot is a multi-layered one which entraps female characters through numerous ways. In the Gothic novels, women are imprisoned through marriage, stripped off all their property and shut in dungeons, labeled mad and locked in attics, trapped in labyrinthine corridors of gloomy castles and murdered, or chained to marriage beds to be legally raped. Thus, the world of Gothic fiction is perilous for a woman to stroll in it as Carter also reveals in “The Bloody Chamber”.

Before the heroine’s quest in the castle in the absence of her husband starts, the heroine finds out certain clues about the Marquis’s secretive life when she first visits the Marquis’s library. When she browses the bookcase, she finds her husband’s pornographic collection. Shocked by the illustrations she has seen in one of the books, the heroine starts to describe this pornographic illustration:

Yet I had not bargained for this, the girl with tears hanging on her cheeks like stuck pearls, her cunt a split fig below the great globes of her buttocks on which the knotted tails of the cat were about to descend, while a man in black mask fingered with his free hand his prick, that curved upwards like the scimitar he held. The picture has a caption: 'Reproof for curiosity'. (13)

In the traditional version of "Bluebeard", the bride's curiosity is an important theme which lays bare the patriarchal construction of woman. Bluebeard tests his wives' faithfulness to his demands by giving a key to them and by warning them not to enter the room the key opens. When the wives – curious of their husband's secretive attitude – open the door of the room they are forbidden to enter, their betrayal to Bluebeard is punished by death. Carter also deals with this myth of woman whose curious nature needs to be punished. However, she deconstructs this myth of woman as well by rewarding her heroine with an affirmation of female desire and with liberation from confinements of Gothic structures. Her rewriting of this myth will be discussed in detail in the following pages. At this point in the story, the heroine's curiosity about her husband's real identity is satisfied by making her confront the Marquis's indulgence in corrupt sexuality and debauchery. In the Marquis's library, in addition to the illustration she finds, the heroine comes across with another pornographic book titled *The Adventures of Eulalie at the Harem of the Grand Turk* which is "a rare collector's piece" (13) and another steel engraving, "Immolation of the wives of the Sultan".

As is discussed before the female body is constructed as lack and castrated in traditional psychoanalytical theories. The fear of castration is crucial in the process of the boy child's identity formation. In the Oedipal stage, the little boy is separated from the mother and develops his subjectivity through identifying with the father as a figure of authority and moral law and represses his desire for his mother. His repressed desire is incestuous since he wants to replace his father and have his mother as his love object. Seeing that the girl child does not have a penis, the boy-child is afraid of losing his penis like her. "Little boys discover that not every human being has a penis and this leads to traumatic fears of castration to be enacted by the father as punishment for incestuous desire for the maternal body" (Morris 96). Laura Mulvey, in her article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", claims that looking at

the female body and perceiving it as castrated evoke an anxiety of castration in men. In this respect, pornography is perceived as a sadistic pleasure. Mulvey maintains: "Voyeurism ... has associations with sadism: pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt (immediately associated with castration), asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment and forgiveness" ("Visual" 14). In this sense, the Marquis is also portrayed as a sadistic character through his indulgence in voyeurism. When the Marquis catches her innocent wife – whom he calls "my little nun" and "baby" (13) in order to emphasize her sexual innocence – he is aroused by "seeing [her] painful, furious bewilderment" (13). And then the Marquis leads his wife to the bed, and the heroine, stunned, says: "We've not taken luncheon yet; and, besides, it is broad daylight ..." (13). The Marquis's declaration shows how much pleasure he takes from voyeurism when he answers: "All the better to see you" (13).

The Marquis's abject state, his desire for the mother and his association of sexual pleasure with the representation of the castrated mother's body is once again highlighted when he makes the heroine wear the ruby necklace while having sex with her. This necklace, which is described by the heroine as a "choker" (12), is also an ancestral piece of jewellery that belongs to the Marquis's grandmother.

After the Terror, in the early days of the Directory, the aristos who'd escaped the guillotine had an ironic fad of tying a red ribbon round their necks at just the point where the blade would have sliced it through, a red ribbon like the memory of a wound. And his grandmother, taken with the notion, had her ribbon made up in rubies; such a gesture of luxurious defiance! (6).

As is observed in the quotation above, the rubies the heroine wears is associated with death and this is also a foreshadowing of the same fate waiting for the heroine at the end of the story because the Marquis will also try to kill her by putting her in a guillotine. However, at the same time, the rubies signify the Marquis's incestuous desire for the mother and this is observed in his kissing the rubies before he starts to kiss the heroine. Thus, once again Carter emphasizes the Marquis's attempt to unite with his mother and satisfy his desire for her through his wives.

Anolik, in her article "The Missing Mother", announces that "[a]lthough all Gothic women are threatened, no woman is in greater peril in the world of the Gothic than is the

mother” (25). The Western tendency to perceive women in binary oppositions such as virgin and whore, maiden and temptress, angel and monster, good and evil, etc., haunts Gothic fiction as well and for the representation of the mother figure, the popular dichotomy of good and evil is adopted. Anolik indicates that the traditional good mother figure is no help to the development of the Gothic narrative with its connotations of protection, stability, and social control preventing deviance because it disrupts the Gothic plot’s tendency to deviate from the social norms. Therefore, in order to activate the narrative either the evil mother, who commits murder, who abandons her family and elopes with her lover, who tortures and deserts her children, should be inserted into the narrative, or the mother figure should be discarded completely. As Anolik conveys, “if a mother is not evil, she must be dead for the narrative to advance” (29). Thus, the mother figure, which is abjected in identity formation theories, excluded from cultural categories, and disowned by economic paradigms because of its potential of being a threat to the dominant order, is rendered absent literally as well as metaphorically in Gothic fiction.

As is emphasized before in the process of the identity formation, the first thing to be abjected is the mother’s body. Thus, the mother figure is expelled not only from the Gothic world as is discussed above, but also from the theories of identity. “The construction of the mother as the all-powerful, all-enveloping womb, as a place of utter peace – and therefore, death – serves to warn the subject against any attempt at escape from identity and identification with a patriarchal order” (Weir 173). Therefore, Kristeva is disturbed by the notion that constructs the self at the expense of banishing the mother. She is for an identity which carries its (m)other within itself.

In this respect, as is discussed in Chapter 2, Kristeva’s perception of the human subject is different from traditional theories of identity since her theory of abjection promotes a fluid identity, which she calls “subject-in-process”. The subject-in-process anticipates a dynamic relationship between the self and its other rather than the rigid separation of boundaries. In the light of this theory, it can be claimed that the conventional Gothic plot, which discards the mother figure, is subverted through Carter’s insert of the mother figure in “The Bloody Chamber” as a power to destroy the symbolic order and as a prerequisite to be a subject-in-process who overcomes the binaries by affirming the (m)other in herself.

Although the heroine leaves the maternal space and through this separation constructs her autonomous subjectivity and attains her position in the symbolic order through marriage, her moving to a castle “neither on the land nor on the water, a mysterious, amphibious place, contravening the materiality of both earth and the waves” (9), signifies her return to the maternal chora with this abject description. The ambiguous presence of the castle also indicates the blurring of boundaries and therefore carries the potential of subversion.

In fact, the castle is a central metaphor in the Gothic narrative. The dark and mysterious Gothic space is associated with the female body. As Fiedler explains: “beneath the haunted castle lies the dungeon keep: the womb from whose darkness the ego first emerged, the tomb to which it know it must return at last. Beneath the crumbling shell of paternal authority, lies the maternal blackness, imagined by the gothic writer as a prison, as a torture chamber” (132). In this respect, the Marquis’s castle also represents the womb because it is also revealed in the course of the story that the Marquis was born in this castle. The association of the castle with the maternal womb is further emphasized when the heroine smells “the *amniotic* salinity of the ocean” (8, emphasis mine) surrounding the castle.

In this sense, being entrapped in the Gothic castle implies the infant’s inability to separate from the mother’s body which is represented as the womb and the tomb in Freud’s theory of identity development. In other words, the struggle to escape from the castle indicates the infant’s struggle for individuation. The castle, which is a maternal space, is a prison for the Marquis who cannot free himself of. His inability to break away from his mother imprisons him in the abject realm and at the end of the story it will be revealed that his permanent stay in this maternal space has resulted in psychosis. His murdering his wives will imply that his attachment to the mother’s body has turned him into a serial-killer. And this dimension of the “Bluebeard plot” in Carter’s story will be analyzed much more in detail when the heroine discovers the secret room full of the Marquis’s ex-wives’ corpses.

However, for the heroine’s development of subjectivity, the castle has a positive function. Although the amphibious castle and its bloody chamber are designed to be both a prison and a tomb in the story, their abject presence will relate the heroine to the maternal space in order to prepare the grounds for the construction of matriarchal order. The heroine soon will prove that the individuation is not accomplished through escaping from the mother

as it is promoted in the traditional identity theories, but through welcoming her. Up until then, the heroine's sexual cravings for her husband and her husband's detached personality will arouse curiosity in her which will lead her to the bloody chamber where she will start to achieve an individuation based on a dynamic structure: "subject-in-process".

When the Marquis tells the heroine that he has to leave France for six weeks for an urgent business, the heroine feels sad. She does not want her husband to leave her alone in their honeymoon. However, the Marquis's distant behaviour seems to be expressing that he has "had too many honeymoons to find them in the least pressing commitments" (15). At this point, the heroine realizes that her naivety gives him pleasure and the heroine decides to act "the fine lady to the manner born one day, if only by virtue of default" (16). When the Marquis gives her the keys to the chambers in the castle, the heroine is shocked to see there are too many keys on the chain.

I eyed the heavy bunch with circumspection. Until that moment, I had not given a single thought to the practical aspects of marriage with a great house, great wealth, a great man whose key ring was as crowded as that of a prison wader.

Here were the clumsy and archaic keys for the dungeons, ... the keys to the kitchens, ... the key to the picture gallery, ... the key to the china cabinet, ... a key to the locked, barred room where five generations of plate were kept.

Keys, keys, keys. He would trust me with the keys to his office, ... the keys to his safes, where he kept the jewels I should wear. (17-8)

This enormous number of keys emphasizes how imprisoning the Marquis's castle is. In fact, the heroine has been suspicious about her husband's real identity right from the start: "that face ... seemed to me like a mask, as if his real face, the face that truly reflected all the life he had led in the world before he met me, before, even, I was born, as though that face lay underneath this mask. Or else, elsewhere" (3). Her "dark newborn curiosity" to find the real face of her husband, to explore, discover, and learn the hidden life is triggered by the Marquis's tempting words when he gives the keys to all rooms in the castle to his wife but spares one: "'What is *that* key?' I demanded, for his chaffing had made me bold. 'The key to your heart? Give it me!' ... 'Ah, no,' he said. 'Not the key to my heart. Rather, the key to my infer.'" (18, original emphasis). Thus, the analogy of the chamber with the hell reflects the

devilish nature of the Marquis as well as the “divine” punishment that she will receive if she dares to unlock the door of it.

Every man must have one secret, even if only one, from his wife ... promise me you'll use all the keys on the ring except that last little one I showed you. ... All is yours, everywhere is open to you – except the lock that this single key fits. Yet all it is is the key to a little room at the foot of the west tower, behind the still-room, at the end of a dark little corridor ... But you must promise me, if you love me, to leave it well alone. It is only a private study, a hideaway, a ‘den’, as the English say, where I can go, sometimes, on those infrequent yet inevitable occasions when the yoke of marriage seems to weigh too heavily on my shoulders. There I can go, you understand, to savour the rare pleasure of imagining myself wifeless. (18-9)

Giving the exact coordinates to the room, the Marquis guarantees that his wife will be drawn to that room like a moth to a flame. It is not only the Marquis but also the patriarchal Gothic plot that plans to entrap the heroine in that “bloody chamber” because the female, the “other” sex, one of the abject forms which continuously threatens the symbolic order, is wanted dead.

In her article “Initiation and Disobedience: Liminal Experience in Angela Carter’s ‘The Bloody Chamber’”, Renfroe reveals that Carter’s story has “strong associations with the biblical story of the temptation of Eve” (94). In Christian creation mythology, Eve is punished for her curiosity and her disobedience because she eats the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge. In her article, Renfroe refers to Marina Warner’s and Maria Tatar’s studies on Perrault’s “Bluebeard” which also read the “Bluebeard plot” as a version of the Christian doctrine of original sin. Warner, in her seminal work *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers*, suggests:

After Perrault, the story often comes with a subtitle, ‘The Effect of Female Curiosity’, – or, in case we should miss the point – ‘the Fatal Effects of Curiosity’, to bring it in line with cautionary tales about women’s innate wickedness: with Pandora who opened the forbidden casket as well as Eve who ate the forbidden fruit. (244)

In addition, Tatar also draws the same parallel between Bluebeard's wives and Eve: "[B]y opening the door, they willfully insert themselves into an infamous genealogy that can be traced to Eve, even as they play into the hands of husband who is ready to execute them for discovering his secrets" (111). In this context, "Bluebeard the ogre husband plays two parts at least in his own story: the patriarch whose orders must be obeyed on the one hand, and on the other the serpent who seduces by exciting curiosity and desire and so brings death" (Warner 246). In Carter's version of "Bluebeard", the Marquis also plays the same roles mentioned by Warner. That is, he is the patriarch with his wealth, power, aristocratic status and sexual knowledge on the one hand, and on the other hand he is the serpent who tempts his wife sexually and triggers her curiosity for knowledge.

When the Marquis leaves the castle, for the heroine there is nothing to do but to explore the castle. She feels isolated and forlorn because of her husband's treatment of her as an object of desire and his secretive and distant attitude that oppresses her. Lying in bed the whole afternoon, she thinks to herself:

Were there jewels enough in all his safes to recompense me for this predicament? Did all the castle hold enough riches to recompense me for the company of the libertine with whom I must share it? And what, precisely, was the nature of my desirous dread for this mysterious being who, to show his mastery over me, had abandoned me on my wedding night? (19).

The heroine's feelings for her husband are ambiguous. On the one hand, she feels resentment for the way she is being treated. On the other hand, she is craving for "the renewal of his caresses" (19). Then, she suddenly gets suspicious and jealous of him, and thinks: "Might he have left me, not for Wall Street but for an importunate mistress tucked away God knows where who knew how to pleasure him far better than a girl whose fingers had been exercised, hitherto, only by the practice of scales and arpeggios?" (19). Then her yearning to know more about her husband's real identity sets her on a quest in the castle. Before she starts her quest for knowledge, she telephones her mother.

And astonished myself by bursting into tears when I heard her voice.

No, nothing was the matter. Mother, I have gold bath taps.

I said, gold bath taps!
No; I suppose that's nothing to cry about, Mother.
The line was bad, I could hardly make out her
congratulations, her questions, her concern, but I was a little
comforted when I put the receiver down. (21)

In fact, the heroine cannot feel safe in the symbolic order. She feels that the Marquis does not love her, but perceives her as a valuable piece of his pornographic collection. The reason why the heroine calls her mother is an attempt to feel the maternal bond which protects her and saves her from the oppression of the patriarchal order. The mother serves "as a role model for her daughter, as one who has clearly operated outside the normal status quo of community expectations" (Renfroe 97). Thus, the heroine finds the courage to explore the rooms in the castle with the keys in her hand. She says in retrospect: "When I remembered that, I felt the exhilaration of the explorer. ... I was determined, now, to search through them all for evidence of my husband's true nature" (22).

First, she visits the Marquis's office. When she searches his desk and drawers, she cannot find anything personal except for his business files and bills. And her curiosity rises. She says: "And this absence of the evidence for his real life began to impress me strangely; there must, I thought, be a great deal to conceal if he takes such pains to hide it". Then, by chance she finds a secret drawer which contains "a file marked: *Personal*" (23). This file, which she wished she would not find, contains notes and postcard from the Marquis's dead wives. She reads the Romanian Countess's postcard "On the occasion of this marriage to the descendant of Dracula – always remember, 'the supreme and unique pleasure of love is the certainty that one is doing evil'" (24). Once again, the Marquis's abjectness is emphasized by his marriage to a Romanian Countess named Carmilla - a reference to Le Fanu's well-known Gothic novel, *Carmilla*, which is about a female vampire. Thinking that she is not raised to be prepared for these "grown-up games" (24), the heroine decides to learn more about her husband. She hopes that she "might find his real self in his den" (25) which she has been forbidden to enter.

Kahane implies that "[t]he heroine's active exploration of the Gothic house in which she is trapped is also an exploration of her relation to the maternal body" ("Gothic Mirror" 338). When the heroine heads toward the room, she reinforces this notion: "I felt no fear, no intimation of dread. Now, I walked as firmly as I had done in my mother's house" (25). As

she approaches the room by walking through “a long, a winding corridor” which makes her feel as if she “were in the viscera of the castle” (25), the symbolic relation between the castle and the maternal womb is once more underlined. In fact, the strength she gains from imagining her mother’s house shows that the heroine is on her way to abandon her position in the symbolic order. She feels “[n]o fear; but a hesitation, a holding of the spiritual breath” (26).

When she enters the room which surrounds her with absolute darkness as if she were in the maternal womb/tomb, she comes across with “the instruments of mutilation” (26). The bond between the heroine and her mother continues to support the heroine by providing her with courage. She states: “Until that moment, this spoiled child did not know she had inherited nerves and a will from the mother who had defied the yellow outlaws of Indo-China. My spirit drove me on, into that dreadful place, in a cold ecstasy to know the very worst” (26). At last, the heroine learns the true nature of her husband when she meets his ex-wives’ corpses. Thus, the heroine is carried to the abject realm represented by the bloody chamber full of dead bodies. As Kristeva argues:

A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A ‘something’ that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture. (*Powers 2*)

Abjecting her (m)other to form a unitary identity through marriage, now the heroine’s boundaries are threatened by the corpses, the abject in its ultimate form, as Kristeva declares, as soon as she enters the chamber. According to Kristeva, in this form of abject the border between death and life is dissolved. The subject faces with the ultimate Other, in the form of a corpse signifying death “infecting” the body, life. Thus, the abject in the form of a corpse annihilates the boundaries between self and other and reminds the subject that one day he will cease to exist. In this respect, the bloody chamber has an abject presence which invites the heroine to blur her most essential boundaries, those between existence and non-

existence. Kahane also indicates that the heroine of a conventional Gothic plot “discovers a secret room sealed off by its association with death. In this dark, secret center of the Gothic structure, the boundaries of life and death themselves seem confused” (“Gothic Mirror” 334). Similar to the conventional Gothic plot then, the heroine of “The Bloody Chamber” also discovers the dead bodies of her husband’s previous wives which expose the cruel dimensions of patriarchal dominance over the female body. However, in contrast to the conventional Gothic plot, instead of trapping the heroine in that chamber, Carter subverts this development in the plot and rescues her from being imprisoned in the patriarchal order with attributing an abject presence to the chamber.

As soon as the heroine sees the corpses, she steps into the world of abject to become a subject-in-process who embraces its (m)other instead of rejecting it. At this point, her strictly demarcated boundaries of her identity are disrupted. According to Kristeva’s definition, the abject “beseeches, worries, fascinates desire” (*Powers* 1). The corpses in the chamber reflect the very nature of the abject as well; they evoke horror and loathing while they exert desire and attraction. This is the reason why the heroine’s excitement and attraction to the brutal scenery are revealed through elegant imagery which has pornographic overtones.

And yet enough, oh more than enough, to see a room designed for desecration and some dark night of unimaginable lovers whose embraces were annihilation. ... The opera singer lay, quite naked, under a thin sheet of very rare and precious linen ... I touched her, very gently, on the white breast; she was cool, he had embalmed her. On her throat I could see the blue imprint of his strangler’s fingers. The worst thing was, the dead lips smiled. (26-7)

The opera singer’s smile on her face shows that she is satisfied. She has been a victim of the Marquis’s aggressive sexual exploitation and her dead body has become a pornographic spectacle kept in the Marquis’s “little museum of his perversity” (27) for exhibition. The heroine continues to relate her observations of the chamber:

As my eyes accustomed themselves to the gathering darkness, I at last – oh, horrors! – made out a skull; yes, a skull ... strung up by a system of unseen cords, so that it appeared to hang, disembodied,

in the still, heavy air ...Yet, the skull was still so beautiful, had shaped with its sheer planes so imperiously the face that had once existed above it (27).

What the heroine sees is the corpse of the Marquis's second wife, a barmaid, whose face and naked body has become famous by being painted by famous artists. The heroine remembers her from "the Redon engraving ... *The Evening Star Walking on the Rim of Night*" (5). Now, she recognizes her and observes that her dead body with the "face of the evening star walking on the rim night" (27) has exactly become the famous painting. Thus, it is emphasized that the Marquis has turned his wives into art objects by killing them.

And the Marquis's last wife's, the Romanian Countess's dead body is portrayed with images of penetration symbolizing the male sexual power which victimizes women: "She was pierced, not by one but by a hundred spikes" (28). In this respect, these images blur the line between not only life and death but also sexuality and death and they signify the heroine's crossing the boundaries of her existence to engage with her other.

Manley in her article titled "The Woman in Process in Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber'" demonstrates that the heroine "is extremely curious, and her curiosity actually helps her in her process toward womanhood: she is not only curious about the locked room, but she is also curious about marriage ... and about sex" (88). Manley refers to Mulvey's "Pandora: Topographies of Mask and Curiosity" in which

Mulvey argues that one can interpret woman's curiosity for such spaces as actually being curiosity about the nature being female, including the nature of female sexuality. Carter's bride, then, marries partly because she is curious about sex; Mulvey sees her curiosity about the locked room as a symbol for curiosity about female sexuality. The knowledge the protagonist gains from the forbidden room is thus knowledge of herself. (Manley 88)

In this respect, the corpses in the chamber with their abject presence evoke repulsion, but simultaneously desire in the heroine. This scene reminds her of the violent separation from the (m)other in the pre-Oedipal period in psychoanalytical terms. Therefore, she steps into the maternal space where the boundaries between self and other are blurred and merge into one another. In other words, the heroine is reminded of the symbiotic relationship between the mother and the child in which the child thinks that they are one. In this sense, the

abjectness of the chamber takes the heroine back to the semiotic stage where she can reconstruct her maternal bond and develop her subjectivity according to the maternal principle rather than the paternal principle represented by the Marquis which oppresses and imprisons her.

Besides, apart from its association with the (m)other, the chamber represents female sexuality which is repressed and rendered passive by the patriarchal construction of sexuality. As is discussed before, the secret chambers, dungeons and enclosed spaces are associated with the threat of female sexuality. In this respect, when the heroine finds out the chamber, she also acknowledges her sexual desire which has been awakened by the Marquis. When she gets out of the chamber, she will have a newly constructed subjectivity liberated from patriarchal authority as well as a female desire which is not defined in male terms. However, like Eve, although the heroine gains knowledge both about herself and sexuality (in Carter's story the knowledge of the husband's true nature is also added to the myth of original sin) through enactment of her free-will, the patriarchal God, represented by the Marquis is waiting for her to punish her disobedience and rebellious curiosity.

Before moving onto the Marquis's and the heroine's encounter with each other, it is significant to discuss the function of the chamber in highlighting the Marquis's abjection as well. By killing his wives and exhibiting their dead bodies as pornographic spectacles, the Marquis is also trying hard to separate himself from his mother. As Mulvey states:

Although on the face of it, representations of female eroticized beauty ... celebrate male pleasure in the female body as object of gaze and sexual enjoyment, in psychoanalytic terms the female body is also a source of anxiety, constantly threatening to return the subject to an original, traumatic, repressed memory of castration. ... Furthermore, this sight may well be of the mother's body, already the first locus of erotic feelings but also of disgust, the point where the subject first finds the need to draw lines of bodily separation and autonomy. Freud argues that, if the trauma is too severe, the male psyche may react to the anxiety with an excessive response, erecting a complex defense mechanism in compensation. These processes of disavowal give rise to fetishism. ("Pandora" 68)

Thus, the erotically exhibited corpses of the Marquis's ex-wives reveal the Marquis's ambiguous feelings for his mother. On the one hand, it can be claimed that his desire for the

mother is still alive which can be observed in his attempt to replace his desire for the mother by getting married for four times and in his providing his wives with wedding gifts which belong to his mother or maternal ancestors. The opal ring, the ruby necklace, even the ancestral bed he shares with his wives have a symbolic significance which indicate that he is trying to reconstruct his maternal bond through his wives. However, at the same time, he is threatened by castration because his incestuous desire for the mother is to be punished by the father, who is the Law that separates the mother and the boy child in traditional psychoanalytical theories by reminding the child that his symbiotic relationship can end by being castrated like the girl child. Therefore, as is revealed in the quotation above, if the separation from the mother is too traumatic, the male may struggle to deal with his anxiety of castration in excessive ways. In this respect, the Marquis, suffering from castration anxiety, finds an extreme way to deal with it: his violent act of murdering his wives is a reflection of his attempts to abject his mother in order to become a subject in the symbolic order. In fact, it can be claimed that he uses his social status, wealth, and power, which are the patriarchal values in the symbolic order, in order to hide his abjection.

Warner argues that Perrault's "Bluebeard" is a fairy tale "which thrills like a Hitchcock film before its time, it foreshadows thriving twentieth-century fantasies about serial killers and Jack the Rippers" (241). In this sense, Carter's Marquis is also a serial killer who has murdered his three wives (and preparing the conditions to murder his latest bride) in order to cope with his castration anxiety deriving from his incestuous desire for the mother. In relation to this approach, not only his desire for the mother, but also his being a serial killer signifies the Marquis's abjection. As Kristeva says:

The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior.... Any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject, but premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of such fragility. He who denies morality is not abject; there can be grandeur in amorality and even in crime that flaunts its disrespect for the law – rebellious, liberating and suicidal crime. Abjection, on the other hand, is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you.... (*Powers* 4).

Kristeva argues that in order to become a subject-in-process an individual's identity should reside on the threshold between the semiotic realm and the symbolic realm. That is, if the individual remains in the semiotic phase permanently, his or her abjection will result in psychosis or if the individual completely attains his or her subject status in the symbolic order, he or she will live up to oppressive patriarchal values. As Becker-Leckrone suggests: "Kristeva puts no faith in the unified, autonomous, sovereign, rational, conscious subject who strives onward and upward toward idealist perfection" (23). Therefore, the individual should not totally separate himself or herself from the (m)other, but he or she should be a member of the symbolic order as well. Only then the individual can become a subject-in-process who still remains a subject on the condition that he or she carries the (m)other in himself or herself. As Cecilia Sjöholm argues:

Any human subject would then be situated between a paternal and a maternal axes ... A singular insistence on the maternal path must end in failure. A single-minded father-identification, on the other hand, entails a perverted rejection of the maternal side as a vile force of irrationality, corporeal drives and infantile needs. (49-50)

Thus, in her story, Carter adopts representations of abject desire in her portrayals of both the Marquis and the heroine. However, while the Marquis's abjection is revealed with negative characteristics which renders him a serial-killer and which reflects his misogyny resulting from his inability to separate from the mother because of his extreme desire for her, the heroine's abjection is imbued with positive characteristics which helps her to reconstruct her bond with the (m)other and saves her from the tyranny of the patriarchal order.

After her experience in the chamber, the heroine realizes that her life is at stake. She decides to call her mother for help, but she finds that "the line, of course, was dead. Dead as his wives" (29). She tries to find relief in thinking that her husband is leaving France for New York at that very hour and he will not be back for a long time. Thus, she can run away from the castle by arranging a train ticket. However, she is still panic-stricken and strives to calm herself through her music.

I opened the lid of the piano; perhaps I thought my own particular magic might help me, now, that I could create a pentacle out of music that would keep me from harm for, if my music had first ensnared him, then might it not also give me the power to free myself from him? (30)

In fact, her music is also a way for her to find courage through her maternal bond because it is her mother who has supported her to attain a career as a musician. As is revealed before, her mother has even sold her wedding ring to pay the fees at the Conservatoire. As Manley also states: “Her mother’s story helps give the protagonist courage, and her mother’s having provided her with the opportunity to study music ultimately gives her daughter both courage and stability” (87). The heroine declares: “I set myself the therapeutic task of playing all Bach’s equations, every one, and, I told myself, if I played them all through without a single mistake – then the morning would find me once more a virgin” (30). At this point, the heroine realizes that the marriage institution she has willingly welcomed is now threatening her life. She associates her music with her virgin state because her aspiration to become a talented musician was rooted in her childhood while she was still living with her mother. Thus, she yearns to return to the semiotic stage in which she can feel her mother’s protection and remain a virgin instead of being victimized by the symbolic order.

While she is playing the piano, the blind piano-tuner, Jean-Yves, enters the music room hearing her music. Jean Yves’s interest in her music, his compliments about her being a virtuoso, and his kindness give her the courage to share her knowledge about her husband with him. She tells him “everything, the keys, the interdiction, [her] disobedience, the room, the rack, the skull, the corpses, the blood” (32). The blind piano-tuner also shares the strange rumours about the Marquis he has heard around. He reveals that a stranger once told him “this place is the Castle of Murder” (32).

Then, both of them hear the sound of the Marquis’s car and understand that he has come back. They quickly try to put the spared key of the bloody chamber into the key ring, but they both notice that the key is still wet with blood. Frightened at the sight of the corpses in the chamber, the heroine had dropped the key into the pool of blood on the ground of the room. Now, although she washes the key in hot water, the stain does not come off. The heroine desperately announces: “the more I scrubbed the key, the more vivid grew the stain”

(33). Then, she sends Jean-Yves away and runs to her bedroom in order to welcome the Marquis as if nothing happened. When the Marquis enters the bedroom and explains the reason why he has returned so soon, the heroine knows that he is lying.

I did not believe one word of it. I knew I had behaved exactly according to his desires; had he not bought me so that I should do so? ... I must pay the price of my new knowledge. The secret of Pandora's box; but he had given me the box, himself, knowing I must learn the secret. I had played a game in which every move was governed by a destiny as oppressive and omnipotent as himself, since that destiny was himself; and I had lost. Lost at that charade of innocence and vice in which he had engaged me. Lost, as the victim loses to the executioner. (34)

At this moment, the heroine realizes that there is no way out of this male Gothic plot and she will be the next victim of her cruel husband. The Marquis purposefully asks about the keys and the heroine tries to distract his attention on the keys by forcing herself to be seductive. This time the mirrors around the ancestral bed show a different image of her. She says: "I saw myself, pale, pliant as a plant that begs to be trampled underfoot, a dozen vulnerable, appealing girls reflected in as many mirrors, and I saw how he almost failed to resist me. If he had come to me in bed, I would have strangled him, then" (34-5). Manley interprets this scene as follows: "She nearly succeeds in seducing him, and she now thinks herself capable of changing his determination of her story. ... She is no longer naïve about her situation, though she may be naïve about her courage and ability to kill her husband" (86). However, the Marquis insists that she should bring the keys to him immediately. When the heroine comes back to their bedroom with the keys in her hand hoping that her husband will not notice the bloody stain on the key, she finds him on the bed,

his head sunk in his hands.

And it seemed to me he was in despair.

Strange. In spite of my fear of him, that made me whiter than my wrap, I felt there emanate from him, at that moment, a stench of absolute despair, rank and ghastly, as if the lilies that surrounded him had all at once begun to fester, or the Russian leather of his scent were reverting to the elements of flayed hide and excrement of which it was composed. (35)

As is observed in the quotation above, the Marquis, sure of his wife's betrayal to him, is waiting for her in despair as if he resented for what he has to do. In fact, this scene can be interpreted as a sign for the Marquis's awareness of his abjection. He feels devastated to find out that his fourth wife has also acted as he expected. Now he has to kill her because she triggers his anxiety of castration. She has learned his bloody secret which lays bare his failure to overcome his desire for his mother. "The atrocious loneliness of that monster!", says the heroine feeling pity for "this man who lived in such strange, secret places" (35). However, the Marquis does not feel pity for her. He is determined to punish his wife for her knowledge of him and for her disobedience to him by decapitation. "Kneel!", he orders her. The heroine says: "I knelt before him and he pressed the key lightly on my forehead, held it there for a moment. I felt a faint tingling of the skin and, when I involuntarily glanced at myself in the mirror, I saw the heart-shaped stain had transferred itself to my forehead" (36). Thus, her fate is written by the Marquis's hands onto her forehead. And at the end of the story, she will declare that "[n]o paint nor powder, no matter how thick or white, can mask the red mark on my forehead ... my shame" (42). Atwood states that the Marquis "has left her not only with a blood-red ruby necklace round her neck, but with a blood-red brand on her forehead; a mark – to those who remember that other rewriter of folk tales, Hawthorne – of the imperfect and human stain of sexual passion"¹⁵ (124). However, at this moment the heroine senses that she has "another fate" (36) to be written by her mother which foreshadows the radical twist Carter gives to the "Bluebeard plot".

Then, the heroine, obeying the Marquis's orders, bathes herself, wears a white dress, puts on the ruby choker, and starts to wait for the Marquis in the music room. The blind piano-tuner is there to provide the heroine with some comfort.

'You do not deserve this,' he said.
 'Who can say what I deserve or no?' I said. 'I've done
 nothing; but that may be sufficient reason for condemning me.'
 'You disobeyed him,' he said. 'That is sufficient reason for
 him to punish you.'
 'I only did what he knew I would.'
 'Like Eve,' he said. (38)

¹⁵ Atwood refers to Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

Thus, the analogy between the heroine and Eve is overtly emphasized by the conversation between Jean-Yves and the heroine above. The Marquis, acting the role of the patriarchal God, will punish her for curiosity and sexual knowledge. The heroine tries to prepare herself for her punishment in the form of decapitation and as soon as she welcomes her horror, she immediately steps into the realm of the maternal feminine as is evident in the following words: “Courage. When I thought of courage, I thought of my mother” (38). The heroine identifies herself with her mother and she calls for the semiotic power to save her. It is the intuitive call of her (m)other that has drawn her to that bloody room and it will be the same mother who will take her out of this murderous plot. When the heroine hears the “hoofbeats” and sees “[a] rider, her black skirts tucked up around her waist so she could ride hard and fast, a crazy, magnificent horsewoman in widow’s weeds” (38), she realizes that it is her mother who has come to save her. However, in the meantime, the Marquis, with a sword in his hand preparing his victim for execution, puts the heroine’s neck on a block to cut it off. “And – a great battering and pounding at the gate, the jangling of the bell, the frenzied neighing of a horse! The unholy silence of the place shattered in an instant. The blade did *not* descend, the necklace did *not* sever, my head did *not* roll” (40, original emphasis). With the intrusion of the mother in the “Bluebeard plot”, which has designed a fate for women to be oppressed and murdered by the patriarchal values, economic paradigms, oppressive roles, aggressive male desire and the male gaze, the traditional Oedipal plot cannot function anymore. The mother figure can reverse power mechanisms functioning in a Gothic text as is observed in the heroine’s marginal mother’s murdering of the patriarchal figure represented by the Marquis. The mother figure promises a new future for the heroines who are to be victimized in order to move the Gothic plot. In this sense, Carter’s portrayal of the mother in “The Bloody Chamber” transgresses the patriarchal definitions of women, overcomes the hierarchical binaries between men and women, and blurs the boundaries between self and other constructed by traditional psychoanalytical theories. Carter’s subversion of the conventional Gothic plot through her rewriting the end of “Bluebeard” is evident in her depiction of the heroine’s marginal mother as follows:

You never saw such a wild thing as my mother, her hat seized by the winds and blown out to sea so that her hair was her white mane, her black lisle legs exposed to the thigh, her skirts tucked round

her waist, one hand on the reins of the rearing horse while the other clasped my father's service revolver and, behind her, the breakers of the savage, indifferent sea, like the witnesses of a furious justice. And my husband stood stock-still, as if she had been Medusa, the sword still raised over his head as in those clockwork tableaux of Bluebeard that you see in glass cases at fairs. (40)

At the end of the story then, the heroine is not saved by her brothers as it is in Perrault's version of the tale, but by her mother. As is emphasized before, this rewritten end subverts the conventional Gothic plot which expels the mother figure. Through Carter's adoption of the "good" mother figure as a power to destroy the symbolic order, the end of the story symbolizes the victory of maternal courage over the patriarchal Gothic plot chasing women in the dark corridors of the maternal space whether to imprison or kill them. As the heroine says: "On her eighteenth birthday, my mother had disposed of a man-eating tiger that had ravaged the villages in the hills north of Hanoi. Now, without a moment's hesitation, she raised my father's gun, took aim and put a single, irreproachable bullet through my husband's head" (41).

This end glorifies the victory of the semiotic over the symbolic. It is "the *maternal telepathy* that sent my mother running headlong from the telephone to the station after I had called her, that night. I never heard you cry before, she said, by way of explanation. Not when you were happy. And who ever cried because of gold bath taps?" (41, original emphasis).

This end asserts the power of the abject over the subject-object dichotomy. It destroys "the women's subjective sexuality and their objective role as property" (Makinen 4) as is observed in the heroine's depiction of the Marquis's dead body. "The puppet master, open-mouthed, wide-eyed, impotent at last, saw his dolls break free of their strings, abandon the rituals he had ordained for them since time began and start to live for themselves; the king, aghast, witnesses the revolt of his pawns" (40). Besides, the bloody chamber which invites the heroine to the abject realm saves her life through making her embrace her (m)other and liberating her from the oppression of the symbolic order. In Makinen's words, "the curiosity of women is rewarded rather than punished" at the end of the story (4).

This end celebrates the victory of the "subject-in-process" over the male gaze. "The castle is now a school for the blind, though I pray that the children who live there are not

haunted by any sad ghosts looking for, crying for, the husband who will never return to the bloody chamber, the contents of which are buried or burned, the door sealed” (41). Thus, the school for the blind and the heroine’s and her mother’s life with the blind piano-tuner emphasize that the male gaze is no longer a threat for them.

This end, unlike the patriarchal Gothic plot, blesses the heroine and her mother with happy life ever after, as subjects-in-process. As Patricia Duncker observes: “In fact, the bond between the Mother and Daughter is never broken. Carter’s tale, perhaps unwittingly, carries an uncompromisingly feminist message; for the women’s revolution would seal up the door of the bloody chamber forever” (12).

4.5 Purr! (M)other Nature Is Calling You!: Abject Representations of Female Desire in Angela Carter’s Feline Stories

Carter’s three stories, “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, “The Tiger’s Bride”, “Puss-in-Boots” in *The Bloody Chamber* collection, are based on cats: a lion, a tiger, and a domesticated cat presented as major figures. As Makinen declares: “the wild felines have signified the sensual desires that women need to acknowledge within themselves” (11) in these stories. The first two tales mentioned above are fierce rewritings of Madame Leprince de Beaumont’s “Beauty and the Beast”, and the last one, completely different from its predecessors, is a playful and funny revisiting of the original “Puss in Boots”. And this part of the study will mainly focus on Carter’s two rewritings of “Beauty and the Beast”, “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”, in which not only the beasts but also the beauties are represented with animal characteristics.

In his introduction to the collection of Angela Carter’s short stories, Rushdie writes: “It is Carter’s genius, in this collection, to make the fable of Beauty and the Beast a metaphor for all the myriad yearnings and dangers of sexual relations” (*Burning* xii). These revisited “Beauty and the Beast” stories deconstruct patriarchal representations of women and they display fluid identities as well as polymorphous sexualities which subvert the original tale in terms of gender politics.

In these stories bestiality is the dominant representation of abjection. The male characters are represented in abject bestial forms in order to awaken the beast in the female

characters. That is, the female characters awaken to an animalistic desire which is culturally used to define male active libido. Thus, female sexuality is redefined as active rather than passive and receptive. Reciprocally, the female characters help the Beasts to discover the beauty in them by taming, in other words, by pacifying them. As a result, by achieving a hybrid state and by becoming subjects-in-process in Kristevan sense, both the male and the female characters in these stories subvert the patriarchal gender definitions. Besides, by claiming their subjectivity, the beauties of these stories reject their roles as victims of male sexuality, which is portrayed as an oppressive threat in the traditional Gothic plot.

In addition, these two recasted stories based on “Beauty and the Beast” reverse the Oedipal narrative of the traditional Gothic which reflects the female characters as the objects of male desire and as the rewards that the heroes win at the end of their Oedipal quest. In the classical version of “Beauty and the Beast”, Beauty’s Oedipal attachment to her father is replaced by her marriage to the Beast who turns into a handsome prince in the end. The Beast also ends his Oedipal journey by getting married to Beauty and attaining his position in the symbolic order. In Carter’s stories, the formulaic narrative of the Male Gothic is subverted by a portrayal of the heroines’ quest in search of a female desire outside patriarchal dynamics. Female desire is repositioned in feminist terms and the cultural myth of the predominant Oedipal pattern is destroyed. The beauties of these stories provide their own endings through their experiences with their abjected position in the symbolic order.

“The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride” can be regarded as two stories which complement each other. “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” is not as radically rewritten as “The Tiger’s Bride”, which is perceived as the “dark twin-piece” (Crunelle-Vanrigh 128) of the former, because Carter wants it to be a smooth introduction for the following tale which overtly announces that the female Other “need not be human ... [and] cannot simply be classified as a passive object awaiting the impressions of an active desiring subject. The other, this otherness, solicits, beckons, implores, provokes and demands” (Grosz, “Animal Sex” 286). “The Tiger’s Bride” then is a complementary story of “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” in terms of developing the animal imagery in more excessive forms.

As is emphasized before, the Gothic tradition is characterized by transgression, ambiguity and excess. The half-human and half-animal characters represent the ambiguity which lies at the root of many Gothic works. These characters not only signify bodily

hybridity, but also highlight the fact that an animal figure ceases to represent a brutal force by being attributed human characteristics. It is this ambiguity which grants the Gothic a polymorphous nature rather than a fixed, unstable, and unchanging one.

In the traditional Gothic, animal figures represent evil as a distortion of human nature, a demonic possession, an alien force residing in the unconscious, and repressed emotions such as guilt or sexuality. For instance, Poe's cat with one eye in "The Black Cat" symbolizes the narrator's conscience and his repressed guilt from murdering his wife. In this sense, animality is linked to brutality and it gains a psychological and spiritual dimension in conventional Gothic works. It shows that the unconscious is full of with animal instincts which find expression in violent acts. However, what Carter proposes through these beast stories is that human beings are more inhuman than animals, particularly in their treatment of one another in heterosexual relationships. Therefore, animality is redefined in positive terms, particularly when it is used for representing female subjectivity. Since animal figures are adopted to represent Otherness in these stories and Carter promotes an identity which constructs itself through embracing this Otherness, the animal Other in this sense is what constitutes a fluid identity free from strictly positioned subject in the symbolic order. Thus, rather than associating animals with cruelty, Carter makes them liberating figures which cast off gender roles in order to propose a utopian heterosexual relationship free from the oppressor/oppressed, active/passive, predator/prey and victimizer/victimized binaries.

Narrated from the third person point of view, "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" is based on the basic plot line of Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast". As Crunelle-Vanrigh suggests in her article "'The Logic of the Same and Différance: 'The Courtship of Mr Lyon'": "Carter thus creates a double textuality, relying on imitation *and* insistent differentiation. Her text depends on intertextuality and pastiche to proclaim its sense of belonging *and* simultaneously on anachronism and travesty to advertise its difference" (129, original emphasis). While the story clings on the fairy tale tradition with its "once upon a time" atmosphere, Carter's use of anachronism such as broken car, taxi, shrilling telephone, and Beauty's photograph alienate the reader. The bridge from the fairy tale world to the contemporary one is built through Carter's skillful adoption of anachronism. Thus, she finds the opportunity to subvert traditional representations by emphasizing difference at all levels. Not only does she underline the difference between the two worlds of Beaumont's classical version and her

rewritten story, but also in the rest of the story she reveals the difference between the gender policies of Beaumont's and her own tale.

