

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

THESIS SIGNATURE PAGE

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

LITERATURE AND WRITING

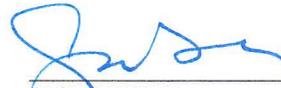
THESIS TITLE: *The Conjuring of Strange Curious Mischief: Twisted Retellings of Classic Children's Narratives*

AUTHOR: Gianna Ramirez

DATE OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE: April 30, 2018

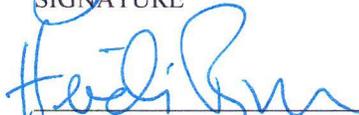
THE THESIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN  
LITERATURE AND WRITING.

Professor Sandra Doller  
THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR

  
SIGNATURE

4/30/18  
DATE

Dr. Heidi Breuer  
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

  
SIGNATURE

4/30/18  
DATE

Dr. Francesco Levato  
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

  
SIGNATURE

4/30/18  
DATE

*The Conjuring of Strange Curious Mischief: Twisted Retellings of Classic Children's Narratives*

Gianna Ramirez  
California State University, San Marcos

Spring 2018

## Acknowledgments

To my amazing committee members, Professor Sandra Doller, Dr. Heidi Breuer, and Dr. Levato. Thank you all so much for your guidance and support! You have each had a huge impact on this project and I can't thank you enough for your time.

Dr. Levato thank you for helping me connect the theory to the creative and for the helpful resources! This truly helped me see creative writing in a new light.

Dr. Breuer thank you for reading my stories and encouraging me to push them even further. But most of all thank you for your support during my first semester of teaching. I will always be grateful for your encouragement when I felt I was all wrong for teaching. I will always be thankful for the knowledge I have gained from you as both a writer and instructor.

Professor Doller thank you for always believing in me. You have been the positive light that has guided me as a creative writer throughout my entire undergrad and graduate career. You have inspired me to not just look at a piece of writing, but you have inspired me to turn the piece completely upside down! You helped me to take risks with my writing and to look at creative writing in a whole new perspective. I am forever grateful for your encouragement, support, and creative wisdom.

To my parents, Mary Jo and Rudy Ramirez, thank you for always encouraging me with my goals and dreams. I would not be where I am today without you. Your never-ending support is what encourages me to always do my best. Thank you for all that you do and for always being there for me.

To my best friend Jenny Crowe, thank you for pushing me through my moments of doubt and for always being there to pick me up. Thank you for spending hours upon hours with me reading and editing this project. Thank you for always making me laugh when I was at my lowest points. Thank you for always believing in me when I didn't even believe in myself. I will forever be grateful I sat next you in Spanish class my friend. We are infinite, Always.

## Contents

A Critical Introduction.....	4
The Conjuring of Strange Curious Mischief.....	29
Chapter 1: The Caterpillar.....	30
Chapter 2: Tin-Heart .....	43
Chapter 3: When a Witch Shatters a Lion.....	60
Chapter 4: Shards .....	69
Appendix.....	83

## ***The Conjuring of Strange Curious Mischief: Twisted Retellings of Children's Narratives***

### **A Critical Introduction**

“Reading is just as creative an activity as writing and most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts. I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the bottles explode.”

- Angela Carter, “Notes from the Front Line”

The “new wine” for this project is created through the process of retelling stories of old texts, which in this case, are classic children's narratives. The old texts I retell are Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, and C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. The “pressure” behind each narrative has built from the misconceptions of the powerful female villains who lurk within Wonderland, OZ, Narnia, and Looking Glass House. Within each retelling, The Queen of Hearts, The Wicked Witch of the West, The White Witch/Queen of Narnia, and The Red Queen are (re) imagined. They possess the powerful traits that have been associated as “villainess,” but are not labeled as the “villain.” The bottle has been shaken, and these powerful female characters are ready to be released.

### ***Twisting and Retelling***

Retellings, Reimaginings, Reworkings, “Recycling” (Hazel Smith), “Transformations” (Anne Sexton), “New Tales in Old Skins” (Emma Donoghue), “Imitations” (Angela Carter); these are just some of the terms used to describe the various types of narratives that have been

developed and inspired from existing well-known texts. These texts include but are not limited to, fairy tales, folktales, legends, myths, and classic narratives. For this project, I define my pieces as “twisted retellings,” therefore the term ‘retelling’ “refers to reworkings of long-standing stories that have been carefully adapted to current literary standards (psychological characterization, sense of place, point of view), current sociopolitical attitudes (human rights, for example), and current literary forms (the contemporary short story, [...], or the novel, most popularly) (Perry 31). In short, each twisted retelling in this project changes the point of view from the original text to challenge the representation of powerful female characters. Each piece additionally challenges the traditional form of children’s literature (the novel) through “current literary forms” of experimental cross-genre poems/short stories. The “twisting” is where horror contributes, and each twist utilizes various elements and conventions from the genre of horror. Thus, offering readers an unexpected twist to the familiar children’s narratives. A twist that ultimately leads my retellings down the path of children’s horror literature.

My fascination with children’s horror literature started years ago. Sitting in my 7<sup>th</sup> grade English class while everyone else read the assigned reading from the outdated English textbook, I was reading Alvin Schwartz’s *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*. I would hide the terrifying novel behind my textbook, so my teacher and classmates wouldn’t see me reading the gruesome tales. The frightening stories and bone-chilling drawings drew me in like a helpless fly unable to look away from the novel. I was immersed in each horrifying tale and often felt like I needed to hide my interest in these stories because I did not want to appear strange to my teachers and classmates. While many of my classmates feared these stories, I was drawn to them. As I became exposed to even more children’s horror tales over the years, I began to look beyond the immersive stories and ask questions such as: Why are these dark and twisted tales so appealing

to young readers? Jessica McCort states in *Reading in the Dark: Horror in Children's Literature and Culture* that “The bookshelves of the children's and young adult sections in any major bookstore reveal that the gothic, and more particularly gothic horror, is alive and thriving in today's most popular children's and young adult books and series” (9). The rise of children's and young adult horror literature not only haunts the pages of books, but the genre has manifested behind the screen in film and Television Series as well. Thus, Children's horror literature is a thriving genre that continues to grow in popularity amongst many young readers who welcome the horror into their reading collections.

### ***The Genre of Children's Literature***

Before exploring the genre of children's horror literature, an understanding of children's literature must be established. When considering children's literature, numerous scholars revisit trying questions that revolve around the genre such as: What exactly is children's literature? What are its components? and What classifies a text as a children's narrative? With such questions, children's literature becomes a unique type of character in the world of literature due to its dual audience readership. The genre, therefore, consists of both young/adult readers and classifies texts based on genre and reading level (which is based on age/grade level). While it is difficult to fully define children's literature, Emer O'Sullivan states in *Historical Dictionary of Children's Literature* that “The singular term *children's literature* denotes a broad and diverse range of texts with different addresses, forms, genres, degrees of linguistic and aesthetic elaborateness, and function. The material comes from a number of different sources – folklore (folktales and fairy tales), books meant originally for adults and subsequently adapted for children, and materials written specifically for them” (1). While O'Sullivan breaks down the components and sources of children's literature to better classify it, the category distinction

between adult and children's literature becomes blurry when considering factors such as who exactly are the addressees and what genres are popularized and socially accepted in children's literature?