The intertextual characteristic of "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" shows itself from the very beginning of the story. Beauty is portrayed with references to "Snow White" and "Cinderella" which underline the domestic character of the heroine in order to show that she conforms to conventional gender roles.

Outside her kitchen window, the hedgerow glistened as if the snow possessed a light of its own; when the sky darkened towards evening, an unearthly, reflected pallor remained behind upon the winter's landscape, while still the soft flakes floated down. This lovely girl, whose skin possesses that same, inner light so you would have thought she, too, was made all of snow, pauses in her chores in the mean kitchen to look out at the country road" (43).

The heroine's beauty and purity presented by the portrayal of the image of Snow White and her busying herself with the housework indicate that she is a typical patriarchal construction of woman. As a dutiful daughter, she is waiting for her father to come back home from a meeting with his lawyers who have informed him that he is financially ruined. However, her father's car is stuck in a rut and he will not be able to get home for a while.

Learning that he has lost all his fortune and lamenting on his not even having enough money to buy his Beauty the white rose she wants, the father abandons his car to look for help. The Gothic atmosphere of the story is introduced when the heroine's father comes across Mr Lyon's mansion. Thinking that the owner of the house can help him to find a way to fix his car, he approaches

a miniature, perfect, Palladian house that seemed to hide itself shyly behind snow-laden skirts of an antique cypress. It was almost night; that house, with its sweet, retiring melancholy grace, would have seemed deserted but for a light flickered in an upstairs window ... The gate clanged loudly shut behind him; too loudly. For an instant, that reverberating clang seemed final. Emphatic, ominous as if the gate, now closed, barred all within it from the world outside the walled, wintry garden. And, from a distance, though from what distance he could not tell, he heard the most

singular sound in the world: a great roaring, as of a beast of prey.
(44)

The horror is set with the seemingly deserted mysterious house and the roaring sound of a beast of prey. The father knocks on the door with a golden knocker of a lion's head and the door opens of its own accord. After a while, he is greeted by a King Charles spaniel and directed to a snug study in which he finds a telephone to call the garage. Arranging a mechanic, the father leaves the house and picks a white rose he has seen in the garden of the house for his daughter. As soon as he picks the rose, he hears the furious roaring again, but this time the sound is very close to him. At this point, the plot presents its Gothic creature, Mr Lyon; as his name implies, a lion with human traits.

There is always a dignity about great bulk, an assertiveness, a quality of being more *there* than most of us are. The being who now confronted Beauty's father seemed to him, in his confusion, vaster than the house he owned, ponderous yet swift, and the moonlight glittered on his great, mazy head of hair, on the eyes green as agate, on the golden hairs of the great paws that grasped his shoulders so that their claws pierced the sheepskin as he shook him like an angry child shakes a doll. (46, original emphasis)

The Beast's dreadful entrance turns into the childish behaviour of shaking the father like a doll. Like a child, he asks for what he possesses, the rose stolen by the father. In fact, the white rose symbolizes Beauty's unspoiled and virgin self. Beauty is represented as the ideal woman constructed by the patriarchal order as beautiful, pure, innocent, selfless, nursing, faithful, passive and having no desire of her own. The father's identification of his daughter with the white rose can be detected in the description of the rose which is the "one last, single, perfect rose that might have been the last rose left living in all the white winter" (46) because his daughter is the only family he has. The father picks the rose thinking that his host would not deny Beauty her present, but the Beast accuses him of being a thief. The white rose then becomes an issue of ownership between the father and the Beast. Explaining that he has picked the rose for his daughter whose only demand from her father is a single white rose, the father shows the photograph of his daughter to the Beast as a proof. Looking at the photograph, the Beast implies that he can forgive the father with the condition of exchanging the white rose for Beauty. At this point, Beauty becomes the object of the Beast's desire.

Carter reveals that Beauty's physical attractiveness is trade material in a male-dominated world. However, conventionally a woman's beauty is not enough. This beauty should also be accompanied with a benevolent heart and Beauty's photograph overtly relates this message: "The camera had captured a certain look she had, sometimes of absolute sweetness and absolute gravity, as if her eyes might pierce appearances and see your soul" (47). Beauty reflects the culturally constructed all-giving woman who has a potential to love unconditionally. It is foreshadowed by these words that Beauty's mission is to see the beauty in the Beast.

The father loves his daughter very much. However, he is a typical patriarch who perceives his daughter in conventional gender terms. He describes her as "his pet" (43), not as an autonomous human and he does not hesitate one moment when the Beast offers him an exchange: "'Take her the rose, then, but bring her to dinner,' he growled; and what else was there to be done?" (47). In the stories of *The Bloody Chamber*, roses are frequently adopted as metaphors to emphasize the condition of the female as commodity in the patriarchal society. Thus, the white rose the father insists on finding for his daughter represents Beauty's condition as the exchange object as was indicated before. Day explains the narrator's question regarding to the helplessness of the father under such circumstances in terms of "an agreement based on the idea of an impersonal, unalterable law of contract. Carter's sly question emphasizes his [the father's] accession and questions its grounds. Outside this system, quite a number of other things might be done" (Day 137). Thus, Beauty, as her name also suggests, is objectified in the male-dominated society. As Irigaray states:

The society we know, our own culture, is based upon the exchange of women. Without the exchange of women, we are told, we would fall back into the anarchy (?) of the natural world, the randomness (?) of the animal kingdom. The passage into the social order, into the symbolic order, into order as such, is assured by the fact that men, or groups of men, circulate women among themselves, according to a rule known as the incest taboo. (170)

Carter shows that even the animal kingdom has an economic system of exchange. The difference between the father and the Beast at this stage is only the Beast's being a "roaring" patriarch.

Before attending the Beast's dinner, the father informs his daughter about the nature of their host, Mr Lyon: "Head of a lion; mane and mighty paws of a lion; he reared on his hind legs like an angry lion yet wore a smoking jacket of dull red brocade and was the owner of that lovely house and the low hills that cupped it" (47). She gives an instinctive shudder of fear when she first meets the Beast: "for a lion is a lion and a man is a man". Beauty's assumption is based on this binary opposition which clearly defines the boundaries between human beings and animals and her assumption is shattered by the ambiguous representation of the Beast who transgresses these borders. The Beast's leonine appearance indicates that he has that fierce, wild, merciless nature of the king of animal kingdom who attacks, tortures and devours his prey. However, Carter subverts the bestial representation of the Beast by portraying him as a vulnerable child. Beauty's fear turns into pity when she observes "some kind of sadness in his agate eyes, that looked almost blind, as if sick of sight, moved her heart" (47).

The Beast's abject status is emphasized at the dinner. He admits that he does not like the presence of servants in the house and upon this, Beauty thinks that "a constant human presence would remind him too bitterly of his otherness" (48). Therefore, the Beast prefers a spaniel as a servant in order not to feel his otherness as an animal. The abject is described by Kristeva as a condition which fascinates and simultaneously evokes repulsion, and this is what Beauty feels when she meets the Beast: "How strange he was. She found his bewildering difference from herself almost intolerable; its presence choked her" (48). However, the abject form Beauty sees draws her to the abject state as well. As Becker-Leckrone argues:

'Neither subject nor object,' 'abjection' names not a thing but a potentiality, a gravitational field that summons the subject from its proper place to a no-man's land where the subject is not only 'beside himself' but also almost cease to be. Abjection's power of horror derives from the fact that the subject is ex-statistically drawn from its proper domain to this "land of oblivion" at the same time that the subject is repulsed. (33)

In this respect, by the sight of the Beast, Beauty is drawn to the "land of oblivion" and confronts the abject. As long as Beauty stays with the Beast, she will start to inhabit the abject realm as well. Carter not only adopts "the anthropomorphic motif" (Crunelle-Vanrigh

133) for the portrayal of the Beast, but also for the portrayal of Beauty as well: “when she saw the great paws lying on the arm of his chair, she thought: they are the death of any tender herbivore. And such a one she felt herself to be, Miss Lamb, spotless, sacrificial” (48). At this point, Carter’s recurrent theme of the female body as meat is observed.

The murderous attacks on the victims demonstrate the abyss between the parties to the crime, an abyss of incomprehension that cannot be bridged. The lamb does not understand why it is lead to the slaughter and so it goes willingly, because it is in ignorance. Even when it dawns on the lamb that it is going to be killed, the lamb only struggles because it does not understand that it cannot escape; and, besides, it is hampered by the natural ignorance of the herbivore, who does not even know it is possible to eat meat ... Which is why we prefer to eat the herbivores. Because, under no circumstances, could they eat us.

The relations between men and women are often distorted by the reluctance of both parties to acknowledge that the function of flesh is meat to the carnivore but no grass to the herbivore. (*Sadeian* 138-9)

In patriarchal terms then, the female body is meatified. The erosion between the borders of the human body and food is a threat to the integrity of the subject because it evokes horror and repulsion in the subject. This abjection destroys the social construction of what is edible and inedible. Therefore, it disrupts the established system of order as well. As Kristeva argues: “Food becomes abject only if it is a border between two distinct entities or territories. A boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the non-human” (*Powers* 75). Beauty is resembled to a lamb which will be sacrificed to the Beast. In this sense, her representation as an edible entity transgresses the clearly demarcated constraints and taboos of society. Carter presents the theme of edibility of the female body in order to discuss dominant sexual politics. Since devouring is an implication for destructive male sexuality, it is implied that by becoming a herbivore for a carnivore’s appetite Beauty does not own a sexual autonomy. She is threatened with the Beast’s male sexuality because she is not on equal terms with the Beast yet. She performs her prescribed roles and she will not be able to confront her desire until she discovers the animality in her.

Crunelle-Vanrigh observes that “Animality permeates the girl’s human-ness” (133). She indicates that Beauty is first defined as a dish for the lion, as a sacrificial “Miss Lamb”,

“a normal enough fate for the daughter of a man who first appears wrapped in a sheepskin coat” (133). Then, Beauty buys expensive furs in London which again relates her to animality. In the mirror scene which will be discussed later, this animal imagery will reveal that the change Beauty goes through her experience with the Beast and her animal side is a “sexual awareness...not seen in human but animal terms” (Crunelle-Vanrigh 133).

During Beauty’s obligatory stay in the Beast’s house – her father forced her to do so – the conversations she has with the Beast show her “a hint of shyness”, “a fear of refusal” (48), “loneliness” (49) on the Beast’s side. She senses that there is a “curious reversal” (49). That is, Beauty thinks that she should be afraid of the Beast because of his furious appearance. However, it is the Beast who shuns away from her; “she frightened him” (49). Thus, the fear both Beauty and the Beast feel is reciprocal. When Beauty and the Beast meet in the study to have a cup of coffee, Beauty starts to strip off the traditional feminine roles that are imposed upon her. Crunelle-Vanrigh states that “[m]oving from woman’s traditional inarticulateness ... to (frivolous) language, she is also seen to be the mistress of the sexual game” (131). The sexual tension between Beauty and the Beast can be observed in their conversation. Although “small talk had never, at the best of times, been Beauty’s forte, and she had little practice at it ... soon she was chattering away to him as if she had known him all her life” (49-50). Besides, Crunelle-Vanrigh adds that “[h]er initial embarrassment betrays an awareness of sex which would have been foreign to Beaumont’s heroine ... She is quite capable of decoding similar sexual awareness in the Beast” (131). These sexual implications are delivered through an abject scene:

they both fell silent, as if these strange companions were suddenly overcome with embarrassment to find themselves together, alone, in that room in the depths of the winter’s night. As she was about to rise, he flung himself at her feet and buried his head in her lap. She stayed stock-still, transfixed; she felt his hot breath on her fingers, the stiff bristles of his muzzle grazing her skin, the rough lapping of his tongue and then, with a flood of compassion, understood: all he is doing is kissing my hands.

He drew back his head and gazed at her with his green, inscrutable eyes, in which she saw her face repeated twice, as small as if it were in bud. Then, without another word, he sprang from the room and she saw, with an indescribable shock, he went on all fours. (50)

The feelings the Beast has for Beauty are expressed in animal terms. This “wild” creature instinctively acts like an animal when he shows his emotions to Beauty through his licking her hands and from this moment on the process of transformation is beginning both for Beauty and the Beast.

When Beauty is summoned by her father to London, she leaves the Beast promising him that she will come back before the winter is over. At this stage, Carter’s heroine does not perform according to the typical representations of women in fairy tales. At first, she is depicted as a girl so selfless that she wants only a white rose from her father as a present. She is so much devoted to her father that she sacrifices herself for the deal between her father and the Beast. However, the life she leads in London changes her. “Carter’s Beauty is not the bashful girl of Beaumont’s story. The selflessness of Beaumont’s heroine is replaced by the thoughtlessness and narcissistic egotism of Beauty, oblivious of her promise” (Crunelle-Vanrigh 131). When her father regains his fortune with the help of the Beast’s lawyers, Beauty finds the opportunity to visit the opera and theatres, attends to parties with her father and buys new clothes. She gets so deeply involved with enjoying herself with “the elements in London” (51) that she forgets the promise she has made to the Beast. The mirror scene reveals the change Beauty goes through. After going to a theatre and coming home late at night, she sits in front of the mirror and takes off her earrings. The mirror she sees herself in reflects a girl whose adolescence is about to leave its place to womanhood. Besides, it reflects a subject who is noticing the object in her. As Kristeva says:

as in *jouissance* where the object of desire, known as object *a* (in Lacan’s terminology), bursts with the shattered mirror where the ego gives up its image in order to contemplate itself in the Other, there is nothing either objective or objectal to the abject. It is simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become *alter ego*, drops so that ‘I’ does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence. (*Powers* 9, original emphasis).

Thus, in front of the mirror, Beauty discovers her femaleness as well as her otherness represented in animal imagery. In order to take its place in the symbolic order, the subject should differentiate itself from the other bodies. In this story, in order to perform her

prescribed roles of femininity, Beauty should differentiate herself from the animal body. However, as is seen below, she is embracing her otherness both as a woman who is trapped in the patriarchal construction of the female, and as an animal that offers dissolution of the boundaries of the self to build a new self-definition free from patriarchal values.

She was learning, at the end of her adolescence, how to be a spoiled child and that pearly skin of hers was plumping out, a little, with high living and compliments. A certain inwardness was beginning to transform the lines around her mouth, those signatures of the personality, and her sweetness and her gravity could sometimes turn a mite petulant when things went not quite as she wanted them to go. You could not have said that her freshness was fading but she smiled at herself in mirrors a little too often, these days, and the face that smiled back was not quite the one she had seen contained in the Beast's agate eyes. Her face was acquiring, instead of beauty, a lacquer of the invincible prettiness that characterizes certain pampered, exquisite, expensive cats. (52)

As is observed above, Beauty acquires animal traits from the cat family. This abject transformation is a threat to the established order because it is a deviation from the norm. It will be soon revealed that through the discovery of her animalistic desire Beauty will be able to nurture the hungry Beast with love. In this respect, the representation of female desire in animalistic terms is a revolt against the patriarchally constructed image of woman as passive. By blurring the distinct boundaries between the human and the animal, Carter subverts the rigid stability of the male-dominant ideology. Crunelle-Vanrigh points out that the metaphorical transformation Beauty goes through from "Miss Lamb" to "pampered cat" "deconstructs her role as the instrument of the Beast's final metamorphosis into a man" (133). Thus, both metamorphoses will promise a new order for the Other that will transcend the boundaries of the dominant order.

The mirror scene is interrupted by the spaniel which has come to take Beauty back to the Beast. The winter has passed and it is spring time and Beauty suddenly realizes that she has broken her promise. While she was leading her glamorous life in the city, the Beast isolated himself totally from the outside world in despair. Here Carter subverts the gender roles promoted by the traditional fairy tale characters.

[T]he tales send the boys out into the world to seek their fortunes, create their wealth, possess their women. The boys must be taught courage. The girls must be taught fear ... Perrault tells the tale ['The Sleeping Beauty'] up to the 'happy ending' of the Prince's kiss which redeems the time and awakens the Princess from her long stupor of adolescence. All the women have to do is wait. She must not initiate sexual activity, a potential she now possesses that is fraught with danger. She must wait and sleep out the years until she is possessed. (Duncker 9)

However, in Carter's story, it is Beauty who makes the most of her wealth while the Beast's fortune "[gives] no pleasure to its possessor" (49). It is Beauty who has adventures in the outside world and gets experienced. And the Beast assuming the role of the fairy tale princess in his attic room waits to be rescued by Beauty.

Beauty's forgetfulness causes the Beast to feel overwhelmed with grief and Beauty finds him in bed dying. "'I'm dying, Beauty,' he said in a cracked whisper of his former purr. 'Since you left me, I have been sick. I could not go hunting, I found I had not the stomach to kill the gentle beasts, I could not eat. I am sick and I must die; but I shall die happy because you have come to say good-bye to me.'" (54). By the love of Beauty, the Beast is transformed from carnivore into a herbivore. His starvation representing sterility announces that male sexual desire in the form of bestial appetite is destroyed. The Beast's character is also changing, like Beauty's. He attains human emotional traits such as suffering and loving.

Beauty gains far more than most fairy tale heroines, active or not, because her submission and sacrifice transform another being, and more specifically, a sexually and/or socially threatening male. A virtuous, insightful, determined woman can change a beast into a person – such is Beauty's power. (Bacchilega 78)

However, Day interprets this scene as the Beast's exploitation of "Beauty's very conventional 'femininity', her sentimental susceptibility to sickness in the male and her stereotypical recoil from destruction" (138). Carter also expresses that the "Beauty and the Beast" tale is "an advertisement for moral blackmail: when the Beast says that he is dying because of Beauty, the only morally correct thing for her to have said at that point would be, 'Die, then'" (Haffenden 83). However, Beauty does not even consider saying this in "The Courtship of Mr Lyon". Instead "[s]he flung herself upon him, so that the iron bedstead

groaned, and covered his poor paws with her kisses. ‘Don’t die, Beast! If you’ll have me, I’ll never leave you.’” (54). At this point, the equality is achieved on both sides. Now, reciprocally Beauty kisses Mr Lyon’s hands as Mr Lyon has done at the end of their first conversation in the study. Beauty discovers that “it was no longer a lion in her arms but a man, a man with an unkempt mane of hair and, how strange, a broken nose, such as the noses of retired boxers, that gave him a distant, heroic resemblance to the handsomest of all the beasts” (54-5). Thus, the Beast is transformed into a human. Atwood mentions that through love “he loses all his mythical dimensions – only sexual desire in isolation has a larger-than-life quality – but he gains his humanity” (Atwood 124). Thus, the Beast’s active desire to consume the female body is tamed.

In the original tale, all the unstable and ambiguous dynamics of the plot are restored by the metamorphosis of the Beast into a Prince Charming. In other words, humanity is restored by destroying “otherness” represented by animal traits at the end of the traditional tale. However, in Carter’s “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, “otherness” is not condemned. On the contrary, it is celebrated through Beauty’s animalistic transformation that enables her to achieve a sexual awareness. Moreover, the Beast is not completely presented as a human being as well. He still retains a resemblance “to the handsomest of all the beasts” (55). As Lechte and Margaroni claim: “Subject and object become fused ... Otherness is overcome in unity” (113). Thus, their marriage, which is implied in the final sentence by an address to Beauty and the Beast as Mr and Mrs Lyon, shows that they are not stable identities, but subjects-in-process who carry the other within. “Mr and Mrs Lyon walk in the garden; the old spaniel drowns on the grass, in a drift of fallen petals” (55). Mr and Mrs Lyon have abject characteristics, but they are a part of the symbolic order at the same time symbolized by their willingly becoming a part of the marriage institution. In other words, the end of the story implies that both their humanness and animality will live happily ever after together in harmony as the reference to animality in their surnames suggests.

Here is the point of Carter’s deconstruction of fairy tales. Where Beaumont starts from a recognition of the potentially dangerous polymorphousness latent in each individual and attempts to fix and channel and castrate it according to the requirements of the social structure, Carter’s stories move toward polymorphousness as a desirable, excitingly perverse end. Pleasure lies in the unfixing of

identity, in the recognition of its fluidity. The fairy tale moves from the margins to the center, Carter from the center to the margins. The hopelessly closed ending of 'Courtship' with its couple walking for eternity in an autumn garden that looks alarmingly like a sepia photograph from an old family album is superseded in 'The Tiger's Bride' by the open-endedness of a metamorphosis in the making. It celebrates the perverse desirability of indeterminacy and liminality, the erotic but dangerous fascination of multiplicity. (Crunelle-Vanrigh 139)

As a result, the ambiguous representation of both Beauty and The Beast, the indeterminacy created at the end of the story whether they are totally transformed into human-beings or not, their liminal experience of being transformed from one state into another by love, their metamorphoses reflected in animal terms and polymorphous nature of desire are all characteristics of the Kristevan abject. Kristeva celebrates the multiplicity and plurality of identity and both Beauty and the Beast destroy the rigid and totalizing norms of sexual identity. They transform the conventional binaries of gender distinction. In addition, the portrayal of female desire in animalistic terms reflects a female sexuality defined in abject terms. In fact, animalistic female desire is a challenge to conception of femininity and it is this abjection that turns Beauty's victimization into heroism. Beauty reclaims her autonomous subjectivity and promises to remain a subject-in-process with her bestial surname. Besides, the story promises a new order in which the marginal and deviant can be welcomed. In these terms, what is welcomed is an active female desire which has been excluded by the patriarchal definitions of female sexuality and this active female desire will be much more overtly portrayed in the following story, "The Tiger's Bride".

"The Tiger's Bride", "a cruel, unsettling twin" (Crunelle-Vanrigh 138) of "The Courtship of Mr Lyon", is different from its preceding story in terms of the narrative point of view. Its being narrated in the first point of view shows that the heroine has a more active part in this story because she assumes the power of the speaking subject. The story starts with the heroine's declaration: "My father lost me to The Beast at cards" (56). Thus, the issue of women's status of being exchange objects in the patriarchal order is once again presented at the very beginning of the story. In this story, the father is not a good man who is devoted to his daughter and who loses all his fortune because of some trouble in his business like the father in "The Courtship of Mr Lyon", but a drunkard who has lost all his fortune in Russia

because of gambling which “is a sickness” (59). Beauty’s father in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” loves his daughter so much that his only concern is to bring her the white rose she wants as a present for her. On the contrary, the father in “The Tiger’s Bride” “said he loved [his daughter] yet he staked his daughter on a hand of cards” (59). Moreover, Beauty in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” sacrifices herself to the Beast for the love of her father. But, in this story, the father sacrifices all his possessions and his daughter “in such a passion to donate all to the Beast” (56). This is the way he lives. Even his wife “did not blossom long; bartered for her dowry to such a feckless sprig of the Russian nobility that she soon died of his gaming, his whoring, his agonizing repentances” (57). That women are objects of exchange in phallogentric culture is underlined by the heroine’s mother being “bartered” through the marriage institution. The trade of women as possessions among men is emphasized more overtly and severely in “The Tiger’s Bride”.

Carter once again adopts the white rose as a symbol of the daughter’s being an exchange object between the father and the Beast. Firstly, the heroine is called by her English nurse as her “Christmas rose”, since she was born on Christmas day. Secondly, the white roses brought by the servant of the Beast who has come to pick the heroine up to take her to the Beast’s palace are demanded by the father from the daughter as a sign of forgiveness. When the daughter breaks off a stem and hands it to her father, she pricks her finger and “so he gets his rose all smeared with blood” (61). The white rose with the blood on it foreshadows the destruction of the heroine’s virginity. Virginity as a commodity that can be bought and sold is much more harshly revealed in this story. As Irigaray articulates:

The virginal woman, on the other hand, is pure exchange value. She is nothing but the possibility, the place, the sign of relations among men. In and of herself, she does not exist: she is a simple envelope veiling what is really at stake in social exchange. In this sense, her natural body disappears into its representative function. Red blood remains on the mother’s side, but it has no price, as such, in the social order; woman, for her part, as medium of exchange, is no longer anything but semblance. The ritualized passage from woman to mother is accomplished by the violation of an envelope: the hymen, which has taken on the value of taboo, the taboo of virginity. Once deflowered, woman is relegated to the status of use value, to her entrapment in private property; she is removed from exchange among men. (186, original emphasis).

In this respect, Beauty's virginity determines her exchange value. The heroine is aware of this fact when she says: "For now my own skin was my sole capital in the world and today I'd make my first investment" (62). At this stage the heroine's experiences in the male-dominated society shows resemblances to Sade's Justine's experiences, which reveal that she is continuously exploited by the patriarchal male figures. Carter identifies the position of Justine in a man's world as such: "Always the object of punishment, she has committed only one crime and that was an involuntary one; she was born a woman, and, for that, she is ceaselessly punished" (Carter, *Sadeian* 39). In the same manner, as a woman Beauty is also being "whipped" by the sexist ideology.

On her way to the palace in The Beast's carriage, she thinks "what ... might be the exact nature of his 'beastliness'?" (61). The first time the heroine meets the Beast is when her father is invited to play cards with him. Different from Mr Lyon in the previously discussed story, The Beast is not a human with leonine traits, but a tiger with a man's mask on his face. However, both Mr Lyon and The Beast signify otherness by being represented as non-human.

[H]e has an odd air of self-imposed restraint, as if fighting a battle with himself to remain upright when he would far rather drop on all fours. He throws our human aspirations to the godlike sadly awry, poor fellow; only from a distance would you think The Beast not much different from any other man, although he wears a mask with a man's face painted most beautifully on it. Oh, yes, a beautiful face; but one with too much formal symmetry of feature to be entirely human: one profile of his mask is the mirror image of the other, too perfect, uncanny. He wears a wig, too, false hair tied at the nape with a bow, a wig of the kind you see in old-fashioned portraits. (58)

The heroine, curious about The Beast's beastliness, remembers her nurse's story about a tiger-man. The tiger-man is abject with its all hairy hinder parts and "only from the head downwards did he resemble a man" (61). She had been told that if she did not behave like a good girl, this tiger-man would come and take her away: "Yes, my beauty! Gobble you up!" (62). The devouring beast as a source of fear is implanted in her during her childhood and gobbling is associated with devouring male sexuality. Besides, the heroine recollects the superstitious stories she heard from other "giggling nursemaids" in their farmyard about "what the bull did to the cows" and how the waggoner's daughter who is "hare-lipped,

squint-eyed, ugly as sin” gives birth to a son, “born of a bear ... Born with a full pelt and teeth; that proved it” (62). In fact, the waggoner’s daughter giving birth to a bear child signifies the punishment of the patriarchal society for her having an active sexual nature. In this respect, the heroine’s knowledge of sexuality is derived from these childhood stories which reveal abject sexualities that arouse horror and fascination. The mainstream society teaches her to fear from female sexuality because in the symbolic order the female desire is represented as absence and lack.

This girl/woman/ Beauty is not being easily and lovingly transferred from girlhood into womanhood. She is making the shift apprehensively: her mind filled with factual knowledge of sex on the one hand, the contrasting rhetorics of fear of animality and of superstition about sex on the other; together with an awareness of her own role as a flesh-object in a commodity system and a determination to play the game for all it was worth, since that was the hand she’d been dealt. (Day 140).

Contrary to Beauty in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, the heroine’s transference from girlhood into womanhood starts with negative implications about sexuality, as the quotation reveals above. This negativity is supported with The Beast’s demand “to see the pretty young lady unclothed nude without her dress and that only for the one time after which she will be returned to her father undamaged” (64). She accepts this but only after proposing her own rules for the game.

You may put me in a windowless room, sir, and I promise you I will pull my skirt up to my waist, ready for you. But there must be a sheet over my face, to hide it; though the sheet must be laid over me so lightly that it will not choke me. So I shall be covered completely from the waist upwards, and no lights. There you can visit me once, sir, and only the once. (65)

What the heroine aims is to make The Beast face the vulgarity of his treatment of her as a sexual object. She says: “How pleased I was to see I struck The Beast to the heart! For, after a baker’s dozen heartbeats, one single tear swelled, glittering, at the corner of the masked eye. A tear! A tear, I hoped, of shame.” (65). The heroine wants The Beast to feel ashamed of his diminishing her to mere sexuality and she understands that she achieves this when she observes his eyes behind the mask evading hers. When The Beast repeats the same

demand, the heroine again implies that this is a humiliating bargain. He drops another tear from his other eye and “he buried his cardboard carnival head with its ribboned weight of false hair ... in his arms” (68) in desperation. In fact, these tears indicate that The Beast is also crushed under the heavy load of prescribed masculine roles. The mask he wears cannot hide the tears in his eyes, the fuddling perfume he wears gives away the bad smell he needs to camouflage, and the clothes he wears cannot cover his giant body. Thus, his human appearance only serves to show that it is an imitation. It seems that although he tries to act like a human, his animal nature betrays him. In fact, by displaying such a character, Carter reverses human and animal dichotomy because these scenes of bargains of voyeurism disclose that it is the mask of a man’s face which forces The Beast to behave like a savage and an unrefined man. The Beast suffers from trying to conform to the constructed gender roles which teach him to treat brutally to women. The patriarchally constructed notion of the male informs him about a male libido which can never be tamed, yet he is ashamed of it. Thus, the reversed representation of The Beast transgresses the boundaries between culture and nature. The Beast is represented as abject in order to reveal that male sexuality constitutes a culturally defined animalistic aspect in negative terms, but in terms of the natural laws animals are more humane than human beings.

On the other hand, during the bargains, the heroine, not remaining submissive in the face of such an indecent proposal, asserts her own will to become the object of the male gaze by changing the rules. The fact that she herself chooses to participate this objectification of the female body implies a resistance that destroys her passivity as a woman in the patriarchal society. She starts to claim her autonomous subjectivity by attempting to break free of the ideological boundaries imprisoning her identity.

While she is waiting for The Beast’s visit to perform her part in the voyeuristic deal, the heroine is accompanied by a lady’s maid which is an automaton and her “clockwork twin”.

the door swings open and out glides a soubrette from an operetta, with glossy, nut-brown curls, rosy cheeks, blue, rolling eyes; it takes me a moment to recognize her, in her little cap, her white stockings, her frilled petticoats. She carries a looking glass in one hand and a powder puff in the other and there is a musical box where her heart should be; she tinkles as she rolls towards me on her tiny wheels. (66)

The themes of the double and the animation of inanimate objects are among the most popular Gothic devices which are associated with the uncanny. Freud bases his discussion about the uncanny on E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman". Freud claims that with all appearances looking as if she were a living being, the doll Olympia's being an automaton is one of the most important elements that contribute to the uncanny atmosphere of the story. The protagonist of the story, Nathaniel, sees Olympia from his window opposite the house this clock-work doll has been made in and falls in love with this silent and motionless girl. When he finds out that Olympia is a wooden doll, his repressed childhood fear of castration surfaces and he suffers from delirium for a while. In "Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche*", Cixous blames Freud for not paying close attention to the function of the doll in the story, but focusing more on Nathaniel's fear of going blind which represents his fear of castration. She asks: "And what if the doll became a woman? What if she were alive? What if in looking at her, we animated her?" (538). At this point, Cixous draws attention to the culturally construction of woman defined by the phallogentric and logocentric "eye/I" which seeks meaning through binary oppositions and constructs a hierarchical order by rendering the woman as the Other to the self. The feminine is the representation, the object, and the repressed which is animated by the patriarchal "I" who has already defined her as the other to the male self. The male "eye/I" animates the female by imposing gender roles on her such as passivity, purity, selflessness and angelic beauty. Thus, woman is an imitation which is socially and culturally constructed, and a mould shaped by patriarchal oppression. She is perceived as uncanny only through a patriarchal view.

In this respect, the heroine's double, "a marvelous machine" (66), is adopted to reflect the position of women in the male-dominated order. "Beauty sees that her culturally defined self was no self at all, merely an imitation of a self" (Day 142) through the animation of her machine maid. This clock-work maid manifests the conventional female roles the heroine is imprisoned within and the way she is perceived by her father and The Beast. The mirror the automaton maid holds up to the heroine makes her realize her object position among men: "I saw within it not my own face but that of my father, as if I had put on his face when I arrived at The Beast's palace as the discharge of his debt" (66). This image in the

mirror helps the heroine to decide not to be the amount payment of her father's debt, and she gains more courage.

However, The Beast does not visit Beauty in her room to perform his male gaze. Instead, he invites her to a riding trip. This riding trip will contribute to the development of the heroine's awareness of her body as a site of desire. She thinks: "A profound sense of strangeness slowly began to possess me. I knew my two companions were not, in any way, as other men, the simian retainer and the master for whom he spoke, the one with clawed fore-paws" (70). At this point, noticing the abject figures she is riding with, the heroine starts to awaken to her abjection. She says: "I knew they lived according to a different logic than I had done until my father abandoned me to the wild beasts by his human carelessness. This knowledge gave me a certain fearfulness still; but, I would say, not much" (70). The heroine understands that both The Beast and his servant exist outside the symbolic order. Such a knowledge of living outside the social norms frightens her, but at the same time it is implied that she is achieving a knowledge which will liberate her. In fact, this is a scene of epiphany for her. The heroine discovers that she is also abjected as a woman by the male-dominated society, like these two animal embodiments are. She is starting to notice the conventional cultural codes of femininity: "I was a young girl, a virgin, and therefore men denied me rationality just as they denied it to all those who were not exactly like themselves, in all their unreason" (70). Thus, she questions the patriarchal logic which perceives everything as irrational that falls outside the borders it constructs. The female with her metaphorical language, uncanny womb, and emotional nature is an irrational being in phallogocentric society. In the Oedipal system of desire, woman is defined as a second order animal. In this respect, the heroine starts to identify with the beasts she is riding with. She is aware of the fact that her constructed otherness renders her an object for the male subject that can be bought and sold when she says: "I certainly meditated on the nature of my own state, how I had been bought and sold, passed from hand to hand. That clockwork girl who powdered my cheeks for me; had I not been allotted only the same kind of imitative life amongst men that the doll-maker had given her?" (70). Thus, she understands that patriarchal society defines women as marginal to the symbolic order, and it is this patriarchal notion that constructs femininity. In this respect, "if, as Cixous and Irigaray have shown, femininity is defined as lack, negativity, absence of meaning, irrationality, chaos, darkness –in short, as non-Being – Kristeva's

emphasis on marginality allows us to view this repression of the feminine in terms of *positionality* rather than of essences” (Moi 165). Kristeva’s notion of woman on the margins of society discloses the heroine’s experience of entrapment in the dominant ideology.

Margaret Atwood draws attention to the difference between the two disrobing scenes of “The Tiger’s Bride” in her article titled “Running with the Tigers”. She contends that the first disrobing scene is performed by the heroine due to the contract made between her father and The Beast (125). However, the reciprocal theme shows itself in this scene as well with The Beast’s stripping naked first, an act which is not involved within the contract. Making the Beast take off his clothes first, only then does Beauty agree to expose her naked body to him.

My composure deserted me; all at once I was on the brink of panic. I did not think that I could bear the sight of him, whatever he was ... A great, feline, tawny shape whose pelt was barred with a savage geometry of bars the colour of burned wood. His domed, heavy head, so terrible he must hide it. How subtle the muscles, how profound the tread. The annihilating vehemence of his eyes, like twin suns ... Nothing about him reminded me of humanity. (71)

The abject appearance of the Beast outside the category of humanity is a threat to the heroine’s stable identity. This is the reason why she thinks that she will not be able to bear the sight of such a creature. However, transgressing the patriarchal boundaries which oppress her mind, the heroine is now ready to fulfill the task that the bargain between her father and The Beast forces her to. “The tiger will never lie down with the lamb; he acknowledges no pact that is not reciprocal. The lamb must learn to run with the tigers” (71). Up until now, she has been questioning her marginalized position as a woman in patriarchy. Facing the Beast’s animality and going through the process of abjection, the heroine is ready to embrace the other within herself. “Abjection therefore implies a further, or a surplus, distortion of desire, in which subjectivity itself disappears before the irrepressible might of the beheld object” (Punter, *Terror Vol 2* 211). At this point, she decides to act in order to liberate herself from this patriarchal prison. From her passive victim state, she will move on to the active state of a victimizer. That is, patriarchally excluded as a lamb, she is now determined to learn to run with the tigers. When she exposes her naked body to The Beast, she manifests that she

welcomes the Other within herself. This is the reason why she declares: “I felt I was at liberty for the first time in my life” (72).

Now that she has concluded the deal, the heroine is free to go home. When she looks in the mirror, this time she sees that her father is smiling with gratification because The Beast has kept his promise and sent him a great amount of money for his voyeurism of the virgin daughter. The heroine knows that she has no value apart from monetary terms for her father. She thinks that she can send her double, the machine maid in her own clothes to her father to perform her role as a daughter. Peach claims that “[a]t one level, the ‘double’ in Carter’s fiction is employed to suggest the immutability of patriarchal society” (43). Thus, the heroine understands that she is no more than an imitation, an automaton in the eyes of the males who impose on her traditional feminine roles that she will not conform to any more. Thus, she strips herself of all those roles by literally taking off her clothes by her own will. She abandons her obedient daughter role. She claims her subjectivity by denying her role as an object of male desire, the “white meat of contract” (73). She attains her own active desire. She says: “I thought the Beast had wanted a little thing compared with what I was prepared to give” (73). Through this announcement she expresses that her body will not be a commodity in a bargain, but a possession of her own that she will give only by her own consent. She goes to The Beast’s den naked only with furs on her shoulders which turn into rats as soon as she enters. Now she stands naked in front of the naked Beast. “He must have decided that, if one should go naked, then all should go naked” (74). Thus, both Beauty and The Beast are literally and metaphorically stripped of their roles in the binary mechanism of masculine/feminine.

When the heroine finds herself naked in The Beast’s den, she once again remembers the nursery stories which associate male sexuality with devouring. However, Carter subverts this association by emphasizing the heroine’s subjective and active sexual desire. She reveals that the heroine’s affirmation of her own sexuality does not need to cause her death by the devouring male sexuality.

He will gobble you up.

Nursery fears made flesh and sinew; earliest and most archaic of fears, fear of devourment. The Beast and his carnivorous bed of bone and I, white, shaking, raw, approaching him as if offering, in

myself, the key to a peaceable kingdom in which his appetite need not be my extinction. (74)

The fear of being devoured connotes the abject. The representation of the female body as an item of food blurs the boundaries between the edible and the inedible, the self and the other. In the scene quoted above, the heroine is presented at the peak of her liminal experience. As Maria Tatar contends “Belle had to learn to be a loving wife in the eighteenth century; in the late twentieth, she has to learn to be game in bed” (313). Thus, Carter’s *Beauty* transgresses the culturally constructed boundaries of her female body by asserting her own willingness to survive in the patriarchal bed. *Beauty* is now transformed from Sade’s Justine into Juliette.

Sade regularly subsumes women to the general class of the weak and therefore the exploited, and so he sees femininity as a mode of experience that transcends gender. Feminine impotence is a quality of the poor, regardless of sex. Juliette is an exception; by the force of her will, she will become a Nietzschean superwoman, which is to say, a woman who has transcended her gender but not the contradictions inherent in it. (Carter, *Sadeian* 86)

Thus, *Beauty*’s and *The Beast*’s animalistic sexual intercourse transgresses all gender boundaries. It signifies a disintegration of the unified human subject and patriarchal ideology.

Slowly, slowly he began to drag his heavy, gleaming weight across the floor towards me ... The sweet thunder of this purr shook the old walls, made the shatters batter the windows until they burst apart ... The reverberations of his purring rocked the foundations of the house, the walls began to dance. I thought: ‘It will all fall, everything will disintegrate’. (75)

In this respect, both *Beauty* and *The Beast* achieve fluid identities which promote dissolution of the borders between the self and the other. Now, both *Beauty* and the *Beast* are on equal terms. “By deconstructing one term of the opposition – in granting *Beauty* her own desire – Carter erases the opposition itself” (Day 147). They share the same libidinal drives; they celebrate the same autonomous subjectivity; and they affirm the materiality of their flesh.

He dragged himself closer and closer to me, until I felt the harsh velvet of his head against my hand, then a tongue, abrasive as sandpaper. ‘He will lick the skin off me!’

And each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shining hairs. My earrings turned back to water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur. (75)

Now the heroine's transformation into animal is complete. When she is stripped of all her patriarchal definitions, symbolized by her skins, her real identity which is represented by a tiger comes out. Her tigerishness destroys all the boundaries she has been imprisoned in so far and highlights a fluid identity which resists patriarchal unitary subjectivity. Beauty's active female desire disrupts the social conventions that prescribe the female body as the object of voraciousness.

It's Carter's contention that a certain amount of tigerishness may be necessary if women are to achieve an independent as opposed to a dependent existence; if they are to avoid – at the extreme end of passivity – becoming meat ... But their change from lamb to tiger need not be a divesting of all 'feminine' qualities, as it is for de Sade; also, although society may slant things so that women appear to be better candidates for meat-eating, the nature of men is not fixed by Carter as inevitably predatory, with females as their 'natural' prey. Lambhood and tigerishness may be found in either gender. (Atwood 121)

As a result, in "The Tiger's Bride", as in "The Courtship of Mr Lyon", the abject representations of both the Beauties and the Beasts in terms of animality revolve around the dichotomy of carnivores and herbivores, tigers and lambs, and the victimizers and the victims. Thus, Carter's treatment of libido as animalistically innate in both the female and the male subverts gender distinctions. Carter unites man and woman on an equal level. In this respect, the abject representations of both male and female characters in these stories erase the hierarchical oppositions that lie in all kinds of discrimination. As the ending of "The Tiger's Bride" proves, Carter claims that only mutual love between the sexes can strip them off their gender burden. She concludes her work on Sade by reflecting on such a view: "only the possibility of love could awake the libertine to perfect, immaculate terror. It is in this holy terror of love that we find, in both men and women themselves, the source of all opposition to

the emancipation of women” (Carter, *Sadeian* 150). This indicates that the lambs can only lie down with the lions and tigers who are tamed by love.

4.6 One Must Howl With the Wolves¹⁶: Subject Representations of Female Desire in Angela Carter’s Wolf Stories

Carter’s concluding of *The Bloody Chamber* is composed of three wolf stories: “The Werewolf”, “The Company of the Wolves” and “Wolf-Alice”. Following the same pattern in the grouping of her feline stories, she bases her first two stories on a traditional fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” which is available in many versions, the best known being the similar versions of Perrault and the Grimm Brothers. The third story remains detached from the other two in terms of its being a rewriting of Kristeva’s semiotic stage and Lacan’s mirror stage, rather than a retold single traditional fairy tale. “Wolf-Alice” still combines the wolf image with the representation of a human being, but unlike the preceding stories, it is not a direct rewriting of the fairy tale.

These stories also reveal Gothic characteristics. Blood, murder, corpses, metamorphosis, monstrous representations, sexuality represented in excessive forms, sexually threatened women characters, rape as a threat to victimize women, self and other dichotomy and hybrid identity are all common Gothic concerns that pose a threat to the traditional unitary subject as well as to the unity and closed system of mainstream society. This time Carter chooses “Little Red Riding Hood” to subvert the cultural myths and stereotypes of women deeply embedded in the fairy tale tradition which helps to establish the patriarchal ideology firmly in society.

In Gothic works, representations of deviations from the norms such as monsters, outsiders, misfits, insane characters, and so on reflect the self which is Otherized by social order. As is discussed before, the Gothic tradition is considered as the Other of the literary canon with its indulgence in excessive representations that transgress social and moral laws. For instance, interactions with the monstrous representations signify one’s relation with his or her Other and therefore promote transgression of the clear cut boundaries of identity.