While taking a closer look at the world of children's literature, it may appear at first glance that the narratives associated with this genre are merely directed towards younger readers and that there is a clear borderline drawn to distinguish the age range of readers who are meant to be the audience for children's narratives, but this is not entirely true. The narratives associated with children's literature can, in fact, reach out to readers of various ages. While it can be suggested that the children's section in any bookstore or library is meant to appeal to younger readers, there is still the presence of the adult audience which ultimately breaks the borderline that is intended to distinguish which narratives readers are encouraged to read. So why are adults part of the readership for children's literature? Zohar Shavit points out in "The Double Attribution of Text for Children and How It Affects Writing for Children" from *Transcending Boundaries: Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults* that "Adults not only write books for children, they also publish, evaluate, interpret, and distribute them" (84). Therefore, not only do adults partake as readers and writers of children's narratives, but they also have a large impact on other aspects of the genre like what narratives are distributed and published. Adults are therefore the decision makers who determine what narratives are acceptable and appropriate for the younger audience. When considering a genre such as children's horror literature it is not surprising that the genre is consistently challenged by adults who deem the content as inappropriate. Jessica R. McCort explains that "the popular and critical response to books explicitly marketed to young readers under the umbrella of horror was sometimes unfavorable, the books regarded by some adults as dangerous influences on the imaginations of

young readers” (6-7). While children’s horror literature is in a constant battle with adults who find it “unfavorable,” its popularity still thrives.

### ***The Horror Genre in Context***

Considering the various genres within children’s literature, O’Sullivan mentions that “Among its genres are adventure stories, drama, science fiction, poetry, and information books” (1). While these are the genres that are traditionally connected with children’s literature and showcased in the spotlight, there is a particular genre that O’Sullivan failed to mention within this list. It is not traditionally associated with the category of children’s literature, but it still sneaks its way into the hands of young readers, and that genre is *horror*.

In order to establish a definition for the term *horror* within the context of children’s literature, I will first distinguish the type of horror narrative I intend to address. Jessica R. McCort indicates four “narrative types” of horror literature for children in *Reading in the Dark: Horror in Children’s Literature and Culture*, by stating:

The term ‘horror’ as a genre classification proves rather unwieldy, as it can be applied to a variety of narrative types, including, to name a few, ‘faux horror’ (a brand of horror targeted toward younger children that tends to domesticate terror and make the frightening funny), literary horror (which draws on, participates with, and often critiques landmark texts and traditions, such as fairy tales, cautionary tales, and canonized monster novels such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*), serialized tween/teen horror books (which encompass the horror-fiction serials of the *Goosebumps* variety), and young adult horror (of the *Twilight* brand, which is arguably actually a blend of romance, action/adventure, and fantasy infused with horrific elements). (6)

With McCort's explanation of the stated four horror narrative types for children's literature (faux horror, literary horror, serialized tween/teen horror books, and young adult horror books), my collection of twisted retellings contributes towards the "literary horror" narrative genre because I intend to "critique landmark texts" within children's literature such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by challenging the representation of powerful female characters (The Queen of Hearts/The Wicked Witch of the West) who are traditionally portrayed as villains within the narratives, thus offering readers a revised representation of the classic female characters by blurring their previous villain image.

With the type of horror narrative established, I will explain the term *horror* in the context of children's literature. McCort further explains that

To explicate the term [horror] further in relation to literary, filmic, and televisual horror, the reader or viewer must be emotionally invested in the situation at hand, must experience a physical response to the text that is rooted in fear, disgust, and repulsion, must reject the terrifying thing while also fearing that he or she might become the next victim, and perhaps most important, must feel *excited* by the horrifying experience that he or she has willingly engaged in as the reader or viewer of the text. (10)

Based on McCort's explanation of the term *horror*, in the context of children's literature, the terrifying "experience" and the feeling of excitement that children's horror narratives create draw out the more "Grimm" characteristics of storytelling instead of just Happily Ever Afters. It highlights the frightful elements commonly associated with classic fairy tale narratives by authors like Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (The Brothers Grimm), Hans Christian Anderson, and Charles Perrault. McCort explains the "Grimm" aesthetic of these classic tales stating that "The

tales told by the Grimms, in particular, are overwhelmingly dark: children and adolescents are abandoned, devoured, dismembered, threatened with cannibalism, beaten, starved, put into comas, maimed, imprisoned, transformed into animals, enslaved, seduced, and decapitated” (121). By utilizing the more “Grimm” tradition of fairy tales, children’s horror literature becomes a valuable contribution because it offers readers an experience that is both entertaining and purposeful. McCort further discusses how the horrific elements are very much present in classic fairy tales by providing examples from Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. She points out how “Little Snow White’s evil stepmother wants to consume the heart of her innocent stepdaughter for dinner (or her lungs and liver, depending on the version you read); Little Red Riding Hood is devoured by a wolf for straying from the path and, in the Grimm’s rendition, is cut from his stomach by the huntsman; Bluebeard’s slaughtered wives are ranged along the walls of his secret chamber, their blood congealing on the floor at the curious heroines’ feet” (6). These are just a few examples, from the more popularized classic fairy tales which demonstrate how the horrific was an essential element utilized by writers. The horrific is expressed through the fear of being slain for dinner, eaten by a monstrous animal, and horrific imagery of being hung on a wall to rot away in order to send a message that terrible things can happen when rules are disobeyed.

Children’s horror literature, however, incorporates horrific elements to establish a narrative that “can function to help younger readers and viewers cope with frightening things, in reality, translating those things into a fantasy world where fear is rendered manageable” (McCort 14). While numerous fairy tales utilized fear to “teach a lesson” or moral to younger children, children’s horror literature optimizes the horrific to show that fear can be conquered. Thus, children’s horror literature becomes a type of outlet for readers to not just experience fear, but to

learn how to accomplish and distinguish certain fears within their own realities. The pages of the text become a secure place for younger readers to witness and experience fear without being in any real danger. The text is a place where “elements of horror can be viewed as beneficial for young readers and viewers because they encourage children to recognize that there are real dangers in the world they will have to confront, unveiling the terror in the familiar” (McCort 22). Therefore, children’s horror literature encourages readers to experience fear within the pages of the text to show readers that those fears lurking and waiting to strike outside the pages of the text can be slain and conquered.

### ***Children’s Horror Narratives***

While the horror genre is small within the world of children’s literature, there are numerous texts (both series and novels) that have gained much attention by readers. Proceeding the “1950’s monster craze,” the publication of horror texts directed towards a younger audience first emerged during the late 1980’s (McCort 6), including texts such as R.L. Stein’s bestselling series *Goosebumps* (first published in 1992), Alvin Schwartz’s collection of short tales inspired by folklore *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* (1981), the *Point Horror* (1991) series with selections from various authors, Betty Ren Wright’s novel *The Doll House Murders* (1983), and Roald Dahl’s novel *The Witches* (1983). Each of these novels sparked an interest in readers to become curious about the genre of horror within children’s literature and therefore created a pathway for future authors to follow and contribute towards. Contemporary examples of children’s horror texts that have gained popular attention by readers are *Coraline* (2002) and *The Graveyard Book* (2008), both written by author Neil Gaiman. In *The Graveyard Book*, young protagonist Nobody “Bod” Owens gains a new supernatural family consisting of ghosts after his original family is murdered by the villain of the story called “the man Jack.” Gaiman’s

inspiration for the novel comes from the classic children's narrative *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling, which Gaiman mentions in his acknowledgments at the end of the text. With this inspiration from a classic children's narrative, Gaiman utilizes the same premise from *The Jungle Book* where a young orphaned boy is adopted by a peculiar new family and must ultimately face the force that led him to this new life. For Gaiman's novel, he incorporates gothic/horror conventions by changing both characters and setting. For example, Gaiman places his protagonist in the setting of a graveyard instead of a jungle and has "Bod" adopted by a family of ghosts, rather than a pack of wolves. Gaiman also incorporates narrative techniques commonly associated with the genre of horror. One technique defined by Noel Carroll in *The Philosophy of Horror: or Paradoxes of the Heart* is the "mirroring-effect." Carroll states that "the emotions of the audience are supposed to mirror those of the positive human characters [...] our responses are supposed to converge (but not exactly duplicate) those of the characters; like the characters we assess the monster as a horrifying sort of being (though unlike the characters, we do not believe in its existence). This mirroring-effect, moreover, is a key feature of the horror genre" (18). Gaiman utilizes the "Mirroring-effect" in a nontraditional sense by having protagonist Bod express emotions of fear towards Jack the human villain instead of the traditional frightening characters, which are ghosts in this case. Therefore, through the "Mirroring-effect" Gaiman directs readers to feel the same connection Bod does to his new family of ghosts, while the horrific feelings are directed towards Jack who has murdered Bod's family.