¹⁶ I came across this old saying in Cristina Bacchilega’s *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (64).

Monsters are particularly prominent in the work of women writers, because for women the roles of rebel, outcast, seeker of truth, are monstrous in themselves. For a woman to rebel, to leave a comfortable home and to search for truth are noble acts ... For women, however, such assertions of questing selfhood have been deemed bizarre and crazy; consequently the Gothic mode – and in particular the concept of self as monster – is associated with narratives of female experience.

In their Gothic narratives women reveal deep-seated conflicts between a socially acceptable passive, congenial, “feminine” self and a suppressed, monstrous hidden self. (Stein 123)

In this respect, Female Gothic writers mostly deal with the male disgust with woman’s sexuality and the male fear of woman’s autonomous and assertive subjectivity by employing monstrous representations. In the Male Gothic, monstrous women characters are provided in order to marginalize female sexuality and condemn them to a state of Otherness. In this sense, deviant and perverted definitions of women in the Male Gothic reveal a negative perspective of female desire in order to banish and diminish the fear of sexual woman. However, postmodern women writers of the Female Gothic like Carter struggle to destroy this conventional objectifying of women as a monster excluded from social order. Carter employs the theme of monstrous women as well, but she ruins the negativity of this representation with an awareness of its subversive potential. In other words, she rewrites the monstrous image of women imbued with positivity and knowing that representation of women’s sexuality is a threat to the male-dominated order, she attempts to construct counter-definitions of woman as powerful, active and self-assertive. Therefore, Carter’s monstrous representations in her wolf stories are an attempt to disrupt the traditional perceptions of women. She puts forward abject representations of women in order to attack the self and the Other dichotomy and celebrates a subjectivity which is based on an embracement of the Other. In the conventional Gothic plot, the labeling of women as Other splits women’s identities in oppositional forces, builds strict borders between their experience of subjectivity and the outside world and offers no integration into society by depriving them of an autonomous self. Thus, Carter shows that active female desire is nothing to be afraid of, instead she claims that its acknowledgement is liberating not only for women but also for men. One’s merging with the Other affirms a more positive definition of women’s identity

and sexuality which constructs heterosexual paradigm on equality. In this way, she revolts against the imprisoning Gothic structures which tend to portray women as victims of patriarchal ideology.

The original “Little Red Riding Hood” is claimed to be a narrative of rape by many critics who have produced considerable psychoanalytical analyses about this classical fairy tale. Zipes, a leading scholar in the field of fairy tale tradition, argues:

As every reader/viewer subconsciously knows, Little Red Riding Hood is not really sent into the woods to visit grandma but to meet the wolf and to explore her own sexual cravings and social rules of conduct. Therefore, the most significant encounter is with the wolf because it is here that *she acts* upon her desire to indulge in sexual intercourse with the wolf, and ... she willingly makes a bargain with the wolf, or, in male terms, ‘she asks to be raped’. (“Second Gaze” 239, original emphasis)

Then what Carter does in the first two stories of her wolf stories is to rewrite the sexual frame of the traditional “Little Red Riding Hood”. She is disturbed with this rape fantasy lying beneath the plot, and she subverts the plot pattern by presenting “a quest for self-identification” which reveals “Little Red Riding Hood’s desire for the wolf [is] a desire for the other” (Zipes, “Second Gaze” 243).

Makinen suggests that “[t]he three wolf stories also deal with women’s relationship to the unruly libido, but the werewolf signifies a stranger, more alienated otherness than the cats, despite the half-human manifestations” (11). Thus, Carter draws more excessive and transgressive human-animal combinations in these wolf stories which reveal once again that human identity is fluid and the subject and the object are interdependent in the formation of identity.

The abjection in these three stories is foregrounded through the representations of werewolves whose half-human and half-animal traits render them subjects-in-process and through the heroines who willingly abandon the symbolic order in order to discover their fluid identities which flow against patriarchal structures. Gutenberg contends that

[w]erewolves have been regarded as prime emblems of the marginal, of deviance and hybridity for more than two millennia. These shape-shifters between the human and the animal world are

an integral part of Western classical mythology (Lycaeon, Leto), and even the medical notion of lycanthropy as a mental disease (the patient thinks he is a wolf and is prone to cannibalism and the desecration of corpses) dates back to ancient times. (149)

Gutenberg discusses the abject characteristics of werewolves in detail in her article, "Shape-Shifters from the Wilderness: Werewolves Roaming the Twentieth Century". Firstly, she suggests that werewolves are abject because they evoke the primal fears which are related to an earlier state of human existence as the quotation puts forward above. Secondly, werewolves transgress the basic rules of civilized behaviour by their "association with cannibalism, uncontrolled violence and/or sexual excess" (149) and therefore they are a social threat to the social rules and norms as well as a threat to the unity of the human subject. Thirdly, their hybridity, their capability of metamorphosis, their potential to blur the boundaries between human and animal evoke disgust and repulsion as well as fascination. This ambiguous effect on the witness of the metamorphosis is caused by the werewolf's being a reminder of what is repressed in the subject. In other words, the werewolf "connotes primitiveness, wildness, brutality, unbridled instinct and cannibalism – traits innate in every human being, which need to be repressed and sublimated in order to achieve or maintain integration into 'civilized society'" (Gutenberg 150). Lastly, the werewolf's connotation of an unstable and fluid identity is a challenge to the strictly defined solid and stable male body. However, although werewolves are able to change their shapes, and this is a characteristic attributed to the female body which can be observed for instance when it is pregnant, Gutenberg reveals that werewolves have long been regarded as masculine for a long time by many researchers and critics. Thus, she claims that ambiguity rules the representations of werewolves because their gender is also indeterminable. That is, by their connection to the night, violence, physical strength, and aggression they connote virile qualities. On the other hand, they are related to culturally constructed female qualities such as "cunning, uncontrollability, non-containment and irrationality" (Gutenberg 151). Moreover, their undergoing metamorphoses in the full moon and their connection with blood also indicate a feminine nature by a reference to menstrual blood. In addition, Gutenberg argues that

with its violent incorporation of victims the werewolf generally reverses the process of giving birth ... Psychoanalytically, the

werewolf's incorporation/jouissance could be interpreted as a phantasmatic construction of the maternal, where the infant introjects the m/other and still has to learn that it can only establish borders between itself and the other, between inside and outside, through rejection and expulsion (152-3).

Thus, through their association with the maternal, the werewolves are excluded by the dominant norms in respect to their ambiguous appearance and transgressive identities. They present a state that belongs to the semiotic stage in which the self and the m/other are one. In this respect, Gutenberg expresses versions of "Red Riding Hood" present a devouring wolf whose belly is forced to give birth at the end of the tale by the hunter's removing the contents of its belly. Thus, the wolf becomes a male mother who gives a violent birth in the realm of abjection. With all these characteristics which endow this representation of werewolves with transgression, subversion, ambiguity, and which make them a threat to symbolic order, werewolves have become a radical figure particularly in the hands of the feminist writers. Gutenberg maintains that "in the twentieth century, the werewolf becomes intimately connected to the realm of the sexual, and, above all, to 'perverse' forms of sexuality that call into question the hegemonic system of heterosexuality" (154). In this sense, Carter's three stories adopt this werewolf figure in order to mirror the female characters' journey of discovering a sexuality which is abject, in other words, a revolt against the patriarchal definition of female sexuality. This section of the study will analyze Carter's second version of "Little Red Riding Hood", "The Company of Wolves", since the employment of abjection in this story is a much more overt one when it is compared with her first version, "The Werewolf". In other words, in "The Company of the Wolves" Carter explicitly celebrates female desire and welcomes the Kristevan "subject-in-process" in her portrayal of her heroine, as well as the werewolf. In addition, this section of the study will focus on "Wolf Alice", which can be interpreted as a metaphorical rewriting of Kristevan identity formation process.

"The Company of the Werewolves" starts with relating certain supernatural beliefs about werewolves in a rural region. By addressing to the reader at the same time, the narrator warns both the readers and the villagers about the wolves "in the woods" and even "at your own hearthside" which "grow lean and famished" because it is winter time and "there is now nothing for the wolves to eat ... The wolf is carnivore incarnate and he's as cunning as he is

ferocious; once he's had a taste of flesh then nothing else will do" (129). The inhabitants of this cold country have been threatened with many dangers these wolves cause for a long time: "there was a woman once bitten in her own kitchen as she was straining the macaroni" (130). And another wolf has eaten up a mad old man. Therefore, a person, who comes across a wolf, should "[f]ear and flee the wolf; for, worst of all, the wolf may be more than he seems" (130). The wolf is more than he seems because in this story as well the wolf is depicted as a half-human and a half-animal creature. By attributing human traits to the wolf, Carter once again underlines the cultural depiction of male sexuality in animal terms.

The wolf's abject representation is firstly depicted by an anecdote known by all the inhabitants of this country. A hunter hunts a wolf and when he slits his throat and cuts his paws, to his surprise he sees that the wolf is turned into a "bloody trunk of a man, headless, footless, dying, dead" (131). Another instance occurs when a man who is married to a young woman and who leaves her on their wedding night is transformed into a wolf. This is learned when he comes back years later to find out that his wife is now married to another man. Getting angry with his wife for her having slept with another man, the wolf eats up the woman's "eldest boy's left foot before he was chopped up with the hatchet ... But when the wolf lay bleeding and gasping its last, the pelt peeled off again and he was just as he had been, years ago, when he ran from his marriage bed" (132). The narrator announces: "They say there's an ointment the Devil gives you that turns you into a wolf the minute you rub it on. Or, that he was born feet first and had a wolf for his father and his torso is a man's but his legs and genitals are a wolf's. And he has a wolf's heart." (132). In this respect, this abject half-human and half-animal creature's involvement in cannibalism is depicted from the very start.

Cannibalism depicts the human body as food and "as one of the central taboos of our culture, would appear to be a close neighbour of incest and the Oedipal taboo, which, if we are to follow Julia Kristeva's account of disgust, are central sites of abjection" (West 235). The borders of the proper subject are founded upon cultural and social practices which force the subject to abide by the dominant norms, laws and taboos. The mouth is the orifice that binds the inside and the outside by its function of deciding what is tasteful for the subject. Eating human flesh then is a cultural form of disgust.

Loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung. The spasms and vomiting that protect me. The repugnance, the retching

that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, muck. The shame of compromise, of being in the middle of treachery. The fascinated start that leads me toward and separates me from them. (Kristeva, *Powers* 2)

Cannibalism, the act of eating and merging with the other, destroys the self and other dichotomy. Its representation transgresses the limits of the symbolic order and therefore becomes a threat to the integrity of identity. Thus, with its representation in the realm of abjection, cannibalism becomes a powerful metaphor for subverting the established norms of society.

In the transitional space between fusion and separation, where the fusional structures are still residual, eating the Other simultaneously signifies devouring myself. Similarly, cannibalism as the ultimate figure of eating one's fellows, comes by extension, to symbolically connote 'eating oneself' – for without others as mirrors of my own limits, I would lose my constitutive contours; to devour my Other is to devour myself. Cannibalism thus stages a radical dissolution of the self (West 236).

Thus, West suggests that the oral devourment of the Other blurs the boundaries between the self and the Other and assimilates differentiation. In this respect, through cannibalism the subject falls into the maternal realm where there are no boundaries between the subject and the object. As West argues: "[T]he cannibalistic taboo reformulates and displaces an archaic eating of a maternal Other, from which the self was once indistinguishable" (240). In this sense, the wolves in "The Company of the Wolves", feeding on human flesh, are a threat to society which strictly demarcates the borders between the subject and the other. Thus, the wolves represent a potential danger of fusing boundaries for the members of this symbolic order. This is the reason why the children of this country are raised by the elders' warnings about the wolves and from early childhood they learn to defend themselves against such a danger.

The protagonist, who is based on the heroine of "Red Riding Hood", is sent by her mother with a basket full of food to visit her grandmother as it is in "The Werewolf". The same pattern repeats itself, and she takes a walk through the woods to reach her grandmother's house. She is equipped with a knife in case of a wolf's attack. The girl's portrayal is heavy with sexual overtones.

Children do not stay young for long in this savage country. There are no toys for them to play with so they work hard and grow wise but this one, so pretty and the youngest of her family, a little late-comer, had been indulged by her mother and the grandmother who'd knitted her the red shawl that, today, has the ominous if brilliant look of blood on snow. Her breasts have just begun to swell; her hair is like lint, so fair it hardly makes a shadow on her pale forehead; her cheeks are an emblematic scarlet and white and she has just started her woman's bleeding, the clock inside her that will strike, henceforward, once a month.

She stands and moves within the invisible pentacle of her own virginity. She is an unbroken egg; she is a sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of membrane; she is a closed system; she does not know how to shiver. She has her knife and she is afraid of nothing.
(133)

Thus, the girl enters the forest, the space of unrepressed desire, with her confidence in her own sexuality which her biological clock reminds her of. With a reference to her monthly bleeding, it is understood that she is at the verge of her puberty. Menstrual blood, culturally and socially perceived as abject, shows that the girl has started to gain her abject position in the symbolic order as a woman. Kristeva argues that “one could suggest that the rites surrounding defilement, particularly those involving excremental and menstrual variants, shift the *border* ... that separates the body's territory from the signifying chain; they illustrate the boundary between semiotic authority and symbolic law” (Kristeva, *Powers* 73, original emphasis). Thus, the identity of the girl on the threshold, transgressing the social constructions of female sexuality, which will be portrayed at the end of the story, is foreshadowed through the reference to the abject menstrual blood.

In this story, as it is in the feline stories, the girl is likened to snow which is associated with purity and chastity. And her red shawl, which is likened to blood on the snow, foreshadows the loss of her virginity. However, until that time she will have to make a journey through the forest which houses naked men who can transform into wolves. These werewolves signify the male sexual aggressivity and their cannibalism is associated with sexual devourment. In this respect, with cultural definitions that refer to her virginity as “an unbroken egg”, “a sealed vessel”, “shut tight with a plug of membrane”, the heroine is depicted as an object of desire ready to be consumed by the male appetite. In addition, she is defined as “a closed system”, like the patriarchal system in which she is brought up. The

heroine is introduced as a conventional figure at this stage in order to create a sharp subversive effect at the end of the story.

On her way to her grandmother's house, the heroine meets a "fully clothed", "very handsome young" man "in the coat and wideawake hat of a hunter, laden with carcasses of game birds" (134). "In making the huntsman a werewolf, [Carter] takes the story's dyad of male virtue and vice and places them within the changeable body of a single character" (Bruhl and Gamer 150). The heroine has "never seen such a fine fellow before" (134). However, with "gleaming trails of spittle clung to his teeth" (134), it is revealed that he is a wolf in disguise of a hunter. Not being aware of this, the heroine chats with him; they laugh and joke like old friends. She soon tells him that she is going to her grandmother's house and the wolf, showing his compass, tells the girl that he can arrive at her grandmother's house a quarter of an hour by following a different route that his compass shows. The girl says that she does not believe him. Then, they make a bet. The wolf asks: "What will you give me if I get to your grandmother's house before you? What would you like? she asked disingenuously. A kiss. Commonplaces of a rustic seduction; she lowered her eyes and blushed." (134-5). This flirtatious scene shows that the heroine "forgot to be afraid of the beasts ... for she wanted to dawdle on her way to make sure the handsome gentleman would win his wager" (135).

In the meantime, the wolf reaches the granny's house. Mimicking her granddaughter's voice, he is invited in. The grandmother is a "pious old woman" who "has her Bible for company" (135). In this sense, she is a part of the hegemonic structure of patriarchal society. With the patchwork quilt, two china spaniels, rug of rags on the pantiles, and the fireplace the grandmother's house reflects her domesticity. The narrator declares: "We keep the wolves outside by living well" (135). This declaration implies that the grandmother lives in accordance with the rules and norms of society and this prevents her from experiencing unruly desire innate in the werewolves. Thus, the grandmother is a traditionally constructed woman who is passive and therefore a prey for the male predator.

He strips off his shirt. His skin is the colour and texture of vellum. A crisp stripe of hair runs down his belly, his nipples are ripe and dark as poison fruit but he's so thin you could count the ribs under his skin if only he gave you the time. He strips off his

trousers and she can see how hairy his legs are. His genitals, huge.
Ah! huge.

The last thing the old lady saw in all this world was a
young man, eyes like cinders, naked as a stone, approaching her
bed.

The wolf is carnivore incarnate. (136)

Male sexual appetite is monstrous, bestial and carnivorous. And this excessive sexual desire is represented by cannibalism as it is observed in the scene above.

After eating the grandmother, the wolf wears the grandmother's clothes and starts to wait for the heroine's arrival. As soon as the girl enters the house, she realizes that her grandmother is the wolf in disguise. She tries to reach the basket to grab her knife, but she cannot do it while the wolf's eyes are fixed upon her. At this point, Carter adopts the popular phrasings of the traditional tale of "Red Riding Hood" of which every reader is familiar with.

What big eyes you have.

All the better to see you with.

No trace at all of the old woman except for a tuft of white
hair that had caught in the bark of an unburned log. When the girl
saw that, she knew she was in danger of death.

Where is my grandmother?

There's nobody here but we two, my darling. (137)

The girl is frightened. She pulls her red shawl more closely round herself "as if it could protect her although it was as red as the blood she must spill" (137). Thus, the association of the red shawl with blood is constructed again. Her blood will be spilled when she is deflowered by the wolf and eaten up by him. At this point, the girl is still trying to rely on her virtue dependent on her virginity. The patriarchal culture she is brought up in has taught her to defend patriarchal values and she seeks protection in her red shawl. The girl understands that she is a sacrificial victim for the male appetite as soon as she hears the great howling of the wolves gathering around the house for the feast. However, "[t]he granddaughter reconceives what she had been taught to fear and opens new ways of thinking about desire and sexuality" (Moss 191). Thus, she suddenly takes off her scarlet shawl, "the colour of poppies, the colour of sacrifices, the colour of her menses, and, since her fear did her no good, she ceased to be afraid" (138). She asks:

What shall I do with my shawl?

Throw it on the fire, dear one. You won't need it again.
She bundled up her shawl and threw it on the blaze, which
instantly consumed it. Then she drew her blouse over her head; her
small breasts gleamed as if the snow had invaded the room.
What shall I do with my blouse?
Into the fire with it, too, my pet. (138)

In this scene, the wolf is sure of the power provided by his bestial libido and he is exerting this power on the girl. By calling her with patriarchal definitions of woman such as “my pet”, he is getting ready to consume her as he has done with the granny. The female body is a commodity in patriarchal society and it is objectified as the meat for the cannibalistic desire. Thus, being the object of consumption, the female body is depicted as a victim for the male appetite. However, at this stage, Carter reverses the traditional tale. The girl is transformed from her being a persecuted heroine position into a liberated one who starts to striptease.

The thin muslin went flaring up the chimney like a magic
bird and now off came her skirt, her woollen stockings, her shoes,
and on to the fire they went, too, and were gone for good. The
firelight shone through the edges of her skin; now she was clothed
only in her untouched integument of flesh. This dazzling, naked
she combed out her hair with her fingers; her hair looked white as
the snow outside. Then went directly to the man with red eyes in
whose unkempt mane the lice moved; she stood up on tiptoe and
unbuttoned the collar of his shirt.
What big arms you have.
All the better to hug you with.
Every wolf in the world now howled a prothalamion
outside the window as she freely gave the kiss she owed him. (138)

Thus, the heroine’s fear of male sexuality represented by the wolves is turned into an autonomous active desire. In this scene quoted above, she is assuming the role of Sade’s active heroines:

[O]nce [these heroines] have tasted power, once they know how to
use their sexuality as an instrument of aggression, they use it to
extract vengeance for the humiliations they were forced to endure
as the passive objects of the sexual energy of others.
A free woman in an unfree society will be a monster. Her
freedom will be a condition of personal privilege that deprives
those on which she exercises it of her own freedom. The most

extreme kind of this deprivation is murder. These women murder.
(Carter, *Sadeian* 27).

In this respect, the granddaughter is getting ready to kill the carnivorous violent appetite in the wolf. Knowing that “the worst wolves are hairy on the inside” (137), she decides to kill the beast in the wolf and to disclose the human within. The wolves’ human side is emphasized by the narrator’s evoking pity on their melancholic nature.

That long-drawn, wavering howl has, for all its fearful resonance, some inherent sadness in it, as if the beasts would love to be less beastly if only they knew how and never cease to mourn their own condition. There is a vast melancholy in the canticles of the wolves, melancholy infinite as the forest, endless as these long nights of winter and yet that ghastly sadness, that mourning for their own, irremediable appetites, can never move the heart for not one phrase in it hints at the possibility of redemption; grace could not come to the wolf from its own despair, only through some external mediator, so that, sometimes, the beast will look as if he half welcomes the knife that despatches him. (131)

The wolves’ howling frightens the inhabitants of the village, but at the same time their suffering, because of their need to feed on human flesh, is underlined. They have grace, but it does not come from within. An external mediator is needed to disclose the grace in them. The wolves suffer from their violent nature and they can become so melancholic that they commit suicide. At the end of the story, the heroine will be this external mediator who will strip the wolf of his violent animality and grant him his humanness. Thus, the heroine will help the wolf to get rid of his masculine roles dictated by patriarchal society. While she is doing this, she will kill the cultural representation of female sexuality as well.

What big teeth you have!

She saw how his jaw began to slaver and the room was full of the clamour of the forest's Liebestod but the wise child never flinched, even when he answered:

All the better to eat you with.

The girl burst out laughing; she knew she was nobody's meat. She laughed at him full in the face, she ripped off his shirt for him and flung it into the fire, in the fiery wake of her own discarded clothing. The flames danced like dead souls on Walpurgisnacht and the old bones under the bed set up a terrible clattering but she did not pay them any heed. (138)

“All the better to eat you with” indicates an extreme sexual desire. The girl laughs at such a declaration. The girl is not a typical submissive and powerless heroine of the conventional Gothic world. She is bold enough to mock the wolf’s expected coming victory because she is determined not to be a prey for the wolf. Thus, Carter reverses the representation of the female body as a raw food hunted to be devoured. Instead, she endows the heroine with the status of the subject who has acclaimed her active desire. Through this acclamation, the heroine attains a bestial hunger by which she becomes powerful enough to devour the male villain. With such a portrayal of a female character, Carter destroys the dichotomy of the male subject’s active sexual appetite vs the female object’s passive state as a food to be consumed. In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter writes: “The strong abuse, exploit and meatify the weak, says Sade. They must and will devour their natural prey. The primal condition of man cannot be modified in any way; it is, eat or be eaten” (*Sadeian* 140). Then, by declaring that she is nobody’s meat, instead of being eaten, the heroine decides to eat her male other. At this point, the heroine becomes a devouring subject and the male body is objectified as meat. She becomes an autonomous self and refuses to be a passive victim.

She will lay his fearful head on her lap and she will pick out the lice from his pelt and perhaps she will put the lice into her mouth and eat them, as he will bid her, as she would do in a savage marriage ceremony.

...
See! sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf. (138-9)

The wolf’s half-human and half-animal representation and his association with dirt signified by the lice on his pelt reflect permeable boundaries of a repulsive corporeal image. Dirt is a threat to mainstream society’s proper cleanliness. In this respect, the heroine’s putting the lice into her mouth evokes disgust, but at the same time this act signifies her crossing the borders between cleanliness and dirt through abjection. This transgression is provided by the abject wolf. The wolf’s eccentricity and marginality are emphasized more by his cannibalism that represents an excessive sexual desire. Since what does not respect to the borders of mainstream society is treated with fear and hostility, the wolf is condemned to live

in the wild apart from the social community. However, he is the abject repressed other that haunts the borders of the self and this is signified by his hauntings of the domestic space.

In order to attain its place in the symbolic order, the self should detach from its other according to the traditional identity theories. In this story, the heroine's place in the symbolic order is prepared by the patriarchal society's creating the fear of the other in her in the form of wolves. The heroine's other is her active desire symbolized by the embodiment of the wolf. In fact, her sexuality has no active representation in the phallogentric sexual structure. It finds its representation in the realm of the abject which is subversive and which deviates from the social norms. Then, her sexual intercourse with the wolf shows that instead of feeling afraid of the Other and excluding him as a potential threat to her stable identity's boundaries, she welcomes him and reconstructs her sexuality in animal terms. In this respect, she understands that true liberation from the patriarchal values which control her body lies in her courage to obtain a fluid identity that carries the Other within. Thus, being in a continuous relationship with the Other, the girl becomes a subject-in-process.

In "The Company of the Wolves", the boundaries between gender distinctions, male sexuality and female sexuality, self and other, subject and object, human and animal are transgressed. The hierarchical distinctions are eliminated and both the wolf and the girl together form a plural identity. That is, at the end of the story not only the savage marriage, but also the multiple identity which both the wolf and the girl possess are celebrated. By comparing "The Company of the Werewolves" with "The Werewolf", Gamble states that

the process of growth is completed in "The Company of Wolves", where little Red Riding Hood ends up "sweet and sound ... in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf". Inhabiting not only granny's house but her bed, Red Riding Hood has in a sense become her grandmother. Making love with the wolf, in a "savage marriage ceremony", she is also embracing her grandmother and thus acknowledging and affirming her adult female sexuality. Bettelheim says that it is love which transforms adult sexuality into something beautiful. Carter seems to be saying that love is not possible until one has come to accept and enjoy her sexuality. (Gamble 127)

In conclusion, mutual love and understanding destroy the patriarchally imposed roles that define relationships between the two sexes in terms of both spirituality and sexuality.

Carter yearns for a utopian heterosexual relationship based on equal terms. In this respect, by her insistence on the reciprocal theme, she manages to present how relationships can be liberating when imagined free from cultural constructions of male-dominated ideology. The last scene which shows the heroine sleeping in the arms of the tender wolf celebrates the union of the self with the Other and defines a subject-in-process outside the traditional psychoanalytical perception of identity resisting imprisonment in the patriarchally constructed borders of the female body and female identity.

The plot structure of “Wolf-Alice” is not based on a rewriting of a single traditional fairy tale. It borrows themes and figures from “Red Riding Hood”, “Beauty and the Beast”, and Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*. Besides, “Wolf-Alice” presents a journey of identity formation. It not only relies on traditional identity theories, but also deals with the pre-Oedipal stage in feminist terms. Wolf-Alice is the main liminal figure of this story who promotes a destabilized identity. Thus, in “Wolf-Alice” “the realm of the pre-Symbolic is revalued over the symbolic order” (Gutenberg 169) by its emphasis on the plural identity rather than a single one that is imposed on women by the symbolic order.

Day claims that this story “acts as a kind of summary of the collection’s preoccupations and perspectives as a whole” (162). In most of Carter’s stories, the heroines discover their sexuality through awakening the beast in themselves. However, in this story, as the hyphenated title “Wolf-Alice” implies, the heroine starts her process of becoming woman as a girl who has half-human and half-animal traits. On the contrary to the other female characters in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, Wolf-Alice is portrayed as an animal from the very beginning who is not yet aware of her human side. Wolf-Alice has been raised by the wolves and she behaves like a wolf. In this respect, the heroine has no comprehension of the social and cultural structures surrounding her. Thus, it can be claimed that in this story Carter designs a plot which metaphorically reveals a half-human and half-animal girl’s transition from the semiotic stage into the symbolic order.

By emphasizing Wolf-Alice’s animal traits more than her human characteristics, the narrator’s descriptions expose her as the abject Other. The narrator is the voice of the first person plural. In other words, the narrator is the voice of society itself which holds the power to decide on what should be regarded as the waste of society. Therefore, when the narrator describes Wolf-Alice in abject terms, he mostly uses the pronouns “we” and “us” in order to

emphasize the difference between the social community and Wolf-Alice. “Her panting tongue hangs out ... Her elbows, hands and knees are thickly callused because she always runs on all fours ... Her pace is not *our* pace ... She can net so much more of the world than *we* can through the fine, hairy, sensitive filters of her nostrils” (140, emphasis mine). In this sense, “[n]othing about her is human except that she is *not* a wolf; it is as if the fur she thought she wore had melted into her skin and become part of it, although it does not exist” (141, original emphasis). Thus, Wolf-Alice has a plural unfixed identity and her animality is associated with the Kristevan semiotic stage in which there is no developed stable identity and no separation from the (m)other yet.

It can be claimed that Kristeva’s model of identity formation is a rewriting of Lacan’s identity formation process. In fact, what Kristeva does is to displace Lacan’s distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic order and substitute in its place a distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic. The semiotic is linked to the pre-Oedipal process in which the child has no separate identity, but identification with the maternal body.

The sensations that construct its physical existence are the rhythms of heartbeat and pulse, dark and light, hot and cold, the regular intaking and outgiving of breath and food and faeces. It is the gradual ordering and patterning of these physical drives and impulses that provides the necessary basis of possibility for the process of signification – the production of meaning. (Morris 144)

Thus, the child’s language in this phase is composed of babbles, incoherent and rhythmic sounds which seem meaningless within the system of language, but in fact are communicative significations. Kristeva relates this semiotic language to the “chora” (the Greek word for womb) in which these various drives, the endless flow of pulsions, Kristeva calls, are gathered up and form a pre-linguistic language which is associated with the maternal.

Our discourse - all discourse – moves with and against the *chora* in the sense that it simultaneously depends on and refuses it. Although the *chora* can be designated and regulated, it can never be definitively posited: as a result, one can situate the *chora* and, if necessary, lend it a topology, but one can never give it axiomatic form. (Kristeva, *Revolution* 26 original emphasis).

In this respect, Wolf-Alice is in the pre-linguistic stage. Her communicative language which is associated with wolves' howls identifies her relation to the chora. Acquiring language for a subject means stepping into the symbolic stage and accepting the authority of the Law. However, Wolf-Alice's language stands outside the symbolic system. It is not the product of the patriarchal order, but a communicative system of signs which belongs to the maternal stage.

Could this ragged girl with brindled lugs have spoken like we do she would have called herself a wolf, but she cannot speak, although she howls because she is lonely – yet 'howl' is not the right word for it, since she is young enough to make the noise that pups do, bubbling, delicious, like that of a panful of fat on the fire. Sometimes the sharp ears of her foster kindred hear her across the irreparable gulf of absence; they answer her from faraway pine forest and the bald mountain rim. Their counterpoint crosses and criss-crosses the night sky; they are trying to talk to her but they cannot do so because she does not understand their language even if she knows how to use it for she is not a wolf herself, although suckled by wolves. (140)

As is observed in the quotation above, Wolf-Alice tries to communicate with the wolves in babbles and incomprehensible sounds. She has not obtained a skill of speaking a language yet. Therefore, she is under the control of her drives and she expresses herself through these instinctive drives and "howls". Her state indicates that she is not a part of the symbolic order. She does not have a language to define herself as "me" and the "other". Therefore, she has not acquired a sense of differentiation between the subject and the object yet.

The "symbolic", on the other hand, is associated with the "establishment of sign and syntax, paternal function, grammatical and social constraints, symbolic law" (Roudiez 7). It is the language that provides a shared, fixed and unitary meaning in the social world which is a patriarchal world. Then, the child's entrance into the "symbolic" language, the language of the father, the Law, necessitates the child's separation from the mother. And this "symbolic" language demands complete conformity from the child; it is characterized by power and control.

Wolf-Alice's separation from her mother and her entrance into socio-symbolic order is an involuntary one. Her wolf-mother is killed and when she is found by her dead mother she does not want to surrender to her so-called saviours, members of socio-symbolic order. "When they found her in the wolf's den beside the bullet-riddled corpse of her foster mother, she was no more than a little brown scrap so snarled in her own brown hair they did not, at first, think she was a child but a cub; she snapped at her would-be saviours with her spiky canines until they tied her up by force" (141). Thus, Wolf-Alice is taken to a convent symbolizing one of the oppressive institutions of patriarchal order and her obligatory socialization begins in this place. During her first days in the convent, she completely acts like an animal. Everybody feels surprised when she first learns "to sit up on her hind legs and beg for a crust" (141). And the nuns discover that when she is treated with kindness, she does not act wild. However, she does not show any sign that she will abandon her animality.

Yet she always seemed wild, impatient of restraint, capricious in temper; when the Mother Superior tried to teach her to give thanks for her recovery from the wolves, she arched her back, pawed the floor, retreated to a far corner of the chapel, crouched, trembled, urinated, defecated - reverted entirely, it would seem, to her natural state. (*Bloody* 141)

Thus, Wolf-Alice rebels against being tamed and acquiring her place in the symbolic order. Her acting like a wolf completely positions her in the semiotic order and renders her abject to the symbolic order. In the semiotic period, which is the pre-Oedipal period, the child is unable to control its drives. Wolf-Alice also urinates and defecates, which indicates that she is in the semiotic stage and she has not learned to control her drives yet. This underlines Wolf-Alice's abjection. Thus, the social codes of the civilized human society do not fulfill any necessary functions for Wolf-Alice. Wolf-Alice's half-human and half-animal identity threatens the strictly demarcated boundaries of society and frightens its members. As the narrator, the voice of the mainstream society reveals: "we secluded her in animal privacy out of fear of her imperfection because it showed us what we might have been" (144). Then, the civilized community knows that Wolf-Alice confronts them with the beastliness, in other words, the otherness within them. Then, all these representations of Wolf-Alice indicate that she is the abject Other who is doomed to be marginalized by the mainstream society.

Realizing that Wolf-Alice will not be able to become a part of social community, the nuns of the convent decide to send her to live with the Duke, another figure who is marginalized by society. The narrator says: "He lives in a gloomy mansion, all alone but for this child who *has as little in common with the rest of us as he does*" (142, emphasis mine). The Duke is also a socially abjected character in this society who is a vampiristic werewolf. His skin is dry as old paper, he sleeps all day long, at night his "eyes open to devour the world in which he sees, nowhere a reflection of himself", "he ceased to cast an image in the mirror" (142) and these are all characteristics associated with the vampire figure. The Duke's not having any reflection in the mirror is a popular representation of the vampire whose inhumanness is revealed through his not being visible in the mirror. This implies that the vampires also have no definitive and stable identities that can be comprehended by socialized beings. As a werewolf the Duke is also depicted through his carnivorous appetite like the other werewolf representations in the preceding stories. The Duke

is cast in the role of the corpse-eater, the body-snatcher who invades the last privacies of the dead. He is white as leprosy, with scrabbling fingernails, and nothing deters him. If you stuff a corpse with garlic, why, he only slavers at the treat: *cadavre provençale*. He will use the holy cross as a scratching post and crouch above the font to thirstily lap up holy water. (142)

As Kristeva contends the abject deals with the profane. The Duke is, in this sense, a profane figure who does not have any respect for religious rituals. Besides, he is a corpse-eater and the corpses are treated as a kind of cuisine as is observed above. In this extract given above death and food are combined in the metaphor of eating corpses. In her theory of abjection, Kristeva defines the corpse as the ultimate example of bodily waste which blurs the borders between life and death. She claims that the dead body reminds the subject of his or her mortality. Therefore, the corpse becomes one of the extreme representations which blur the boundaries of the symbolic order and it revolts against the clear-cut definitions between being alive and being dead. The Duke's feeding on the corpses then positions him in the realm of the abject. Through this figure, Carter attempts to disrupt any fixed, socially and culturally acknowledged, strictly conditioned perceptions of human society. In one of her interviews Kristeva explains that the abject has

the aspect of nausea, of wanting to vomit. *L'abjection* is something that disgusts you. For example, you see something rotting and you want to vomit. It's "abject" on the level of matter. It can also be a notion that concerns moral matters – an *abjection* in the face of crime, for example. But, it is an extremely strong feeling which is at once somatic and symbolic, and which is above all a revolt of the person against an external menace from which one wants to keep oneself at a distance, but of which one has the impression that it is not only an external menace but that it may menace us from the inside. So it is a desire for separation, for becoming autonomous and also the feeling of an impossibility of doing so – whence the element of crisis which the notion of abjection carries within it. Taken to its logical consequences, it is an impossible assemblage of elements, with a connotation of a "fragile limit". ("Interview" 374, original emphasis).

In this respect, the Duke's feeding on corpses has the effects the abject produces as is discussed above. Corpses are rotten bodies which create disgust on the material level and the act of eating them makes you want to vomit on the material level as well as on the moral level because cannibalism is a social taboo that threatens the borders of human integrity. Thus, the Duke's abjection is depicted through one of the extreme representations that disturb the notion of what is edible and inedible. By presenting such a character, Carter subverts the subjective perception of purity and defilement dichotomy by erasing the boundaries between them.

The Duke lets Wolf-Alice to live with him because she lacks the cultural and social training of society which judges and excludes him. Thus, these two socially abjected figures start to share the same margins of their society. Wolf-Alice does not feel frightened when she sees "the Duke with the leg of a man on his shoulder" because she has that "verminous innocence" (145). In this context, the narrator likens Wolf-Alice to Eve who has not attained the knowledge of ideologically constructed structure of human society yet. This is the reason why Wolf-Alice is defined as innocent because she does not have the consciousness to suffer from the social and cultural imprisonment of the mainstream society.

If you could transport her, in her filth, rags and feral disorder, to the Eden of our first beginnings where Eve and grunting Adam squat on a daisy bank, picking the lice from one another's pelts, then she might prove to be the wise child who leads them all and

her silence and her howling a language as authentic as any language of nature. (143)

Thus, through emphasizing Wolf-Alice's innocence by associating her with Eve and with animality, Carter indicates that animality is a pre-human state which is also prior to identity formation. Hence, she binds animality and Kristeva's semiotic stage through such a metaphor and makes animality the symbol of liberation from all kinds of boundaries that are socially and culturally constructed. This is the reason why Carter pushes her heroine into the symbolic order towards the end of the story in order to manifest that being a human is a social construct. Besides, Wolf-Alice's association with Eve brings out a new awareness of female desire. Her discovery of her femaleness through her body which is in the act of changing and becoming provides Wolf-Alice's awareness of her desire as well.

She would spend hours examining the new skin that had been born, it seemed to her, of her bleeding. She would lick her soft upholstery with her long tongue and groom her hair with her fingernails. She examined her new breasts with curiosity; the white growths reminded her of nothing so much as the night-sprung puffballs she had found, sometimes, on evening rambles in the woods, a natural if disconcerting apparition, but then, to her astonishment, she found a little diadem of fresh hairs tufting between her thighs. (146)

As soon as Wolf-Alice starts to live with the human community, she discovers culturally imposed behaviours. For instance, when she discovers her bodily rhythm through having menstruation, she learns to feel ashamed of her bodily function which differentiates her body as female.

Her first blood bewildered her. She did not know what it meant ... At night, she prowled the empty house looking for rags to sop the blood up; she had learned a little elementary hygiene in the convent, enough to know how to bury her excrement and cleanse herself of her natural juices, although the nuns had not the means to inform her how it should be, it was not fastidiousness but shame that made her do so ... She tore strips of the most absorbent fabrics to clumsily diaper herself. (144)

Menstrual blood is culturally associated with dirt and therefore it is rendered abject both as an element of defilement and as a sign of difference which separates women from men. Thus, during her individuation process in society, Wolf-Alice learns to get rid of her dirtiness because she first learns to be ashamed of it. At the same time, her monthly bleeding equips Wolf-Alice with the concept of time cycle. Before experiencing menstruation, she has “no direct notion of past, or of future, or of duration, only of a dimensionless, immediate moment” (144). That is, Wolf-Alice is free from the notion of historical linear time which categorizes time as past, present and future. This implies that Wolf-Alice stands outside the ontological values patriarchal society provides for her. “Like the wild beasts, she lives without a future. She inhabits only the present tense, a fugue of the continuous, a world of sensual immediacy as without hope as it is without despair” (141). Thus, Wolf-Alice is not entrapped in the closed system of time; she is always in the present, therefore her process of being a subject is never finished. She is always in the process of becoming. Kristeva observes that female subjectivity poses a problem with respect to the linear and historical conception of time.

Female subjectivity seems to offer it [(time)] a specific concept of measurement that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* out of the many modalities that appear throughout the history of civilization. On the one hand, this measure preserves cycles, gestation, and the eternal predictability can be shocking, but its simultaneity with what is experienced as extra-subjective and cosmic time is a source of resplendent visions and unnamable jouissance. On the other hand, it preserves a solid temporality that is faultless and impenetrable, one that has so little to do with linear time that the very term “temporality” seems inappropriate. (Kristeva, “Women’s Time” 354, original emphasis)

Thus, female subjectivity shapes time into a repetitive and unclosed ongoing system. Since female subjectivity is dependent on bodily functions, the biological rhythm of the female body provides a peculiar sense of time. Bacchilega states that “economic and symbolic revaluing of women’s menstrual and birth blood [is] essential to the transformation of the heroine’s subjectivity” (66). Therefore, Wolf-Alice’s conceptualization of time through her monthly bleeding transforms her subjectivity into an autonomous one free from the

patriarchal authority. In fact, defining time through her bodily cycles, Wolf-Alice challenges the patriarchally constructed notion of time.

She learned to expect these bleedings, to prepare her rags against them, and afterwards, neatly to bury the dirtied things. Sequence asserted itself with custom and then she understood the circumambulatory principle of the clock perfectly, even if all clocks were banished from the den where she and the Duke inhabited their separate solitudes, so that you might say she discovered the very action of time by means of this returning cycle (145-6).

In this sense, Wolf-Alice's acquirement of the notion of time is a positive one which is closely connected with her femaleness. However, as soon as she obtains the knowledge of time, she remembers her violent separation from her mother's body metaphorically as well as literally and she starts to get into a contact with the symbolic order as well.

When she curled up among the cinders, the colour, texture and warmth of them brought her foster mother's belly out of the past and printed it on her flesh; her first conscious memory, painful as the first time the nuns combed her hair. She howled a little, in a firmer, deepening trajectory, to obtain the inscrutable consolation of the wolves' response, for now the world around her was assuming form. She perceived an essential difference between herself and her surroundings that you might say she could not put her *finger* on – only, the trees and grass of the meadows outside no longer seemed the emanation of her questing nose and erect ears, and yet sufficient to itself, but a kind of backdrop for her, that waited for her arrivals to give it meaning. She saw herself upon it and her eyes, with their sombre clarity, took on a veiled, introspective look. (146, original emphasis)

At this point, Wolf-Alice starts to identify her surroundings as meaningful, which indicates that she is taking a step out of the semiotic stage composed of incomprehensible utterances yet of a bodily communication with the mother and moving towards to the symbolic stage that will endow her with the language of the Law. Saussurean linguistics reveals that each sign in the system of language attains its meaning through its difference from others. In other words, meaning is delivered through the difference of a sign from the other ones. As Saussure declares:

A linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas; but the pairing of a certain number of acoustical signs with as many cuts made from the mass of thought engenders a system of values; and this system serves as the effective link between the phonic and psychological elements within each sign. (15)

This indicates that a sign achieves meaning because it firstly exists within a linguistic system and it secondly defines its meaning through its difference from the other signs. In relation to this perception of language, Wolf-Alice's awareness of her difference from her surroundings enables her to give meaning to her environment. In fact, Wolf-Alice's entrance into the symbolic order and language is provided through a more overt instance symbolized by the Lacanian mirror stage in the course of the story. Carter's rewriting of Lacan's mirror stage also underlines Wolf-Alice's identity formation process by granting her an awareness of self separated from the (m)other.

Wolf-Alice comes across a mirror in the Duke's house and when she sees her reflection in the mirror first, she mistakes it for a littermate which is trying to become friends with her.