In *Coraline*, readers follow a young female protagonist named Coraline Jones into an uncanny world that seems magical and inviting, but she soon realizes it is actually a dangerous world that she must fight her way out of and save other characters, like her parents, and trapped ghost children. *Coraline* is a non-traditional narrative, compared to other children's texts like

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, because it highlights and amplifies horrific elements such as the setting of an eerie old house, imprisoned ghost children characters, and a villain called "The Other Mother" who wants to trap and eat the souls of children. While reading *Coraline*, I became fascinated with Gaiman's writing approach due to the various gothic/horror conventions he incorporates within the text. The unique and darker approach Gaiman utilized for *Coraline* has also offered numerous scholars to observe and write about the text through various lenses. For example, in Karen Coats article "Between: Horror, Humor, and Hope: Neil Gaiman and Psychic Work of the Gothic" from *The Gothic in Children's Literature: Haunting the Borders*, approaches children's horror/gothic literature through a psychoanalytical reading by arguing that the usage of gothic motifs and themes within Gaiman's pre-adolescence and young adult texts shows "how the Gothic may help children cope with traumas in an indirect fashion" with hints of humor and hope, suggesting that the horror/gothic elements used within children's horror narratives (such as Gaiman's) are meant to assist young readers to grow and develop rather than merely frighten them (77).

In addition to being analyzed through a psychoanalytical reading, *Coraline* has also been observed through a feminist lens (regarding psychoanalysis) by numerous scholars such as Anne Balay and Melissa Wehler. Both highlight how the gender portrayals and stereotypes seen in Gaiman's novel are challenged by both the female and male characters, but mostly observe the main protagonist Coraline Jones and her journey as a female hero. Other scholars, such as Danielle Russell and Elizabeth Parsons et al., observe and critique the representation of 'motherhood' as portrayed by the evil female villain within the narrative, who Gaiman named "The Other Mother." In Parsons et al. article "The Other-Mother: Neil Gaiman and Postfeminist Fairytales" it is suggested that "Gaiman's texts present a journey toward normative and

consolidated feminine and heterosexual identities that rely on demonizing women” (371).

Parsons et al. acknowledge an intriguing point associated with Gaiman’s novel that I examine as similar amongst other children’s narratives, and that is the “demonizing” woman. She is the older adult female character (such as *The Other Mother*) who is portrayed as the villain who the young female protagonist must conquer to complete/fulfill her journey. The “demonizing” woman or female villain is where my inspiration arises for my collection of stories. She is the character who is associated with the “evil” role due to her power and non-traditional feminine characteristics.

### ***The Monstrous and Abject Female Villain***

The role of the female villain within children’s literature takes many forms such as a witch, Queen, evil step-mother, insensitive/controlling mother, or sometimes she can even be a combination of these forms. This role causes her to be feared and despised by readers due to her cruel actions, which are most commonly against a younger female protagonist. Therefore, the female villain has been depicted in such a way within children’s narratives that she becomes more than just a villain, she becomes a monster. By examining the role of a female villain as “monstrous,” I connect my analysis of *The Queen of Hearts*, *The Wicked Witch of the West*, *The White Witch/Queen of Narnia*, and *The Red Queen* to Barbra Creed’s theory of the *monstrous-feminine* and Julia Kristeva’s theory of *abjection*. Before unpacking the role of these female villains, the theory of the *monstrous-feminine* and *abjection* must be established and explained.

In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Julia Kristeva describes the concept of the *abject* as both an “object” and “reaction.” She explains that “the abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to *I*” (1). The abject is ambiguous. It is both “*I*” and “not *I*” because “what is *abject*, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws

me toward a place where meaning collapses” (2) Therefore, that which is *abject* is what disrupts the border of meaning, and causes the subject “I” to be both attracted and repulsed by the abject. Once the border has been disturbed, the “reaction” of disgust and fear by the subject is called *abjection*. Kristeva explains that the subject can feel abjection towards “improper/unclean” things like blood, waste, vomit, food, or a corpse which is “the most sickening of wastes” (3). Kristeva also identifies that when a subject expresses *abjection*, 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” (4). Therefore, that which is abject disputes the border that separates the “human” from the “monster.” Thus, the abject becomes identified as a “monstrous-perversion” (McCort 203).

As for the concept of the *monstrous-feminine*, Barbra Creed first discussed the term in an essay called “Horror and the monstrous-feminine: An Imaginary Abjection.” She later developed her analysis in the text *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, feminism, psychoanalysis*. Creed’s theory of the *monstrous-feminine* is divided into two parts within her text. The first part explains “that when woman is represented as monstrous it is almost always in relations to her mothering and reproductive functions” (7). Through Kristeva’s theory of the abject and the maternal, Creed examines the various types of women within horror films to argue how a woman is portrayed as monstrous due to her horrific role as either “archaic mother, the monstrous womb, the witch, the vampire, and the possessed woman” (7). The second part of Creed’s text connects concepts of psychoanalysis, in particular, “Freud’s theory of castration,” which Creed argues portrays the monstrous-feminine “woman as castrator” within horror films. Although Creed’s theory of the monstrous-feminine is concerned with the representations of female monsters within films, her theory can be recognized through the depictions of female villains in classic children’s literature.

While Creed discusses various female monsters within horror films like *Carrie*, *The Exorcist*, *Alien*, *Psycho*, etc., her theory is not limited to women depicted as monstrous in films.

Expanding Creed's theory to the female villains within classic children's literature demonstrates how and why villains such as The Queen of Hearts, The Wicked Witch of the West, The White Witch, and The Red Queen are viewed as "monstrous" characters. Therefore, I will be utilizing Creed's first discussion on the monstrous-feminine to critique the representations of female villains within the children's narratives I retell.

### ***The Queens and Witches Revealed***

Female characters in a powerful role have been represented in numerous ways throughout children's narratives. For example, she has appeared in various villainous forms within early classic fairy tales, such as the child eating witch in *Hansel and Gretel* by the Brothers Grimm, the jealous and cruel stepmother in *Cinderella* by Charles Perrault, and the evil Queen/Witch/Stepmother who lusts for vanity and power in *Snow White*, also by the Brothers Grimm. As fairy tales and folktales developed over time and authors began to compose novel-length texts directed towards a younger audience, the female characters in a powerful role remained the same. Classic children's narratives, such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, Frank L. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, and C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, all depict the role of a powerful female as the villain of the story. Each is depicted as evil, wicked, and cruel women and are therefore seen as abject and monstrous characters due to their non-traditional roles and characteristics. Female villains have been represented in numerous ways throughout children's narratives, but they each share similar traits within their villain role. So what components make a female villain? While there are several, the

prominent reoccurring components of a female villain I explore are her non-traditional gender role and characteristics. Since female villains reject gender stereotypes, traditional heterosexual relationships, and the maternal role, these female characters are therefore depicted as unnatural and frightening within their narratives. Through each component that female villains display, I became inspired to retell their narratives where they would be depicted as progressive powerful leaders who are not categorized as villainous for rejecting traditional feminine roles.

By examining the female villain roles portrayed by *The Queen of Hearts*, *The Wicked Witch of the West*, *The White Witch/Queen of Narnia*, and *The Red Queen*, it can be seen that each defy gender biases commonly associated with female characters such as being “depicted as dependent, emotional, silly, clumsy, and lacking intelligence” (Tsao 110). These female characters reject such depictions by moving away from the victim or “damsel in distress” role and instead take up leadership roles within their narratives, which ultimately portrays them as “monstrous” characters. For example, in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, the Queen of Hearts reigns over the playing card subjects of Wonderland. She is depicted as an unjust and ruthless monarch who is fueled by rage. When something does not go her way, she screams the phrase “Off with his/her head!” which causes all her subjects to feel horrified by her. Female villains like the Queen of Hearts strike fear through their powerful roles and their demands are depicted as monstrous. Therefore, a female character who takes up a leadership role is seen as abject within her narrative because she exemplifies that which “disturbs identity, system, order” (Kristeva, 4). She challenges the traditional patriarchal system and is deemed a villain for her actions.

The female villain also disturbs “order” by rejecting traditional heterosexual relationships. Karen Coats explains how in many children’s narratives, especially fairy tales, that

“the ultimate reward [...] is a heterosexual marriage that usually involves a character marrying ‘up’ – that is, into a great fortune and/or outside his or her social class” (255). This is seen in many fairy tales where the young female protagonists, such as Cinderella or Snow White, fall in love with the handsome prince and complete their stories with a joyful marriage. However, this is not the case for powerful female characters. The ultimate reward for a female villain is her powerful leadership role within the land she lives in. Her desire is not to fall in love and end her story with marriage; instead she desires to reign with power. For example, The White Witch/Queen of Narnia is depicted as malicious and deceitful in her role. She does not develop a love interest within the narrative; instead she desires the lives of the Pevensie children in order to stop them from fulfilling the prophecy that would take her from power.

The female villain also rejects the maternal role within the narrative, which causes her to be further depicted as monstrous. The maternal character or female character within a narrative becomes abject due to the threat she poses to the “symbolic order.” The maternal figure is depicted as abject because she becomes a type of border between the place where “meaning collapses” and the symbolic. Creed describes this process as discussed by Julia Kristeva, explaining that “Kristeva argues that all individuals experience abjection at the time of their earliest attempts to break away from the mother. She [Kristeva] sees the mother-child relation as one marked by conflict: the child struggles to break free but the mother is reluctant to release it” (254). Therefore, even though the female villain rejects the maternal role, she is still observed as abject due to her maternal/feminine body, which then also positions her as *monstrous-feminine* (female monster). The female body is significant to her depiction as abject, monster, or villain role. Creed highlights this when she states, “as with all other stereotypes of the feminine, from virgin to whore, she is defined in terms of her sexuality. The phrase ‘monstrous-feminine

emphasizes the importance of gender in the construction of her monstrosity. (3). Therefore, even when The Queen of Hearts, The Wicked Witch of the West, The White Witch/Queen of Narnia, and The Red Queen reject the traditional maternal role they are still depicted as abject characters due to their gender. Overall, the female villain has been depicted in various types of roles and because she is a character who rejects traditional gender biases seen within narratives, she is not portrayed as powerful. She is seen as an abject feminine character with monstrous traits who threatens the order of a patriarchal system and is thus labeled as the “villain” causing readers to fear a woman in a power role.

### ***Feminist Fairytale Revisions***

My inspiration to write twisted retellings that re (imagine) the roles of female villains of classic children’s literature developed after being exposed to feminist fairytale revision texts. Feminist revision writers began to change the perception of fairy tales through contemporary retellings of the classic tales since the 1970’s (Coats 255). Texts such as Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber*, Anne Sexton’s *Transformations*, and Emma Donoghue’s *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* strive to offer readers new perceptions of various female characters (both victims and villains) who were underrepresented/misrepresented and offer these female characters an opportunity to be viewed as purposeful characters, rather than inconsequential. The purpose behind these texts sparked from the “undeniably sexist and classist biases” seen within classic fairy tales (Coats 255). Donald Haase acknowledges in *Fairy Tales and Feminism* that, “Throughout the 1970’s these ideas were repeated in writings by American feminists, which did not always analyze fairy tales in depth but more frequently utilized them simply as evidence to demonstrate the sociocultural myths and mechanisms that oppress women” (3). Therefore, the retellings by feminist writers like Carter, Sexton, and Donoghue set out to highlight the

complications of fairy tales and express how these classic tales situated female characters in a role that was mostly depicted as either “damsel in distress” or “villainous.” These revision tales inspired me to approach my own twisted retellings in a way that could offer the oppressed female characters an opportunity to be marveled rather than feared and despised. I first looked at the female protagonist of the classic tales that I would be retelling, but I soon realized they were not the characters who spoke to me-- it was the villains. The Queens and Witches who are feared by the younger protagonist and depicted as furious wicked women due to their authority in a leadership role. These were the characters that inspired me for my retellings.

### ***The Writing Process: Constructing and Experimenting***

When I first created this project I initially intended to retell numerous children’s narratives that would experiment with conventions of the genre of horror and mimic the genre in relation to authors like Edgar Allan Poe, Joyce Carol Oats, and Thomas Ligotti. However, after writing the first draft of my piece “The Caterpillar,” I began to realize I wanted to expand my retellings even further. I first looked to (re) imagine the roles of the female protagonist within each classic text, which were Alice, Dorothy, and Lucy. However, as I read went through and re-read each story I realized their roles were not the roles that inspired me. Instead, it was the female villains. I began to question the significant role each female villain played within the narrative due to the ways each villain was represented. They were the Queens and Witches who were described as evil, cruel, and wicked. They were female characters of power who were represented as “villainous” due to their position of power in the lands of Wonderland, Oz, Narnia, and Looking-Glass House. These were the female characters I wanted to (re) imagine to show a powerful female role in a new light.

As I approached writing the pieces for this project I referred myself back to Hazel Smith's text *The Writing Experiment: Strategies for Innovative Creative Writing*. I was exposed to this text during my undergraduate career in my first creative writing course, and it has inspired and guided me since then. Through Smith's chapters, I was able to focus my writing process on specific strategies and techniques to compose each retelling. I decided to take a more experimental approach when writing these poems/short stories to depart from the traditional narrative form, which is the most common form utilized within children's literature. Smith explains that "an experimental approach to writing means retaining an open-ended and open-minded attitude and pursuing new, diverse modes of textual exploration" (ix). Taking the experimental route for this project was both invigorating and challenging. While composing, I utilized strategies of experimental writing for both generating and structuring the pieces.

When generating the content for the pieces, I looked to Smith's sections on "Recycling as Rewriting" and "Generic Cross-Dressing." In "Recycling as Rewriting," Smith explains this writing process as the "rewriting of a classic text, fairytale, or myth from a contemporary point of view. To do this you need to take a text (usually a familiar one) such as *Jane Eyre* or *Hamlet* and rewrite it from a new perspective" (77). Through this process of rewriting and adding a new point of view, I chose to retell *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, and *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, because they were stories that attracted me towards literature when I was younger and they were stories I knew would be recognizable for readers. While retelling each story, I also experimented with the narrative technique of 'point of view'. Since I am (re)imagining the roles of female villains within each piece I wanted to change the narrator of the story by putting this power into the female villain's perspective. However, I

refrain from naming these characters within the stories. I decided to perform this creative approach because I wanted to make readers believe that it is the original protagonist telling the stories, but instead, it is revealed to be the female villains of the classic stories that are narrating. Therefore, by not naming the character telling the story, I rely on the familiar content of the classic stories I add to each piece to signal to the reader who the narrator truly is. I also looked at Smith's chapter "Generic Cross-Dressing" when generating content for each retelling. This section allowed me to think experimentally concerning genre. Smith explains that "A multi-genre piece combines and 'cross-dresses' various types of writing. It may mix fiction and non-fiction, the literary and the non-literary, and different literary genres" (200). For this project, I looked to "cross-dress" or combine literary genres such as children's literature and horror. The combination of these two genres was so appealing to me because it is unexpected and experimental within itself. As I experimented with the combination of the two genres, I began to also experiment with the form and structure of each piece. When it came to the forms for the retellings I wanted to transition from the traditional form of prose by adding elements of poetry to the pieces as well. As I began to write I refrained from paragraphing the stories in the traditional short story form. I broke lines apart to mimic stanzas of poetry, while still telling a narrative. Since I combine elements from the forms of poetry and prose, I connected this to Smith's discussion on "Prose Poetry." She states that "A prose poem usually combines some of the syntactic and metaphorical/metonymical characteristics of poetry, but also exploits the intellectual, narrative and logical possibilities of the sentence" (183). So, for each piece, I utilized the constraint of not writing traditional narrative sentences and instead focused on creating a rhythmic narrative through non-traditional stanzas.