She bruised her muzzle on the cold glass and broke her claws trying to tussle with this stranger. She saw, with irritation, then amusement, how it mimicked every gesture of hers ... She rubbed her head against her reflected face, to show that she felt friendly towards it, and felt a cool, solid, immovable surface between herself and she – some kind, possibly, of invisible cage? In spite of this barrier, she was lonely enough to ask this creature to try to play with her ... at once she received a reciprocal invitation. She rejoiced; she began to whirl round on herself, yapping exultantly, but, when she retreated from the mirror, she halted in the midst of her ecstasy, puzzled, to see how her new friend grew less in size. (145)

As the quotation reveals above, although Wolf-Alice meets her reflection in the mirror, she does not recognize herself yet. Lacan reveals that at an early point in the infant's development, there is a state of being in which there is no difference between the subject and the object. What is called as pre-Oedipal stage by Freud is called by Lacan as "imaginary" since he claims that at this stage there is no defined center of self. At this stage, the child lives

a symbiotic relationship with the mother and there is no boundary between their bodies, but a merging of identities. In order to construct a sense of self, the child should gain a perception of the self and separate himself or herself from the (m)other. This process takes place in the “mirror stage” in which the child sees itself in the mirror and “realizes” that he or she is a self which is separate from the mother. However, this image of self is also a false image since it is a reflection of the self in the mirror, and both is and is not the self. Thus, the child’s relationship to the world is an imaginary one which is developed by his or her “misrecognition” of his or her own image, an imaginary substitute for the self, in the mirror. In this regard, the self becomes only a representation.

It is also at this stage the child starts to speak. According to Lacan, the realization of the separation of self and (m)other and the world is what produces the language and this language is constituted by lack. As soon as the child enters into language, he or she starts to suffer from having a constructed identity rather than an autonomous one. In this respect, Wolf-Alice’s first experience with the mirror still shows that she is in the imaginary stage. She does not have a sense of self separated from the (m)other, but at the same time what she recognizes in the mirror is a false reflection of the self in Lacanian sense because she thinks that her reflection is a littermate. However, her second experience with her reflection in the mirror carries her one step forward to the mirror stage where she identifies her image as a self separated from the (m)other. This identification is exemplified by her need to cover her nakedness by a dress she finds in the Duke’s house.

Her intimate in the mirror wound the old clothes round herself, wrinkling its nose in delight at the ancient yet still potent scents of musk and civet that woke up in the sleeves and bodices. This habitual, at last boring, fidelity to her every movement finally woke her up to the regretful possibility that her companion was, in fact, no more than a particularly ingenious variety of the shadow she cast on sunlit grass. Had not she and the rest of the litter tussled and romped with their shadows long ago? She poked her agile nose around the back of the mirror; she found only dust, a spider stuck in his web, a heap of rags. A little moisture leaked from the corners of her eyes, yet her relation with the mirror was now far more intimate since she knew she saw herself within it. (146-7)

At this point, Wolf-Alice leaves the semiotic stage and enters into the symbolic order through the mirror stage which grants her an identity separate from the others. The “symbolic order” is “the realm of consciousness, rules, order, differentiation, logic (*logos* is the Greek for word), power, in contrast to the Imaginary realm of the Unconscious with its anarchic, uncontrolled desires” (Robbins 115). Therefore, Wolf-Alice’s experiences with her body and surroundings teach her cultural rules. She learns to deal with her menstruation by cleaning herself, she learns to dress in order to cover her breasts and “a little diadem of fresh hairs tufting between her thighs” (146), and she learns to clean herself from “her coat of ashes in the water” in order to wear a dress “so white” (147). All these behaviours show that Wolf-Alice is adopting the cultural and social rituals the mainstream society provides for her. She discovers that her reflection is only a constructed representation through looking behind the mirror and seeing that there is nothing there. However, as Day suggests “[t]he regret at finding there is nothing substantial behind the mirror is also a liberation” (105). By subverting the traditionally constructed subject and object dichotomy that constitutes identity, Carter liberates her heroine from the confinements of patriarchal notion of identity.

Kristeva declares that we have to accept our position as inserted into an order that precedes us because she thinks that there is no escape from this order. There is no other space from which we can speak and if we are able to speak, it can be only through the framework of the symbolic language. Thus, Kristeva offers a revolutionary subject, whether masculine or feminine, who attacks the symbolic order with the semiotic. However, if the semiotic is marginalized then how it is exercised rises as a question in our minds. Kristeva answers this by saying that the only possible way is to release some of the semiotic pulsions into the symbolic. That is, the use of a series of ruptures, absences and breaks in the symbolic language can be detected as semiotic.

Kristeva believes that the desire to return to an imagined semiotic order is a dangerous position for an individual woman, as well as for feminism as a movement. By rejecting the symbolic order which sustains social identity a woman leaves herself unprotected and open to the full force of unconscious desire, of which the most powerful is always the death drive. A desire to return to the mother can become a desire for loss of identity, for a dissolution of self in m/other – for death. (Morris 148)

In fact, Kristeva does not differentiate between the semiotic and the symbolic as two separate entities. She notes that these two stages merge with one another in the process of making meaning. Carter also reveals a parallel perspective when she tells her heroine's journey of identity formation. Firstly, Wolf-Alice is depicted in the semiotic stage which renders her abject to the symbolic order. Her identification with the wolves and her unawareness of her human side make her experience a blissful union with the (m)other which anticipates no boundaries between the self and the other. Then through her experiences in the human community, Wolf-Alice enters into the mirror stage and acquires a knowledge of her self and surroundings through initiating difference. However, this does not indicate that Wolf-Alice has completely become a subject in the symbolic order. As Kristeva mentions, she has become a split subject, a pluralized identity which constructs itself on the border of the semiotic and the symbolic order. Wolf-Alice's merging these two different stages of identity is observed in the rest of the story by her not conforming to the rules of the symbolic system completely. She welcomes her human side, but she still has a hold onto her animality. Thus, she creates her own subjectivity. And this aspect is revealed in the scene which she licks the wound of the Duke who is shot by the bullets of the villagers chasing him. The villagers who are determined to take revenge from the Duke because of his being a graveyard robber of corpses are prevented by Wolf-Alice's appearance in a bridal gown because they think that she is the ghost of the bride eaten by the Duke. Feeling afraid of her, the villagers stop running after the Duke and Wolf-Alice. The Duke's state of being in-between is also highlighted once again towards the end of the story.

Poor, wounded thing ... locked half and half between such strange states, an aborted transformation, an incomplete mystery, now he lies writhing on his black bed ... howls like a wolf with his foot in a trap or a woman in labour, and bleeds ... She prowled round the bed, growling, snuffing at his wound that does not smell like her wound. Then, she was pitiful as her gaunt grey mother; she leapt upon his bed to lick, without hesitation, without disgust, with a quick, tender gravity, the blood and dirt from his cheeks and forehead. (148)

When Wolf-Alice is licking the Duke's wound, a sign of affection, she does not feel any disgust. Her licking like an animal and her lack of repulsion imply that Wolf-Alice is still

connected to the abject maternal space. In this respect, Wolf-Alice is the subject-in-process, she is never finished. By her affection she also grants the Duke his identity, just as the tiger's bride does. The Duke is metamorphosed into a human being through love and his appearance becoming visible in the mirror is an indication of it.

As she continued her ministrations, this glass, with infinite slowness, yielded to the reflexive strength of its own material construction. Little by little, there appeared within it, like the image on photographic paper that emerges, first, a formless web of tracery, the prey caught in its own fishing net, then in firmer yet still shadowed outline until at last as vivid as real life itself, as if brought into being by her soft, moist, gentle tongue, finally, the face of the Duke. (149)

Thus, Wolf-Alice, freeing herself from the process of structuring unified and stable identity, restores the Duke to his humanity. As the reciprocal theme adopted in the other stories provides equality between the hierarchically constructed male and female characters, Wolf-Alice's and the Duke's relationship on equal terms destroys the predator and prey relationship as well. Wolf-Alice is not victimized or depicted as food for the Duke's carnivorous appetite. She attains her own subjectivity and develops a loving relationship with the Duke.

There is a certain amount of parody in this story – Carter seems to be pushing the redemptive-love scenario just about as far as it will go – but it's a tribute to her skill that she gets away with it. She knows her motifs, and Wolf-Alice is in part a Frog Prince story – kiss the yucky thing, the really yucky thing, and it will get better; though the Duke, even when licked, is no prince. *You see* – she appears to be saying to the Marquis, or to both of them, the Bluebeard of her own story and de Sade himself – *you didn't have to confine yourself to those mechanistic stage sets, those mechanical rituals. It wasn't just eat or be eaten. You could have been human!* 'Human', however, does not necessarily mean 'wonderful'. In Carter's world it is always, even at best, a little ambiguous. She does have a yen for tigerhood. (Atwood 132, original emphasis).

As is observed above, Carter's main aim is to celebrate humanness free from constructed boundaries that imprison identities.

By presenting stories within other stories and establishing an intertextual relationship with classical fairy tales, these three wolf stories endow their heroines with autonomous subjectivities and autonomous female desire. They relate the protagonists' struggles of achieving a fluid identity which transgresses the borders of the subject and the object positions. That is, by embracing their Others, the characters in these stories become subjects-in-process who affirm an identification with the Other, whether it is the abjected female subject, the abjected animality, or the abjected sensuality.

In conclusion, as is seen in the close analysis of the collection of the stories provided above, representing female desire in animal terms is the dominant abject motif in *The Bloody Chamber* stories. The female protagonists of the stories become aware of their sexuality and gain autonomous desire through animality. Duncker perceives the beasts in the stories as patriarchal figures which reinforce "women's masochistic complicity in male sexual aggression" (10). She argues that these beasts are men who are after victimizing the female protagonists in order to establish their power and prove their ownership of women. However, Makinen opposes Duncker's view by claiming that Carter is successful at portraying autonomous female desire. "Read the beasts as projections of a feminine libido, and they become exactly that autonomous desire which the female characters need to recognize and reappropriate as a part of themselves (denied by the phallogocentric culture)" (Makinen 12). Thus, women whose experience of sexuality is repressed in a male-dominated world are provided with a freedom of speech on their bodies which is denied to them for centuries. In this respect, Carter, as a postmodern writer of the Female Gothic, develops new definitions of female sexuality through animal images. This chapter has also shown that the role of the beasts in Carter's stories is an affirmative one. Bestiality reverses the Oedipal stage that constructs female identity as a negation to the male one. Thus, the abject representations of human and animal combinations destroy the traditional psychoanalytical establishment of human identity and form a bridge that binds men and women on equal terms.

Most of the characters portrayed in these stories are in some respect marginal and eccentric. They possess animal traits that create fear, hostility, avoidance or loathing, the feelings which characterize Kristeva's abjection. In this respect, Carter's characters represent a deviance from the representations of the social norms as well as a subversive potential which Gothic narratives promote by challenging socially and culturally established laws. The

half-human and half-animal characters who discover the animality in them or who are transformed into animals transcend the boundaries of the patriarchal system sexually and in terms of gender identity. As a result, the abject representations of sexuality give a new perspective of sexuality and identity different from Freud's and Lacan's traditional identity theories. In this respect, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* is a revolutionary work which opens new ways of thinking about female desire by overthrowing all kinds of oppressive ideologies particularly the patriarchal one and offers a new egalitarian world which can change hierarchical heterosexual relationships into an equal and mutual one.

CHAPTER 5

EMMA DONOGHUE'S *KISSING THE WITCH: OLD TALES IN NEW SKINS*

"One is not born a Gothic monster but rather becomes one"

Michelle Massé

5.1 Abject Representations of Lesbian Desire

The Lesbian Feminist Movement in the 1970s emerged as a reaction against the patriarchal society and phallocentric culture that define heterosexuality as a compulsory norm. Lesbian feminists' aim is a political one. They intend to overthrow patriarchy by opposing gender roles imposed on women in a male-dominated society and by revolting against women's oppression by societal power structures. In their manifesto, "The Woman-Identified Woman" (1970), Radicalesbians¹⁷ deal with these issues. They declare:

A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion ... She may not be fully conscious of the political implications of what for her began as personal necessity, but on some level she has not been able to accept the limitations and oppression laid on her by the most basic role of her society – the female role. (239)

Thus, Radicalesbians express all women's rage against being imprisoned by male definitions. By trying to define lesbianism with positive terms, they claim that women should develop their sense of identity with reference to themselves rather than with their relation to men. Radicalesbians think that only through relating to women, women can gain a new consciousness and start a cultural revolution. This idea radically implies that lesbianism is the only way of liberating oneself from patriarchal values and it assumes that even female heterosexuality does not bring liberation to women because women's relationships with men are perceived as a kind of slavery to the patriarchal ideology.

¹⁷ "Radicalesbians are a group of activist lesbian women in the 1970s who reacted against the invisibility of the lesbian identity in sexual politics of the feminist movement.

However, in “Not for Lesbians Only”, published in 1975, Charlotte Bunch tried to show that heterosexual women can also take their places in a lesbian feminist movement even if they are not lesbians. Bunch argues that what lesbianism puts forward as a critique of heterosexuality as a patriarchal institution is not only related to sexual orientation which forms an alternative community in mainstream society. On the contrary, lesbian-feminist politics intends to evoke a lesbian consciousness in every woman. In this respect, Bunch claims that “[l]esbian-feminism is not a political analysis ‘for lesbians only’. It is a political perspective and fight against one of the major institutions of our oppression – a fight which heterosexual women can engage in” (254). Thus, by defining heterosexuality as an ideological institution and as “a cornerstone of male supremacy” (253), Bunch invites all women – whether they are lesbians or not – to attack heterosexual domination in order to transform society into a more egalitarian one.

Adrienne Rich introduces a much more developed view of heterosexuality as institution in her article, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (1980), and perceives lesbianism as a resistance to male domination. She proposes the term “lesbian continuum” to emphasize the bond of sisterhood between women and her aim is to bring together women of the world around a political cause. She explains what she means by lesbian continuum as follows:

I mean the term *lesbian continuum* to include a range – through each woman’s life and throughout history – of woman-identified experience, not simply the fact a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman. If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a richer inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support ... we begin to grasp the breadths of female history and psychology which have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical definitions of *lesbianism*. (“Compulsory” 349)

In regard to these ideas presented above, Rich’s concept of lesbian continuum urged many feminists to develop strategies that would destroy the hegemonic power structure that oppress women. For instance, lesbian writers started to focus on social themes such as female

friendship and social bonds between women in patriarchal society in their literary works rather than only dealing with a lesbian's acknowledgement of her sexual orientation and portraying her relationships with other lesbians. Then, with the emergence of poststructuralist approaches and Monique Wittig's exploration of the linguistic constructs used as a power to exert heterosexual paradigm as the dominant norm, lesbian writing changed its direction to analyzing linguistic representations of lesbian women. Different from the social approaches discussed above that are based on woman-identification concept, Wittig draws attention to the language as an instrument of the "straight mind" which presupposes a necessity to construct differences at every level. She asserts that the heterosexual system employs signs for categorizing ontological differences and makes them function as an oppressive power on "all those who are in the position of the dominated" (345). In this respect, men and women, white people and black people, and social classes which are perceived economically, politically, and ideologically different are the linguistic products of the heterosexual society and culture. In the light of these ideas, Wittig declares that "'woman' has meaning only in heterosexual systems of thought and heterosexual economic systems. Lesbians are not women" (347). Thus, by providing such an approach which claims that lesbians are not women, Wittig shows that categories of gender are cultural constructs and therefore destroying the binary gender system is possible. Moreover, through this declaration lesbianism acquires an idealistic privileged position outside both the heterosexual and patriarchal system. As a result of this, by refusing to have a relationship with man, the lesbian becomes a disruptive figure who resists compulsory heterosexuality and transgresses gender distinctions.

In the 1980s, the notion of woman-identification left its place to issues of sexuality and desire. Realizing that psychoanalysis could be used as a tool to analyze and describe lesbian desire, lesbian sexual radicals of this period were indulged in discussing and portraying lesbian sexuality in their works. Feminist critics acknowledge that traditional psychoanalytical theories construct women's sexuality from a male-dominated point of view rather than examining and understanding it. Therefore, lesbian sexual radicals attempted to express same-sex desire among women overtly in order to attack the repressive theories of sexuality. As Palmer contends "[d]esire and its connections with fantasy, along with a lesbian erotics, are topics of enquiry" (*Contemporary Lesbian 2*) in this period. Unlike the preceding

collective woman-identification approach, lesbian feminists of the 1980s focused on difference and they discussed butch-femme identification and sado-masochistic relationships among lesbians. However, they were so much concerned with depicting lesbian desire that they could not realize that they were reviving the patriarchal and “simplistic identification of lesbianism with sex” (Palmer, *Contemporary Lesbian* 25). Moreover, they fall into the trap of describing sexual practices in terms of power struggle based on dominance and submission in patriarchal terms. In this respect, they were accused of being imprisoned in binary system and in practices of hierarchically constructed heterosexual relationships. It is the postmodern concept of gender as performance that liberates lesbian sexual relationships from these patriarchal concerns. At this point, Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, which presents an alternative approach to hierarchical sexual practices of same-sex relationships, should be explored.

According to Butler, social reality is constructed through social symbolic signs particularly by language itself. By continually engaging in “speech acts”, the speaking subject makes his or her discursive practice “real”. Butler argues that “[w]ithin speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names” (*Bodies* 13). In other words, the performative act of speaking creates the conventions of reality for the speaking subject who transfers this constructed reality into his or her actions. In this respect, she expresses that ideologies of societal structures also function through these speech acts. In parallel with these articulations, Butler draws attention to “gender acts” which enact gender norms of society similarly like speech acts and she reveals that “gender acts” render these gender norms “real” and “natural” for the individual.

If gender attributes, however, are not expressive but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal. The distinction between expression and performativeness is crucial. If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. The gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted

as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality.

Genders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived. As credible bearers of those attributes, however, genders can also be rendered thoroughly and radically *incredible*. (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 192-3, original emphasis)

As is observed above, Butler maintains that gender is an ideological construct of heteronormative values used by patriarchal hegemony to exercise power on sexual identities. In other words, gender roles, categorized as masculine and feminine, are learned performances imposed upon subjects by compulsory heterosexuality. In this sense, if gender is a performance that enacts heteronormative "reality" and if gender is a socially and culturally constructed fiction, then Butler thinks that it is possible to challenge and subvert these roles by alternative performative acts.

While discussing the concept of performative gender, Butler questions the established notion of lesbianism as an imitation of heterosexual identities that are regarded to be "original". In her opinion, all gender identities are copies; there is no "original" sexual identity because what is considered to be original is a social construct of the power domains. In Butler's words:

Compulsory heterosexuality sets itself up as the original, the true, the authentic; the norm that determines the real implies that "being" lesbian is always a kind of miming, a vain effort to participate in the phantasmatic plenitude of naturalized heterosexuality which will always and only fail ... [T]here is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but *gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original*. ("Imitation" 127, original emphasis)

Thus, Butler maintains that heterosexuality imitates a phantasmatic idealization of itself and it continually fails. In order to naturalize itself as "original" and "real", heterosexual identity repeats itself and projects itself as compulsory. In this respect, if lesbianism is perceived as a copy of heterosexual identity when it is defined by butch and

femme roles, then it means that heterosexuality is also defining itself by this copy which produces lesbianism as its origin. Butler reveals that such a simple inversion is obviously not possible. However, such an approach of copy and origin can show that “each position inverts into the other and confounds the possibility of any stable way to locate the temporal and logical priority of either term” (Butler, “Imitation” 128). Thus, instability of both terms can be utilized to disrupt the dominant heterosexual ideology which constructs itself as “reality”. If lesbian and gay identities are regarded to be fake copies of “natural” heterosexual identity, then parodic inversions of drag can reveal how hierarchical and binary system functions through heterosexual paradigm.

[T]he parodic or imitative effect of gay identities works neither to copy nor to emulate heterosexuality, but rather, to expose heterosexuality as an incessant and panicked imitation of its own naturalized idealization. That heterosexuality is always in the act of elaborating itself is evidence that it is perpetually at risk, that is, that it “knows” its own possibility of becoming undone: hence, its compulsion to repeat which is at one foreclosure of that which threatens its coherence. That it can never eradicate that risk attests to its profound dependency upon the homosexuality that it seeks fully to eradicate and never can or that it seeks to make second, but which is always already there as a prior possibility. Although this failure of naturalized heterosexuality might constitute a source of pathos for heterosexuality itself – what its theorists often refer to as its constitutive malaise – it can become an occasion for a subversive and proliferating parody of gender norms in which the very claim to originality and to the real is shown to be the effect of a certain kind of naturalized gender mime. (Butler, “Imitation” 129)

The quotation above reveals that lesbian and gay identities have a subversive parodic function which can disrupt the institution of compulsory heterosexuality. It also highlights the dependency of heterosexuality on homosexuality in order to assure its position in society. However, heterosexuality finds a way to exert itself as a norm on subjects by denying this dependence and rendering lesbian and gay identities secondary to itself. Although heterosexual norm tries to eject lesbian and gay identities from mainstream society, it can only repress them by exercising its power on them. Thus, through excluding same-sex desire and defining it as improper, unhealthy, perverse and a threat to the symbolic order by labeling

it as the abject Other, heterosexuality defines its boundaries and forces itself upon subjects as the only sexual identity norm.

In relation to the theoretical discussions above, it is observed that lesbian desire is categorized as abject in Kristevan sense. Lesbianism terrorizes patriarchal society because it haunts the borders of heterosexual identity by representing deviation from social and sexual norms. Same-sex desire, patriarchally constructed as the Other of heterosexual desire, challenges the symbolic order with its potential to disrupt hierarchical power relations between the sexes because by representing neither the female nor the male a lesbian woman is an ambiguous figure which resists traditionally defined unitary identity. Lesbianism, in this sense, destabilizes the security of the symbolic order. With their capacity to parody heterosexual relations, lesbian identities are marginal, subversive and eccentric figures who can transgress the social and sexual boundaries of the symbolic order.

Butler criticizes Kristeva's perception of the abject because she thinks that Kristevan abject connotes a dependence on the maternal that serves as another signifier which seeks to displace the paternal law. Butler argues that Kristeva's distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic shows that "the symbolic becomes possible by repudiating the primary relationship to the maternal body" ("Body Politics" 162) and therefore Kristeva's theory of the semiotic – the maternal language – accepts the hegemony of the symbolic. In this respect, she suggests that "recourse to the maternal does not constitute a subversive strategy as Kristeva appears to assume" ("Body Politics" 162). Since Kristeva's theory of the maternal relies on the stability of the paternal law, the semiotic, which manifests itself as a poetic speech in language, is subordinate to the symbolic and cannot offer the possibility of subversion or disruption in Butler's opinion. Therefore, Butler observes that such a semiotic revolt against the symbolic can bring only a temporary subversion rather than a radical revolution that unsettles the patriarchal hegemony because it functions "through elision, repetition, mere sound, and the multiplication of meaning through *indefinitely* signifying images and metaphors" ("Body Politics" 165, emphasis mine) and meaningful language is only possible through the repression of the semiotic in terms of the paternal law. However, what Kristeva tries to point out is that women should learn to speak the symbolic in order to lay bare the speaking subject that leaves no place for the women in the system. According to Kristeva then, it is not only possible for women, but also for men to stand out of the defined

and unified culture. Yet, as is mentioned above, Butler insists that such a subversion of the symbolic by the semiotic is a temporary one; it does not promise a radical and complete transformation of the symbolic order.

Besides, Butler's aspiration for a permanent transformation of the norms of the symbolic order ends up in psychosis for Kristeva. Butler does not agree with Kristeva either on this issue particularly because Kristeva asserts that sustaining the subversive maternal principle "leads to psychosis and to the breakdown of cultural life itself" ("Body Politics" 163). Kristeva's declaration implies that disrupting the hegemonic structures is only possible through accepting the symbolic order and revealing its deficiencies by preserving a privileged space for the maternal principle and celebrating the subversive functions of this principle within the system. In this respect, although both Butler and Kristeva agree on the subversive potential of abjection, Butler aims to overthrow the symbolic order totally while Kristeva strives to build a more egalitarian approach by trying to abolish the rigid boundaries between the semiotic and the symbolic.

Kristeva embraces plurality. She associates the pre-Oedipal stage with non-gendered identity and perceives the pre-Oedipal mother as a figure who encompasses both masculinity and femininity. Therefore, in Kristeva's opinion the opposition between feminine and masculine does not exist in pre-Oedipality. Thus, Kristeva offers her concept of subject-in-process as a plural identity that combines both the semiotic and the symbolic in itself and by this way she attacks phallic monism. As Morris maintains: "Crucially for Kristeva, it is a self that remains within the social order; to opt out of the symbolic order altogether is, for her, to opt out of history. Disengaged from the symbolic modality, the 'revolutionary' potential of the semiotic disposition explodes into non-sense or madness" (146). Therefore, in Kristeva's opinion, women should not attach themselves to the pre-Oedipal period and speak only the semiotic language. The chora provides women with the power of undermining fixed categories that create meanings in the symbolic order and by rejecting the symbolic order completely, women cannot alter the patriarchally conceptualized world. Since Kristevan subject is not a fixed one which takes a position of remaining on the threshold of the semiotic and the symbolic, a stable state of being defined by the dominant authority will not be imposed upon the woman's identity anymore.

Kristeva believes that the desire to return to an imagined semiotic order is a dangerous position for an individual woman, as well as for feminism as a movement. By rejecting the symbolic order which sustains social identity a woman leaves herself unprotected and open to the full force of unconscious desire, of which the most powerful is always the death drive. A desire to return to the mother can become a desire for loss of identity, for a dissolution of self in m/other – for death. (Morris 148)

This desire to return to the mother resulting with the loss of identity is what Butler argues against. Since lesbianism also indicates a return to the maternal in Kristevan sense, Butler accuses Kristeva of defining same-sex desire as abject and associating lesbianism with psychosis. According to Kristeva, “when homosexuality dominates the outcome, cultural dissent is stifled and subdued” (Sjöholm 52). Such an approach once again illustrates that Kristeva is always for plurality refusing the single dominance of either the semiotic stage or the symbolic stage. Although Butler announces that by “delimit[ing] maternity as an essentially pre-cultural reality” (“Body Politics” 162), Kristeva’s psychoanalytical theories remain outside of culture, “there is no such ‘outside’ in Kristeva’s work” (Sjöholm 54). Kristeva, in fact, promotes an identification with the Other; she argues against a clear-cut boundary between self and other, and it is in this sense her subject-in-process is neither a homosexual nor a heterosexual.

As was discussed before the abject cannot be completely expelled; it remains a part of society as well as subjectivity that threatens their constructed and secured borders with dissolution. Butler approves this idea as well, but she also announces that while heterosexual bodies are qualified as “natural”, “real” and as “subjects” according to regulatory norms of society, homosexual bodies are denied these established values and excluded from mainstream society by being rendered abject.

[T]he limits of constructivism are exposed at those boundaries of bodily life where abjected or delegitimated bodies fail to count as ‘bodies’. If the materiality of sex is demarcated in discourse, then this demarcation will produce a domain of excluded and delegitimated ‘sex’. Hence, it will be as important to think about how and to what end bodies are constructed as it will be to think about how and to what end bodies are *not* constructed and, further, to ask after how bodies which fail to materialize provide the

necessary ‘outside,’ if not the necessary support, for the bodies which, in materializing the norm, qualify as bodies that matter. (Butler, *Bodies* 15-6, original emphasis).

Butler, above, questions how and why certain bodies are counted as “liveable”, “present”, and “legitimate”, while abject bodies are counted as “unliveable”, “nonexistent”, and “delegitimate” in the dominant order. This does not mean that the physical existence of abject bodies is denied, but they are denied the subject status. Abjection is a discursive process for Butler and therefore she thinks that abject bodies do not reside outside the dominant culture. That is, they are an important part of the cultural discursive production of the bodies. Abject bodies function within the cultural norms and this notion implies that transformation of these norms is possible. She emphasizes that cultural and social norms become dominant through reiteration. In this respect, by parodying the dominant reiterative and performative acts of gender, the cultural codes which construct heterosexuality as compulsory can be undermined and hierarchically constructed gender politics can be subverted.

As is discussed in the theoretical background chapter of this study, Lacan’s identity model relies on the Oedipal pattern which is formed by the fear of castration. And this indicates that an infant’s taking its place in the symbolic order demands its acquirement of normative forms of sexuality, that is, heterosexuality. The symbolic domain normalizes heterosexuality while it delegitimizes and pathologizes homosexuality. Butler challenges this model of identity which otherizes non-heterosexual identities. In this respect, Butler also criticizes Kristeva for her putting up a resistance to the symbolic order by offering a maternal space, the chora, outside the symbolic domain. She perceives “the distinction between internal and external is established through the ejection and transvaluation of something originally part of identity into a defiling otherness” (“Bodily Inscriptions” 108). However, she argues against these inner and outer domains that remain utterly distinct because in order to remain separate entities, these domains presuppose a border which is “maintained for the purposes of social regulation and control” (“Bodily Inscriptions” 108). Butler elaborates on this boundary of the body between the inner and the outer as follows:

The boundary between the inner and outer is confounded by those excremental passages in which the inner effectively becomes outer, and this excreting function becomes, as it were, the model by which other forms of identity-differentiation are accomplished. In effect, this is the mode by which Others become shit ... 'Inner' and 'outer' make sense only with reference to a mediating boundary that strives for stability. And this stability, this coherence, is determined in large part by cultural orders that sanction the subject and compel its differentiation from the abject. Hence, 'inner' and 'outer' constitute a binary distinction that stabilizes and consolidates the coherent subject. When that subject is challenged, the meaning and necessity of the terms are subject to displacement. If the 'inner world' no longer designates a topos, then the internal fixity of the self, and, indeed, the internal locale of gender identity, become similarly suspect. ("Bodily Inscriptions" 108)

In this respect, what Butler aims is to recast the borders of the abject. In Butler's opinion, abject bodies are rendered external to the symbolic order by the boundaries established by the symbolic order itself. Therefore, lesbian and gay bodies, which are rendered abject in the heterosexual culture, become a transgressive interpretation of heterosexual gender roles since these gender roles are parodied rather than copied by same-sex identities. Palmer observes that Butler

regards the abject, the realm to which society has traditionally relegated the homosexual, not as a position of impotence but as the site from which the gay community can challenge heteropatriarchal power and the regulatory discourses that serve to enforce it. She describes parodic mimicry, in fact, as one of the strategies available to lesbians and gay men to resignify the boundaries of the abject. (Palmer, "Lesbian Transformations" 143)

Butler's critical approach to Kristevan abject presented above shows that Butler argues against Kristeva mainly because of Kristeva's definition of the abject outside culture which, Butler thinks, proposes a temporary subversion of the symbolic order. However, as is discussed above, although Kristeva seems to offer two separate realms continually struggling with one another, she aims to unite the semiotic and the symbolic through her concept of subject-in-process. Since Butler is a lesbian literary theorist who yearns for a more radical change, she is disturbed by the labeling of the lesbian as abject. Therefore, she aims to

liberate the lesbian figure from her abject position and grant her a permanent subject position affirmed within the culture. In this respect, although this chapter of the study will mainly make use of Kristevan abject while analyzing lesbian identities and lesbian desire in Emma Donoghue's stories, it will benefit from Butler's approach to the abject status of the lesbian in hetero-patriarchal culture and society as well.

5.2 Emma Donoghue and Her Work

Emma Donoghue is renowned as a protean talent who has produced historical novels embodying historiographic metafictional elements, drama, screenplays, biography, modern fairy tales, anthologies as well as works of literary history at so young an age. Since she is an academic with a PhD degree in English Literature from Cambridge University, her devotion to research can be observed in her works in which she blends historical and contemporary ideas. Her sense of Irish nationality, her deep interest in historical, cultural and literary studies and her identity as a lesbian have considerably influenced her works.

In fact, the common motive behind all Donoghue's works is to reveal and express a lesbian identity. Her first published work, *Passions Between Women: British Lesbian Culture 1668-1801* (1993), is a historical and cultural research of lesbianism in England from the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century. *We Are Michael Field* (1998) is a biography about two Victorian women writers and lovers – as well as aunt and niece – Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, who wrote poems and plays together under the pseudonym Michael Field. Donoghue utilizes their unpublished journals and letters in her work.

Donoghue is very much interested in rewriting sexually and culturally marginalized historical accounts. Her historical novels are based on real historical characters. In *Slammerkin* (2000), Donoghue retells the true story of a prostitute in London in the eighteenth century, Mary Saunders, who murders her employer. Donoghue, in this novel, reveals how greed, poverty, despair and sexuality perceived as a commodity affect people's lives. Like *Slammerkin*, *Life Mask* (2004) is also a rewriting of real-life events. It gives the account of a love triangle between an actress, the twelfth Earl of Derby and a sculptress in the eighteenth century London. Lesbianism is the prominent theme in this novel as well as in *The*

Sealed Letter (2008) which is about a scandalous divorce in the 1860s and which deals with one of the first feminist movements in Britain. Donoghue expresses her interest in rewriting historical events in an interview in these words: “I’m not sure why I’m drawn to stories based on real people. I guess I enjoy filling in the gaps” (“Dangerous Liaisons”).

Her novels with contemporary settings embody lesbian characters as well. *Stir-fry* (1994) is a semi-autobiographical and a coming-of-age novel whose setting is the late 1980s and early 1990s and a university campus. It deals with two lesbian students’ relationship and their heterosexual friend who becomes bisexual. In *Hood* (1995), Donoghue chooses her characters from a lesbian feminist community and portrays lesbian sexuality with erotic scenes. *Landing* (2007) relates the story of two women who are involved in a long-distance relationship. Donoghue reveals the influence of her lesbian identity on her writings as follows:

Discovery at the age of fourteen that I was a lesbian certainly gave me plenty to write about, and researching lesbian history has left me with a feeling of having so many unknown stories to tell, but sexuality is not a motive exactly; I write because I need and love to. All writing has a political impact, and I am aware that doing interviews, etc., is my form of lesbian activism, but the motive for writing is not propaganda: I just want to tell stories in a language as powerful as I can make it. (“Emma Donoghue”)

As Donoghue explains above although her writings are about the marginalized and oppressed lesbian identity and the silenced lesbian history, she does not produce her works with a provocative attitude. For instance, she does not portray victimized lesbian characters in a patriarchal community or adopt a violent and aggressive lesbian figure who wants to annihilate men. Rachel Wingfield explains Donoghue’s treatment of lesbianism in her novels as follows:

Donoghue does not find it necessary to avoid either her gender and her sexuality to appeal to the mainstream, although she has too has certainly been influenced by the backlash against feminism ... In *Stir Fry*, we read about one young woman’s journey towards lesbianism ... But Mariah’s journey seems to have very little to do with rebellion against anything, be it patriarchy, or convention, and still less to do with a positive choice based on a passion for women and a desire to maintain her own integrity. (70)

Hence, Donoghue does not adopt the theme of lesbianism as a radical attack at heterosexual paradigm. She preserves a space for her lesbian characters and reveals their experiences, their relationships with one another, their daily lives, the problems they deal with, and the struggles they are involved in. This is the very reason why Donoghue is reputed as a unique writer in contemporary literature. In an interview with Marti Hohmann, Donoghue emphasizes the importance of lesbian literature as follows:

I would also argue that fictions of lesbianism are just as important as lesbianism itself. Fantasies, anxieties, and dreams of all kinds show up in literature. The study of the stories that circulated about love between women – and how they influenced women's lives and perceptions of themselves – is a crucial part of lesbian history. (Donoghue)

In conclusion, by giving voice to lesbian characters and by lifting the veil over lesbian history, Donoghue still disrupts patriarchal notion of heterosexual desire as the proper norm of society. In this respect, her literary works present a much more positive attitude toward representations of lesbian in literature.

5.3 Emma Donoghue and Lesbian Gothic

Since the Gothic employs marginal and eccentric subjects and themes in order to revolt against social and cultural circumstances and to transgress the strictly drawn boundaries in society, many lesbian writers utilize the elements of this genre to discuss their feminist ideals and assert their political stance. First of all, the Gothic provides the opportunity to question normative images of reality, particularly of gender and sexuality. Therefore, lesbian writers embrace the Gothic for its resistant attitude against ideological reality. They know that patriarchal society condemns their sexual preference as immoral and sinful. In this respect, the Gothic enables them to explore the conflicts and the problems they experience in an orthodox hetero-normative reality imposed upon them by patriarchal society. Secondly, being aware of the subversive potential of the Gothic, these writers attempt to express a resistance to patriarchal power. The Gothic reveals that desire is about power relationships. Therefore, it promotes transgressive representations of desire to challenge patriarchal power structures. In this respect, being one of the radical representations of

transgressive desire, lesbian desire is promoted as the only alternative to the patriarchal rule by many lesbian writers. Thirdly, since the Gothic is associated mainly with psychoanalytical terms and considered to be a genre of repressed anxieties and desires, lesbian writers try to liberate and express their same-sex desire through deconstructing conventional psychoanalytical theories which render the female body as the other to the male body in a hierarchical relationship. Palmer suggests: "Repressed desires and anxieties are, of course, of central importance to the lesbian subject who, lacking a history and a language to articulate her sexual orientation, may feel haunted by emotions which she cannot or dare not articulate" ("Lesbian Gothic" 119). The Gothic world, then, which is full of supernatural beings, monsters, ghosts, vampires, witches, human-animal combinations, and automata, provides one of the most appropriate settings for lesbian writers who aim to make lesbian identity visible in the dominant culture which expels them by abjection. Although certain women writers of the realist tradition, disturbed by the representation of the lesbian as abject, have aimed to create a lesbian figure in a realist environment by struggling to make lesbians a part of the dominant culture, many Lesbian Gothic writers have embraced the abject image of the lesbian in order to call for a radical revolution that can overthrow patriarchal oppression and destroy the patriarchal ideology that excludes lesbian women by not counting them as subjects. Lesbian desire poses a threat to the symbolic order with its potential to destabilize the dominant system. Therefore, writers of Lesbian Gothic strive to expose lesbianism not only as a threat but also as a power that can abolish oppressive sexual and hierarchical structures. As Palmer maintains:

They utilize strategies emphasizing lesbian specificity and 'difference'. Acknowledging the element of excess that lesbian sexuality signifies in phallocentric culture, they create, with subversive intent, parodic versions of the monstrous images that society projects upon the lesbian. The tactics they adopt in this respect reveal connections with poststructuralist theory. (*Lesbian Gothic* 14-5)

As Palmer indicates above, writers of Lesbian Gothic adopt parodic versions of the negative images that patriarchal society promotes. They aim to destroy these negative images by attributing positive aspects to the conventional images of the lesbian as freakish and

monstrous. Therefore, contemporary writers of Lesbian Gothic mainly adopt rewriting strategies in order to subvert and transgress the traditional plot and trappings of the Gothic. Quest for identity, restructuring the social and familial structures, reconstructing the Oedipal plot, reshaping past images of the lesbian, and providing a history of lesbian identity are common themes of Lesbian Gothic.

What Lesbian Gothic writers aspire to is to make the silenced and the repressed speak for itself. Lesbian sexuality and culture have been denied for a long time and therefore, they aim to express their desire and grant to the same-sex desire a normative status which is forcibly repressed by traditional psychoanalytical theories condemning lesbian desire as a neurosis. Thus, by using Gothic imagery, Lesbian Gothic writers try to represent what is unrepresentable in patriarchal heterosexual paradigm. In her seminal work *Lesbian Gothic*, Palmer states that the lesbian

instead of existing as an absence or silence in the narrative or being assigned the role of the monster, as is often the case in the Gothic texts of the past, is credited with an identity and viewpoint. She is permitted to emerge from the closet (or in the case of the lesbian vampire, the coffin!) and recount her own story. (23)

Thus, coming out of the closet, the lesbian is visualized and liberated from her repressed and unrepresentable state. As Jackson argues: “the fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made ‘absent’” (4). Moreover, the fantastic attempts to make “visible which is culturally invisible” (Jackson 69). In this respect, writers of Lesbian Gothic revolt against the patriarchal culture that refuses to see them as subjects.

As was discussed in the second chapter of this study, the Gothic is mainly characterized by excess, ambivalence and transgression. In this sense, the Gothic is one of the most appropriate genres for the treatment of lesbianism as a theme because the representation of the lesbian signifies excess by its celebration of same-sex desire among women which is regarded as a deviation from the sexual roles. Besides, through being perceived as neither man nor woman by the dominant culture, the lesbian becomes an ambivalent figure who can transgress the patriarchally constructed gender roles. Susanne Becker, in *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions* (1999), coins a term “subject-in-excess” in order to define the split subject

driven to excess by the subjectivity-formation process through separating himself or herself from the mother. According to Becker, “separation/abjection structures feminine gothic texture, motivating the mirror-plot of female desire” (*Gothic Forms* 158). Although Becker builds her “subject-in-excess” on the representations of the female body as monstrous who transgresses proper definitions of femininity of patriarchal ideology and associates her term with the daughter’s fear of her mother’s engulfing body from which she tries to separate herself in order to become a subject in the symbolic order, “subject-in-excess” can be utilized to depict the lesbian subjectivity as well. In this sense, the lesbian is also a “subject-in-excess” who transgresses the patriarchal boundaries of identity shaped by the symbolic order.

Thus, Donoghue, in *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* which is endowed with the characteristics of Lesbian Gothic, not only portrays popular fairy tale characters as “subjects-in-excess”, but also exceeds the traditional Gothic structure based on the Oedipal pattern by offering an alternative identity formation process through woman-identification. Thus, the lesbian characters in her stories exceed the male gaze, destroy the male control over themselves and revolt against the traditional pattern of the Gothic by revealing an autonomous female desire for another woman.

As was discussed before, in traditional psychoanalytical theories the separation from the mother for the female subject is more difficult and more problematic than for the male subject. That is, the female cannot resolve her Oedipal conflict easily and therefore she remains more strongly attached to the pre-Oedipal phase than the male. For both sexes, the mother is the primary object of desire. The male child can achieve the state of the subject by recognizing the sexual difference between his mother and himself and by replacing his desire for the mother with another female object of desire. However, the female child’s route to becoming a subject is a diverged one. She has to experience a more radical separation from her mother, her first object of desire and then she has to take her father as her object of desire, and only after that can she replace her father with another man who will become her normative object of desire. Thus, the female child can never be completely cut off from the mother and she is not able to replace her desire for the mother with another woman as the male child does in terms of heterosexual paradigm. Therefore, the female can never attain an autonomous subject status and she remains as the object of desire throughout her life in patriarchal culture.

However, Lesbian Gothic promotes that a woman can direct her desire to another woman. And in Donoghue's stories such a transformation of sexual orientation is presented with positive and affirmative aspects. Donoghue destroys the fear of being imprisoned in a blissful symbiotic relationship by reconstructing the maternal bond through liberating lesbian relationships. Kristeva writes:

This is precisely where we encounter the rituals of defilement and their derivatives, which, based on the feeling of abjection and all converging on the maternal, attempt to symbolize the other threat to the subject: that of being swamped by the dual relationship, thereby risking the loss not of a part (castration) but of the totality of his living being. (*Powers* 64)

Thus, Kristeva shows that the rituals of defilements are derived from abjection, particularly from the fear of being engulfed by the mother, the primary abject body. Since lesbianism is associated with the female's remaining in the pre-Oedipal phase according to the traditional identity development, lesbian characters are also abjected by the dominant psychoanalytical discourses. However, Donoghue resignifies the borders of the abject lesbian in the four stories studied in this chapter through positive representations.

In fact, Kristeva does not attach a negative aspect to abjection when it is experienced by the subject because she claims that embracing the abject Other is a necessary step for the subject to achieve a fluid and a plural identity which transforms him or her into a subject-in-process. It is in this sense that abjection is perceived as a revolt against the construction of the subject in the symbolic order. However, according to Kristeva, if an individual remains in the pre-Oedipal stage and starts to experience abjection permanently – as it is in the case of female homosexuality – then the individual becomes stuck in a psychosis. In this respect, in order to destroy the association of lesbianism with psychosis, Donoghue offers an affirmative process of identity formation for the lesbian subject. In her stories, firstly she displays the heroine's identification with her (m)other and the heroine's attachment to the semiotic. Secondly, after emphasizing this maternal bond, Donoghue separates her heroines from their (m)others by making them experience the status of the subject in the symbolic order. However, the heroines cannot adapt themselves to the symbolic order because they feel they are entrapped in patriarchal gender roles. Then, thirdly and lastly, she constructs for her

heroines a subjectivity which can be identified as a “subject-in-excess” through making them involve in lesbian relationships. However, for Donoghue such a process does not mean that her heroines become abject entities who suffer from psychosis. On the contrary, by representing the women with whom the heroines establish same-sex relationships as mother figures at the very beginning of her stories, then by making her heroines break away from these mother figures through placing them in the symbolic order, and consequently by letting them realize their same-sex desire for the women who are no longer represented as mother figures is liberating. Thus, Donoghue saves permanent abjection from its negative association with psychosis. In other words, Donoghue’s heroines experience lesbianism not as a psychosis resulting from remaining in the semiotic realm, but as female “subjects-in-excess” who celebrate their maternal bond and their freedom to express same-sex desire. Such a depiction of positive construction of lesbian identity is a utopian one and Donoghue thinks that Lesbian Gothic provides her with the opportunity to present this utopian female world from a feminist lens.

The common abject representation of the lesbian that can be detected in many Gothic works is the portrayal of the lesbian as monster. As Palmer announces: “A stereotype or mythic image which is frequently projected onto the figure of the lesbian in patriarchal culture is that of *monster*” (*Contemporary Lesbian* 90, original emphasis). What is deviant from social norms is doomed to be categorized as abnormal, unnatural, perverse and evil. In this respect, compulsory heterosexuality defines the lesbian by these negative characteristics. This is the very reason why a lesbian is represented as the monster and characterized as a witch, a vampire, a spinster, a woman with animal attributes, or a woman as life-in-death, in many Gothic works and horror films that express the homophobic attitude of society and culture. The lesbian signifies perverse sexual desire and once she is recognized, she is thrown out and ejected as the abject by the patriarchal community because the monstrous representation of the lesbian threatens the stability of the symbolic order with its in-between and ambiguous borders. In other words, the representation of the lesbian as a monster separates the normal and the abnormal desire and lays bare the boundary which discriminates identities who perform proper gender roles and those who do not. Therefore, as a reaction to such a discriminating attitude many feminist lesbian writers portray lesbians with positive images. Either they choose to tell emancipating lesbian relationships or they reconceptualize

the lesbian image as a monster from an endorsing point of view. For instance, Bertha Harris proposes that this monstrous image can be adopted to subvert the traditional image of woman as passive, submissive, and angelic. She points out that “the quintessence of all that is female; and female enraged ... the lesbian is ... that which has been unspeakable about women” (qtd. in Zimmerman 463). Thus, Harris offers a way of celebrating the lesbian-as-a-monster image rather than condemning it by making the unspeakable speak through a powerful and anarchic monstrous mouth. By this subversion, the lesbian becomes a transgressive figure who has the potential to destroy patriarchal ideology.

In “Demisting the Horror: Contemporary British Women’s Horror”, Wisker writes:

The abject Other is recognised as a projection of and from the self. Confronting that which horrifies and disgusts, and recognising ourselves in it, is a way of overcoming our fears and owning up to them, admitting them to be parts of ourselves. Much women’s horror insists on this recognition of our selves in the construction of that which has conventionally been seen as Other, as disgusting, as abject. By refusing closure and punishment, the restoration of order of conventional horror, it leaves a space for new visions and relations, new insights and practices. (155)

Wisker demonstrates that confronting the abject horrifies the subject, but this confrontation also provides a victory over this fear. If the subject admits that the abject is a part of himself or herself, then he or she can recognize himself or herself in the Other and become a subject-in-process in Kristevan terms which offers a plural and fluid identity rather than fixed and rigid identities of the symbolic order. In this respect, in her collection of rewritten fairy tales with a contemporary feminist point of view, Donoghue also adopts the lesbian-as-a-monster image to signify its Otherness and underlines the abjected position of the lesbian identity in hetero-patriarchal culture. However, since she celebrates the abject with a positive and affirmative approach, she invites her readers to confront the Other in themselves in order to reject the patriarchal definitions of identity. She prefers to remind her readers of their maternal bond in which they can find a plural and constructive unification rather than the violent separation necessary to achieve their subjectivities. Therefore, Donoghue revises the motifs of the Gothic and the traditional fairy tale and she re-evokes these motifs through dark forests, castles, witches, queens, beasts, spinsters, persecuted

heroines, and repressed sexualities from a lesbian point of view. Besides, she reverses the traditional Oedipal pattern and carries her heroines to the pre-Oedipal realm to construct their subjectivities anew with the maternal principle. Consequently, Donoghue destroys associations of lesbianism with female aggression and manipulation and representations of the lesbian as murderous and violent with an urge to annihilate man by subverting the traditional Gothic plot and recasting classical fairy tale pattern. In this respect, Donoghue's reshaped fairy tales offer a disruptive, transgressive and revolutionary perspective that destroys the patriarchal ideology inserted in the fairy tales for centuries.

This chapter provides a close analysis of four stories from Donoghue's collection in the light of Kristeva's theories of the abject. By exploring Donoghue's employment of the abject in these rewritten fairy tales this chapter aims to reveal the problematics of lesbian identity in hetero-patriarchal culture, the representations of female desire reconceptualized in lesbian terms, the construction of "subject-in-excess" that can transgress the boundaries of patriarchal sexual politics, the destabilization of the opposition between subject and object, the celebration of the lesbian identity through re-embracing the maternal bond and the recasting of established cultural and social values.

5.4 Emma Donoghue and the Fairy Tale

Donoghue's collection of stories, *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*, is composed of thirteen rewritten fairy tales. The title of her work reveals a similar approach to Carter's depiction of her own revisionist attempt in her writings defined by her as putting new wine in old bottles in order to make the old bottles explode. Donoghue also offers her readers an opportunity to delve into a fairy tale world which molts its conventional and patriarchal skin through a feminist retelling process and giving voice to the antagonist characters such as the evil stepmother, the evil female rival, the wicked witch, the beast, the spinster, and the fairy godmother.

These thirteen rewritten stories present heroines who find their sense of selves in their relationships to other women. At the end of their journeys achieving an identity liberated from the gender roles of the symbolic order awaits the heroines as a reward rather than a conventional happy ending of marriage which symbolizes the willing acceptance of

becoming a member of the symbolic order. Many of Donoghue's heroines begin their journeys toward the discovery of their identities with a submissive, passive, and self-effacing attitude without feeling any self-worthiness or self-esteem. For instance, in "The Tale of the Handkerchief", the maid of the princess complains about her inferior position comparing it to her mistress' aristocratic rank: "I was born a maid, daughter to a maid ... How could you, a pampered princess, know what it's like to be a servant, a pair of hands, a household object? To be no one, to own nothing, to owe every last mouthful to those you serve?" (61). In "The Tale of the Voice", the heroine visits a witch in order to win her beloved's heart. She makes her demand: "You must change me first. Make me better. Make me right. Make me like a woman he could love" (192). However, the advice she receives from the witch is not what she has asked for. The witch replies: "Change for your own sake, if you must, not for what you imagine another will ask of you" (192). In the course of the stories, these heroines gain confidence and courage to have control on their own lives and shape their own destinies. For instance, in "The Tale of the Bird" the heroine decides to leave her husband who imprisons her in the house with an over-protective attitude. She says: "My life was in my own hands, now, beating faintly, too small yet for anyone to notice. I cupped freedom to my breast, I would feed it, I would love it; it would grow big enough to carry me away" (24). In "The Tale of the Handkerchief", the heroine makes a confession at the very beginning of the story: "Once I was a stupid girl; now I am an angry woman. Sometimes you must shed your skin to save it" (145).

Contrary to the use of the third person point of view in the classical fairy tales, all the protagonists tell their own stories and this indicates that the heroines' subjectivities are shaped by their own effort rather than by the omniscient narrator whose voice is the voice of the patriarchal ideology in the classical fairy tales. As Ann Martin argues:

Donoghue's use of first-person narration is thus crucial, not just as a feminist writing strategy in which tales are given new significance based on altered contexts and perspectives, but also as a figuration of agency through which the younger women are shown to make their own decisions and to reflect upon those decisions from a different moment in time. The self-aware voice of each storyteller makes explicit her status as a subject who has deliberately chosen the path she has taken, and the use of past

tense indicates that the narrator has a different understanding of her actions as she considers her experiences retrospectively. (15)

In this respect, the heroines' control over their narratives reveals their autonomous agency. Thus, the reader's passive state under the authority of the omniscient narrator is transformed into an active one by engaging with marginalized voices. In this respect, Donoghue's retold tales are interwoven in such a way that a character in one story appears as the first person narrator in the following one. Each story ends with the heroine asking a character "Who were you before?" and the protagonist offers to tell her own story and the next story begins. For instance, the fairy godmother, a character in the first story, "The Tale of the Shoe" reveals her life story as the protagonist of the next one, "The Tale of the Bird".

*In the morning I asked,
Who were you
before you walked into my kitchen?
And she said, Will I tell you my own story?
It is a tale of a bird. (9)*

These linking passages in italics inserted between the tales on a single page create the frame of Donoghue's collection of re-visioned traditional fairy tales. Elizabeth Wanning Harries describes Donoghue's narrative technique as follows: "Donoghue reframes the tales, placing them in a receding series of frames, creating something like a Quaker Oats box effect" (130). Martin also draws attention to Donoghue's narrative frame and claims that this characteristic of

Donoghue's text, where the narrator of one tale is transformed from a teller of her own story into a listener of another's, and where a supporting character in one tale becomes the protagonist of another, the continuing exchange of narratives challenges the singularity of any identity and suggests the illusory nature of any conclusion. (12)

In her article "The Gender of Fairies: Emma Donoghue and Angela Carter as Fairy Tale Performers", Maria Micaela Coppola also highlights this method of framing and states that "[t]hese refrains retrospectively connect the stories of the protagonists, creating a single

story and a single female genealogy” (134-5). Donoghue’s attempt at creating a single female genealogy is apparent in her refusing to give a name to her heroines. First of all, this attempt can be interpreted as a rejection of adopting the well-known names of the heroines of the traditional fairy tales who are imprisoned in patriarchal plots. Since these popular heroines reinforce patriarchal culture, Donoghue aims to show that her heroines are liberated from these names which are associated with the gender roles they perform. Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel, Little Mermaid are names imbued with patriarchal notions of the feminine. Secondly, Donoghue represents all the heroines of the classical fairy tales chosen to be studied in this chapter as lesbian characters. Since the lesbian body is categorized as abject and there are many metaphors such as monster, witch, crone, coven, hag, spinster, and so on that can be associated with the lesbian which reflect how the lesbians are excluded from mainstream culture, resisting such a categorization, Donoghue does not give a name to her heroines. Consequently, through all her lesbian characters without names, she creates one single body and one single identity which is collective in nature. This collective body represents all lesbians who aim to destroy the patriarchal ideology that renders them abject in their society.

In this respect, although these stories are connected to one another through these characters, through common themes such as emancipation from gender roles, through achieving a sense of self by rebuilding the bond with the mother’s body, through lesbian relationships providing liberation, and through creating a history of lesbianism by utilizing popular fairy tales, they are not based on a single definitive plot. Therefore, these stories do not demand a reading in a certain strict order. The stage is left to another character of a classical fairy tale who speaks on behalf of herself at the end of every story and presents a new version of the traditional fairy tale she belongs to. Thus, this study focuses on four stories of the collection which overtly deals with same-sex desire through various abject representations of lesbian identities which are positively constructed.

5.5 “That some of us have learned to go barefoot knowing the mate to one foot is the other.”¹⁸: Abject Representations of Lesbian Desire in Emma Donoghue’s “The Tale of the Shoe”

“The Tale of the Shoe” is the first story in *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*. It is a rewriting of the Grimm Brothers’ “Cinderella” which focuses on the lesbian relationship between Cinderella and her fairy godmother rather than presenting a happy marriage with the Prince Charming at the end. Cinderella’s slavery to housework, all the glamorous balls, and the handsome Prince of the classical version of the fairy tale are employed, but recasted and subverted with a feminist approach by Donoghue.

As in the other stories of the collection, the heroine of “The Tale of the Shoe” does not have a name, either. However, the reader, acquainted with the traditional tale “Cinderella” since his or her childhood, can recognize the heroine of Donoghue’s story as Cinderella as soon as he or she delves into the plot. The heroine is presented with a melancholic mood who is mourning over her mother’s death at the very beginning of the story:

Ever since my mother died the feather bed felt hard as a stone floor. Every word that came out of my mouth limped away like a toad. Whatever I put on my back now turned to sackcloth and chafed my skin. I heard a knocking in my skull, and kept running to the door, but there was never anyone there. The days passed like dust brushed from my fingers. (1)

The heroine’s depression caused by her mother’s death can be observed in the restlessness of the heroine expressed in her own words above. She cannot properly sleep, speak, and think; and even the dresses she wears make her feel restless. Cinderella’s melancholic state can be explained by Kristeva’s theoretical work on melancholia, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1989), which reveals that melancholia is derived from a sense of the loss of the mother experienced by the infant while separating from the mother in order to become a subject in the symbolic order. Kristeva’s definition of the feelings of the melancholic is in accordance with what Donoghue’s Cinderella’s experiences:

¹⁸ From “Against Cinderella” in *Homecoming: New and Collected Poems* by Julia Alvarez. (p. 53).

I live a living death, my flesh is wounded, bleeding, cadaverized, my rhythm slowed down or interrupted, time has been erased or bloated, absorbed into sorrow ... Absent from other people's meaning, alien, accidental with respect to naïve happiness, I owe a supreme, metaphysical lucidity to my depression. On the frontiers of life and death, occasionally I have the arrogant feeling of being witness to the meaninglessness of Being, of revealing the absurdity of bonds and beings. (Kristeva, *Black Sun* 4).

In this respect, a person who is suffering from melancholia indicates that he or she has remained in the pre-Oedipal stage, which is the semiotic stage in Kristevan terms. Kristeva announces that in order to become an autonomous subject “[m]atricide is our vital necessity” (*Black Sun* 27) because it is the symbolic order which substitutes the subject's feeling of loss deriving from the separation from the (m)other brings. Thus, “the depressive/melancholic person suffers from an incapacity to believe in the symbolic, that is, to take it as an adequate substitute for the original loss and as an incarnation of the sadness felt” (Lechte and Margaroni 77). In this respect, the melancholic replaces its object of desire, the mother, by sadness. Since he or she remains in the semiotic stage, symbolic language becomes meaningless for him or her. In fact, it is the semiotic language the melancholic speaks. As Kristeva argues: “Melancholia then ends up in asymbolia, in loss of meaning: if I am no longer capable of translating and metaphorizing, I become silent and die” (*Black Sun* 42). Hence, the melancholic cannot understand or speak the symbolic language and he or she is detached from the symbolic order by remaining in the semiotic stage. As a result, he or she throws himself or herself into an abject state.

In relation to the discussion above, Donoghue's Cinderella cannot also separate herself from her mother which is evident in her mourning for her mother's death. She constantly remembers her separation from her mother which makes her remain in the abject realm. She is depressed and she feels so lonely. As the heroine says: “Some nights I told myself stories to make myself weep, then stroked my own hair till I slept” (2). Contrary to Cinderella in the traditional fairy tale who is abused and forced to do housework by a wicked stepmother and evil stepsisters, Donoghue's Cinderella devotes herself to cleaning and cooking because she is trying to get over her loss. The heroine says: “I scrubbed and swept because there was nothing else to do. I raked out the hearth with my fingernails, and scoured the floor until my knees bled. I counted grains of rice and divided brown beans from black”

(1-2). The reason why she engages herself with domestic drudgery is to overcome her grief for her mother's death.

Nobody made me do the things I did, nobody scolded me, nobody punished me but me. The shrill voices were all inside. Do this, do that, you lazy heap of dirt. They knew every question and answer, the voices in my head. Some days they asked why I was still alive. I listened out for my mother, but I couldn't hear her among their clamor. (2)

But, the shrill voices in her head which scorn her are the voices of patriarchal ideology that order her to overcome her sorrow through domestic slavery. These patriarchal voices know every question and answer because they define the roles of women in society. The oppression of patriarchy is so much evident in its attempt to suppress the voice of the female that Cinderella cannot hear her mother's voice among their clamor.

One day, when Cinderella is still in a depressive mood, she feels someone is behind herself. When she turns back and sees the stranger, she notices that this stranger is a woman who "must have come out of the fire. Her eyes had flames in their centers, and her eyebrows were silvered with ash" (3). This woman represents the conventional figure of fairy godmother in the Grimm Brothers' version of "Cinderella". In Donoghue's version, the fairy godmother motif is employed as a helper who visits Cinderella to cure her melancholia. The fairy godmother introduces herself to Cinderella as her mother's friend and Cinderella suddenly feels the magical transformations her mother's friend applies to her. Cinderella defines the transformations she experiences as follows: "How can I begin to describe the transformations? My old dusty self was spun new. This woman sheathed my limbs in blue velvet. I was dancing on points of clear glass" (3). In fact, the magical transformations on Cinderella's appearance provided by the fairy godmother in the classical fairy tale are presented in Donoghue's story as the transformations the heroine goes through by meeting her mother's friend. At this point, Cinderella's lost object, her dead mother, is replaced by this mysterious woman. This replacement helps Cinderella get over her depression and her melancholic attachment to her dead mother. Cinderella asks the woman to take her to a ball. "Isn't that what girls are meant to ask for?" (3), she says, as if trying to express that this is

what a daughter demands when she has a mother to ask for. Thus, the woman, a mother figure for Cinderella, underlines the importance of maternal bond for Cinderella.

The ball in a fairy tale represents the symbolic community because it gathers ladies and gentlemen in order to provide an opportunity for them to be matched with one another through marital bond. In this sense, this scene can be interpreted as Cinderella's urge to separate from her mother embodied by her mother's friend in order to define her boundaries between self and other, and construct her subjectivity in the symbolic order. However, in addition to this approach, this scene also illustrates Cinderella's realization of her orientation of same-sex desire directed toward her mother's friend. Therefore, Cinderella's "dancing on points of clear glass" can be interpreted as a sense of threat, which stems from an awakening of same-sex desire directed toward her mother's friend, to the boundaries of subjectivity that should be stabilized in order to achieve the position of being a subject in the symbolic order. And Donoghue will develop this same-sex desire through Cinderella's relationship with the fairy godmother much more clearly in the rest of the story.

At this point, Cinderella's infatuation with her mother's friend can be conveyed through her melancholic state. Kristeva associates melancholia with female homosexuality as well since it refers to a state of constant identification with the mother which

can be eroticized – whether the lost object is recovered as erotic object (as is the case for male heterosexuality or female homosexuality), or it is transposed by means of an unbelievable symbolic effort, the advent of which one can only admire, which eroticizes the other (the other sex, in the case of the heterosexual woman) or transforms cultural constructs into a 'sublime' erotic object (one thinks of cathexes, by men and women, in social bonds, intellectual and aesthetic productions, etc.). (*Black Sun* 28)

As Kristeva argues above, in "The Tale of the Shoe", the lost object – the dead mother – is recovered as erotic object – as the friend of Cinderella's mother. Thus, with the realization of her orientation of desire directed to a woman and with an urge to separate herself from mother-identification, Cinderella immediately decides to go to a ball which symbolizes the sphere of the symbolic order. When Cinderella's mother friend, the substitute for the fairy godmother in the classical fairy tale, takes her to the ball at the palace, Cinderella knows how to behave in such an environment. She puts a courteous smile on her face, she

keeps her belly pulled in and refuses the canapé offered to her, and she dances with ten elderly gentlemen “who had nothing to say but did not let that stop them” (4). She chats with these gentlemen by using only these words: “Indeed and Oh yes and Do you think so?” (4).

What Cinderella does at the ball is a parodic re-enactment of gender roles imposed upon women by male-dominated ideology. Such a parodic re-enactment of gender roles has a subversive power according to Irigaray. Irigaray claims that if women perform the roles patriarchal society imposes upon them in a parodic manner instead of rejecting them, then they can lay bare the artificiality of these conventional roles. She thinks that this strategy of “mimesis” will enable women to resist and subvert their patriarchally constructed images. Irigaray defines this strategy as follows:

There is ... perhaps only one ‘path,’ the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of *mimicry*. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus begin to thwart it.

...
To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself – inasmuch as she is on the side of the ‘perceptible,’ of ‘matter’ – to ‘ideas’ about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but as to make ‘visible,’ by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It also means ‘to unveil’ the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. (76, original emphasis)

In this respect, Cinderella is using the same strategy Irigaray proposes and she challenges them by parodic performance of traditional roles of women. When she returns home from the ball before midnight, her mother’s friend asks her: “Had enough?” (4). Cinderella, who thinks that the woman is old enough to be her mother and she herself is a girl with her own fortune to make, persuades herself to go to the ball again the next night. The patriarchal voices in her head, which have scolded her and forced her to commit herself to doing housework once, at this point start to jabber again and each one of them tells her to do

something different. Cinderella, under the influence of these voices, wants to see what the symbolic order offers to her in life.

That night Cinderella dances three times with the prince who plays a minor role in Donoghue's rewriting of "Cinderella" when he is compared with the major role he plays in the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale. In the Grimms' version, the handsome prince symbolizes the male power and control which offers Cinderella the only way out of her miserable life through getting married. In Donoghue's story, Cinderella does not seem impressed by the prince and she relates her conversation with him as follows: "He asked me my favorite color, but couldn't think of any. He asked me my name, and for a moment I couldn't remember it" (5). Cinderella's forgetting her favorite color and particularly her name for a moment shows that she is so much involved with her mimicry of gender roles that she nearly forgets her maternal identity and adapts herself to the feminine role the symbolic order defines. Sjöholm states that "On the one hand the semiotic is constant upheaval and a source of subversion, while on the other it cannot sustain itself but needs the symbolic as a source of negative support for its powers to emerge" (21). In this respect, Donoghue also emphasizes the negative effects of the symbolic order symbolized by the prince on Cinderella in order to assert the subversive power of the semiotic explicitly. In other words, Donoghue builds this patriarchal realm for the sake of undermining its hegemony by the maternal power. Therefore, in order to destroy the symbolic order and celebrate the semiotic, Donoghue sends her heroine to the ball for the third time.

This time her mother's friend takes Cinderella to the ball by a coach which is driven by mice coachmen and she dresses Cinderella in red silk. Cinderella, welcoming these magical transformations, highlights the function of her mother's friend as the fairy godmother: "She claimed her little finger was a magic wand, it could do spectacular things. She could always make me laugh" (6). In fact, the scenes which show the relationship between Cinderella and the woman have flirtatious overtones. The woman always makes her laugh and shows Cinderella the sparkle in her eyes, Cinderella leans her head on the woman's shoulder when they drive back together from the ball and their fingers draw "pictures in the ashes on the hearth, vague shapes of birds and islands" (4). Zipes maintains:

The soiled girl ... lacks love, protection, and guidance. She seeks help from another powerful female figure ... who provides her

with the resources to regain her self-respect and establish her true identity through marriage to a wealthy prince. She can find love and become a beloved object. ... The key agent of power lies with a magical female who intervenes to assist the downtrodden girl and make her feel loved. (Zipes, *Why Fairy* 120)

Zipes provides above the traditional plot of “Cinderella” in which Cinderella finds love, protection, guidance, self-respect and her true identity through a marriage with the prince. However, Donoghue’s Cinderella will oppose getting involved in such a plot and she will find what she lacks and true love in the fairy godmother represented by her mother’s friend.

When Cinderella goes to the ball for the third time, she feels bored. The musicians are playing the same tune over and over again, she dances like a “clockwork ballerina” (6) and she smiles until her face twists. Her resemblance to a clockwork ballerina in such a patriarchal community underlines Cinderella’s mimicry of male-defined roles once again. As Irigaray argues:

I think the masquerade has to be understood as what women do in order to recuperate some element of desire, to participate in man’s desire, but at the price of renouncing their own. In the masquerade, they submit to the dominant economy of desire in an attempt to remain ‘on the market’ in spite of everything. (133)

This is what the ball – patriarchal ideology – demands from Cinderella. It forces her to participate in man’s desire. However, Cinderella will soon realize that she will not be able to perform the gender roles assigned to her anymore. When the prince comes to propose to her, she feels as if she were in a fairy tale and the prince seems like an actor on a creaking stage. Cinderella’s depiction of the proposing scene like a fairy tale atmosphere and of the prince like an actor on the stage highlight the gender roles both parts have to perform in patriarchal society. The following quotation from the story will reveal how Cinderella saves herself from becoming a subject in the symbolic order by rejecting the prince’s marriage proposal.

As soon as the words began to leak out of his mouth, they formed a cloud in which I could see the future.

I could hardly hear him. The voices were shrieking. Yes yes yes say yes before you lose your chance you bag of nothingness.

I opened my teeth but no sound came out. There was no harm in this man; what he proposed was white and soft, comfortable as fog. There was nothing to be afraid of. But just then the midnight bell began to toll out the long procession of years, palatial day by moonless night. And I leapt backward down the steps, leaving one shoe behind. (7)

Although the patriarchal voices try to convince her to join the marriage institution, and insult her by saying that she has no other chance to save herself, Cinderella will not perform the role of being a commodity in a marriage. Besides, although she sees a comfortable future for her by getting married to the prince, she “dismiss[es] the heterosexual future he offers her as bland and suffocating, ‘white and soft, comfortable as fog’” (Palmer, “Lesbian Transformations” 147) and Cinderella leaves the ball by leaving one shoe behind. In Donoghue’s story, this shoe is not portrayed as a trace for the prince to follow and find the girl of his dreams. Instead, the shoe symbolizes patriarchal entrapment and by leaving her one shoe behind, Donoghue’s Cinderella takes the first step to announce her liberation from the symbolic order.

When she meets her mother’s friend again after the ball, Cinderella reveals that she has “got the story all wrong” (7). As Palmer suggests:

Recognizing her attributes of intelligence and emotional warmth, she [Cinderella] admits, in a phrase which alerts the reader to Donoghue’s deliberately subversive aims, that she ‘had got the story all wrong’ (8). It is the woman, not the prince, whom she loves. (Palmer, “Lesbian Transformations” 147)

The story ends by Cinderella’s expressing her desire for her mother’s friend:

How could I not have noticed she was beautiful? I must have dropped all my words in the bushes. I reached out.

I could hear surprise on her breath. What about the shoe? she asked.

It was digging into my heel, I told her.

What about the prince? she asked.

He’ll find someone to fit, if he looks long enough.

What about me? she asked very low. I'm old enough to be your mother.

Her finger was spelling on the back of my neck.

You're not my mother, I said. I'm old enough to know that.

I threw the other shoe into the brambles, where it hung, glinting.

So then she took me home, or I took her home, or we were both somehow taken to the closest thing. (7-8)

As is seen from the quotation above, instead of providing a happily-lived-ever-after formula by making Cinderella get married to the prince, Donoghue offers an alternative happy ending by uniting Cinderella and the fairy godmother in a lesbian relationship. "She is unconcerned about the shoe which she dropped on leaving the ball, recognizing that, as the majority of women are content with an orthodox heterosexual future, the prince will quickly find another girl to fit it" (Palmer, "Lesbian Transformations" 147). Thus, Cinderella realizes her desire for her mother's friend when she takes off the patriarchal veil and sees the beauty of her mother's friend. As Martin argues:

[W]hen the narrator steps out of the shoe, the palace, and the fairy tale that she has learned by heart, she is no longer located within the hierarchies associated with the heterosexual sphere. Neither is the Fairy Godmother; and so, instead of a mother figure who wields an authoritative influence, the Fairy Godmother can be a woman who engages in a collaborative and erotic relationship with a younger woman. (17)

This fairy godmother's being stripped of her motherly roles is most evident when Cinderella quits identifying the woman with her mother and changes the direction of her initial desire for the mother toward her mother's friend in lesbian terms although the woman warns her that she is old enough to be her mother. Karen E. Rowe offers an explanation of the bond between the heroine and the fairy godmother in a classical fairy tale as follows:

Frequently a good fairy, old woman, or comforting godmother (second substitution for the original mother) releases the heroine from the stepmother's bondage and enables her to adopt appropriate adult roles. Godmothers or wise women may seem merely fortuitous magical agents who promise transformations to make external circumstances responsive to the heroine's inner

virtue. Emancipated from enslavement as a cinderlass, Cinderella, for example, blossoms fully into a marriageable young princess at the ball. Functioning more subtly to exemplify cultural expectations, however, the 'dream' figure allows the heroine not only to recall the pattern embedded by the original mother, but also to claim that paradigm femininity as her own. ... When the heroine gains sexual freedom by repudiating the stepmother, she immediately channels that liberty into social goals epitomized by the primary mother. (214)

Donoghue subverts the pattern conveyed above by portraying the fairy godmother as a figure who frees Cinderella from the patriarchal voices in her head that play the role of the stepmother in the traditional version of the tale in her story. Donoghue's magical agent also takes Cinderella to the ball, but Donoghue creates this external circumstance in order to reflect the heroine's repressed desire for a woman. Thus, Cinderella in "The Tale of the Shoe" revolts against cultural expectations through uniting with her original mother in the embodiment of her mother's friend and gains sexual freedom by silencing the patriarchal voices in her head and by refusing to be a slave to the male-dominated social goals. As Coppola argues:

Cinderella gradually understands she cannot fit into the story prescribed and repeated by the voices. Consequently, she starts ignoring them and rewrites her story. This new tale has been, she realizes, already written; the new ending of the story (which she perceives, now, as completely and truly her own) has always been at her disposal, needing only to be re-read. The only thing that Donoghue's Cinderella (and with her, the reader) has to do is to read the signs in a different way. Only then can she consciously interpret her self-narrative and, consequently, deviate from its pre-established, hidden designs. (135)

In conclusion, at the very beginning of the story, Donoghue displays Cinderella as abject through her portraying Cinderella's melancholia for her mother's death. At this stage, Cinderella mourns over her separation from the maternal bond represented by her mother's death. Then, when her mother's friend visits her, she builds her maternal bond again by replacing her mother with this woman. However, the symbolic order calls for her and it urges her to separate from this new mother figure as well in order to become a subject in the

symbolic order. According to traditional psychoanalytical theories, this is the only way for her to recognize her boundaries between self and Other. She listens to the patriarchal voices in her head and tries to adapt herself to the symbolic order by parodically re-enacting the gender roles masculinist culture imposes upon women. However, she soon finds out that there is no use in performing these female roles and in defining her identity by becoming a wife to a prince, a representative of the patriarchal order. Thus, she refuses to be a subject “of” and “to” the symbolic order, and recovers her maternal identity by expressing that her desire is for a woman, not for a man. In this respect, she becomes an abject figure for the symbolic order by asserting her lesbian identity. Yet, by becoming abject she transgresses the patriarchal boundaries built for a woman. She liberates herself from getting imprisoned by patriarchal structures. Thus, rewriting Cinderella from such a radical point of view and subverting the traditional Gothic plot embedded in fairy tales, Donoghue resignifies the boundaries of the abject, finds true liberation of female desire in the abject representation of the lesbian desire. And while she does that she does not fall into the trap of representing the lesbian body with monstrous and fearful images which can pose a threat to the symbolic order. Instead, as is observed in “The Tale of the Shoe”, she presents a positive utopian female space where the semiotic can be celebrated.

5.6 “I ... leaned/and touched you, mesmerized, woman, stunned”¹⁹: Abject Representations of Lesbian Desire in Emma Donoghue’s “The Tale of the Rose”

“The Tale of the Rose” is the third story in *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* and follows “The Tale of the Bird” which is a rewriting of Hans Andersen’s “Thumbelina” also with slight references to Perrault’s “Bluebeard”. “The Tale of the Bird” is about a pregnant wife’s search for freedom because she is imprisoned by her over-protective husband in the house. The heroine’s husband does not allow his wife to go out in the sun saying that it is dangerous to walk under “the scathing sun” and there is “the risk of exposure to rough men in the cornfield” (19). The heroine, who feels unworthy like the many other heroines in the collection, is impressed by her husband’s protective attitude and agrees with his reasonable explanations at first. However, as her pregnancy progresses, she feels trapped and restless by

¹⁹ From “Beauty and the Beast” in *Rave: Poems 1975-1999* by Olga Broumas. (p. 68)

the surrounding walls of their house. One of these days she finds an injured bird in the house flown down a chimney. The heroine busies herself with treating the bird for some time and when it recovers, she lets it out to fly. In fact, the heroine identifies with the bird and envies its freedom. Consequently she decides:

Next time. Next year, I would get away somehow, sometime, with or without this child, heading somewhere I knew nothing about but the sun would shine down on my naked head. I would be hurt and I would be fearful, but I would never be locked up again. (24)

When the bird circles back, the heroine asks: “Who were you before you took the skies?” (25) and the bird starts to tell “The Tale of the Rose”, which is the next story in Donoghue’s collection. The bird reveals that it was Beauty before she was transformed into a bird.

“The Tale of the Rose” is a revisited version of Beaumont’s “Beauty and the Beast”. In this story, like Carter, Donoghue also reverses the traditional Oedipal pattern mostly found in the Gothic plot. Instead of depicting the heroine’s development of identity process through taking her position in the symbolic order, Donoghue presents the heroine’s choice of refusing the separation from the (m)other in order to develop an identity free from patriarchal definitions. In other words, the heroine of “The Tale of the Rose” consents to reside in the abject realm by forming a lesbian relationship with a woman. In this contemporary rewriting of “Beauty and the Beast”, Donoghue adopts a radical approach and reveals that the Beast is not a man, but a woman excluded by her society because she has expressed her same-sex desire which is forbidden to be experienced in patriarchal view.

At the very beginning of this story, the heroine reveals an awareness of the burden of being a woman imprisoned by the cultural and social roles of her community. She says: “In this life I have nothing to do but cavort on the wind, but in my last it was my fate to be a woman” (27). The heroine’s cavorting on the wind signifies freedom. Thus, at this point the heroine has nothing to do but to feel free. However, she also knows that it is her fate to become a woman in patriarchal terms in a male-dominated society one day. As Simone de Beauvoir declares in her seminal work *The Second Sex* (1949) “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (184). Therefore, the heroine is aware of the fact that when the time

comes she will be forced to perform the social and cultural roles that the patriarchal ideology expects from women. In this respect, it can be claimed that from the very first sentence of the story, traditional Gothic confinements which imprison women are presented. Being a heroine in a traditional Gothic plot means to suffer from the gender roles that patriarchal society imposes upon women and to be threatened by aggressive male sexuality. However, Donoghue will subvert this conventional Gothic plot at the end of the story by providing her heroine with the necessary growth which will enable her to resist this patriarchally defined fate.

The heroine also indicates that she knows she is beautiful only because her father tells her so. The father, symbol of the patriarchal order, defines her daughter in terms of beauty, a value which is used as an exchange commodity in the male-dominated economy. Irigaray states that “just as a commodity has no mirror it can use to reflect itself, so woman serves as a reflection, as image of and for man, but lacks specific qualities of her own. Her value-invested form amounts to what man inscribes in and on its matter: that is, her body” (187). In this respect, although the heroine has a loving father, her beauty, which is inscribed on her by the male gaze, will be her father’s investment in the course of the story. However, the heroine does not recognize her beauty when she looks in the mirror. In this sense, she is not a stereotypical woman who defines herself by the male gaze. The heroine thinks: “My oval mirror showed me a face with nothing written on it” (27). In many feminist texts, the mirror is associated with patriarchal gaze. That is, when a woman looks in the mirror, she does not see her authentic reflection, but a reflection shaped by patriarchal ideology. In this sense, the mirror of patriarchy does not show anything to the heroine. Therefore, at this stage she seems to have developed a self image outside male control. She depicts her face with nothing written on it because she has not adopted the images the patriarchal ideology assigns to her. In the course of the story, it will be observed that the heroine’s face, which is a blank sheet, will be filled with experiences free from the dictation of the patriarchal ideology.

In addition, the mirror imagery also connotes Lacan’s mirror stage in which the infant separates itself from the mother and constructs a sense of self when it recognizes its reflection in the mirror. However, since the heroine sees nothing and cannot define her sense of self when she sees her reflection in the mirror, this scene can be approached by the psychoanalytical theory of D. W. Winnicott who revises Lacan’s mirror stage and reveals that

“the precursor of the mirror is the mother’s face” (111). That is, when the mother and the infant are in a symbiotic relationship before the mirror stage and the child has not drawn its boundaries between self and (m)other yet, the mother’s face functions as a mirror of the self. If the infants do not have mothers to look at, then “[t]hey look and they do not see themselves” (Winnicott 112). In this respect, since the heroine’s mother is absent from the story, the mirror associated with the mother’s face does not offer her a self image. This implies that the heroine is in the semiotic stage where there is not a recognition of difference between “me and not-me”. In other words, she has not acquired her place in the symbolic order yet. And Donoghue will develop this image of mirror in various aspects in relation to the heroine’s development of identity process throughout the story and the heroine’s scenes with the mirror will be analyzed in detail in the following pages.

From the very start the heroine shows her difference from her social community and from her sisters. For instance, she is neither interested in her beauty nor in her suitors. She has “an appetite for magic” and wants only “something improbable and perfect as a red rose just opening” (27). Her appetite for magic also signifies that she is not a part of the symbolic order because magic represents illicit knowledge in the male-dominated society. Helen Haste says: “[p]artly this is because magical explanations are ways of dealing with the incomprehensible and the mystifying; it is an essential quality of witches that they are mystifying and incomprehensible to men” (173).

After such an exposition part, Donoghue takes her readers to the realm of Beaumont’s “Beauty and the Beast”. The heroine’s father loses his wealth, the family moves to a cottage and the heroine starts to work hard on the land. In the traditional version of the tale, Beauty’s merits are highlighted through the portrayal of her sisters’ counter behaviour. “These sisters are vain and selfish, quite the opposite from Beauty, who is modest, charming, and sweet to everybody” (Bettelheim 304). Donoghue’s version also singles out the heroine’s diligent character and compares her hard-working attitude to her sisters’ vanity. However, Donoghue rejects the social construction of women becoming rivals in a patriarchal economy in respect to the cultural roles they play. The heroine says: “I tucked up my skirts and got on with it. It gave me a strange pleasure to see what my back could bend to, my arms could bear. It was not that I was better than my sisters, only that I could see further” (28). Besides, she devotes herself to housework. She washes her father’s shirts on a black rock. Yet, this does

not mean that she adopts the woman image as a servant in the house because while she is washing, she finds “a kind of peace” and feels that she washes her “old self away” (29). Thus, Donoghue subverts all the stereotypical images of the domesticated woman through making her heroine associate this daily housework with a motive to know herself and express herself.

When one day the father leaves home learning that one of his ships has come safe to the shore, he promises his daughters to bring them whatever they want. While her sisters ask for dresses, cloaks and boots, the heroine asks only for a red rose. And when the father returns with the rose in his hand, he confesses that he has sold her daughter to a hooded beast from whose garden he has stolen the rose. Bruno Bettelheim, in *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976), analyzes the widely-known classical fairy tales with a traditional psychoanalytical approach and his interpretation of “Beauty and the Beast” is as follows:

In ‘Beauty and the Beast’, the fateful events are brought about by a father’s having stolen a rose to bring to his best-loved youngest daughter. His doing so symbolizes both his love for her and also an anticipation of her losing her maidenhood, as the broken flower – particularly the broken rose – is a symbol for the loss of virginity. (306)

Bettelheim develops his discussion about “Beauty and the Beast” on the Oedipal pattern. He claims that this classical fairy tale is about Beauty’s Oedipal love for her father which is transferred to Beauty’s future husband, the Beast, who turns out to be a handsome prince at the end of the tale. In this respect, Bettelheim thinks that the heroine’s asking her father for a rose emphasizes her Oedipal attachment to her father. In Bettelheim’s opinion, when the heroine is given to the Beast by her father as an exchange object, she is supposed to resolve her Oedipal conflict by getting married to the Beast. This, indeed, shows the patriarchal approach derived from Freud’s psychoanalytical theories that Bettelheim adopts.

No other well-known fairy-tale makes it as obvious as ‘Beauty and the Beast’ that a child’s oedipal attachment to a parent is natural, desirable, and has the most positive consequences for all, if during the process of maturation it is transferred and transformed as it becomes detached from the parent and concentrated on the lover. (Bettelheim 307)

As is observed in the quotation above, Bettelheim thinks that such a “bargain” has positive consequences for the heroine’s development of her own identity. However, Donoghue, as a lesbian writer who defines her identity outside the symbolic order, will subvert this Oedipal pattern which can be observed in many traditional tales by making her heroine neither feel an Oedipal attachment to his father nor making her feel as an exchange object. When the heroine learns that she is exchanged for a rose and a box of gold, she thinks: “Now you may tell me that I should have felt betrayed, but I was shaking with excitement. I should have felt like a possession, but for the first time in my life I seemed to own myself. I went as a hostage, but it seemed as if I was riding into battle” (31). Thus, the heroine does not feel that she is captivated as a hostage, but she is so full of courage that she feels as if she were going to a battle to fight. In this respect, although the plot is woven like the traditional Gothic plot, the heroine is not like the Gothic heroine who is helpless, passive, submissive and obedient. She has a spirit of interpreting her external world in her own terms. However, on the other hand, she is still put in a position of being a “woman on the market” by her father.

[W]hen women are exchanged, woman’s body must be treated as an *abstraction*. The exchange operation cannot take place in terms of some intrinsic, immanent value of the commodity ... It is thus not as ‘women’ that they are exchanged, but as women reduced to some common feature – their current price in gold, or phalluses – and of which they would represent a plus or minus quantity. Not a plus or a minus of feminine qualities, obviously. Since these qualities are abandoned in the long run to the needs of the consumer, *woman has value on the market by virtue of one single quality: that of being a product of man’s ‘labor’*. (Irigaray 175)

As Irigaray mentions above, women are exchange objects who have value on a patriarchal market. In regard to this, the heroine of Donoghue’s story has value in terms of a box of gold paid by the beast and her virginity symbolized by the rose. Therefore, it can be claimed that she has taken her position in the symbolic order by becoming a commodity.

The traditional Gothic atmosphere is presented as the heroine approaches the castle.

The castle was in the middle of a forest where the sun never shone. Every villager we stopped to ask the way spat when

they heard our destination. There had been no wedding or christening in that castle for a whole generation. The young queen had been exiled, imprisoned, devoured (here the stories diverged) by a hooded beast who could be seen at sunset walking on the battlements. No one had ever seen the monster's face and lived to describe it. (32)

Thus, the castle associated with its mysterious owner is an ominous place for the villagers, representatives of the mainstream society, who have expelled the castle and its inhabitant from their social community because of these supernatural rumours. No one has seen the beast's face and therefore they imagine the beast as a monster. In this respect, both the castle and its monstrous owner are abjected and marginalized by the patriarchal community. As is discussed before, the castle is associated with the mother's body. Holland and Sherman, in their article "Gothic Possibilities", admit that throughout their studies on the Gothic they have found "in the castle mother – mother as nurturer, as sexual being, as body, as harboring a secret, as an indifferent hardness, and so on" (289). Since the mother is the first to be abjected in traditional identity theories, the castle in this story also represents the maternal space which is abjected by the villagers in order to define themselves as a separate identity from the mother, the original Other. In this sense, the heroine's journey to this abject space is her journey to the maternal in which she will face her Other.