The structure of each piece was also an experimental writing approach I conducted. Through experimental structure, I moved away from the traditional paragraphing of prose, which holds words together in a confined box. I decided I wanted to cut open that box and let each word be released into a non-traditional structure. The structure of each piece is meant to express how the (re)imaging of the female villains is a progressive and modern perspective. With the four retellings (although similar in style), I intentionally structured each differently in order to express the individuality of the narrator. In “The Caterpillar,” I started the narrative with traditional poetic lines, but as the narrator falls down a hole the words mimic the action of falling. Then as the narrator finally stops falling, the structure of the narrative is turned upside down on the page to signal that the narrator is in another world. This structure forces the reader to turn the piece upside down, allowing for a non-traditional reading experience. In “Tin-Heart,” the structure of the narrative moves from left to right to convey that the narrator is struggling to find an identity. This is also expressed through the transition of a capitalized “I” to an uncapitalized “i” which is then changed to “You.” The use of the pronoun “you” is meant to emphasize how the narrator is lost within the story and the narrating power has turned to the reader. However, as the narrator grows and becomes aware of her powers she ultimately comes back to being referred to as “I” within the narrative and this is signaled structurally by the lines coming together in the middle. In “When a Witch Shatters a Lion,” the narrative begins as a traditional paragraph, but as the narrator discovers her strength, the structure begins to fall apart and break into lines. This is meant to signal the literal transgression from prose structure to a non-traditional structure within the narrative. Then the last piece “Shards” is a backward font structure, and the only way for the reader to interpret the words is with a mirror. I was inspired to create a backwards narrative by Lewis Carroll’s poem “Jabberwocky,” which is found by Alice

in *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. This piece requires readers to experience the narrative in a non-traditional sense through a hands-on approach. I ended the collection with this piece because it puts the reader right in the piece with the narrator. The reader becomes a significant part of the piece because the reader needs to provide the mirror in order for the narrator to tell the story. Thus, this structure is meant to express the idea that the reader is offering the narrator the opportunity to be seen in a new perspective through the backward font structure of the narrative.

As I come to the end of this introduction, I take advice from Hazel Smith one last time. Smith reminds any creative writer that “There are no rules or regulations for creative writing and no blueprints for a good piece of writing. Anyone who is looking for a formula for exciting work will not find it, and writers who rely on formulae usually produce dull results” (ix). Through the experimentation of mixing genres, playing with structures, and changing perspectives, I intend for each retelling to showcase how creative writing is itself a rule breaker, it’s unpredictable, innovative, and shakes “old bottles” to release new narratives for readers to experience. So please take this bottle, shake the stories, and uncork *The Conjuring of Strange Curious Mischief*.

### Bibliography

- Abbruscato, Joseph and Tanya Jones, editors. *The Gothic Fairy Tale in Young Adult Literature: Essays on Stories from Grimm to Gaiman*. McFarland, 2014.
- Bacchilega, Cristina. *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.
- Bantinaki, Katerina. "The Paradox of Horror: Fear as a Positive Emotion." *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism*, vol. 70, no. 4, Fall 2012, pp. 383-392. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1111/j.1540-6245.2012.01530.x.
- Baum, Frank L. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005.
- Beckett, Sandra L. *Transcending Boundaries: Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults*. Routledge, 2014.
- Bernheimer, Kate, editor. *My Mother, She Killed Me, My Father He Ate Me: Forty New Fairytales*. Penguin Group, 2010.
- Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. Vintage Books, 1977.
- Bloom, Clive. "Horror Fiction: In Search of a Definition". Editor, Punter, David. *A New Companion to the Gothic*. John Wiley & Sons Incorporated. 2012.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 2006.
- Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Other Stories*. Barnes & Noble Inc., 2010.
- Carroll, Noel. *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*. Routledge, 1990.
- Carter, Angela. *The Bloody Chamber: And Other Stories*. Penguin Classics, 2015.
- Campbell, Lori M, *A Quest of Her Own: Essays on the Female Hero in Modern Fantasy*. McFarland, 2014.

- Coats, Karen. *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's and Young Adult Literature*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.
- . *Looking Glasses and Neverlands: Lacan, Desire, and Subjectivity in Children's Literature*. University of Iowa Press, 2004.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Dickson, Randi. "Horror: To Gratify, Not Edify." *Language Arts*, vol. 76, no. 2, 1998, pp. 115–122. *JSTOR*, doi:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41484083>.
- Donoghue, Emma. *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*. HarperCollins, 1997.
- Falconer, Rachel. *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership*. Routledge, 2008.
- Gaiman, Neil. *Coraline*. HarperCollins, 2012.
- . *The Graveyard Book*. HarperCollins, 2015.
- Greenway, Betty. *Twice-Told Children's Tales: The Influence of Childhood Reading on Writers for Adults*. Routledge, 2005.
- Haase, Donald. *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches*. Wayne State University Press, 2004.
- Hahn, Mary Downing. *Wait Till Helen Comes: A Ghost Story*. HMH Books; Reissue Edition, 2008.
- Harries, Elizabeth W. *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale*. Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Hollingsworth, Cristopher, editor. *Alice Beyond Wonderland: Essays for the Twenty-First Century*. University of Iowa Press, 2009.

- Horning, Kathleen T. *From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books*. HarperCollins, 2010.
- Howard, A.G. *Splintered*. Harry N. Abrams, 2014.
- Jackson, Anna, et al. *The Gothic in Children's Literature: Haunting the Borders*. Routledge, 2007.
- Joosen, Vanessa. *Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairytales: An Intertextual Dialogue between Fairy-Tale Scholarship and Postmodern Retellings*. Wayne State University Press, 2011.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Lewis, C.S. *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. HarperCollins, 2002.
- McCallum, Robyn. *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity*. Edited by Jack Zipes, Routledge, 2013.
- McCort, Jessica R. *Reading in the Dark: Horror in Children's Literature and Culture*. University Press of Mississippi, 2016.
- Oittinen, Ritta. "Adaptations and Transformations." *Children's Literature and Culture: Translating for Children*. Routledge, 2000.
- O'Sullivan, Emer. *Historical Dictionary of Children's Literature*. Scarecrow Press, 2010.
- Page, Danielle. *Dorothy Must Die*. HarperCollins, 2015.
- Parsons, Elizabeth, et al. "The Other Mother: Neil Gaiman's Postfeminist Fairytales." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2008, pp. 371–389.
- Perry, Evelyn M. *Robin McKinley: Girl Reader, Woman Writer*, Scarecrow Press, 2010. ProQuest E-book Central.

- Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Barnes & Noble Inc., 2006.
- Reynolds, Kimberly, et al. *Contemporary Classics of Children's Literature: Frightening Fiction*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2001.
- Russell, Danielle. "Unmasking M(other)hood: Third-Wave Mothering in Gaiman's *Coraline* and *MirrorMask*." *Feminism in the Worlds of Neil Gaiman*, 2012, pp. 161-176.
- Schwartz, Alvin. *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*. Scholastic Inc., 1981.
- Sexton, Anne. *Transformations*. Mariner Books, 2001.
- Smith, Hazel. *The Writing Experiment: Strategies for Innovative Creative Writing*. Allen & Unwin Press, 2005.
- Stephens, John, and Robyn McCallum, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2013.
- Stein, R.L. *Goosebumps Retro Stream Collection*. Scholastic Inc., 2015.
- Tatar, Maria. *Off with Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood*. Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Tsao, Ya-Lun. "Gender Issues in Young Children's Literature." *Reading Improvement*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2008, pp. 108-14. *Academic Search Premier*.
- Waller, Alison, *Constructing Adolescence in Fantastic Realism*. Routledge, 2011.
- Warner, Marina, *No Go, the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling, and Making Mock*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999.
- Wright, Betty Ren. *The Doll House Murders*. Holiday House; Reissue Edition, 2008.
- Zipes, Jack. *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, and the Culture Industry*. Routledge,

***The Conjuring of Strange Creative Mischief: Twisted Retellings***

“Tame wolves are sometimes the most dangerous of them all. Dragons do exist. And children must learn how to beat them somewhere. Why not in the pages of a book?”

– Jessica R. McCort, *Reading in the Dark: Horror in Children’s Literature and Culture*

## The Caterpillar

Once upon a midnight hour,  
I laid amongst a field of wildflowers.  
As each one slumbered  
I pondered their immortal stature.  
They stood still...still and content.  
Still...  
Content...

I gazed up towards the somber night.  
Not a star in sight, for the only light  
to be seen  
was from a crescent moon  
that smiled down at me.

I laid silent and isolated.  
For each second that passed  
reminded me of the late hour  
as I peered from flower to flower.  
Immersed in their stature  
I yearned to hear their quaint words.  
A voice...  
A whisper...  
A sound...  
As heavy lids drew over my weary eyes,  
I suddenly heard a subtle whisper.

“Who disturbs this silent hour?” I clamored.  
I held my breath,  
Waiting...  
Waiting...  
Waiting...for an answer.  
It must be the wind I thought, and nothing more.  
Convinced my mind was playing tricks,  
I laid back amongst the flowers to enter a silent slumber.

As I edged near a dream like state,  
I suddenly heard a gentle  
But unsettling murmur.  
Arising in a trembling state I spoke out  
to the darkness, “Who speaks to me at this late hour?”  
Peering through the dark canvas, my mind began to fill with doubt.  
When suddenly I noticed a curious entity not too far out.

A white rose gleamed in the moonlight.  
Beckoning me to admire its marvelous sight.  
Entranced, I arose  
to explore this mysterious and captivating rose.

As I grew closer...  
closer...  
and closer...  
I asked, “Did you speak a word during this late hour?”  
A simple remark would suffice,

but still it stood...

Still and nothing more.

“Curiouser and Curiouser” I said out loud.

Turning back towards my wildflower bed

I suddenly heard a grim voice behind me that said...

“*Whooo are Youuuuu?*” and nothing more.

Entranced by this strange and curious voice I turned back.

Peering intently towards the ghastly white rose

I noticed just there

upon its stem

was a vibrant blue caterpillar that said once again,

“*Whooo are Youuuuu?*”

Amazed by this curious wonder

I faintly replied to the caterpillar “I beg your pardon sir, but I hardly know.”

As I waited for his reply, he slowly inched his way up

towards the white petals of the precious flower,

while his slick skin glowed like a gem from the moon’s eerie smile.

As I watched him inch closer...

closer...

and closer...towards the resting white rose I cautioned him

to not destroy its fragile innocence.

Carless of my cautioning words,

He continued to inch his way slowly and steadily over each delicate petal.

He caressed each petal with his body.

Stroking...

Stroking...

Stroking...

the velvet white skin.

He inhaled each of the petals intoxicating aroma.

Breathing....

Breathing...

Profoundly.

He began to taste the white rose

with a puncturing bite.

Savoring the oozing sweetness of innocence.

Filling his greed with delight.

I pleaded and pleaded... "Please Sir...do not harm this precious white rose"

But he simply ignored

and only tore...

Growing tired of the caterpillar's arrogance

I threatened to knock it down to find its ominous

Grave upon the dirt floor.

As I awaited its reply it suddenly began to tear and rip

apart the white rose from bottom to top.

Causing the helpless petals to drop.

"Oh Please! Please! Do not destroy this rose!"

I pleaded

But it simply would not stop.

"Whooo are Youuuu?" was all it replied.

Angered with rage I swung my arm across

To rid myself of this horrid fiend and send  
It to its eternal grave.

Once the caterpillar was lost from my vision.  
I quickly plucked the white rose from its ghastly dirt prison.  
Holding the rose close  
I could see each small sharp protruding spike.  
Thorns that were meant to guard the vulnerable white petals  
from predators in the night.  
Thorns that prick and puncture the mind.  
They pricked  
poked,  
and finally punctured.  
A small drop of red fell from finger to petal.  
The white petal... painted red.  
The white rose was horribly damaged and now only bled.  
Maddened by this heinous act  
I searched the ground for the horrid creature  
Yearning to remove its head from its hideous core.

Fumbling around in the dirt,  
I suddenly heard another familiar voice behind me that said,  
*"Who are you?"*  
and nothing more.  
Turning in the darkness I could not see  
What spoke out to me.  
This voice was not of the caterpillar,

But something cold...

Something dark.

Feeling a fiery terror spark inside my heart

I turned once again to see

what spoke out to me

but nothing was there.

Causing me to ponder and wonder

“How could this be?”

Motionless and afraid

I glanced deep into the dark night canvas display

I shouted out

“Who are you!”

But no reply.

Stumbling slowly through the darkness

I realized there was no longer light.

For the moon suddenly vanished from sight.

I decided to leave this darkening place

For I realized I was no longer safe.

Unable to see

I walked slowly

With only my feet to guide me.

Inching my way through the dirt floor

I suddenly fell

Down

Down

Down

What seemed to be a trap.

I could not scream

For suddenly I began to feel a sensation deep within

I was falling...

Falling...

Falling...

Falling...

Down

what seemed to be an infinite (hole).

Light vanished as I continued to fall

Light itself seemed frightened of  
the vast emptiness that pulled me down.

As light scurried away

I felt as if my own self was beginning to fade.

I fell

and

Fell.

For what seemed

Like years.

But,

I could not

Tell.

Sound.

Was nowhere around.

I was falling

Deeper

And deeper

Underground.

I wondered.

Perhaps

I'll come out

On the other side

Where people

Walk upside down.

But,

Then,

I

Suddenly

Unexpectedly

Somehow

Just.

Stopped.