This emphasis on the abject is developed also by the image of the beast as monstrous. Since the heroine's being an exchange object between her father and the beast signifies her being a member of the symbolic order and owning an identity defined by patriarchal economy, the abject castle and the abject beast will pose a threat to her identity by challenging her boundaries between the self and the (m)other. In other words, the battle she is invited to by the beast is a battle that she will fight for defining her identity outside the symbolic order. For instance, when the heroine meets the beast, her imagination leads her to draw a deformed picture of the beast and she feels frightened by the threat his appearance demonstrates.

The beast was waiting at the top of the steps, back to the light, swaddled in darkness. I strained to see the contours of the mask. I imagined a different deformity for every layer of black cloth.

The voice, when it came, was not cruel but hoarse, as if it had not been much used in twenty years. The beast asked me, Do you come consenting?

I did. I was sick to my stomach, but I did. (33)

The heroine shows the symptoms described by Kristeva when a person enters the abject realm: “Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects” (*Powers* 1). A person reacts like this when he or she faces the abject because what is abject reminds him or her of the violent separation from the mother, that is, from the blissful union with her. This is the reason why a person feels desire and repulsion at the same time; he or she is reminded of this separation but also simultaneously is pushed into desire to be with the mother in that blissful stage by the abject sight. Therefore, the heroine is also repelled by the sight of the beast; however, she is simultaneously fascinated by it because she admits that she has come consenting.

The heroine’s exploration of the castle is also associated with a return to the mother’s body:

[T]he heroine’s exploration of her entrapment in a Gothic house – both she and it vulnerable to potential penetration – can be read as an exploration of her relation to the maternal body which she too shares, to the femaleness of experience, with all its connotations of power over, and vulnerability to, forces within and without. (Kahane, “The Maternal Legacy” 243)

In this respect, the heroine’s exploration of the castle is significant in terms of reconstructing her bond with the maternal. She finds a room in the castle with her name on it which indicates that her identity is welcomed in the castle and the (m)other has opened up a space – a room – for her. In other words, this represents the union with the Other: the self in the Other. There are hundreds of dresses cut to her shape, which indicates that the roles she has to put on are appropriate for her in this castle which is built outside the patriarchal society. Besides, she also has the keys to every room in the castle “except the one where the beast slept” (34). When she discovers the hidden face behind the beast’s mask, she will meet the original (m)other represented by the beast’s identity. This is the reason why she says: “I had a room of my own, and time, and treasures at my command. I had everything I could want except the key to the story” (34). In this sense, the key to the story is remembering the

maternal bond with the mother, establishing “woman-identification”, resisting to be a member of the symbolic order, rejecting the definition of female identity established by patriarchal norms, and identifying with the abject – the (m)other – in order to subvert and transgress the patriarchal boundaries which demand a separation from the (m)other to develop a closed self with clear-cut borders.

The beast represents the marginalized and the abjected Other. The heroine’s confrontation with the beast throws her into an abject state. According to Lacan’s theory of identity formation, the infant constructs its boundaries between the subject and the object and recognizes a difference between itself and the (m)other in the mirror stage that follows the imaginary stage in which the infant has no defined center of self and it is experiencing a blissful union with the (m)other. However, Donoghue subverts Lacan’s mirror stage when she depicts her heroine’s recognizing her self as a merging identity with the Other symbolized by the beast.

I sat in my satin-walled room, before the gold mirror. I looked deep into the pool of my face, and tried to imagine what the beast looked like. The more hideous my imaginings, the more my own face seemed to glow. Because I thought the beast must be everything I was not: dark to my light, rough to my smooth, hoarse to my sweet. When I walked on the battlements under the waning moon, the beast was the grotesque shadow I threw behind me. (35)

As is observed above, the heroine recognizes her self image in the mirror through identifying with the beast’s image. The necessary separation from the (m)other which should take place in the mirror stage for the subject to distinguish between the self and the other and to step into the symbolic stage which will define its relations to all others is subverted by Donoghue in the presented scene above. The heroine, who has become an exchange object in the symbolic order, is now in a castle representing the (m)other’s body, and in a room of her own which can be interpreted as the mother’s womb. Thus, she steps into the abject realm and resists the hegemony of the symbolic order. “Abjection looms and threatens, jettisons the subject to a borderland of horror, and at once beseeches and repulses the subject, radically defying categorization” (Becker-Leckrone 151). Hence, through abjection the heroine’s desire is described anew as a desire for the Other, the beast, by whom she destroys binary

oppositions. Although she feels horror by her hideous imaginings of the beast which threatens her subjectivity, she feels fascinated by it as is implied in the depiction of her glowing face. Through destroying binary oppositions and portraying her self image merging with the secondary terms such as “dark, rough, hoarse, and grotesque shadow” placed in a hierarchal binary structure associated with the Other, she manages to embrace what is jettisoned by the patriarchal society. The threat that the abject poses is developed in the story by a conversation between the beast and the heroine.

One night at dinner the beast said, You have never seen
my face. Do you still picture me as a monster?

I did. The beast knew it.

...

One night at dinner the beast said, You have never felt my
touch. Do you still shrink from it?

I did. The beast knew it.

...

One night at dinner the beast asked, What if I let you go?
Would you stay of your own free will?

I would not. The beast knew it. (35-6)

The heroine’s avoidance of the beast reveals her fear of the abject. She has the urge to demarcate her boundaries between her self and the other. Becker-Leckrone defines the horror the subject feels when he or she confronts the abject as follows:

This concept distinguishes itself from other psychoanalyses of fear, though at times only by subtle allusion, primarily because Kristeva’s abjection concerns fear of neither objects nor other subjects, but rather the threat of indistinction between the two. This distinction presents itself, definitively, as a crisis of place and identity. (33)

This threat of the indistinction between the subjects and the objects leads the heroine to feel the need to get out of this abject state. Therefore, this time the gold mirror in her room shows her father “lying with his feverish face” in need of help and reminds her of the unitary identity she has to develop in order to proceed to the symbolic realm. The heroine asks for leave from the beast to go back home and take care of her father.

Taking leave on the steps, the beast said, I must tell you
before you go: I am not a man.

I knew it. Every tale I had ever heard of trolls, ogres,
goblins, rose to my lips.

The beast said, You do not understand.

But I was riding away. (37)

The beast tries to reveal his true identity before the heroine leaves. He wants to convey that he is not a monster as she imagines; he is not even a man. However, the heroine cannot hear what the beast says because she is leaving the castle. When the heroine reaches home, she starts to treat her ill father and he recovers quickly by the help of his beloved daughter. But, she does not return to the beast's castle because she is persuaded by her sisters to stay.

At this point, the heroine looks in the mirror in her father's house. She sees the rose garden of the castle. The rose that her father has brought to her from the beast's garden, associated with her virginity as a commodity, is "stiff against the mirror...still red" (37). Although she had left it drying against her mirror when she was leaving for the castle, the redness and freshness of the rose indicates that the heroine still preserves her virginity. And the image shown by the mirror is herself walking in the beast's rose garden and she sees a black shape on the grass. The heroine says: "I found the old papery rose clenched in my fist, flaking into nothing" (38). Thus, Donoghue also subverts the imagery of rose traditionally interpreted as a girl's virginity and chastity. The heroine's being sold for her virginity to the beast by the patriarchal Law, that is, the female body as an exchange community, does not have any value in the abject realm. As a result, Donoghue destroys all the patriarchal norms founded upon women's subordination and exploitation.

Thus, the heroine decides to leave her paternal home and returns to the castle. As she enters the rose garden, she finds the beast lying among the rose buds frozen.

I pulled and pulled until the padded mask lay uppermost. I
breathed my heat on it, and kissed the spot I had warmed. I pulled
off the veils one by one. Surely it couldn't matter what I saw now?

I saw hair black as rocks under water. I saw a face white as
old linen. I saw lips red as a rose just opening.

I saw *the beast was a woman*. And that she was breathing,
which seemed to matter more. (39, emphasis mine)

When the heroine takes off the beast's mask, she sees that the beast is a woman. Until this scene the heroine has been presented in an ambiguous position. That is, she oscillates between the semiotic and the symbolic realm. Her female identity, strictly demarcated by the traditional psychoanalytical theories, has been threatened by the abject beast who is perceived as an improper and disorderly Other because of her lesbian identity. Since her sexual orientation is directed to a woman, she threatens hetero-patriarchal norms. This is the reason why she is abjected and excluded from the mainstream society. The beast has been leading a secluded life, but she has also created for herself a maternal space of her own symbolized by the castle. In this respect, the conventional Gothic plot, which offers a sexually threatening male figure who is after penetrating the heroine at least by his gaze and male control, is subverted by Donoghue. In the traditional Gothic plot, while the male villain can express his sexual desire for the heroine and poses a threat to the heroine of being raped, the Gothic heroine's desire is absent from the text. The original version of "Beauty and the Beast" also employs the same conventional Gothic pattern.

The name Belle or Beauty assumes meaning through the behavioral traits that the young woman displays as a good housekeeper and domesticated woman: industrious, diligent, loyal, submissive, gentle, self-sacrificial. Not all these traits are necessarily bad, but in the context of the plot, Beauty's behavior leads to the denial of her own desires. In fact, we never really know her desires, but we certainly know what her father and the Beast want. (Zipes, *Why Fairy* 142)

As Zipes reveals above, Beauty's desire cannot find a way to express itself in the traditional Gothic pattern. However, Donoghue rewrites this original version by focusing on both the heroine's and the beast's desire which is a lesbian desire. The heroine's kissing the woman behind a beast's mask and her depiction of the beast's lips as a red rose just opening connotes erotic overtones. Since lesbian desire is defined as perverse in a patriarchal society based on heterosexual relationships, such a rewriting of a classical fairy tale which expresses same-sex desire is a revolt against the norms of the symbolic order. Donoghue destroys the patriarchal pattern in the traditional fairy tales and provides a radical feminist pattern which

envelops an abject representation of female desire. The heroine decides to remain in the semiotic stage.

This was a strange story, one I would have to learn a new language to read, a language I could not learn except by trying to read the story.

I was a slow learner but a stubborn one. It took me days to learn that there was nothing monstrous about this woman who had lived alone in a castle, setting all her suitors riddles they could make no sense of, refusing to do the things queens are supposed to do, until the day when, knowing no one who could see her true face, she made a mask and from then on showed her face to no one. It took me weeks to understand why the faceless mask and the name of a beast might be chosen over all the great world had to offer. After months of looking, I saw that beauty was infinitely various, and found it behind her white face. (39-40)

The new language the heroine mentions above is a pre-linguistic language, the semiotic, which is associated with the maternal. The semiotic is ambivalent, plural, disruptive, and an on-going process which resists the closed system of meanings. And the heroine is going back to this maternal linguistic practice. By learning about the beast's story, she realizes that the lesbian Other is monstrous only in the eye of patriarchal society. What she herself derives from the beast's appearance is that beauty has various representations. Kristeva's following definition of the state of the subject in the face of the abject is in parallel with what the heroine feels: "I behold the breaking down of a world that has erased its borders" (*Powers* 4). The abject representation of the beast leads the heroine to transgress the boundaries of her own and culturally constructed compulsory heterosexuality as well. In this respect, Donoghue also subverts the monstrous image of the lesbian by claiming that the monstrous appearance of the lesbian is a mask designed by hetero-patriarchal ideology. What lies beneath the mask is beauty.

Donoghue ends her story as follows: "And as the years flowed by, some villagers told travelers of a beast and a beauty who lived in the castle and could be seen walking on the battlements, and others told of two beauties, and others, of two beasts" (40). Such an ending illustrates a panorama of the patriarchal society which counts the subjects of the symbolic order as its rightful members and which excludes identities that deviate from the social norms

by defining them as abject. In this respect, the image of this lesbian couple in the eyes of the subject beholder and the abject beholder is different. In other words, the subjects of the symbolic order will define this lesbian couple as bestial because they construct their subjectivities by strictly demarcating their borders between self and Other and they jettison such alternative identities as the waste of their mainstream community. As Butler contends:

We see this most clearly in the examples of those abjected beings who do not appear properly gendered; it is their very humanness that comes into question. Indeed, the construction of gender operates through exclusionary means, such that the human is not only produced over and against the inhuman, but through a set of foreclosures, radical erasures, that are, strictly speaking, refused the possibility of cultural articulation. Hence, it is not enough to claim that human subjects are constructed, for the construction of the human is a differential operation that produces the more and the less 'human', the inhuman, the humanly unthinkable. These excluded sites come to bound the 'human' as its constitutive outside, and to haunt those boundaries as the persistent possibility of their disruption and rearticulation. (*Bodies* 8)

On the other hand, the abject identities who can either identify with the same-sex desire or the subjects-in-process who can embrace the abject Other in themselves, will define this lesbian couple as beautiful. Thus, Donoghue not only rewrites Beaumont's classical fairy tale from a lesbian perspective, she also rewrites the image of lesbian as monstrous from an affirmative point of view. That is, she does not need certain elements of horror in order to portray a powerful figure of the lesbian who terrorizes patriarchal society. On the contrary, although she adopts this popular image of monstrous lesbian character by identifying the bestial appearance with lesbian desire as is in "The Tale of the Rose", she does not attribute negative characteristics to this monster image. Her aim is to reveal that what is perceived as monstrous is a cultural construction and in this sense the lesbian is not monstrous. This is the reason why Donoghue depicts her lesbian characters with positive images. They are excessive representations of the attempt to rebuild the bond with the maternal. Therefore, they are the subjects-in-excess as the heroine and the beast are portrayed who are successful at transgressing the boundaries that imprison their lesbian bodies as well as their female subjectivities.

In conclusion, “the key” to this story and to all the other stories in Donoghue’s collection is the affirmation of the possibility of loving relationships and same-sex desire between women. The heroine’s experiences with the mirror which trace her discovery of her identity as a lesbian, the subverted image of the conventional image of the rose which is traditionally associated with female sexuality, chastity, virginity and female body as an exchange commodity, and the disruption of the patriarchal representation of woman as obedient, self-sacrificial, gentle, loyal and submissive embodied by Beauty signify the heroine’s revolt against the Oedipal pattern found in classical fairy tales. By recasting “Beauty and the Beast” as a lesbian narrative, Donoghue manages to transgress the patriarchal boundaries that imprison women in male-dominated definitions of female identity and desire. Besides, she liberates not only her heroine Beauty, but also the Beast from the oppression of a hierarchically constructed heterosexual relationship by redefining the abject with positive characteristics.

As is explained before, the passages that link Donoghue’s rewritten fairy tales to one another are like the knots of a weaving pattern which carry the reader to the following story in order to make him or her learn the life story of the character in the previous fairy tale. The passage between “The Tale of the Rose” and “The Tale of the Apple” is presented below:

*Another summer in the rose garden,
I asked,
Who were you
before you chose a mask over a crown?
And she said,
Will I tell you my own story?
It is a tale of an apple. (41)*

And the beast’s story about how she has come to wear a mask in order to hide her identity is explored in the following analysis of “The Tale of the Apple”.

**5.7 “I’m coming back to you woman/flesh of your woman’s flesh/your fairest/
most faithful mirror ... Receive me, Mother.”²⁰: Abject Representations of Lesbian
Desire in Emma Donoghue’s “The Tale of the Apple”**

“The Tale of the Apple” is the fourth story of the collection which follows “The Tale of the Rose” discussed previously in this chapter. It reveals the story of the beast that has chosen to live behind a mask in a castle far away from the mainstream society. “The Tale of the Apple” is a revisited version of the Grimm Brothers’ “Snow White” in which Donoghue approaches Snow White and her stepmother queen’s relationship from a lesbian perspective. She reconstructs the figure of the wicked stepmother by portraying her as a lesbian who falls in love with her stepdaughter. In this respect, Donoghue draws attention to the association of the lesbian identity with the maternal and the abject once again.

“The Tale of the Apple” is narrated by Snow White. The maid who has brought her up tells her that she resembles her mother very much. Snow White has her mother’s eyes and her long hands. By this emphasis on resemblance between Snow White and her mother, Donoghue underlines mother-daughter identification and preserves a space for them outside the patriarchal paradigm. However, Snow White’s mother dies while she is giving birth to her daughter. By the death of her mother, Snow White tragically moves from the semiotic stage to the symbolic represented by her father, the King. The Oedipal desire between the father and the daughter can be observed in their close relationship. Snow White describes her father as her “toyman” and she tells how he tosses her high in the air and how he bounces her on his lap. As Rowe maintains: “In the throes of oedipal ambiguities, a young girl who still desires dependency seizes upon her father’s indulgent affection, because it guarantees respite from maternal persecutions and offers a compensating masculine adoration” (214). However, Snow White’s blissful relationship with her father will be interrupted when one day the King decides to get married because in the Oedipal dynamics the mother is a rival to Snow White is and in competition with her for the love of the father. Snow White displays her first meeting with her step-mother as follows:

²⁰ From “Snow White” in *Rave: Poems 1975-1999* by Olga Broumas. (pp. 83-4)

But the day there was a patch of red on my crumpled sheet, my father brought home a new wife. She was not many years older than I was, but she had seen one royal husband into the grave already. She had my coloring. Her face was set like a jewel in a ring. I could see she was afraid; she kissed me and spoke sweetly in front of the whole court, but I could tell she would be my enemy. There was only one room for one queen in a castle. (45)

As is discussed before, menstruation is considered as abject because it is related to the maternal. Menstrual blood signifies a woman's potential of becoming a mother and therefore it is linked to the semiotic stage. In this respect, the symbolic order defines menstrual blood as filthy, maternal, and female and categorizes it as abject. Therefore, its representation is regarded as a resistance against the symbolic order. Snow White's menstruation symbolizes that she has also become a woman. And the day she has become a woman, her father brings home a new wife who is nearly at the same age with the heroine. Snow White senses that they will be enemies because there is no room for two queens in the patriarchal structure of society.

Snow White's perception of her stepmother as an enemy is a reference to the Grimm Brothers' original version of the tale. The plot is activated by the conflict between Snow White and her stepmother, the queen: "the one fair, young, pale, the other just as fair, but older, fiercer; the one a daughter, the other a mother; the one sweet, ignorant, passive, the other both artful and active; the one a sort of angel, the other an undeniable witch" (Gilbert and Gubar 36). In Donoghue's version the queen is only a few years older than Snow White and this indicates that the conflict between the queen and Snow White will be much more apparent. Besides, Snow White is not a child anymore. Her being raised by her father implies that she has attained her position as a subject in the symbolic order from the day she starts to bleed. This means that it is time also for Snow White to perform her gender roles assigned to her by the symbolic order.

In this respect, Snow White feels conflicting emotions for the queen. On the one hand, she hears the voice of the semiotic represented by the stepmother-queen which tells her that she can reconstruct her bond with the maternal space again. On the other hand, she is raised by her father and she has learned to live up to the patriarchal ideology. Snow White under the influence of patriarchal values knows that a woman is another woman's rival

particularly when they are a mother and a daughter struggling to win the father's love. In this context, as soon as Snow White hands in the keys of the castle, the coronet, and the velvet train of state to the queen, she observes that the new wife is "laden down with all the apparatus of power" (45). She thinks to herself:

But it was me the folk waved to as the carriage rattled by; it was me who was mirrored in my father's fond eyes; mine was the first apple from the orchard.

I know now that I would have liked her if we could have met as girls, ankle deep in a river. I would have taken her hand in mine if I had not found it weighted down by the ruby stolen from my mother's cooling finger. I could have loved her if, if, if. (45-6)

Although Freud admits that the identity achievement into a "normal woman" is problematic for the girl child, he gives a theoretical explanation for her process. The girl child, finding out that she has already been castrated because she has no penis, perceives herself as a lack. At this stage, the clitoris is perceived as an inferior penis by the girl child and as a result of this, the little girl develops a penis envy out of this deficiency. Freud implies that the girl child blames her mother for her physical inferiority because she discovers that her mother is castrated as well. Thus, the girl child gives up her pre-Oedipal attachment to the mother, takes her father as her love object and perceives the mother as a rival to her for the love of the father. She develops a passive sexuality which is based on a desire for the father who can give her a baby as a substitute for the penis. And as Jessica Benjamin argues: "Desire in woman thus appears as envy – perhaps only as envy" (89). In regard to this approach, the quotation presented above foregrounds Snow White's envy for her stepmother. On the other hand, Snow White also knows that she could have loved her stepmother, if her female identity had not been constructed in Freudian terms. And in the course of the story Donoghue will destroy this Freudian approach to female identity, and she will rewrite the identity process by defining the female desire as a desire for the mother – not a desire for the father – which is incestuous and lesbian. Thus, Donoghue will destroy the Oedipal pattern and she will offer a new process of identity formation for Snow White that will be based on identification rather than on differentiation.

Snow White's and the queen's desire for each other is revealed in a covert way, but with sexual overtones:

Her lips were soft against my forehead when she kissed me in front of the whole court. But I knew from the songs that a stepmother's smile is like a snake's, so I shut my mind to her from that very first day when I was rigid with the letting of first blood.

In the following months she did all she could do to woo my friendship, and I began to soften. I thought perhaps I had misread the tight look in her eyes. Eventually I let her dress me up in the silks and brocades she had brought over the mountains. It was she who laced up my stays every morning till I was pink with mirth; last thing at night it was she who undid the searing laces one by one and loosed my flesh into sleep. With her own hands she used to work the jeweled comb through my hair, teasing out the knots. Not content with all this, she used to feed me fruit from her own bowl, each slice poised between finger and thumb till I was ready to take it. Though I never trusted her, I took delight in what she gave me. (46-7)

Although Snow White concentrates on the softness of the queen's kiss on her forehead, she also reminds herself of the culturally imposed image of evil stepmother and she tries to stay away from her. Gilbert and Gubar, in their article "The Queen's Looking Glass: Female Creativity, Male Images of Women, and the Metaphor of Literary Paternity", claim that male authors have generated two extreme images for women: "angel" and "monster". The "angel woman" has "virtues of modesty, gracefulness, purity, delicacy, civility, compliancy, reticence, chastity, affability, politeness" (Gilbert and Gubar 23) as Snow White in the traditional version of the fairy tale has. And the "monster woman" is "an antithetical mirror image of an angel" and "a representative of otherness" who "embodies intransigent female autonomy ... assertiveness, aggressiveness" (28), "possess[es] unhealthy energies, powerful and dangerous arts" (29) and who is called by "source bad names (witch, bitch, fiend, monster)" (Gilbert and Gubar 28) as the wicked stepmother queen is portrayed in the classical version of "Snow White". This patriarchal image is so culturally embedded in women that Snow White also associates her stepmother's smile with evil when she describes it as a snake's smile. On the other hand, she thinks that she could have misread the tight look in her stepmother's eyes. Observing that she treats her like a real mother, Snow White cannot

prevent herself from feeling sympathy for her. However, Snow White, as a child, who is developing her identity in Freudian terms, has not solved her Oedipal conflict yet. Therefore, although she feels delight for what the queen does, she still does not trust her.

The Oedipal conflict, which makes mother and daughter rivals to one another, is reinforced by the King who replaces the magic mirror in the classical version of the tale.

My father was cheered to see us so close. Once when he came to her room at night he found us there, cross-legged on her bed under a sea of velvets and laces, trying how each earring looked against the other's ear. He put his head back and laughed to see us. Two such fair ladies, he remarked, have never been seen on one bed. But which of you is the fairest of them all? (47)

Thus, rather than portraying the queen's conversations with the magic mirror in the Grimm Brothers' version and employing the magic mirror as a metaphor to convey patriarchal notions of women, Donoghue overtly proposes the male gaze represented by the King in order to highlight its oppressive influence on women's relationships with one another. However, as is seen in the quotation above, until the Oedipal father comes, the queen and her daughter have been sharing one of those private moments that a mother and a daughter can have. This delicate bond newly being constructed between Snow White and the queen is disrupted by the King's interruption by asking "which of you is the fairest of them all?" and he tries to incite the rivalry between his wife and his daughter. As Gilbert and Gubar convey: "female bonding is extraordinarily difficult in patriarchy: women almost inevitably turn against women because the voice of the looking glass sets them against each other" (38).

Besides, it is implied that the King takes pleasure from the sight of the queen's and his daughter's sitting on the same bed. Obviously, this is a remark which hints at the sexual desire that can arise between women and which can also become a pornographic spectacle for the male gaze. Snow White senses that there is something more than the mother-daughter relationship between herself and the queen when she says: "We looked at each other, she and I, and chimed in the chorus of his laughter. Am I imagining in retrospect that our voices rang a little out of tune?" (47). After implying that same-sex desire is started to be felt between Snow White and the queen, Donoghue associates their desire for one another with the maternal bond. Snow White compares her appearance with the queen and indicates that their

faces are not “the same, and not comparable” (48). At this point, on the one hand, Donoghue emphasizes that same-sex desire between Snow White and the queen is not derived from the child’s strong attachment to the mother. However, on the other hand, she aims to show that if lesbian desire is to be perceived as a projection of a woman’s desire for the mother onto another woman, this does not have to be a negatively constructed desire which leads to psychosis. On the contrary, she wants to reveal that the maternal principle positively connects women to one another. In this sense, it should not be banished, but embraced in order not to be victimized by the patriarchal definitions of women that imprison them to make them a part of the symbolic system.

Thus, although the King as the patriarchal mirror tries to re-produce “woman” as the object of masculine desire by asking “how am I to judge between two such beauties?” (48), both Snow White and the queen continue to look at each other knowing that their mirror is a matriarchal one in which they see one another as one. As Snow White suggests: “I looked at my stepmother, and she stared back at me, and our eyes were like the mirrors set opposite each other, making a corridor of reflection, infinitely hollow” (48). This scene shows that Snow White and the queen are experiencing one of those blissful moments of the mirror stage in which the child is in a symbiotic relationship with the mother and the Law has not interrupted the child’s identification with the mother yet by introducing sexual difference to the child.

However, when the father kisses Snow White on the forehead, pushes her gently out of the room and closes the door behind her, the presence of the father, symbolized by the phallus, reminds the child of its sexual difference and forces her to be a part of the pre-given structure of social and sexual roles. Sjöholm states that “[m]aternity and femininity are both presented as forms of subjectivity that are split and open, challenging and productive of differentiation in relation to the social order” (51). Therefore, both maternity and femininity should be repressed in order to provide the prevalence of the symbolic order. Consequently, both Snow White and the queen are thrown into the symbolic order by the King’s entry signifying the social taboo on incest and same-sex desire and they start to perform the gender roles imposed upon them by the social order through oppression.

The King’s closing the door of his bedroom behind Snow White implies the sexual activity that is going to be shared by the queen and the King. What the King wants is to have

a boy-child as a legitimate heir to his patriarchal crown. However, the queen is barren. The King starts to become more aggressive and oppressive as the queen cannot get pregnant. He imprisons the queen in her room, forbids her to see Snow White, and makes her “do nothing except lie on her back and wait to find herself with child, the child who would be his longed-for son” (49). However, soon it is the King who gets sick and dies in his bed by cursing “the doctors, ... his enemies, ... the two wives who had failed him, and finally with a wet mouth he cursed the son who had never come” (50).

By being oppressed for so long, the queen resenting her being treated as an item of the economic system that has to perform the child-bearing role in order to contribute to the maintenance of the symbolic order usurps the throne as soon as the King dies and asserts her power upon her subjects. At this point, the queen attains her patriarchal image of the monstrous woman who is powerful, autonomous, aggressive and assertive. When she wears the crown, the first thing she intends to do is to banish Snow White who is a threat to her throne.

Say that I am queen,
 You are my father's wife, I replied.
 I will be queen after he is dead, she said.
 I made no reply.
 Say that I am queen, she repeated, her fingers whitening
 around the scepter.
 If you really were, I told her, it would need no saying.
 ...
 I could have you cast out.
 Indeed.
 If you cross me in this, she said confidently, I could have a
 huntsman take you into the forest, chop out your heart and bring it
 back on a plate.
 Strong meat, I murmured. (50)

In the quotation above, Donoghue's queen acts like the wicked queen in the Grimm Brothers' "Snow White". As soon as she gains power, she also becomes an oppressor because she is so much full of resentment. She represents the queen of the classical version who "has internalized the King's rules: his voice resides now in her own mirror, her own mind" (Gilbert and Gubar 38). The throne symbolizing the patriarchal power seizes the queen at this stage. However, Snow White does not feel afraid of her stepmother's power. She observes that the queen's rage stems from her attaining the values of the symbolic order.

In the story following “The Tale of the Apple” which is “The Tale of the Handkerchief”, it will be revealed that the queen was a maid who usurped her princess’ royal identity and her hope for becoming a better woman was dependent on her bearing a child. The maid in “The Tale of the Handkerchief”, who is the stepmother queen in “The Tale of the Apple”, says: “Once I had the crown settled on my head and a baby or two on my lap, who knew what kind of woman I might turn out to be?” (79). However, the queen never manages to get a baby on her lap, but she will soon realize her desire for Snow White and discover what kind of a woman she will be. She will obviously quit her need for social security in the symbolic order and experience a female desire which will be defined outside the male-dominated hegemony.

When Snow White learns that her father is dead, she leaves the palace without attending the funeral. She starts her journey to the forest and she is found half-starved by a gang of woodsmen. And Snow White starts to live with them and becomes a housewife. She says:

I guessed how to cook the food they threw on the table, gathering together from the shattered jigsaw of memory everything I must have seen the castle servants do ten thousand times. Gradually I learned how to keep hunger at bay and disease from the door: all the sorcery of fire and iron and water. (53)

In the traditional “Snow White”, Snow White is found by seven dwarfs and her life with the dwarfs

is an important part of her education in submissive femininity, for in serving them she learns essential lessons of service, of selflessness, of domesticity. ... [T]he realm of domesticity is a miniaturized kingdom in which the best of women is not only like a dwarf but like a dwarf’s servant (Gilbert and Gubar 40).

Donoghue employs the same education for her heroine and although she does not complain about hard work – because it kept her memories at bay – she continues to perform the role of the “angel in the house”. She is haunted by the image of her stepmother and lets her mind dwell on her. However, she also knows that although she is living in a cottage and the queen

in a palace, they are both “living much the same kind of life” (53). They are leading the same kind of lives because both of them are entrapped by the patriarchally defined roles of women: Snow White has become a slave to domestic drudgery and the queen becomes a victim of her ambitions represented by the patriarchal throne.

Snow White thinks that the queen will trace her and kill her. Then one day, the queen comes, but she seems to have changed. In the original version of the tale, the queen also visits Snow White in order to kill her and Snow White cannot recognize her because she has transformed herself into a witch. In Donoghue’s stories the figure of witch is adopted as a representative of subversive and transgressive power. Waelti-Waters argues that “[t]he women grow in self-assurance, setting their own priorities, selecting their own images. The fairy tale race is evolving and the witch is being rehabilitated” (142). In this sense, in *Kissing the Witch*, Donoghue also rehabilitates the image of the witch through breaking her ties with its patriarchal connotations and reconstructs her anew by endowing her with positive characteristics and with affirmative lesbian desire. Thus, Donoghue attempts at destroying the abjectness of lesbian sexual subjectivity by stripping her off the wicked, evil, perverse, deviant, isolated, and exiled state.

While discussing the representation of the lesbian as a witch in her *Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions*, Palmer refers to Daly’s work *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, which, she thinks, has been an inspiration for many Lesbian Gothic writers. In her work, Daly utilizes the motif of the witch as an icon to represent the lesbian culture in radical feminist movement. She announces that her work is:

an invitation to the Wild Witch in all women who long to spin. ...
It is a declaration/Manifesto that in our chronology (Crone-ology)
it is time to get moving again. It is a call of the wild to the wild,
calling Hags/Spinners to spin/be beyond the parochial
bondings/bindings of any comfortable ‘community’. (xv)

Palmer reflects that the witch in Daly’s work is

a signifier of those attributes, such as strength, independence and
commitment to lesbian sisterhood, which patriarchy seeks to
repress by recruiting women into heterosexual relations and
encouraging them to conform to a docile model of femininity.
(*Lesbian Gothic* 30)

In this respect, the representation of the lesbian as a witch creates a woman-identified space outside the patriarchal community which enables women to liberate from male oppression and which provides women with a separate female culture to express their feminist concerns. Therefore, Donoghue's attempt at "rehabilitating" the image of the witch in her stories with positive attributes reshapes the representation of lesbian desire as abject in an affirmative way.

Donoghue, in "The Tale of the Apple", subverts the murder plots the witch-queen plans in the traditional "Snow White". The witch-queen's first murder plot in the classical fairy tale is to offer "to lace Snow White 'properly' for once – then [to] suffocate her with a Victorian set of tight laces" (Gilbert and Gubar 40). Bettelheim thinks that this scene "suggests Snow White's conflicts about her adolescent desire to be well laced because it makes her sexually attractive. Her collapsing unconscious symbolizes that she became overwhelmed by the conflict between her sexual desires and her anxiety about them" (212). In this respect, the witch-queen's offer to lace Snow White has sexual connotations. Donoghue also subverts this scene and saves her heroine's desire associated with the Oedipal development of sexual identity. Instead, she rewrites this scene by portraying lesbian desire between Snow White and the queen.

On her first visit, Snow White does not want to speak with the queen, but the queen waits for her outside in order to be let in the cottage. When Snow White invites her for a minute, the queen admits: "I keep breaking mirrors" (55). Since the mirror reflects patriarchal images of women and represents the symbolic order's oppression on women, the queen's breaking the mirrors indicates that she has liberated herself from patriarchal imprisonment.

Sitting by the fire with her I shut my eyes and it felt like
old times. She stood behind me and laced up my stays tightly, the
way I could never lace them on my own.

When they came home that night the men found me alone
in a sort of stupor. First they were anxious, to hear my breath come
so quick and shallow ... They said my stepmother had to be a
sorceress, to find me so deep in the forest. (55)

In the original version of the tale, the dwarfs come home and when they unlace Snow White, she comes back to life. In Donoghue's version, Snow White is in a kind of stupor not

because the queen has attempted to kill her, but because the queen has made her feel sexual pleasure by lacing up her stays. Thus, Snow White discovers her desire for the queen and she feels enchanted by it. As Zipes maintains: “The witches not only are agents of evil but also represent erotic and subversive forces” (*Art of Subversion* 205). In this sense, the witch-queen represents subversive same-sex desire which poses a threat to the heterosexual culture. And the witch-queen’s inviting Snow White to the palace underlines the witch-queen’s attempt to rescue her from the domestic slavery which is imposed upon her by the woodsmen who are representatives of the symbolic order.

On her second visit the witch-queen in the classical fairy tale “promises to comb Snow White’s hair ‘properly,’ then assaults her with a poisonous comb” (Gilbert and Gubar 40). In Donoghue’s story, this scene is retold again through a deep association with lesbian desire. “This time, she knelt beside me, and there was nothing of the queen about her. I haven’t had a night’s sleep since you left, she said; it feels like dancing in shoes of red-hot iron. Will you come home now?” (56-7). In this scene, Donoghue refers to the end of the classical “Snow White” which punishes the wicked, vain and jealous queen by making her put on red-hot shoes and condemns her to dance in them until she dies. In Donoghue’s story the queen feels as if she were dancing in red shoes not because Snow White wins the Oedipal rivalry and declares that she is the fairest of all by marrying a handsome prince and regaining her claim to the throne. On the contrary, she feels this pain because she misses Snow White so much. In fact, at this point she is suffering from unrequited love. Snow White turns down the queen’s request. Then, the queen

took out her jeweled comb and began to draw it through my hair,
patient with all the burrs and knots my new life had put in it. I shut
my eyes and let the points of the comb dig into my scalp, scraping
down to the kernel of my memory. (56)

This scene, like the lacing scene, shows that the queen, liberated from patriarchal imprisonment, wants to save Snow White as well. By combing her hair, she tries to remind her of the maternal bond she once experienced with her stepmother in order to liberate her from the life she is leading with the woodsmen, representatives of patriarchy. In fact, Snow White is tempted by the queen’s gifts in the original version. In this version, she is tempted by the queen herself.

When they came home that night the men found me curled around the tree stump on the damp grass. They lifted me up and told me that my stepmother must be a witch to put such poison of idleness in my head. They warned me to stay inside and shut the door to all comers. (56)

The woodsmen are the voices of patriarchy which exclude sexually active women by defining her as a witch. Helen Haste, in her work *The Sexual Metaphor*, identifies four images of sexual woman in traditional literature: wife, whore, waif and witch “which express different mechanisms of coping with their sexual powers” (172). She announces that among these images “woman as witch” is the most threatening image because the witch is a powerful figure who cannot be dominated by men because she “has autonomous sexuality, and makes demands on men” (173). Her sexual appetite is perceived as never fully satisfied and uncontrollable and therefore the witch disrupts the patriarchally constructed woman image as sexually passive. As is also discussed above, the witch is an abject and transgressive figure who represents active lesbian desire. The woodsmen’s attempt to inform Snow White about her stepmother’s witchcraft and to warn her to stay inside shows the attempt to expel lesbian desire from their hetero-patriarchal order by abjecting it.

The third and the last attempt of the witch in the traditional “Snow White” is to offer a poisonous apple to Snow White. In Donoghue’s version, this scene is also subverted.

But one afternoon in early autumn I was troubled by a whiff of a scent of overpowering sharpness. I could not remember what it was; all I knew was that I could hardly stand it. I turned, and there at the half door my stepmother stood, an apple in her upturned hand.

Stepmother, yes, that was the word, but there was nothing of the mother about her. (56-7)

In the quotation above, by making her heroine use the word, stepmother, Donoghue once again implies the maternal bond that ties the queen and Snow White to one another. However, she also aims to show that although lesbian desire is perceived as a psychosis stemming from a strong attachment and desire for the mother, the queen is no mother to Snow White. That is, she is now a woman with whom Snow White can experience her same-

sex desire. The queen visits Snow White by bringing her an apple as a present, a fruit which has sexual connotations. In fact, the metaphor of apple has a long history. For instance, it is the apple which is thrown for the fairest by the Greek goddess of discord, Eris, at Peleus's and Thetis's wedding. Three goddesses, Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite, claim the apple, but Aphrodite grasps it because she promises to give the love of Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, to Paris. This patriarchal game of Eris which is played upon women's vanity resulted in the Trojan War. Donoghue also makes her queen offer an apple to Snow White which highlights the beauty of Snow White but in a woman's eyes. Besides, apple is the forbidden fruit of temptation in the myth of Adam and Eve which causes their fall. However, in Donoghue's story all these connotations are subverted and the metaphor of apple is employed in order to awaken Snow White into a discovery of her lesbian desire for the queen.

The apple was half ripe. One side was green the other red. She bit into the green side and swallowed and smiled. I took the apple from her without a word, bit into the red side, and began to choke. Fear and excitement locked in a struggle in my throat, and blackness seeped across my eyes. I fell to the ground.

It was all white, where I went; like warm snow, packed into the angles and crevices of my body. There was no light, or noise, or color. I thought I was treasure, stowed away for safekeeping. (57)

The apple they share represents the lesbian sexual activity experienced between Snow White and the queen. When Snow White discovers her desire for a woman, she feels fear and excitement and falls to the ground. Her desire for her (m)other is an abject one in a heterosexual culture. However, she does not fall into the abject realm which has negative connotations for the symbolic order. On the contrary, her abjectness is white and like warm snow it embraces her body.

When Snow White opens her eyes, she finds herself in an open coffin. The woodsmen advise her to lie down because she is poisoned and she should rest. They offer to take her "to another kingdom, where they'll know how to treat a princess" (58). In the traditional version of the tale, Snow White's lying passively in a glass coffin renders her an

object of desire for the Prince Charming. However, Snow White resists this fate and she does not obey the woodsmen's advice.

But my mouth was full of apple, slippery, still hard, vinegary at the edges. I could feel the marks of my own teeth on the skin. I bit down, and juice ran to the corners of my lips. It was not poisoned. It was the first apple of the year from my father's orchard. I chewed till it was eaten up and I knew what to do.

I made them set me down, and I got out of the box, deaf to their clamor. I stared around me till I could see the castle, tiny against the flame-colored forest, away up the hill. I turned my face toward it, and started walking. (58)

Snow White gets out of the patriarchal coffin which imprisons her by the male gaze and walks out of the symbolic order by heading toward the castle where the queen lives. She has chewed the apple and has come to terms with her desire for a woman. This indicates that she has embraced her (m)other and she has chosen to exist in the semiotic stage in which she can feel liberated from patriarchal norms.

In conclusion, by giving a lesbian twist to the Grimm Brothers' "Snow White", Donoghue reconstructs female desire associating it with the maternal bond and passion for another woman. She unites Snow White and the stepmother queen in the abject realm of the castle which symbolizes the mother's body. She not only reshapes the representation of the lesbian as a wicked witch in positive terms, but also liberates Snow White from her passive and domestic state into an active and self-assertive one. Thus, destroying the image of mirror as patriarchy's voice and associating it with the mirror stage where the child and the mother are one, Donoghue reminds her readers that maternal bond can never be broken. Although in traditional psychoanalytical theories the child's development of subjectivity is dependent on his or her necessary abjection of the (m)other's body, Donoghue once again celebrates the semiotic by providing her readers with a radical version of "Snow White" based on lesbian desire.

5.8 “A Woman Who Loves a Woman Is Forever Young”²¹ : Abject Representations of Lesbian Desire in Emma Donoghue’s “The Tale of the Hair”

“The Tale of the Hair” is a rewriting of the Grimm Brothers’ “Rapunzel”. The narrator-protagonist of the story reveals her past life before she transforms into the princess’ white horse in the previous story, “The Tale of the Handkerchief”. Donoghue re-visions the classical “Rapunzel” by utilizing the Gothic imagery and the motifs in the tale from a subversive point of view. She revisits the plot of “Rapunzel” by portraying a love affair between Rapunzel and the witch instead of Rapunzel and the prince as it is in the original version.

The story opens up with an abject representation. The horse, which is “now reduced to a skull” (82), is not only depicted as an animal with human attributes, but also as a dead carcass. The human-animal combinations which represent the Other with an emphasis on ambiguity and formlessness are abject. Such a representation is used by Donoghue at the very beginning of the story because she aims to present her heroine with abject characteristics in order to underline her heroine’s process of establishing her lesbian identity outside the symbolic realm. Before being transformed into an abject figure, an animal, the heroine reveals that she was a woman. In this sense, before the narrator-protagonist continues her narration with relating her experiences as a woman, Donoghue foreshadows that she will celebrate her abjection as a revolt against hetero-patriarchal paradigm at the end of the story.

The protagonist as a horse in “The Tale of the Handkerchief” is killed by an ambitious maid who replaces her princess’ royal identity in order to get married to a prince. “The Tale of the Handkerchief”, which is a revisited version of “The Goose Girl”, deals with this maid’s life story. The maid introduces the royal princess to the prince as her own maid and assigns her the duty of taking care of a flock of geese. However, she is continually haunted by the princess’ horse which becomes the voice of the maid’s conscience reminding her of the crime she has committed. At the end of the story, the maid repents what she has done and begs mercy from the royal princess. However, the royal princess admits that she has gained her freedom through becoming a goose girl in the open fields and the royal garden is quite imprisoning for her. As for the maid, she leaves the palace after her husband’s death

²¹ From “Rapunzel” in *The Complete Poems: Anne Sexton* by Anne Sexton. (pp. 244-5)

and starts to search for a crown that she can call her own. Thus, Donoghue finishes her story with a feminist revolution by celebrating the liberation of women from patriarchal values.

In “The Tale of the Handkerchief”, one day, when the maid is passing by the stableyard, she sees the dead horse’s head nailed to the arch and notices that the princess is talking to it. This is also a scene of abjection which evokes horror and loathing in the maid. A head of a dead horse, hanged on an arch, which is able to speak like a human-being indicates that the horse transgresses the limits of the conventional representations of both human and animal. Although such an in-between representation horrifies the maid, it also fascinates her. The horse represents her confrontation with the abject Other in herself. Thus, the maid asks the horse: “Who were you before a queen chose you as a horse?” (81). Then, starting to listen to the life story of the horse, the maid also develops the courage to cross the strict boundaries between the symbolic and the semiotic realms.

The horse reveals that in its past life it was Rapunzel who was living in a tower which had been built by a woman who was not her biological mother. In the Grimm Brothers’ version, Rapunzel is given to a witch by her parents because her father has made a pact with the witch. Stealing some rampion from the witch’s forbidden garden in order to satisfy his pregnant wife’s craving for this plant, Rapunzel’s father is allowed to take as much rampion as he wants if he agrees to give their child to her. Consequently, the father accepts the witch’s demand. The witch raises Rapunzel, but when she reaches puberty, she imprisons her in a chamber in the tower. In this respect, the witch in the original version of “Rapunzel” represents the phallic possessive mother who does not want to separate from her daughter, who cannot come to terms with her daughter’s sexual maturity, and who cannot give her daughter away to the Oedipal stage to make her attain her identity. In other words, the witch represents the all-encompassing and devouring maternal figure of the pre-Oedipal stage in traditional psychoanalytical theories who has the power to bury her child in her womb and to absorb his or her identity. In short, the witch in the classical version of “Rapunzel” represents the myth of castrating mother.

At best the maternal is protecting those aspects of life that appear as the negative to dominant discourses of Western society; the singular, the ethical, that which gives life, that which it is not possible to subsume under given, phallogocentric notions of universality ... At worst, however, maternity is mirrored as a

phallic and punishing instance of the subject, or as that body of denial through which abjection is produced ... In this sense, maternity comes to serve not as a model of empowerment but rather as a castrating object of identification for women, inhibiting their access to the symbolic rather than producing the challenges of negativity. (Sjöholm 50)

In this respect, when the child attempts to separate from the mother in order to become a subject, the mother is abjected. Therefore, in traditional narratives, the mother is portrayed with monstrous characteristics which emphasize her abjected position and which show how it is difficult for the child to break away from the symbiotic relationship with the mother. In order to highlight the necessary need of the child to break away from the mother then, the mother's abjection is represented in excessive forms mostly with monstrous characteristics. The witch is one of these popular monstrous representations of the devouring mother.

In the Grimm Brothers' "Rapunzel", Rapunzel's attempt to separate herself from the maternal figure represented by the witch is revealed when the prince starts to sneak in the tower by climbing up Rapunzel's tresses. According to Freud, "[s]teep inclines, ladders, stairs, and going up or down them, are symbolic representations of sexual act" (243). Thus, the prince's climbing up the tower to Rapunzel's room implies that they are engaged in sexual activity and Rapunzel gives herself away to the witch when she says her dress is tight around her belly. This implies that she is pregnant. As a result of Rapunzel's "wickedness", the witch banishes her into the desert and waits for the prince in Rapunzel's room to come. The witch uses Rapunzel's tresses, which she has cut, as a bait to catch the prince. The prince climbs up the tower thinking that he will find his lover, Rapunzel. However, horrified at the sight of the witch, he jumps out of the tower, falls into the thorn bushes and gets blinded. Since blindness symbolizes castration, once again the witch is constructed with negative terms as a castrating mother. As Creed maintains: "The myth about woman as castrator clearly points to male fears and phantasies about the female genitals as a trap, a black hole which threatens to swallow them up and cut them into pieces" (*Monstrous Feminine* 106). In this respect, the conventional image of the witch is imbued with negative characteristics revealed above and she symbolizes the abject Other in the identity-formation process.

However, Donoghue re-visions the traditional plot of “Rapunzel” presented above in a radical way. She adopts most of the motifs that can be found in the original version of the tale in order to subvert them. In Donoghue’s story, there is no prince and it is Rapunzel who is blind. By portraying her Rapunzel blind, Donoghue wants to indicate that she has not awakened to her lesbian identity yet. Donoghue’s heroine does not remember her childhood. The only thing she knows is that the woman she is living with in a stone hut in the woods is not her biological mother. The woman, who represents the witch in her story, acts as a devoted mother and does whatever Rapunzel wants and gives whatever she needs. She feeds her with a bowl of milk which signifies the most intimate relationship between a mother and a child. In this sense, the relationship between Rapunzel and the witch is like the symbiotic relationship between the mother and the child in the pre-Oedipal period. The witch satisfies Rapunzel’s primal needs and teaches her everything she knows. As Rapunzel admits:

The woman was my store of knowledge, my cache of wisdom. Which was odd, since she had so little to say, and what she spoke was never above a whisper, for fear of disturbing the birds and the beasts. She taught me you only have the right to kill a creature when you know its names and ways” (85).

The witch’s transference of her knowledge to Rapunzel without speaking much shows that they can communicate with one another by their senses and instincts which are associated with the female principle. In fact, “[t]he witch gathers information through her own senses and through her word-magic” (Waelti-Walters 81). This is the reason why the image of witch in the patriarchal culture has negative connotations. Since her power stems from remaining outside the patriarchal structure and since she is speaking a language the male cannot understand, the witch is condemned as the Other who poses a threat to the patriarchal hegemony. The language the witch speaks is the language of the semiotic. The witch’s definition of the symbolic language as a person’s right of killing a creature that he or she can name is a proof for this approach. In her opinion, the language of the father is violent and destructive. According to Lacan, a child completes his or her identity formation by moving from the pre-Oedipal stage to the symbolic stage through learning to speak the language which belongs to the symbolic order. The symbolic language functions through

differentiation, categorizations, and binary oppositions, in other words by “naming”. Daly claims that male-controlled language offers no authentic experience for women. She suggests:

Women struggling for words feel haunted by false feelings of personal inadequacy, by anger, frustration, and a kind of sadness/bereavement. For it is, after all, our ‘mother tongue’ that has been turned against us by the tongue-twisters. Learning to speak our Mothers’ Tongue *is* exorcising the male ‘mothers’. (330, original emphasis)

In this respect, by speaking so little the witch rejects the symbolic language of the Law and refuses to teach it to Rapunzel as well. This also emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between the mother-witch and Rapunzel and reveals that they are both residing in the semiotic realm. Thus, what the witch tries to do by not speaking much is to save Rapunzel from the tyranny of the patriarchal language. In this respect, Donoghue adopts the image of the witch as an “active affirmation of woman’s status of ‘other’” (Waelti-Walters 101) in her story.

However, one day Rapunzel reaches puberty and starts to notice the physical changes in her female body. Such an awareness of her body hints at Rapunzel’s becoming a grown-up woman now, and therefore this can generate the possibility of Rapunzel’s passage into the symbolic order by separating herself from the mother figure. Rapunzel describes her transition to womanhood as follows:

As the years pulled me toward womanhood my body swelled, my spirits whirled. My hair began to grow faster; one day I could sit on its sharp ends, and another day again, I could cover my knees with it. I felt its weight pulling at the back of my head; it lolled like curtains over my cheek. (86-87)

Rapunzel’s sexual development is signified by her body swelling and her fast growing hair. In fact, long hair is an erotic symbol that emphasizes Rapunzel’s growing up into a woman. Her sexual awareness is highlighted with her wish to live in a tower. In Freudian psychology, towers and tall buildings are associated with the phallus. When Rapunzel reveals her wish to the witch, the witch does not understand the reason why she is in such a need.

I said, I wish I could live up there in the light, in a high tower.

What do you want light for if not to see by? She asked.

All I could answer was: I like the feel of it on my face.

As ever, the woman did what I asked, without asking anything in return, but it was the first time she had not understood me. (86)

The mother-witch cannot understand Rapunzel because although blind, Rapunzel wants to feel the light that comes from the outside world which means that she is getting prepared to separate from the mother. Yet the mother-witch does what Rapunzel wants and she builds a tower for her and they go back to their old life. However, one day Rapunzel starts to have menstruation which is associated with female sexuality and this indicates that Rapunzel is attaining her abject position in the symbolic order as a woman. Janet Lee states that “[m]enarche represents the entrance into womanhood in a society that devalues women through cultural scripts associated with the body ... As a crucial signifier of reproductive potential and thus embodied womanhood, menarche becomes intertwined with sexuality” (83-4). Therefore, on the first day of her bleeding Rapunzel has a nightmare of a hunt which actually symbolizes the sexual appetite of the male that hunts female bodies in order to satisfy his hunger. Rapunzel relates her nightmare as follows:

The wood was full of men who were also stags and also the dogs that chased them. My hair was caught in a tangle of hedge, my clothes shredded by the thorns. There was no safety. There was no cover. There was no door to the tower, when in my dream I stumbled through the thornbushes and found it at last, clubbing my fists on the stone walls to be let in. I woke only when the woman came upstairs, pulled my hands from the stones, and took me in her arms as she had never done before. She held me till I slept, whispering in my ear all the names of the herbs. (88)

As is seen in the quotation above, Rapunzel pictures herself in the forest chased by men. Such a scene is one of the common patterns that can be found in the traditional Gothic works. In the traditional Gothic plot, a woman runs across a forest or through the dark corridors of a castle in order to escape from the debased villain who pursues her to devour her sexually. This chase sexually threatens the female body, renders it the object of aggressive

male desire, and victimizes it by entrapment. Thus, Rapunzel is frightened by the forest because she realizes that male sexuality is destructive. In Donoghue's story, the forest represents the outside world, that is, the symbolic order which perceives the female body as a prey. Therefore, Rapunzel feels that she is not safe outside the tower which represents the semiotic realm. In fact, the tower, which symbolizes the phallus in Freudian psychology, is a space associated with the symbolic order in traditional Gothic narratives. In the classical version of "Rapunzel", Rapunzel is also imprisoned in a tower by a representative of the phallic mother, the witch, who intends to prevent Rapunzel from attaining her sexual maturity. In this sense, the tower is associated with the phallic mother in the Grimm Brothers' version. Lindsay Wells describes the phallic mother as follows:

She is an experience of the child: a fearful, unconscious fantasy that someone as powerful as a mother will be able to penetrate her very being, get inside her psyche and even possess her (as evil spirits possess people). In the child's natural ambivalence, this is the negative and the opposite of the experience of 'mother-as loving', as someone who promotes growth. Both mothers live on in the unconscious. (83)

However, Donoghue not only rewrites the image of the tower, but also she reshapes it by depicting it as "askew" (87) and separates it from its patriarchal connotations by transforming it into a maternal space associated with the pre-Oedipal period. Rapunzel's primal needs such as food, protection, and compassion are satisfied by the mother-witch in this maternal tower. For instance, in order to soothe Rapunzel, the mother-witch embraces her as she has never done before and lets Rapunzel sleep in her arms by whispering all the names of the herbs as if she is singing a lullaby. The woman's listing the names of the herbs stresses her image as a witch.

The next day, Rapunzel, still under the influence of her dream, listens to the sounds the trees make and decides that they are not her friends anymore. She tells the witch that she is afraid of the forest. And the witch replies: "But the forest is what we eat ... What we wear. What we burn" (59). At this point, the witch's close connection with nature is emphasized once again in order to subvert the patriarchal image of the forest which hosts destructive male sexual appetite. In fact, like Carter, Donoghue also uses the forest as a metaphor for her

heroine's sexual awakening. By underlining the close bond between women and nature, drawing attention to the protective and nurturing aspects of the mother nature, and presenting the wilderness as a maternal space, the witch aims to reshape the image of the forest in Rapunzel's nightmare by reminding her of their dependence on the mother nature as female bodies. In fact, the witch does not want to repress Rapunzel's sexual desire as the witch in the Grimm Brothers' tale does. On the contrary, she tries to show Rapunzel that she does not need to be afraid of her sexuality because the witch aims to awaken Rapunzel to a liberating, positive, constructive, and protective female sexuality which can be experienced among women. The witch says to Rapunzel: "Do you think I'd let you be hurt? ... Trust my ears to hear the horn, and my fire to scare the wolves, and my arms to keep out the wind" (89). But Rapunzel chooses to trust the stone walls of the tower. "Block up the window below me, I begged her, and the window below that, and all the windows except this one" (89). Contrary to the Grimm Brothers' Rapunzel, Donoghue's is not entrapped by the witch out of her will. In fact, it is the heroine herself who demands to be imprisoned in the tower by the witch. Rapunzel's demand indicates that although she is aware of the fact that she has to separate from her mother-witch in order to become a separate subject in the symbolic realm, she instinctively denies this and wants to remain with the mother-witch in their maternal tower.

Thus, Rapunzel continues to live in this enclosed maternal space without any complaint. However, one day she starts to sing a song about "the moon and a prince and a ring" (90) to amuse herself. The mother-witch who is skinning a fox outside calls out to her:

Where did you hear of such things?
In the stories.
What stories? she said. I never told you such stories.
Who's been telling you stories?
I must have heard them in the time before.
She said, You have never even seen a man.
No, I answered, but I can imagine. (91)

Donoghue's Rapunzel has not grown up with the patriarchal values promoted by the traditional fairy tales which dwell on a love affair between a prince and a princess that ends in a happy marriage. The mother-witch has saved her from the fate male-dominated culture shapes for her by not telling her these fairy tales. However, the tradition of these fairy tales is so deeply rooted that although Rapunzel does not know such a kind of life, she is a member

of this collective unconscious. This scene shows how fairy tales function for children from their early years in order to maintain the cultural and social values of patriarchal ideology.

Then like an answer to her songs, the prince comes late
one night.

Will you come down to me? he asked.

I cannot. I'm afraid of waking the woman.

Is she your mother, that you fear to wake her?

No mother nor nothing to me, I said.

There was a long silence, so I thought he had gone. I was
about to call out after him when he asked, more hoarsely, May I
come up to you? (92-3)

Hearing this tempting request, Rapunzel lets down a rope for the man to climb up the tower. As is emphasized before, climbing up is associated with sexual activity. Wells argues:

Adolescence is a time of sexual awakening. Rapunzel is
locked in the tower when she is twelve years old – significantly,
the age of puberty. Sexuality: a force, that perhaps, like no other,
can give a young person a feeling that, 'This is me!' The corollary,
of course, is that a troubled, repressed sexuality might leave an
adolescent feeling, 'Who am I?' How can Rapunzel, locked up in
the tower, grow to know who she is? She will need the prince to
help her with that. (82)

However, Donoghue's heroine's prince is the witch who has cross-dressed in order to make Rapunzel confront her desire for a woman. When the witch in disguise of a man kisses her, Rapunzel, assuming that she is kissing a man, has found a way to let out her desire. Therefore, she decides to see the prince again. In order to meet secretly from the mother-witch, they develop a sign language. And Rapunzel immediately decides to marry him if he brings her a golden ring. The next day seeing the smile on Rapunzel's face, the mother-witch asks: "What ails you today?...Nothing, I sang out. Nothing you need to know, or maybe something you never will" (94), answers Rapunzel. And the witch in a rage crashes the bowl she holds against the wall. She shouts: "There is nothing I do not know...Everything you think you know you have learned from me" (94). The mother-witch, like the witch in the original tale, accuses Rapunzel of deceiving her. Like a typical demanding mother, she starts to list the things she has done for Rapunzel. The mother-witch reminds her of how she has

been self-sacrificial when she was feeding her and protecting her from the dangers outside. Rapunzel answers back by saying that she has accompanied the witch for years and kept her from loneliness. And then like a spoilt child, she blames the witch for what has happened: “You should have known better than to give me what I asked for” (95). In fact, the witch knows better than Rapunzel what she needs. This is the reason why she makes love to her in disguise of a man.

However, Rapunzel declares that she will leave the witch for the prince when she hears the horn of him and the witch confesses that the horn is hers. She says: “I knew I would have no peace till I found you a prince” (96). The witch is disappointed with Rapunzel because she thinks that she has saved her from being victimized from an oppressive heterosexual relationship. However, Rapunzel gets so angry that she starts to utter every abject definition of the witch constructed by the symbolic language. “I pulled back and threw the sharp fragments in her face, calling her witch, monster, carrion, all the words she ever taught me” (96). Rapunzel uses these words to imply the negative characteristics assigned to these images by the patriarchal ideology. However, in fact, the witch has taught her these words in order to celebrate these images with their independent, autonomous, and wild characteristics. In this sense, not having understood what the witch tries to teach her, she uses these words as an insult. “Witch, monster, carrion” are the words which are patriarchally used to signify abjection. In order to exclude the Other and define the boundaries between the self and the Other, the subject needs such a naming process. At this point, Rapunzel abjects the mother-witch because she is threatened by the loss of identity in the (m)other. The abject reflects the horror of the body without any borders. In this respect, by her lesbian body the witch symbolizes the body without any borders.

The representation of the lesbian as a witch is one of the common motifs that can be found in fantastic writings as is discussed before. Palmer states that “the lesbian resembles the witch in both her exclusion from mainstream society and the threat she poses to –hetero-patriarchal values and conventional models of femininity” (*Lesbian Gothic* 29). In this respect, the metaphor of the witch can be adopted in “a political sense as a synonym for ‘lesbian feminist’ and in a psychological one as a metaphor for the attributes of strength and rebelliousness which they believe women who identify as lesbian display” (31). The witch symbolizes a separate female sphere where women can express themselves, liberate

themselves from male control, create a matriarchal culture and revolt against the symbolic order. In this respect, the lesbian resembles the witch who threatens the hetero-patriarchal values and conventional roles of femininity. Besides, through her supernatural powers, the witch is a transgressive figure and also in this sense she can easily be associated with the lesbian who has the potential to transgress the hetero-patriarchal boundaries. Threatened with all these characteristic of the witch and realizing that her repressed desire also comes out to be a desire for woman, Rapunzel perceives the witch from a patriarchal point of view. And upon seeing Rapunzel's attempt to expel her, the witch leaves the tower taking the rope with her.

At this point, Rapunzel decides to leave the maternal tower which is an act of separation from the mother. She gains her courage to face the dangers of the forest which reflects her need to confront her repressed desire. In the original version of the tale, in fact, it is the witch who cuts Rapunzel's hair in order to prevent her from seeing the prince. The hair representing Rapunzel's connection with the outside world and in Donoghue's context symbolizing the erotic object that attracts men's attention, Rapunzel decides to get rid of it. Thus, she herself cuts her own hair.

Weighing them between my hands, I realized that my hair was my own to do what I would with. The small paring knife was slow in my hand, but it sawed through the plaits one by one. I had never cut my hair before; I expected something like pain or blood, but all I felt was lightness, like a deer must feel at the shedding of antlers. (97)

Birkhauser- Oeri notes that "[h]air contains no nerves and so can be cut without hurting us; it is thus a particularly good image for autonomous parts of the psyche we are unaware of" (88). Therefore, when Rapunzel cuts her hair, she also gets rid of the compulsory heterosexuality. Since traditional psychoanalytical theories define her desire as a repressed desire for the father residing in the unconscious, the associations of her hair with heterosexual desire, with being an object of desire in patriarchal sexual order, and with sexual act with a prince are destroyed when she herself decides to cut it. In the traditional version, the witch cuts Rapunzel's hair in order to punish her.

Her gesture may represent, on the one hand, a type of self-mutilation, a castration, insofar as a woman's power and beauty are still attributed to her hair. It also implies, on the other, a repudiation of the traditional burden of femininity, a liberation from the actual and symbolic impediment of her heavy hair. By contrast, when the witch in "Rapunzel" cuts off the heroine's golden braids and thrusts her into the desert wilderness the divestiture of hair and banishment are presented as commensurate afflictions ... She has stripped Rapunzel of the unique marker of her fairy-tale identity and femininity. (Shuli Barzilai 246)

However, Rapunzel decides to get rid of her femininity defined by patriarchy by her own will. Then, she makes a rope from her hair in order to get outside of the maternal tower. She spends a night in the forest. When she comes back, she watches the witch desperately climbing up the tower calling for her. And when the witch reaches Rapunzel's room and she sees that Rapunzel is gone, she jumps out of the tower, falls onto the thorn bushes and gets blind. In the Grimm Brothers' version, it is the prince who climbs up the tower and seeing that the witch is waiting for him instead of Rapunzel throws himself out of the tower and gets blinded by falling on the thorn bushes. Donoghue combines these two characters presented in the classical "Rapunzel", the witch and the prince, in representation of the mother-witch she portrays. Thus, she implies that her initial desire for the mother and her desire after the separation from the mother are the same. In this respect, Donoghue once again underlines same-sex desire as the only way to liberate oneself from the symbolic order. As Martin suggests:

Though the Rapunzel figure has decided to let herself be blinded by the narrative of true patriarchal love, she is eventually able to critique that tale and her own desires. This leads neither to a tragic rejection of the Mother Gothel figure, nor to a defiant embrace of an alternative to men, but rather to a more complicated position that again returns to the private sphere and to the relationship between two individuals who must identify and negotiate their desires. (18)

When Rapunzel comes back, she finds the witch lying on the ground. She picks the thorns from her lids and asks: "Can you see?" (98). And the witch answers: "What does it matter. The hedges may swell, the lavender may bloom, but it will all be wasteland when

you're gone" (99). In the Grimm Brothers' "Rapunzel", Rapunzel finds the prince after her turmoil in the desert, and when she sees that he is blind, she cries. The prince regains his sight when Rapunzel's tears fall on his face. This indicates that the castrated prince regains his male sexuality when he replaces his desire for the mother with a desire for another woman he can love. Donoghue's story also ends in the same way. Realizing that the witch is blind, Rapunzel starts to cry.

I took her head on my chest and wept over her, salt in her wounded eyes. It was the only way I knew to clean them. I didn't know whether they would heal, or whether she would have to learn the world from me now. We lay there, waiting to see what we would see. (99)

Donoghue finishes her story with an open-ending. Rapunzel's tears fall on the witch's face, but she does not know whether they would heal or not. However, as the witch reveals before it does not matter whether she can see again or not if she does not have Rapunzel with her. What matters is that they get united in the end and they can express their desire for one another from now on.

Thus, by subverting the Grimm Brothers' plot and the motifs of the traditional Gothic, refusing to employ the prince as a character who provides Rapunzel with sexual maturity, and by establishing the female principle once again through a lesbian relationship, Donoghue celebrates the power of the abject which enables her heroine to revolt against the symbolic order. Donoghue reverses the identity process the traditional psychoanalytical theory provides for the female and she manages to transgress the boundaries of symbolic order by offering a female space characterized by lesbianism.

In conclusion, Donoghue, very much like Carter, frees the traditional fairy tales from their patriarchal imprisonment and rewrites these tales with contemporary ideas of female identity and female sexuality. Like Carter, she is concerned with her female characters' attainment of agency which is denied to them in the patriarchal fairy tales. Donoghue's heroines are raised by such social and cultural codes which teach them to be passive, unassertive and selfless. However, through their relationships with women, these heroines attain self-reliance and their own will to shape their own destiny rather than letting patriarchal norms do it. Thus, Donoghue also rejects the patriarchal representation of women

in the fairy tale tradition as passive, weak, submissive, dependent, and self-sacrificing. Instead, she provides strong and powerful female figures who refuse to wait for their princes to rescue them and who manage to run away from the prison of a preordained fate on their own. Donoghue's heroines, also like Carter's heroines, rebel against the fairy tale "happily-ever-after" formula by their rejection of getting married and becoming a member of the symbolic order in the end.

Moreover, Donoghue's heroines move one step forward from Carter's heroines and they refuse to get involved in a heterosexual relationship no matter if it promises equality or not. She erases the male term in her stories and if she employs male characters, they are minor characters, passive figures and they lack agency. Donoghue also makes her heroines resist the patriarchal economy which makes women an exchange object between the father and the husband, but with a different strategy. By embracing their lesbian identities, these heroines destroy the system of bearing children and this indicates that they do not have any aim of owning heirs in order to keep their property in the family. Such a perspective also shows their rebellion against the patriarchal and the capitalist system which perceives marriage and having children as a materialistic exchange of property.

If the female body in narrative is threatening, the lesbian body is doubly so. The female transgresses its own limits because part of its defined nature is to throw off things, to push things outside itself: to menstruate, to give birth, to lactate. The lesbian body, not identified with birthing despite the exploding contemporary phenomenon of lesbian motherhood, seems to be a body not coded female because of its discursive refusal to enter into reproduction. But the sexually independent lesbian body, even when absent, becomes an archetype of the impure female body, and the narrative also violently attempts to contain the lesbian body. (Farwell 162)

In this respect, Donoghue embraces the abject as a subversive power to overthrow patriarchy and to annihilate the symbolic order, while Carter employs the abject in order to propose subjects-in-process who carry the other within themselves. Therefore, Donoghue's attempt at re-visioning the classical fairy tales is a more radical one. However, the treatment of female sexuality is more covert and subtle in Donoghue's stories when they are compared with Carter's. While Carter adopts pornographic images in order to provide her heroines with

an autonomous and active female desire, Donoghue hints at the sexual activity between her lesbian characters, but never describes them in detail. In this sense, Donoghue is successful at her attempt to destroy the cultural association of lesbianism solely with the representation of sexual practice. Instead, she highlights the emotional attachment among women. Lillian B. Rubin maintains that what is important in a lesbian relationship is the emotional bond rather than the sexual activity.

Like their straight sisters, lesbians can have intensely intimate and satisfying relationships with each other without any sexual involvement. Certainly a nonsexual friendship will sometimes slide over into a sexual relationship. But, when it does, it's the emotional aspect of the entire relationship, not just the sexual, that's at center stage for the women. (465)

In relation to the quotation above, Donoghue also tries to draw attention to this aspect of lesbian relationships. Donoghue's heroines are not objects of desire. They experience woman-identified relationships in which the subject and the object positions do not exist. Donoghue is aware of the fact that "[t]he lesbian body and lesbian sexuality, however, are the female body and female sexuality attempting with a vengeance to grasp agency and subjectivity in a linguistic and narrative system that has no place for female subjectivity" (Farwell 161). Thus, in order to provide her heroines with a female subjectivity outside patriarchal norms, she relies on lesbian relationships which grant her heroines female independence and save them from being imprisoned in Gothic structures.

As is observed above in the critical analyses of Donoghue's stories, these lesbian relationships are always constructed upon the need for embracing the (m)other from whom the heroines should separate in order to achieve their identities in the symbolic order. Donoghue destroys the conventional image of the phallic mother in the traditional psychoanalytical theories who represents the engulfing womb ready to absorb her children's identities. Instead, she proposes a positively constructed mother image with which her heroines can identify and reconnect themselves to their mothers' bodies in order to form their subjectivities outside the symbolic order.

The heroines are portrayed as separated from their biological mothers at the very beginning of these stories. However, they soon find a mother figure through whom they can

remember the nurturing and all-embracing characteristics of their mothers. They get separated from these mother figures as well when they temporarily attain their subjecthood in the symbolic order. By making her heroines experience their subjectivities in the symbolic order, Donoghue shows how imprisoning the patriarchal structure is for the female subjects. Thus, in order to liberate themselves from patriarchal oppression, Donoghue's heroines change the direction of their sexual orientation toward women with whom they can construct a more positive emotional bond. In this respect, although Donoghue adopts mother figures to provide her heroines with an awareness of same-sex desire, after her heroines' experiences in the symbolic order, she does not portray them as mother figures any longer. That is, these women are stripped off their motherly roles and become the individuals with whom the heroines can experience their same-sex desire. Donoghue's

older female characters are shown to possess an understanding of themselves and the world that the younger characters lack and often reject, and the conflicts of the stories often revolve around the gaps between these perspectives, particularly in tales where the protagonist cannot acknowledge the wisdom of the older woman. However, the potential mentor figures are less invested in teaching specific lessons and more interested in prompting the younger characters to experience difficulties and hardships for themselves, especially when it comes to finding love. As a consequence, the relationships that form among older and younger women in Donoghue's tales are ... less stable and hierarchical. ... Rather than an Oedipal-like struggle that results in either triumph or capitulation – and thus a single and authoritative vision of correct behavior – what Donoghue depicts repeatedly is the discovery of new perspectives through a process of exchange and exploration between generations. The older women may act as catalysts enabling the younger women to find their own desires, or as antagonists challenging the protagonists to find their own paths, but such interactions become forms of collaboration, in which women learn and grow through their experiences with other women. (Martin 7-8)

In this respect, returning to the mother's womb does not mean that these female identities are facing the danger of getting buried in the maternal womb. On the contrary, the mother's womb is a utopian space in which the heroines can unite with their mothers and discover their lesbian desires. Moreover, lesbian bodies disrupt the hetero-patriarchal

hegemony and they transgress the boundaries of patriarchal definitions of female bodies which are perceived as lack.

Although Donoghue adopts the abject representations of lesbian, she, “far from endorsing the concept of the lesbian as monstrous, seek[s], on the contrary, to challenge it by deconstructing the binary opposition normal/abnormal.” (Palmer, “Lesbian Transformations” 150). In addition, Palmer claims that Donoghue “renegotiate[s] and resignif[ies] the boundaries of the abject, thus helping to redeem the lesbian from the image of ‘the monstrous feminine’ which homophobic culture projects upon her” (“Lesbian Transformations” 143). In this respect, Donoghue’s use of the abject calls for an encounter between the symbolic order and the semiotic in order to threaten the stability of the symbolic order. Farwell explains the threat that the lesbian body creates as follows:

[T]he lesbian body represents the threatening, unknown part of female sexuality. One can even argue that the lesbian body is the ultimate transgressor of narrative limits because even when absent it is the silent threat behind the excess attributed to the female body not under male control. The lesbian body, then, transgresses carefully defined sexual boundaries by being ‘too’ female; and at the same time, by refusing to remain the passive, though monstrous, object that the system requires, it also becomes ambiguously gendered. The lesbian body terrifyingly ruptures the distinction on which male, heterosexual power depends. (163)

By inserting the lesbian body in classical fairy tales then, Donoghue struggles with the traditional and patriarchal narrative structure. She utilizes the abject images of the lesbian in order to create a woman-identified space where women can create their own community free from male control. Donoghue does not disturb the conventional notions in her stories in order to restore the order at the end. On the contrary, she disturbs them, subverts them, and transgresses them by proposing an alternative and utopian social space for women outside the hierarchical binary structure of heterosexuality which signifies sisterhood and community of women. Thus, Donoghue’s stories present a battle with the patriarchal system and lesbianism is the most revolutionary, radical and effectual weapon which can be used against patriarchal definitions of women.

Donoghue ends her collection of rewritten classical fairy tales by addressing her readers saying that “This is the story you asked for. I leave it in your mouth” (228). Thus, by

not leaving these stories in her readers' ears but in their mouth, Donoghue urges her readers to spread her stories by word of mouth. In fact, Donoghue is aware of the fact that the traditional fairy tales have survived through centuries and they still have the power to shape societal and cultural structures as well as gender roles. Therefore, by rewriting these fairy tales from a lesbian point of view and wishing her stories to be spread around by word of mouth as the traditional fairy tales have been, Donoghue aims to transform the oppressive patriarchal structures and gender roles, and define the female desire anew liberated from hierarchically constructed binary oppositions and heterosexual values.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study has emerged from an awareness that one of the most significant contributions of postmodernism to philosophical thinking is that language is a social, cultural, and an ideological construct. In the light of such an approach all the “universal” values have been questioned and undermined because postmodernism has laid bare the hidden ideologies behind the linguistic constructs which shape our lives. In fact, all kinds of ideologies have an oppressive attitude whether they are radical or not because they are constructed upon exclusion. That is, when an ideology emerges, it tends to define the world from its point of view and this point of view is always formed as a reaction against the previously formed ideologies. In this respect, dominant ideologies exert their power on societies which are composed of individuals by excluding the values promoted by the Other ones. The patriarchal ideology has a long history of domination over societies because it is constructed upon the hierarchical relations between the basic representatives of societies: men and women. The biological difference between men and women has been identified and then defined by language and this linguistic difference between men and women has created a power struggle between these two opposite sexes through cultural definitions of the strong and the weak. In other words, it is the language in the hands of the patriarchal ideology which defines who is the oppressor and who is the oppressed. And since language is considered to be based on differentiability principle which has formed binary oppositions that privilege either of its constitutive elements over the other, men and women are also positioned hierarchically in societal structures by assuming the roles of the oppressor and the oppressed.

In this respect, since postmodernism has challenged oppressive ideologies and prepared a ground for marginalized discourses to emerge, feminism has also reacted against the oppressive patriarchal ideology with a political aim to liberate women from this oppression. Therefore, literature, which is built upon linguistic representations, has been one of the means that feminism employs in order to achieve its cause.

This study has chosen the Gothic tradition in literature as a literary material to analyze firstly because its traditional versions have promoted the most imprisoning structures in which women can be oppressed. Secondly, and more importantly, the reason why this study has focused on the Gothic tradition in literature rather than the other traditions is that the Gothic has an ambivalent nature. It seems to comply with the dominant values because in order to subvert and transgress conventional representations of these values, it should first portray them. Such a characteristic of the Gothic genre is helpful to understand women's position in the patriarchal society. It firstly depicts the patriarchal ideology in which women are oppressed, entrapped, victimized and silenced, and then it offers subversive and transgressive methods by which women can liberate themselves from these confinements. In the hands of the male writers, the Gothic has become a means of rebelling against the societal structures that oppress men and it has promoted a masculine transgression of social taboos. However, when male writers of the Gothic dealt with these issues, they rather ignored or oppressed the female element for the sake of achieving their goals which are regarded to be more "universal" when women's problematic existence in society is concerned. Since the "universal" is defined by what is male, then women are considered to be secondary beings whose concerns cannot be regarded as "universal". On the other hand, if the male writers of the Gothic prefer to focus on the relationships between men and women, their main purpose is to show that they can exert their power on women. Thus, by imprisoning women in domestic structures, by chasing them to destroy their virginities, by threatening them with their violence, and by victimizing them through patriarchal structures, the male writers of the Gothic have declared that they have the control over the female body.

The writers of the traditional Female Gothic have also dealt with the same issues. However, their aim was different. They have also portrayed their heroines as silent, submissive and ready to be victimized. Besides, they have drawn a circular plot for their heroines in which the heroine is separated from her patriarchal home only to get married and entrapped again in another patriarchal home. Thus, the Gothic heroine is reconciled with the established norms of the social order through the "and-they-lived-happily-ever-after" formula. However, although the heroine is presented as a prisoner within patriarchal structures, these writers of the Female Gothic manage to react against the gender politics of their time at least by exposing the very oppressive nature of the patriarchal politics.

But, this study has neither concerned itself with the traditional Male Gothic nor with the traditional Female Gothic apart from displaying their limits that prevent their heroines from getting liberated. This study has claimed that the subversive nature of the Gothic has found its overt expression in the postmodern Female Gothic which is characterized by rewriting. By employing rewriting as a literary device, postmodern Female Gothic writers have managed to present a feminist approach to the conventional Gothic works, which promises liberation for women. By rewriting traditional Gothic plots, these writers have aimed to destroy the patriarchal sexual politics which is deeply embedded in culture. Thus, they not only expose how women are socially, culturally, and sexually oppressed by the patriarchal ideology, but also the ways which can lead women to liberation. Therefore, feminist Gothic writers' works, which are characterized by rewriting strategy, explicitly declare a rebellion against oppressive power structures.

The Gothic tradition is also characterized by rewriting. The Ur-plot, themes, settings, characters, and supernatural elements of the Gothic have been written over and over again since its emergence in the eighteenth century. The Gothic tradition has undergone many changes as historical, social, cultural, economical, and political concerns have changed through the centuries. However, the main elements it employs to represent these changes have remained the same. It still deals with oppressive societal systems, familial structures, gender relations, and the Oedipal drama of identity construction through the excessive representations of characters, settings with transgressive functions, fantastic elements with subversive nature, and the plots that are based on the process of identity formation. Thus, the Gothic still holds onto its fundamental principles: ambivalence, excess and transgression. The target of its critical approach may change through the historical, cultural and social developments, but its repetitive and transgressive nature never changes.

The Gothic tradition is based on gender politics. Since the Gothic itself is interested in marginalized discourses, gender politics that lies at the root of all kinds of oppressive politics has been one of its main concerns. The writers of the Gothic are aware of the fact that sexuality can be utilized as a means to transgress social norms: for instance, sexuality in its excessive forms such as incest, same sex desire, sadistic and masochistic practices, and rape disturb cultural and social norms. In addition, excessive sexual representations have the potential to transgress dominant moral codes promoted by mainstream society. Then since

sexuality is defined by the dominant ideology, its transgressive representations challenge the dominant authority. Besides, sexuality in its heterosexual form reveals the hierarchically constructed relationships between men and women and reinforces the binary opposition of male/female. In this respect, it is the cultural and social construction of sexuality that also defines the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. While sexuality displays the patriarchal ideology lying at the core of mainstream society through the relationships between men and women, it also constructs class, race, religious, and ethnic relations on the basis of definitions of men and women. The oppressor, represented by the male, womanizes its Other through oppression.

Many feminist writers, who aim to destroy the patriarchal oppression which imprisons them in domestic values, in psychoanalytical paradigms and in their bodies, have adopted the Gothic genre then because they observe that the Gothic is interested in the “unspeakable”. Since the Gothic gives voice to various marginalized discourses, feminist writers have employed this genre in order to give voice to women’s problematic existence in the patriarchal society. However, these feminist writers have also noticed that the traditional Male Gothic plot only focuses on masculine transgression of social taboos and it still continues to entrap women within patriarchal structures and imprisons the female identity and body within binary oppositions. Therefore, disturbed by these representations of women, postmodern feminist writers of the Gothic have aimed to destroy patriarchal definitions of women.

Then, this study has also emerged with the need to reveal the patriarchal definitions of female identity and female sexuality in the traditional psychoanalytical theories which have long provided the main critical reading of the Gothic genre. Even the critical approaches to the Gothic from a psychoanalytical stance have reinforced the patriarchal definitions of women. As Massé argues:

In traditional psychological readings, we nonetheless focus on the repressed desire of the heroine as the key that opens the text and reconstructs her character. Culturally prohibited from speaking of passion, unable to move toward the object of desire, the heroine remains the passive center of the novel and of the female adolescent’s erotic dream. The phantasmagoric horrors that bombard her are the natural companions of repression, the price

she must pay for her transgression – desire – even when it is only obliquely acknowledged and represented. By being a perennially passive victim, she remains a “good girl,” never entirely aware of her own sexual longings. We then understand her repeated ordeals as peculiarly female pleasures, testament to the masochism Freud calls “an expression of the feminine nature” (“Economic Problem of Masochism” 161). These painful pleasures thus become foreplay to the fulfillment that marriage promises at the novel’s end, when pleasure principle gives way gracefully to reality principle. (10-1)

Thus, not only the traditional Gothic pattern, but also the traditional psychoanalytical theories focus on the repressed desire of women as the key that opens the Gothic text as well as the key that opens the patriarchal psychoanalytical paradigm. In this respect, this study has attempted to analyze representations of female desire in the postmodern rewritings of the Female Gothic writers with the belief that conventional representations of the female desire can be challenged by a feminist approach. Hence, this study has found out that the postmodern Female Gothic writers not only do subvert the traditional Gothic plot that represses female desire but also the traditional psychoanalytical perspectives which argue that they provide “valid” explanations for female identity and female desire, in fact, with a hidden purpose behind. This hidden purpose behind the scientific mask of traditional psychoanalytical theorists is imposing patriarchal gender roles upon women.

In the light of these approaches provided above, this study has also selected a subversive rewriting of the traditional psychoanalytical theories to apply to the postmodern Female Gothic works. In this respect, Julia Kristeva’s psychoanalytical theories have laid bare the subversive nature of these works because her theories reframe the male-dominated analyses of female sexual identity. She revises Freud’s and Lacan’s psychoanalytical framings of male and female subjectivities and offers a new and revolutionary understanding of female desire.

Since female desire is Otherized and repressed by the definitions of the female body as passive, receptive, lack, and invisible in Freud’s and Lacan’s theories, Kristeva comes up with a celebration of the Other which emphasizes the fact that the subject is dependent and constructed upon what it defines as the Other to itself. Therefore, the female Other plays an important role in the construction of male identity. However, traditional psychoanalytical

theories privilege the male subjectivity and use the female represented as the (m)other as a starting point but not as a definitive figure of the male identity. These patriarchal theories claim that in order to become a subject in the symbolic order, an individual should firstly separate himself and herself from the (m)other. And then he or she should subject himself or herself to the paternal Law which defines the attachment to the mother's body as incestuous and therefore desire for the mother should be repressed in order to achieve a healthy psychological state. Kristeva draws attention to the difficulty of separating from the mother for both male and female identities. Since both the male and the female child experience a symbiotic relationship with the mother in which the child and the mother become one, it is difficult for him or her to break away from the body which he or she once embraced. Therefore, Kristeva develops a theory of subjectivity which puts forward a new definition of the subject. She mentions that neither the male child nor the female child has to separate himself or herself from the (m)other in order to attain their positions as subjects in the symbolic order, but they can become "subjects-in-process" which deny socially and culturally constructed boundaries between self and Other, and which combine the semiotic and the symbolic within itself by carrying the (m)other within himself or herself. "Subject-in-process", then, lives by the rules of the symbolic order as well as by the rhythms of the semiotic which privilege the maternal principle.

Thus, this concept of the "subject-in-process" is the reason why this study has adopted the Kristevan approach to analyze Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, and Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*. Since the "subject-in-process" is a concept which is constructed upon an egalitarian basis in which the symbolic and the semiotic, self and Other, subject and object, and men and women can unite with one another, its representations in these literary works calls for a new world order which is characterized by equality. The "subject-in-process" destroys the hierarchically constructed binary oppositions and it has the potential to embrace all kinds of differences. The analyses of these works in the light of the Kristevan approach have revealed that although these writers' aim is politically ideological, it is not ideological in the sense that it provides another utopian binary structure which reverses the hierarchy between men and women. In other words, these writers do not aim to portray the superiority of the female principle over the male principle. On the contrary, they want to achieve

reconciliation between male and female principles. In other words, they do not attempt to assert the domination of feminist ideals over the patriarchal ones.

In this respect, this study has not mainly adopted the radical feminist approaches of Luce Irigaray or Judith Butler although it has made certain references to their theoretical works in order to appreciate their contribution to women's liberation. Since Kristeva's approach has proved to be demanding equality rather than a dominance of radical feminist values, it perfectly fits this study whose aim is to reveal the egalitarian approach embraced by Rhys, Carter and Donoghue because such an approach has the potential to change the world. This is where the power of literature lies; literature works for the betterment of humanity.

Thus, while these three postmodern Female Gothic writers utilize the subversive potential of the Gothic narrative, they have also redefined female desire by adopting abject representations of female sexuality and female body in order to destroy the oppressive power structures which imprison women within conventional gender roles. They have attempted to dwell on female sexuality in their narratives because they know that female sexuality has been silenced, repressed and excluded throughout the centuries by the patriarchal ideology in order to sustain its hegemony over society. As Wolff also maintains: "The Gothic tale thus reinforces a woman's sense of herself as an essentially sexual creature, something that society has often been at pains to deny" (209). In this sense, when Female Gothic writers have attempted to rewrite traditional Gothic plots, they have simultaneously started to rewrite the history of sexuality and through this rewriting practice they subvert the history of "repressed" sexuality. In other words, by making the unspeakable speak through a matriarchal mouth, they assert their sexuality which is denied by patriarchal society because of its potential to upset the established norms and structures.