I landed in a garden that seemed forgotten  
 It was still and content  
 Still.  
 Content.  
 As I slowly walked through the prickling bushes  
 that surrounded me  
 I came upon a marvelous sight.  
 I had wandered into a rose garden filled with  
 picturesque red roses that made me  
 smile with delight.  
 I approached the closest arrangement of roses  
 When suddenly I noticed something strange...  
 Each rose dripped drops of red.  
 As if they had been cut and bled.  
 Reaching out to touch one of the roses  
 I embraced it fully in my grasp, and as I released it  
 My hand was covered in its wet sticky color.  
 Dripping  
 Dripping  
 Dripping  
 Red....  
 Horrified by this hastily sight I turned away to  
 depart.  
 When suddenly I ran into her...  
 The ruler of Hearts.  
 She seemed familiar,

but I could not say.  
 She was powerful with rage...  
 And she begged me to stay  
 But I explained  
 it was time for me to go on my way.  
 As we moved through the garden  
 I noticed a rose bush that was unpainted.  
 The roses were white.  
 Red was nowhere in sight.  
 I ventured towards the white rose bush  
 Immersed in their simplicity.  
 .  
 The ruler of hearts reached up to the bush  
 and plucked a white rose  
 quickly and harshly from its slumbering state.  
 She turned to me  
 with sorrow in her darkening eyes  
 holding out the  
 Abducted rose.  
 As an offering  
 For me to take.  
 As I took the white rose  
 Its protruding thorns pricked my skin  
 And released a small  
 red dew drop

that dripped...  
 and dripped...  
 The white rose  
 became painted  
 in my own red brassy blood  
 Turing towards  
 The ruler of hearts  
 For comfort, she  
 Suddenly became  
 a mirror.  
 That did not show a reflection...  
 but a memory.  
 I was lying in the night  
 amongst the wildflowers  
 with the moon's eerie light.  
 I was confused by this marvel  
 for as I peered closer I noticed  
 that I was not moving.  
 I was bloody and ragged  
 without a breath in sight.  
 I turned from the mirror.  
 In horror.  
 I searched for help.  
 But,

my reflection was gone.  
 and I knew something was  
 quite wrong.  
 Started and helpless  
 I began to sink down towards the  
 cold dirt floor.  
 I glanced back  
 To the glassy display.  
 But,  
 I was older.  
 I was cloaked in shades of red.  
 My reflection was  
 That of a  
 Queen  
 Her blistering eyes burned with  
 rage  
 While her crown was dripping  
 Drops of  
 Red.  
 I begged to return home.  
 But she...the queen  
 Simply replied,  
 "This.  
 This.  
 Is who  
 You're meant to be"

and nothing more.

## Tin Heart

Somber eternal woods  
is where I awoke.  
Surrounded by tormented branches  
deep in slumber,  
suddenly became disturbed from  
my innocent blunder.

Unsure of my surroundings  
my heart was furiously  
Pounding.  
Pounding..  
Pounding...

Then flame filled eyes peered  
from towering branches  
burning clear  
my deepest fear.

Beyond each demon tree  
an Emerald Empire  
was all I could see.  
It glistened beneath burning eyes of time.  
Projecting a sweet hymn  
of innocent crime.  
With only Emerald green

I knew

This was a place  
I had never seen.

i knew

i was forever paused.  
As time continued on, i could not.  
Like a broken hand of a clock  
i  
became  
paralyzed  
with taunting  
thoughts.

As i laid peacefully on the ground  
i realized i was lost  
In a forgotten world  
Never to be found.

As the beckoning green called out  
Suddenly, silver was all to be seen.  
A blistering figure suddenly emerged.  
A dweller of the night  
that

Shined  
and  
Shined  
had  
arrived.

With axe in hand  
Chopping and slashing.  
Fear suddenly  
ceased,

You  
were freed  
from the taunting  
forests grasp.

This unfamiliar dweller  
Made entirely of silver tin  
Offered his axe.  
He simply said,  
“Destroy and make it the past.”

You  
grasped the wooden handle  
Clenching fingers tight.  
Ready for battle.

You

hacked and lashed  
the lurking face of fear.  
Destroying every demon tree  
that stood near.

You

prepared to swing  
the  
finishing strike  
but  
the last standing tree  
begged  
and  
begged  
*“think twice”*

The towering terrorizer

then  
bowed down  
to what seemed  
an invisible  
crown.  
Then  
silence echoed  
and  
was all around.

The towering tree  
pleaded  
and  
pleaded  
to end the blistering hacks  
then  
asked  
and  
asked

*“wicked enchantress what do you lack?”*

You

thought

and

thought.

What

do

You

*“lack?”*

One simple word appeared

Within

your

broken

Mind

“Home”

For

You

realized

You

were lost

forever intended

to brokenly...

roam.

You

cried out for help.

Asking for a way back

to

that enchanted place

called "*home*"

Then,

the tin dweller

calmed

with his

reassuring tone.

Taking a fallen piece of lumber

from the body

of a demon

who once slumbered.

The tin dweller

offered

# You

the broken piece

And simply said,

*“The Wizard.*

*It’s simple.*

*The Wizard*

*can save you from this homeless doom.*

*The Wizard*

*can build you a broom.”*

So,

You

F

O

L

L

O

W

E

D

The

Yellow

Through

A

Field

Of

Orange

P

O

P

P

I

E

S

To

The

Great

Empire

Of

Emerald

Where

He...

The Wizard...

grants every heart's

Desire

The Wizard  
Appeared  
Within a  
Fiery red flame  
Bellowing and bellowing,  
*"What is your name?"*

But,  
A  
Faded  
Name  
Was  
All  
That  
Remained.

Uncertain  
And  
Unafraid  
You  
Simply  
Said,  
*"Home"*

The wizard  
Thundered  
In a  
Fiery  
Rage  
*"That is no name!  
Now, tell me  
what it is  
You have  
come to  
say!"*

Taking  
the  
fallen  
piece  
of  
lumber  
you  
place  
it  
in front  
of  
The  
Wizard  
who  
speaks  
through  
a  
roaring

thunder,

*“What would You have me, the Great and Powerful  
do with this piece of rotten lumber?!”*

You

look to the

East

then

to

the

West

and

boldly

Say,

*“A broom.*

*A broom*

*will do.”*

But,

suddenly

flames

erupt from

all around

the room.

Melting

emerald gems

into

liquid doom.

The  
burning  
green  
liquid  
ruptured  
rapidly  
from all  
around.  
Scorching  
flesh  
and  
bone  
into emerald stone  
causing You  
to  
fall upon  
the  
ground.  
As  
smoke arose from  
The Wizards stage.  
You felt a boiling rage  
as You stormed away.  
But, you turned back  
to say,

*"You will never forget this day. You will see deceitful Wizard.*

*You will pay."*

Departing  
from the  
Emerald Empire

Your vision  
suddenly  
became less

blurry,

and

You

could

feel

a

deep

powerful

fury

from within.

You

became

determined

to

destroy the

one made

of silver tin.

Returning to  
the desolate  
forest  
You discovered  
the Dweller  
made of tin  
standing amongst  
a lumber wasteland.  
With him  
You saw  
a stitched  
body made  
entirely of straw.

You slowly crept towards  
a broken piece of lumber  
that held the weapon  
of the tin dweller.

Taking the wooden handle  
within Your emerald hands.

You  
swung  
a blistering  
strike  
unstitching  
body from head.  
As straw spread,  
the silver dweller fled.

Before he could flee  
you took up the ax  
and threw it straight into  
the tin dwellers back.  
He then only could plead  
asking to  
set him free.

But,  
With fury and rage  
you carved and tore  
his tin chest apart  
revealing a  
shimmering silver  
heart.

You took the silver heart within Your hand.  
and declared Your power over  
this Western Wasteland.

With straw  
and  
heart in hand  
You vowed  
to create  
The most powerful  
Weapons  
in all the land.  
With straw and lumber  
You built  
Your broom.

With the heart  
of the tin dweller  
You produced  
A pair of silver slippers  
With more power  
Than that  
Dreadful  
deceitful  
wizard.

Looking up towards the clearing night

It was time to take flight.

I

Will

Fly

Through

The

Western skies

And finally

Take a stand

With broom in hand

I

will

rule

this

western land.

### **When a Witch Shatters a Lion**

Winter found me. Just a body. Skin and Bone. Fading sou. Winter. Body. Skin. Bone. Soul. Winter covered me in a blanket of snow. My heart drank the blistering cold. Skin. Bone. Creatures gathered all around. Winter. Snow. Heart. Cold. Around. Curious. Unafraid. No sound. You. First to approach. Your valiant mane danced with blistering winds. While blue iced eyes spoke. Bitter Lies. You. Valiant. Blistering. Iced. You. Ruptured my core. Spilling my emptiness upon the winter floor. My body a canvas. Bare. A frozen statue. Eyes were meant to care. But, yours only stare. You. Stare. They. Stare. And. Stare. Ruptured. Emptiness. Winter floor. Body. Canvas. Statue.