When this study has applied Kristeva's theories, particularly her theory of abjection, to Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, and Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*, it has found out that the utilization of the abject in these feminist works reveals a radical approach to female desire. They liberate female desire by destroying the representation of it as passive and they reshape female desire by defining it as active by privileging the abject Other's experiences in the patriarchal symbolic order. This study has shown that a celebration of the abject in the literary works mentioned above is a celebration of the "powers of horror" which terrify the

symbolic order with a threat to dissolve its rigid boundaries. This study has also argued that embracing what is abject is the fundamental need to transform societies into an egalitarian one. Therefore, it has attempted to reveal that a new world order should be based on not excluding, jettisoning, ejecting and expelling the Other, but on acknowledging, understanding, sympathizing, welcoming, and uniting with the Other. Besides, this study has demonstrated that if the relationships between men and women are built on an equal basis, the hierarchical distinctions between all binary oppositions will be destroyed. Therefore, it has attempted to offer a utopian but not an impossible ideal which promotes equality.

In addition, built on these arguments, this study has shown that when female desire is given a voice which does not echo but challenges the patriarchal constructions of female sexuality, it gains the power to unsettle the cultural and social definitions of the female body as well as the male body. Although active female desire is represented by abject entities that are excluded and expelled from proper representations that the symbolic order promotes, these abject entities create a new kind of language, which is the language of the semiotic, that has the power to undermine the language of the paternal Law. This is the reason why active female desire finds its expressions in the abject because the abject questions and disrupts the hegemony of dominating values.

This study has selected these three Female Gothic works to manifest how these theoretical assumptions can be turned into practice. And through their theoretical analyses it has found out that one can follow a chronological development of the subversive power of abject female desire and offer a history of abject female desire which rewrites the history of repressed sexuality promoted by the patriarchal ideology. These works have overtly showed that chronological transformations of abject representations promote social and cultural transformations in society as well. These three postmodern Female Gothic works have a common approach to female sexuality in their representations of female desire. They all present active female desire in abject forms. However, the most important aspect of Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* and Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* that this study has pointed out is the endorsement of the abject with positive characteristics. That is, since what is relegated to the abject is excluded, banished, and Otherized in negative terms, these writers of the postmodern Female Gothic aim to transform the negative characteristics of the abject and create from the threat

that the abject poses to the patriarchal symbolic order a subversive power to destroy the strictly constructed boundaries of identity and to transgress the patriarchal boundaries of sexual paradigm. Until the emergence of the postmodern aesthetics, female desire had been abjected through negative images such as the evil, the mad, the monstrous, the witch, the animal, and so on. In these three works, the writers still adopt the same images, but they are successful in destroying the negative connotations of these images by shaping them with positive characteristics. In this respect, one can chronologically trace the development of abject representations of female desire which gradually attain a more positive and a more revolutionary potential from *Wide Sargasso Sea* through *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* to *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*.

When Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* is taken into consideration this study has argued that Rhys transformed the terrifying, monstrous, animalistic, ghostly, mute image of Bertha in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, shaped by the conventional definitions of women, into a female figure who can speak on behalf of herself, claim her right to express her sexuality, and destroy the patriarchal order by deciding to burn Thornfield down in order to construct a new world order. Bertha is victimized by the patriarchal construction of women in *Jane Eyre*. However, Antoinette is liberated in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by her decision to destroy the patriarchal symbolic order by fire which celebrates the liberation and victory of active female desire over the oppressive and imprisoning structures of patriarchal sexual politics. Antoinette's fire simultaneously destroys and renews the world. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Rhys tells the story of a woman who is abjected in every respect. Antoinette is Otherized and abjected in racial, social, cultural, familial, and sexual terms. However, this study has found out that through her ordeals in the novel, Antoinette has learned to internalize her Others and developed an egalitarian worldview. The end of the novel also shows that Antoinette is on the verge of becoming a subject-in-process on whom an egalitarian society will be based. Thus, by destroying the hierarchically constructed heterosexual relationship between Antoinette and Rochester in the novel, Rhys also destroys all kinds of binary oppositions that are hierarchically constructed. Thus, by ending her novel with a promise to unite the male and the female principles, the symbolic and the semiotic spheres in the embodiment of Antoinette, Rhys offers a utopian concept of heterosexuality which is based on equal terms, but not impossible to be realized. As a result of these arguments, this study has proved to be a

counter-analysis of the conventional readings of *Wide Sargasso Sea* which connects the end of the novel to Bertha's destruction in her own fire in *Jane Eyre* which showed that women are victimized not only in the patriarchal society, but also in the Gothic plots. However, this study has proved that Antoinette is not a victim, but a courageous and strong woman who is liberated from the confinements of the traditional Gothic plot by becoming a subject-in-process. Rhys's Antoinette is not silenced and muted by the oppressive patriarchal sexual politics. She becomes the voice of the collective female body that speaks louder and louder through her representatives who follow her steps in the following Female Gothic novels.

This study has demonstrated that Carter moves one step beyond Rhys by overtly uniting the abject and the subject in her representations in the Gothic plots of *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. She adopts abject images in the portrayal of her female characters as well as in the depiction of her male characters. The dominant abject image she uses is bestiality. By blurring the boundaries of the identities of both sexes with animalistic traits, she subverts the patriarchal constructions of male and female sexuality which is based on the Oedipal paradigm. In conventional representations of sexuality, excessive male desire finds its representation in animality and in the practice of devouring the female body. However, by allowing her heroines to tame the males who are represented by wild animals such as tigers and wolves, Carter destroys the conventional male image of the predator and the victimizer. Besides, she also destroys the conventional image of the female as the object of male desire in Oedipal psychology. Women are traditionally represented by edible food items whose only sexual function is to satisfy excessive male desire. However, by turning them into wild animals Carter challenges the conventional representation of animalistic desire embodied by the male. Thus, Carter shows that female desire can also be represented as active and she liberates her heroines from the conventional representations of female sexuality as passive and receptive. In this respect, Carter subverts the patriarchal notions of sexuality which can be observed in the hierarchically constructed heterosexual couple. By reconstructing the heterosexual relationships on a more egalitarian basis, Carter destroys the gender roles imposed upon both men and women in the symbolic order. As a result, by endowing both the male and the female with subject and abject status simultaneously, Carter offers her readers Kristevan subjects-in-process who can embrace and carry the Other within himself or herself. Thus, through the analysis of Carter's Female Gothic stories, this study

has shown that the subject-in-process, who destroys the hierarchical boundaries of binary oppositions and unites these binary oppositions on an equal basis in himself or herself, is not a representation which is constructed outside the symbolic order, but he or she who has achieved the status of a subject-in-process can reside freely in the symbolic order (but still not in the patriarchal symbolic order). In this respect, this study has argued that by telling the stories of the female subjects-in-process, Carter rewrites the after lives of Antoinette in which Antoinette in the form of Carter's female characters is proved to be living as an autonomous and liberated woman in the symbolic order.

This study has demonstrated that when it is compared with the two works mentioned above, *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* is the most radical one. Donoghue also moves one step beyond Carter in her employment of the abject by leaving the heterosexual couple behind and dealing with lesbian desire. Since same-sex desire is also excluded from the symbolic order, Donoghue adopts abject representations of lesbian identity in order to express lesbian desire in her work. Since lesbian desire represents a deviance from social, cultural and sexual norms, it is conventionally depicted by negative images and perceived as monstrous and freakish. Donoghue aims to liberate lesbian identity from its marginalized position by recasting these negative representations as positive ones. Thus, Donoghue finds a way to express a doubly repressed female desire which is lesbian. She adopts abject figures such as the beast, the evil step-mother, and the witch that can be found in classical fairy tales, associates them with lesbian identities, and reconstructs them with positivity in order to celebrate lesbian desire. In this respect, Donoghue offers her readers "subjects-in-excess" who can transgress sexual boundaries. Thus, *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* is a revolutionary example of the Female Gothic which proposes an alternative and utopian social and sexual space for women outside the hierarchical binary structure of heterosexuality and promotes sisterhood and an alternative community of women. However, the most important point to be taken into consideration in Donoghue's celebration of lesbian desire is her offering a radical way of destroying patriarchal hegemony. In other words, this study has manifested that Donoghue seems to be in a dialogue with Rhys's novel and offering an alternative after life to Antoinette by showing her the Other side of the story in her attempt at becoming a subject-in-process. This study has announced that if becoming a subject-in-process happens to fail in the patriarchal society and if the patriarchal ideology finds a way to

oppress and imprison even a subject-in-process, then developing a same-sex desire can remain the only way to liberate women from patriarchal power structures. Thus, in a sense, Donoghue's rewritten stories show that if the patriarchal ideology finds a method to imprison Antoinette once again in the attic, she can run away into a woman-identified space radically liberated from the patriarchal confinements.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TURKISH SUMMARY

POSTMODERN İNGİLİZ KADIN GOTİK YAZININDA KADINLIK ARZUSUNUN ABJECT²² TEMSİLLERİ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, postmodern İngiliz Kadın Gotik yazınında kadınlık arzusunun edebi temsillerini, Jean Rhys'in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Angela Carter'ın *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), Emma Donoghue'nun *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997) eserleri ışığında incelemektir. Bir çok kadın yazar bu temsilleri dönemin baskın, sosyal, kültürel ve ideolojik olguları çerçevesinde feminist bir bilinçle ele alabilmek için eserlerinde Gotik yazın geleneğini kullanmışlardır. Gotik yazın, marjinal bir yazın biçimi olarak toplum tarafından dayatılan cinsellik anlayışına başkaldırdığı ve sosyo-cinsel faktörler sonucu şekillenen kadın bedeninin ve kadın cinselliğinin edebiyat tarihi içerisinde değişen temsillerini yansıttığı için kadınlık arzusu temsillerinin incelenmesi açısından bu çalışma için elverişli bir yazın türüdür. 18.yy'ın başlarından itibaren cinsellik, hem kadın yazarlar hem de

²² Julia Kristeva'nın psikanalitik kuramlarını sunarken kullandığı "abject" terimi "iğrençlik" ya da "zelil" olarak Türkçe'ye çevrilmesine rağmen, bu kelimelerin tam olarak "abject"i karşılayan kelimeler olmadığını düşündüğümünden, özet içerisinde İngilizce kullanımını kullanmayı sürdürdüm. "Abject" psikanalizde Ben'in Öteki'yle arasındaki sınırlarını korumak için dışladığı ya da ittiği her kavram ve varlık için kullanılabilir. Özne kendini bir bütün olarak korumak ve Ötekiyle özdeşleşmemek için kendinden farklı olana bir takım içgüdüsel ve bedensel tepkiler verir. Bu bağlamda "abject" öznenin iğrendiği, tiksindiği, tahammül edemediği, korktuğu, dışladığı, ittiği, ayrıldığı ve bastırdığı her türlü kavramı ifade eder. "Abject" ne öznedir (subject) ne de nesne (object). Kristeva'ya göre "abject" in nesneyle ortak olan tek bir yanı vardır: öznenin karşıtı olma durumu. Bir yandan da Kristeva özne ve "abject" in hiçbir zaman birbirlerinden tam olarak ayrılmadığını iddia eder. "Abject" olan Ben ve Öteki arasındaki sınırlarda seyreder ve varlığıyla öznenin sınırlarını sürekli ihlal etmeye yönelik bir tehdit oluşturur. Bu sınırların ihlalden korkan özne "abject" olanı kendinden uzakta tutabilmek için ona karşı iğrenme gibi duygular geliştirir. Fakat Kristeva'ya göre iğrenilen aynı zamanda arzu edilendir. Bu yüzden de toplumsal, kültürel ve psikanalitik anlamlarda kendini kendinden farklı olanlardan ayırarak var eden benlik "abject" olan tarafından aynı zamanda baştan çıkartılır da. Özne bilinçaltı bir güdüyle onunla bütünleşmeyi, bir olmayı arzu eder. Çünkü "abject" olan her şey özneye bir zamanlar benliğiyle Öteki arasında farkın olmadığını deneyimlediği "ayna evresi" öncesi simbiyotik dönemi hatırlatır. Bu dönemde çocuk anneyle simbiyotik bir ilişki içindedir ve kendi benliğini annesinden ayıramaz. O yüzden simbiyotik dönemde özne/nesne ve ben/Öteki arasında bir fark yoktur. Öznenin bu mutluluğu "abjection"ı deneyimleyerek kendini Öteki'nden ayırmaya başlamasıyla bozulur. Bu bağlamda "abject" olan her şey, özneye, Ben'in Öteki'nden ayrılmasını ve farklılığını algılamasını ilk kez deneyimleten anneden kopuş dönemini hatırlatır.

erkek yazarlar için tartışılmasına tabu gözüyle bakılan bir kavram olsa da, ataerkil toplum tarafından kendilerine dayatılan cinsel kimlik rolleri ve bastırılmış cinsellik tarihi içerisinde kadın yazarlar erkek yazarlara nazaran çok daha fazla baskı altındaydılar. 20.yy'ın ortalarından sonra ortaya çıkan postmodernizm akımının politik ortamında kısa bir süre içerisinde hızla gelişen feminist akımlar kadın cinselliğine yeni tanımlar getirilmesini sağlamıştır. Feminist hareket, kadın cinselliğine getirilen bu alternatif bakış açıları sonucunda, kadın yazarların geleneksel anlamda olumsuz bir olgu olarak temsil edilen kadınlık arzusunun karşı pozitif temsiller ile karşı söylem oluşturmalarını ve kendilerini özdeşleştirecekleri yeni figürler bulmalarını mümkün kılmıştır. Bu açıdan arzu temsili güç ilişkileriyle yakından ilintili olduğu için, Gotik yazın geleneği, kadın yazarlara, kendi arzularını ortaya koyabilmeleri ve toplum tarafından dayatılan geleneksel özne/nesne ilişkisini ve ezen/ezilen ilişkisini tersine çevrilebilmeleri için uygun bir araç olmuştur. Böylece Kadın Gotik yazarları kadın bedenini ve cinselliğini temsil etmek için farklı stratejilere başvurmuşlardır ve postmodern anlatı özellikleriyle bezenmiş Kadın Gotik yazınında kadın yazarlar geleneksel Gotik olay örgüsünü yeniden yazarak ve yeniden formüle ederek ataerkil söylem tarafından kendilerine dayatılan rolleri yıkmışlardır. Bu çalışma, son dönem Kadın Gotik yazarlarının “yıkıcı” (subversive) yeniden yazım tekniği aracılığıyla kadın cinsel arzusunun bastırılmak yerine ifade ederek, hem kadınlık arzusunun toplum tarafından dayatılan tanımına karşı çıktıklarını hem de arzusunun ve hazzın cinsel olarak ifade edilip eyleme dökülmesini edebi performanslar olarak ortaya koyduklarını iddia etmektedir. Bu açıdan bu tez postmodern özellikler taşıyan Kadın Gotik eserlerini inceler ve bu eserlerin yazarlarının kadınları ataerkil ideolojiye hapseden, baskın otoriteye boyun eğdiren ve kurban olarak konumlandırılan geleneksel Gotik eserlerini yeniden yazarak kadın cinselliğinin tarihini feminist bir bakış açısıyla nasıl baştan kurguladıklarını açıklar.

Fransız Feminist Kuramcı Julia Kristeva'nın *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980) adlı çalışmasında ortaya koyduğu “abjection” kuramı, kadınlık arzusunun temsillerinin incelendiği ve araştırıldığı bu çalışmada, özellikle kadınların, hem toplumda hem de geleneksel psikanalitik kuramlar bağlamındaki marjinal pozisyonunu vurgulaması açısından önem taşımaktadır. Kristeva, bu eserinde, kadını Öteki konumuna yerleştiren geleneksel benlik oluşum sürecinin yapısını bozarak ve özne/nesne arasında çizilmiş olan katı hiyerarşik sınırları yıkarak benlik oluşumunu açıklayan kuramları yeniden formüle eder.

Böylelikle Kristeva, Ötekini başkalaştırmayan yeni, akışkan ve değişken bir benlik tanımı ortaya koyarak her tür ikili karşıtlık arasındaki hiyerarşik sınırları ortadan kaldıran bir benlik anlayışı yaratır. Ötekini kucaklayan ve içinde Ötekini barındıran bu tarz bir özneyi “oluşum sürecinde bir özne” olarak tanımlar. Geleneksel psikanalitik kuramlar kadın benliğini ötekileştirdiği için egemen söylem etkisinde kadınlık arzusu da ötekileştirilmiş, bastırılmış ve dışlanmış. Kısacası ataerkil cinsel politikaların ayrımcı ideolojisi çerçevesinde kadın cinselliği yok sayılmıştır. Bu açıdan Kristeva’nın “abjection” kuramı kadınlık arzusunu geleneksel eksiklik, yokluk, pasiflik tanımlarından kurtarır ve ataerkil ideolojiden bağımsız olarak görünür kılar.

Aslında Kristeva’nın psikanalitik kuramları Freud ve Lacan’ın benlik oluşumu kuramlarının yeniden yazılmasıdır. Freud’a göre benlik oluşum sürecinde çocuk, kendisi ve Öteki arasındaki ayrımın farkına ancak annesinin penisi olmadığını farkettiği anda varır. Lacan’ın ortaya koyduğu öznenin benlik oluşum sürecine göre ise çocuk, anneye kendisi arasındaki ayrıma altı ila on sekiz aylıkken aynada kendi yansımasını tanıdığı zaman varır. Lacan bu dönemi “ayna evresi” olarak tanımlar. Kristeva’nın benlik tartışmasına psikanalitik açıdan getirdiği yenilik çocuğun anne ile kendisi arasındaki ayrımın farkına varmasını ayna döneminden önceki bir döneme, “semiyotik evre”ye dayandırmasında yatar. Kristeva çocuğun anneden ayrılık sürecine “abjection” adını verir. Kristeva’ya göre çocuk, “ayna evresi”nde kendini aynada tanımadan önce, anne sütünü dışarı tükürerek, dışkılama ve hatta anne kucağını reddetme yoluyla kendi benliği ve Öteki arasında bir sınır oluşturmaya çalışır. Ancak, Kristeva’ya göre çocuk hiçbir zaman annesinden ya da benlik hiçbir zaman dışladığından kopamaz. Başka bir deyişle “abject” edilmeye çalışılan, benlikle ötekini ayıran sınırın eşiğinde, her zaman benliğe tutunarak varolmaya devam eder. Bu açıdan Kristeva’nın benlik kuramı pre-Oedipal ve Oedipal dönemler arasında keskin bir sınır çizmez. Yani, Kristeva’ya göre çocuk kendi öznel pozisyonuna sembolik düzende ulaşırken semiyotik düzen ile bağlarını hiçbir zaman tam anlamıyla koparmaz. Bu bakış açısı sayesinde Batı düşüncesinin temelini oluşturan ikili karşıtlıklar arasındaki hiyerarşik sınır ortadan kaldırılmaktadır ve bu ikili karşıtlıklar içiçe geçmektedir. Bu da öznelliğe katı, keskin ve tekil bir yaklaşımın aksine özgürleştirici, eşitlikçi ve çoğulcu bir yaklaşımı ortaya koymaktadır.

“Abject” ile ilişkilendirilen her şey yalnızca anneye, Ötekiyle, kadınla değil benlikten uzaklaştırılanla, dışlananla ve atılanla da ilintilidir. “Abject” olarak nitelendirilen,

benliğin bütünlüğüne tehdit oluşturduğundan, öznedeki iğrenme, tikslenme, mide bulantısı, yadırganma, utanç, korku yarattığı gibi aynı zamanda arzu ve istek uyandırarak onu baştan da çıkarır. Öznenin iğrendiği ve ittiği her şey bu bağlamda arzu nesnesidir. Geleneksel psikanalitik kuramlara göre birey olabilmek için benliğin Öteki'nden ayrılması şart olduğundan “abject” olan benliğin geleneksel anlamda oluşmasına ve bütünselliğine bir tehdit oluşturur ve özne ile nesne arasındaki sınırları belirsizleştirir. Aynı zamanda “abject” toplumsal anlamda kabul gören benlik oluşumu üzerine kurulu sosyo-sembolik düzene de bir tehdit oluşturur. Bu açıdan “abject” toplumun hegemonyasını sürdürebilmek için oluşturduğu egemen ideolojileri yıkabilme ve benlik sistemini kökünden sarsabilme niteliğine sahip bir kavramdır. “Abject” egemen ideolojinin çizdiği her türlü sınırı ihlal eder. Bu bakımdan, egemen ataeril ideolojiyi ve geleneksel psikanalitik kuramlardaki kadını Öteki olarak dışlayan benlik oluşum sürecini yıkmayı amaçlayan postmodern Kadın Gotik yazarlar, toplum tarafından benimsenen normları sorgulamak için “abject” figürlerden yararlanırlar. Bu çalışmada, yukarıda iddia edilen düşünceleri örneklemek için seçilen üç eserde kadınlık arzusunun “abject” temsilleri Kristeva'nın kuramları ışığında incelenir ve bu temsillerin “yıkıcı”, “sınırları ihlal edici” ve “yeniden yapılandırıcı” özellikleri açık bir şekilde vurgulanır.

Kristeva'nın “abject” kavramı ve Gotik yazın geleneği arasında bir çok ortak nokta vardır. Gotik yazını da “abject” kavramı gibi dışlananla, toplum dışına itilenle, benlikle toplum arasındaki eşikte yer alanla, marjinal kılınmışla ve sapkın olanla ilgilenir. Gotik yazını yine “abject” kavramı gibi muğlak temsilleriyle, gelenekleri aşma potansiyeliyle, toplumun korunaklı sınırlarını yıkmayı vaadeden temalarıyla toplumun yasaklarına ve tabularına saldırır. Gotik yazınının sembolik mekanizmaları hayaletlerle, canavarlarla, zombilerle, doğaüstü varlıklarla kültürel ve kişisel korkuları, toplumsal çatışmaları ve farklı dönemlerin tarihsel açmazlarını ortaya koyar. Toplumsal ve öznesel bütünlüğü tehdit eden korkuları ve yasaklanmış arzuları açığa çıkarır. Bu açıdan Gotik yazın “abject” gibi hem korku yaratan hem de arzu uyandıran bir potansiyel taşır. Aynı zamanda Gotik yazını da kadının ataeril düzende Öteki olarak damgalanmasıyla ve ezilmesiyle ilgilendiğinden cinsiyet farklılıklarını ve rollerini oluşturan iktidar yapılarının da altını kazar. Gotik yazını da bir bakıma ikili karşıtlıkların birbirine bağlı olduğunu ve keskin sınırlarla ayıramayacağını ve Ötekileştirilenin öznenin hala önemli bir parçası olduğunu vurgular. Bu ikili karşıtlıkların

arasındaki sınırı ihlal ederek Gotik yazını da toplumsal normlardan sapanların öyküsünü anlatır.

Ataerkil psikanalitik kuramlara göre benlik oluşumu çocuğun anneden kopup sembolik düzene geçişiyle meydana gelir. Erkek çocuk anneden (arzu objesi) koparak babayla özdeşleşir ve anneye olan arzusunu bastırarak ve yerine başka bir kadını arzu nesnesi olarak konumlandırarak ataerkil sembolik toplumun bir parçası olur. Fakat kadının benlik oluşumu bu psikanalitik kuramlar çerçevesinde sunulduğu gibi kolaylıkla oluşmaz. Kız çocuk halihazırda cinsiyet olarak özdeşleştiği anneden kopartılır, anneyi arzu nesnesi olmaktan çıkararak babayı arzu nesnesi yapar. Ancak toplumun öngördüğü birey olabilmek için kız çocuğun koptuğu annesiyle yeniden özdeşleşmesi ve babaya olan arzusunu başka bir erkeği arzu nesnesi yaparak yenmesi gerekmektedir. Her iki cins için de çizilmiş bu ataerkil benlik oluşumunda toplumun öngördüğü sağlıklı ve tümlenmiş bir birey olmak için atılacak ilk adım anneden kopuştur. Oedipal benlik gelişimi üzerine kurulmuş olan geleneksel Gotik olay örgüsü de anne figürünü dışarıda bırakır. Geleneksel Gotik romanda anne figürü ya yoktur, ya hapsedilmiştir ya da ölmüştür. Bu bağlamda anne figürü eksik olan Gotik romanlarda kadın kahraman da korunmasız ve ataerkil değerlere kurban edilmeye hazır bir karakter olarak çizilir. Postmodern Kadın Gotik yazarlar anne figürünü kullanarak kurdukları olay örgülerinde ataerkil Oedipal benlik oluşumunu yıkarlar. Ataerkil sembolik düzenin bir parçası olabilmek için kadın kahramanın annesinden kopması ve evlilik kurumuna dahil olması gerekmektedir. Bu yüzden geleneksel Gotik romanlarda mutlu sonla biten olay örgüleri çok kullanılır. Bir takım zorluklardan geçen kadın kahraman sevdiğine kavuşur ve onunla evlenir.

Ancak birçok postmodern Kadın Gotik romanında anne-kız ilişkisi ataerkil benlik oluşumuna karşı çıkılarak temsil edilir. Kız çocuğun benlik oluşumunu tamamlayabilmesi için mutlaka annesinden kopmasının gerekmediği, tam tersi annesiyle özdeşleşerek ve bütünleşerek kendini gerçekleştirebileceğini iddia eder. Anne ve kız ilişkisini ve kişinin benlik oluşumundaki annenin rolünü yeniden tanımlayarak bu romanlar mutlu sona ulaşmak için kadın kahramanın ataerkil düzenin desteklediği evlilik kurumuna mutlaka dahil olması gerekmediğini, özgürlüğün ve öznelliğin kadını ezen ataerkil düzeni yeniden feminist bir bakış açısıyla yapılandırmaktan geçtiğini ve toplumun ancak eşitlikçi bir düzen üstüne kurulduğu zaman kadının ezilen ve Öteki konumundan kurtulacağını savunur.

Bu çalışmada Rhys'in, Carter'ın ve Donoghue'nun eserlerinin seçilmesinin birincil sebebi kadınlık arzusu temsili bakımından bu yazarların kadın cinselliğine ortak bir yaklaşım benimsediklerini tespit etmemdir. Bu eserlerin tümü aktif kadınlık arzusunu "abject" biçimlerle sunarlar. İkincil ve hatta daha önemli bulduğum diğer bir sebep de bu eserlerin feminist yazarlarının "abject"e olumlu özellikler yüklemesidir. "Abject" konumuna itilen her şey olumsuz anlamlarla dışlandığı, sürüldüğü ve Ötekileştirildiği için bu postmodern Kadın Gotik yazarlar "abject"i kimliğin ve benliğin hiyerarşik sınırlarını ortadan kaldıran ve ataerkil simgesel düzene tehdit oluşturan bir güç olarak kullanırlar. Postmodern estetiğin ortaya çıkmasından önce kadınlık arzusu kötü, deli, canavar, cadı, hayvan, vb. olumsuz anlamlar taşıyan imgelerle "abject"leştirilmiştir. Bu üç eserin yazarları bu imgeleri hala benimsemektedirler. Ancak bu imgeleri olumlu anlamlarla yeniden şekillendirerek negatif çağrışımlarını yıkmayı başarırlar. Bu bakımdan, kadınlık arzusunun "abject" temsillerinin, *Wide Sargasso Sea*'den *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*'e ve bu eserden de *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*'e kronolojik olarak gittikçe daha olumlu anlamlar kazandığı ve devrim yaratan biçimlere dönüştüğü gözlemlenir.

Jean Rhys'in *Wide Sargasso Sea* adlı romanı Charlotte Brontë'nin *Jane Eyre*'iyle metinlerarası bir ilişki içindedir. En az *Jane Eyre* kadar popüler ve *Jane Eyre*'in yeniden yazımı olan bu roman bir çok eleştirmen tarafından Jane karakterinin bastırılmış öfke, korku, arzu ve cinselliğini temsil ettiği iddia edilen Bertha karakterinin kocası Rochester tarafından deli damgası vurularak Thornfield Malikanesine hapsedilmeden önceki yaşamını anlatır. *Jane Eyre*'deki Bertha karakteri bir çok kadın yazarın kadın cinselliği temsillerini derinden etkilemiştir. Bertha *Jane Eyre*'de ataerkil toplumun aktif kadın cinselliği korkusunu yansıtır ve geleneksel Gotik olay örgüsündeki ataerkil otorite tarafından hapsedilir ve susturulur. Bertha ırksal, toplumsal ve cinsel anlamda dışlanmış ve "abject" edilmiş bir karakterdir. Bu bağlamda, Rhys'in *Wide Sargasso Sea*'sindeki "abject Öteki"ye metinlerarası metotlarla kendi öyküsünü anlatması için bir ses verilmiş ve Bertha'nın bağımsız bir özne olması sağlanmıştır. Rhys romanında Bertha'yı Antoinette olarak yeniden isimlendirerek bunu açıkça vurgulamıştır. Antoinette'in Öteki'nin "abject" alanında konumlandırılmış, bölünmüş ve geleneksel anlamda sabit olmayan benliği ataerkil ideolojinin oluşturduğu benliğe meydan okur. Erkek bakışı tarafından canavarlaştırılmış ve sessiz kılınmış Antoinette kurban olmayı reddeden ve kadınlık arzusunu ifade etmeye cesaret eden asi bir karakter olarak çizilir

Rhys'in romanında. Rhys'in genel olarak tüm romanlarında bulunan yabancılaşma, yalnızlık, korku, kaygı ve kayıp temalarının yanısıra *Wide Sargasso Sea*'de "abject" arzusunun aşırı cinsel arzu, melankoli, kadın kahramanın annesiyle olan ilişkisi ve kadın bedeninin canavarlaştırılması üzerinden temsil edilmesi de gözlemlenir.

Kristeva'nın *Strangers to Ourselves* (1988) adlı kuramsal kitabında yabancılaşma ve yabancılık kavramları "abject" yabancıнын egemen toplumsal ve kültürel değerlerle oluşturulmuş kurumlarına tehdit oluşturduğunu iddia edilir. Bu bakımdan Antoinette aynı zamanda bir "abject" yabancı temsildir. Bunun yanı sıra Kristeva'nın *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1989) başlıklı çalışmasındaki melankoli kavramı kullanıldığında Antoinette'in annesiyle olan ilişkisi ve Rochester'la olan ilişkisi üzerinden ortaya konan kadınlık arzusunun temsili daha da açık bir biçimde ortaya çıkar. Kristeva'ya göre melankoli kadın cinselliğiyle yakından ilintilidir. Bu yüzden Antoinette'in annenin kaybindan kaynaklanan melankolik karakteri aynı zamanda onun kadınlık arzusunun "abject" temsiline de yeni bir boyut ekleyerek kadın cinselliğinin ataerkil tanımlarını tamamen yıkar. Bu sayede Rhys, Antoinette üzerinden yalnızca ataerkil düzeni, ırksal Öteki kavramını ve pasif kadınlık arzusu temsiliğini yıkmaz aynı zamanda kadın öznesinin ataerkil tanımını da Antoinette'i melankoli üzerinden annesiyle bütünleştirerek yıkar ve semiyotiğin gücünü kutlar. Antoinette *Wide Sargasso Sea*'nin sonunda ataerkil düzeni kendi iradesiyle yıkmaya karar vererek hapsedildiği ataerkil düzenin simgesi Thornfield Malikanesini yakmaya karar verir. Antoinette'in ateşi özgürlüğü, ataerkil cinsel politikalar tarafından baskılanmaya çalışılan ve hapsedilen kadın arzusunun zaferini, hiyerarşik cinsel rollerin yıkıldığı eşitlikçi yeni bir dünya düzeninin kurulmasını temsil eder. Bu romanın sonunda Antoinette Öteki olarak konumlandırılanı içselleştirmeyi başaran "oluşum sürecinde bir özne" olarak okuyucusuna veda eder. Böylece Rhys yarattığı Antoinette karakteri üzerinden hiyerarşik heteroseksüel ilişki modelini sarsar ve eril ve dişil ilkeleri, sembolik ve semiyotik düzeni biraraya getirir. Böylece Rhys okuyucusuna eşitlik ilkesine dayanan ütopyik bir heteroseksüel ilişki modelinin yaşanmasının imkansız olmadığına dair bir umut verir. Bu çalışma *Wide Sargasso Sea*'nin geleneksel okumalarının tersine Antoinette'in kurban olmadığı, "oluşum sürecinde bir özne" olarak güçlü ve cesur bir kadın olduğunun altını çizerek *Jane Eyre*'de kendini de Thornfield Malikanesiyle yakan Bertha'dan farklı olarak daha isyankar ve devrimci olduğunu

gösterir. Antoinette kendisini takip eden diğer Kadın Gotik roman karakterlerinin sesi olur ve kollektif kadın bedeninin gittikçe daha yüksek sesle kendini ifade eden simgesi haline gelir.

Carter Rhys'ten bir adım daha öteye giderek *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*'indeki karakterlerinde açıkça “abject”i ve özneyi bir araya getirir. “Abject” temsilleri yalnızca kadın karakterlerini tasvir etmek için değil erkek karakterlerinin de tasviri için kullanır. Carter “Mavi Sakal”, “Kırmızı Başlıklı Kız”, “Güzel ve Çirkin” gibi geleneksel Gotik olay örgüsüne sahip klasik masalları feminist bakış açısıyla yeniden yazarak bu masallarla sunulan ataerkil kadın ve erkek imgelerini ve cinsiyet rollerini yıkar. Carter'ın “abject” temsillerindeki egemen imgeler hayvan imgeleridir. İnsanın ve hayvanın bir arada temsil edildiği bu imgeler korku, düşmanlık, kaçınma ve iğrenme gibi duygular uyandırır. Carter her iki cinsiyeti de hayvan imgeleriyle şekillendirerek kadın ve erkek cinselliğinin ve cinsiyet rollerinin ataerkil tanımlarını yokeder. Bu masallarda erkeğin aşırı cinsel arzusu temsilini kaplan ve kurt gibi vahşi hayvan imgelerinde ve kadını yeme eyleminde bulurken, hayvan biçiminde temsil edilmiş erkek kahramanlarını kadın kahramanları tarafından evcilleştirerek Carter erkek cinselliğinin geleneksel bir biçimde avlanma ve kurban etme eylemleriyle temsil edilme biçimini yıkar. Buna ek olarak Carter, aynı zamanda, kadının ataerkil ideolojide cinsel arzu nesnesi olarak tanımını ve yine erkeklik arzusunu doyuracak besin maddesi temsili olarak sunulmasını, kadın kahramanlarını da genel olarak erkek cinselliği tasviri için kullanılan vahşi hayvan imgelerine büründürerek yıkar. Böylece Carter kadınlık arzusunun da aktif olarak temsil edilebileceğini göstererek kadın kahramanlarını geleneksel pasif kadın cinselliği tanımından kurtarır. Ayrıca bu yarı insan yarı hayvan “abject” temsiller Oedipal benlik oluşumu sürecini de tersine çevirmiş olur. Kadın arzu nesnesi olmaktan ve erkek de arzulayan özne olmaktan çıkar ve aktif kadın cinselliğinin ön planda tutulmasıyla erkek arzu nesnesine ve kadın da arzulayan özneye dönüşür. Bu bağlamda Carter, hiyerarşik ilişkiler üzerine kurulu heteroseksüelitede gözlemlenen ataerkil cinsel rolleri yeniden tanımlar ve kadın cinselliği için yeni tanımlar sunar. Carter heteroseksüel ilişkileri daha eşitlikçi bir düzleme taşıyarak, erkek ve kadın karakterlerinin ikisini de özne ve “abject” konumuna aynı anda koyarak okuyucularına Ötekini kucaklayan ve Ötekini içinde taşıyabilen Kristeva'nın “oluşum sürecinde özne” temsillerini sunar. Bu çalışma Carter'ın Kadın Gotik öykü örneklerini inceleyerek özne ve nesne arasındaki hiyerarşik ilişkiyi ortadan kaldıran ve ikili karşıtlıkları eşitlikçi bir biçimde bir araya getiren

“oluşum sürecinde özne” kavramının yalnızca sembolik düzen dışında varolmadığını ama “oluşum sürecinde özne” konumuna ulaşmış erkek ya da kadının sembolik düzen içinde de özgürce yaşayabildiğini gösterir. Ama bu özne sembolik düzen içinde nefes alabilse de hala ataerkil sembolik düzen bu öznenin kendi içinde yer almasına izin vermez. Bu açıdan bu tez “oluşum sürecinde özne”ler olarak temsil edilen kadın kahramanların öykülerini anlatan Carter’ın Antoinette’in sonraki yaşamlarını yazdığını ve Antoinette’in Carter’ın kadın karakterleri sayesinde bağımsız ve özgürce kadınlık arzusunu yaşayan ve Ötekini kendinde taşıyarak sembolik düzende varolabilen biri olarak hayatına devam edebilme ihtimali olduğunu öne sürer.

Yukarıdaki eserlerle karşılaştırıldığında Donoghue’nun *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*’i en radikal olanıdır. Bu eser “Külkedisi”, “Pamuk Prenses”, “Rapunzel” gibi klasik masalların lezbiyen kimlik üzerine kurularak yeniden yazılan Gotik olay örgülerinden oluşur. Donoghue da öykülerinde Carter’dan bir adım daha öteye giderek heteroseksüel çifti geride bırakır ve lezbiyen arzusunun temsiliyle ilgilenir. Eşcinsel arzu sembolik düzen dışına itildiği için Donoghue öykülerinde “abject” temsilleri lezbiyen arzuyu tanımlamak için kullanır. Lezbiyen arzu toplumsal, kültürel ve cinsel normlardan sapma anlamına geldiğinden lezbiyen kimlik genellikle canavar ve ucube olarak olumsuz imgelerle temsil edilir. Donoghue lezbiyen arzuyu marjinal konumundan bu olumsuz imgeleri olumluya dönüştürerek özgürleştirir. Böylece Donoghue hayvan, canavar, kötü üvey anne ve cadı gibi klasik masallarda bulunan “abject” figürleri lezbiyen benliklerle ilişkilendirir ve bu “abject” temsilleri lezbiyen arzusunun toplumda kabul görmesi için olumlu özellikler yükleyerek yeniden yapılandırır. Bu bakımdan Donoghue okuyucularına cinsel sınırları ihlal eden “aşırılık halindeki özne”ler sunar. Donoghue’nun öyküleri her türlü toplumsal ve cinsel normu yıkan ve kadınlara heteroseksüel ikili karşıtlıklar dışında kurgulanmış alternatif ve ütöpik, toplumsal ve cinsel alanlar sunan Kadın Gotik yazını örneğini oluşturur. Donoghue’nun lezbiyen arzuyu olumlaması ataerkil hegemonyanın yıkılmasını sağlayan radikal bir eylemdir. Donoghue Pamuk Prenses’e, Külkedisi’ne, Rapunzel’e lezbiyen kimlikler vererek sadece eşcinsel arzusunun kültürün içinde yer alabileceğini göstermez ayrıca kadınların kendilerini erkek egemen toplumun dışında özgürce ifade edebildikleri kadın-özdeşimli bir alan da yaratır. Bu yüzden lezbiyen arzusunun temsili sadece kadın cinselliği ile değil Donoghue’nun öykülerinin Rhys’in romanıyla diyalog içinde olduğu varsayılırsa,

Donoghue'nun lezbiyen karakterlerinin Antoinette'e çok daha radikal bir yaşam çizdiği gözlemlenir. Bir başka deyişle "oluşum sürecinde bir özne" kavramı ataerkil düzende varolmakta başarısızlığa uğrarsa ve ataerkil ideoloji sürekli değişimi ve Ötekini kucaklayan bu özneyi de ezmeyi ve hapsetmeyi başarır o zaman eşcinsel bir arzu geliştirmek kadınları ataerkil iktidarın elinden kurtacaktır. Bu bakımdan eğer ataerkil ideoloji Antoinette'i bir kez daha tavanarasına hapsetmeyi başarır Antoinette de kadın-özdeşimli bir alana kaçıp ataerkil sınırlamalardan ve baskılardan kurtulmayı başaracaktır.

APPENDIX B: CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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Nationality: Turkish

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EDUCATION

2003 – 2010 Ph.D., English Literature, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

1999 – 2002 M.A., English Literature, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

1995 – 1999 B.A. English Language and Literature, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey.

WORK EXPERIENCE

2009 – 2010 **Part-time Lecturer**, Department of English Language and Literature, Atılım University, Ankara, Turkey.

2006 – 2009 **Lecturer**, Department of English Language and Literature, Atılım University, Ankara, Turkey.

(**Courses Designed and Taught:** Survey of English Literature II, Literary Terms and Movements, Introduction to Literary Theory and Philosophical Approaches, Literature and Film, The Gothic Tradition, Postmodernism in Literature, Intertextuality and Rewriting in Literature, Modern and Contemporary British Culture, Translation II, Advanced Grammar, Composition I & II, Research Techniques and Academic Writing)

2001 – 2006 **Research Assistant**, Department of Foreign Language Education, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

(**Courses Taught:** Introduction to Literature, Drama: Analysis and Teaching I, Spoken English I & II, Composition I & II)

RESEARCH

M.A and B.A. Theses

*The Rabelaisian Grotesque in Carson McCullers's **The Ballad of the Sad Cafe** and Jeanette Winterson's **Sexing the Cherry***. M.A Thesis, METU, Ankara.

*Disillusionment of the Characters in William Makepeace Thackeray's **Vanity Fair***. B.A. Thesis, Ankara University, Ankara.

Publications

Aktari, Selen. "Tracing the Rabelaisian Grotesque: The Representations of Human-Animal Combinations in Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion*". *Jeanette Winterson and Her Work: The 14th METU British Novelists Seminar: Proceedings*. Sönmez, Margaret J-M, and Funda Başak Baskan, eds. Ankara: METU, 2006.

Aktari, Selen. "Revisiting the Gothic Plot: The Call of the M/Other in Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber' ". *Angela Carter and Her Work: The 15th METU British Novelists Seminar: Proceedings*. Martinez-Caro, Dürrin Alpakin, and Hatice Bay, eds. Ankara: METU, 2008.

Published Story:

Aktari, Selen. "On İki Çekirdek". *Düşe-Yazma: Zaman*. 10. Ocak-Şubat (2005): 70-71.

Unpublished Conference Papers

"Rewriting 'Little Red Riding Hood': Angela Carter's 'The Werewolf' and Tanith Lee's 'Wolfland'", 5th International IDEA Conference: Studies in English, Atılım University, April 14-16, 2010, Ankara, Turkey.

"Revisiting the Gothic Plot: The Call of the M/Other in Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber' ", Angela Carter and Her Work: The 15th METU British Novelists Seminar, December 13-14, 2007, Ankara, Turkey.

"'Boundaries, Always Boundaries' : A Bakhtinian Approach to Androgyny in Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*, *The Passion* and *Weight: The Myth of Atlas and Heracles*", Millennial Fictions Conference, Brunel University, July 6-7, 2007, London, UK.

“Todorov’s Theory of the Fantastic in Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry*”, 2nd International IDEA Conference: Studies in English, Hacettepe University, April 17-19, 2007, Ankara, Turkey.

“Tracing the Rabelaisian Grotesque: The Representations of Human-Animal Combinations in Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion*”, Jeanette Winterson and Her Work: The 14th METU British Novelists Seminar, December 14-15, 2006, Ankara, Turkey.

Research Interests

Contemporary Literary Theory, Narratology, Theories of Culture, Theories of Genre, Contemporary Women’s Fiction (British, American and Turkish), Modern Drama (British and American), Film Studies.