Icy solitude. Graceful. Disaster. My words Muddled.  
While Your words thundered. Solitude. You. Words. Disaster.  
Your words thundered, she is flesh, and flesh is soft. Delicate. Vulnerable.  
she is flesh, and flesh is soft. She, with long piercing white hair.  
she is flesh, and flesh is soft. she, with gleaming gold eyes.  
she, is flesh and flesh is soft. she, with a pale mouth.  
she is flesh, and flesh is soft. she, with translucent skin made of glass.  
she is flesh, and flesh is soft. she, a fragile specimen.  
she is flesh, and flesh is soft. Winter. covered me. Protected me.  
But. You. You. Tortured me. Winter. covered me.  
But, You. Melted me. Revealing me. For all to see.

Creatures gathered. All around. No breath. No Sound. Prowling my body. Creatures. Breath. Sound. Up and down. my body. Up. Down. A Window. A Museum. A Tool. my Body. Window. Museum. Tool. Body. A playground. Meant for who? You? For who? Boldly. You roared. Melting the winter floor. You. Roared. Floor. Your claws. Sharp and hard. Suddenly. Tore. Claws. Roared. Tore. "*Confess.*" "*Confess.*" You roared. "*Confess your unnatural flesh.*" she, a fragile specimen. she, bleeds. she, is weakness. she. Specimen. she. Bleeds. she. she, is greed. Winter covered me. But, You. You. Exposed me. You circled. Around. And. Around. Teasing. Tormenting. Testing. No sound. Around and around. Waiting. No sound. Waiting. Winter covered. But, You. You. Exposed. You. Desired more. Claws and jaw. Prepared to slash. You. Leaped for the attack.

You. Clenched down tight. You. Desired. Exposed. Desired. Expecting blood. From your first bite. Clenched. Bite. You. Blood. But, You. Didn't realize. My glass body cannot break. Body. Ice. Glass. Only take...

Your greatness

Crumbled

C r u m b l e d

C

R

U

M

B

L

E

D

Teeth

S h a t t e r e d

Shattered.

Pieces.

Weakness.

I took your only power.

you shook. you ran.

Power.

you.

coward.

Winter. Covered.

Winter.

you.

you exposed.

you craved My flesh.

Craved.

Flesh.

Blood.

Cold.

But,

Winter transformed.

My Body.  
Once skin and bone.  
Turned to eternal stone.  
I confess.  
My body.  
I confess.  
Undressed.  
I confess.  
Exquisite.  
I confess.  
Resilient.  
Upon the winter floor.  
Teeth.  
Of the great coward.  
In pieces.  
you.  
can no longer roar.  
Winter.  
Froze my flesh.  
Winter.  
I.  
Roar.  
Winter.  
Hardened my pain.  
Winter.  
Revealed.

This Body Is Mine To Reign

“Why it’s a Looking-glass book, of course!  
And, if I hold it up to a glass, the words will all go the right way again”  
- Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

## Shards

Mirror, Mirror

in my hand

tell me

who

should

rule

this

land?

Tell the crowd how you  
write on mirrors

To redo

The past

Tell them how you

hope each word

will fade into the glass.

Look at me.  
 Look at my  
 reflection.  
 Look how she  
 awaits,  
 For her day  
 of  
 glorious  
 redemption.

Reflecting terrors  
 Is what has been  
 seen,  
 But tell them this,  
 "A dream  
 is what  
 I  
 shall be."

Mirror, Mirror

in my hand

who

should

rule

this

land?

I am the power

within this glass.

Tell them,

tell the crowd

I am the ruler

who will wear

the crown.

Mirror you are  
truth,

but a thief

of my youth.

Mirrors speak

Only the

language

of time.

Reflecting

A deep rooted

fear

of a once

past lie.

powerful sorcerers.  
are a much to  
claimed we  
By those who  
glass fortress.  
trapped behind this  
We have been  
to the ground.  
tied  
and  
been addressed  
have  
I know and I  
Tell the crowd

Mirror, Mirror  
 In my hand  
 remain  
 me  
 why  
 I  
 should  
 be the ruler  
 of this land.

Your majesty  
 is a  
 piece of  
 a  
 greater  
 game.  
 a  
 game of the  
 Name  
 Your majesty,  
 it's time  
 to play.

So,  
as time dims  
my reflection  
begins.  
Mirror, Mirror  
in my  
hand.  
Why  
should  
I  
rule  
this land?

A

land run by

rules where only

knights and kings

reign

is all in the

past.

Shades this past.

Release this truth.

Keep who

is meant

to rule

no longer

trapped behind

this Glass.

Land!  
of this  
ruler  
rightful  
the  
you release  
I command  
in my hand  
Mirror  
Mirror,

Shards of  
glass crumble  
and fall  
into place  
revealing  
who  
should  
reign over  
this  
Mad  
Miraculous  
Land

Land.  
Of  
This type  
Rule  
To  
Order  
In  
Mad  
Must be  
For You  
Be weary  
But,

Found.  
Be  
To  
Mean  
Never  
Who was  
The one  
beaten ground.  
from the  
rises  
suddenly  
A Queen

The crowd will soon hail my name.  
See.  
And  
Just wait  
Rules of the game.  
The  
Will Break  
And  
I am released  
Be trapped.  
Will I  
Longer  
No

Mirror, Mirror

In my hand

I

Now

Reign

Over

This

Mad

Miscellaneous

Land.

## Appendix

### *Poem A:*

I landed in a garden that seemed forgotten

It was still and content

Still.

Content.

As I slowly walked through the prickling bushes

that surrounded me

I came upon a marvelous sight.

I had wandered into a rose garden filled with

picturesque red roses that made me

smile with delight.

I approached the closest arrangement of roses

When suddenly I noticed something strange...

Each rose dripped drops of red.

As if they had been cut and bled.

Reaching out to touch one of the roses

I embraced it fully in my grasp, and as I released it

My hand was covered in its wet sticky color.

Dripping

Dripping

Dripping

Red...

Horrified by this ghastly sight I turned away to depart.

When suddenly I ran into her...  
The ruler of Hearts.  
She seemed familiar,  
but I could not say.  
She was powerful with rage...  
And she begged me to stay  
But I explained  
it was time for me to go on my way.

As we moved through the garden  
I noticed a rose bush that was unpainted.  
The roses were white.  
Red was nowhere in sight.  
I ventured towards the white rose bush  
Immersed in their simplicity.

The ruler of hearts reached up to the bush  
and plucked a white rose  
quickly and harshly from its slumbering state.

She turned to me  
with sorrow in her darkening eyes  
holding out the  
Abducted rose.  
As an offering  
For me to take.

As I took the white rose

Its protruding thorns pricked my skin

And released a small

red dew drop

that dripped...

and dripped...

The white rose

became painted

in my own red brassy blood

Turing towards

The ruler of hearts

For comfort, she

Suddenly became

a mirror.

That did not show a reflection...

but a memory.

I was lying in the night

amongst the wildflowers

with the moon's eerie light.

I was confused by this marvel

for as I peered closer I noticed

that I was not moving.

I was bloody and ragged

without a breath in sight.

I turned from the mirror.

In horror.  
I searched for help.  
But,  
my reflection was gone.  
and I knew something was  
quite wrong.

Startled and helpless  
I began to sink down towards the  
cold dirt floor.

I glanced back  
To the glassy display.  
But,  
I was older.  
I was cloaked in shades of red.  
My reflection was  
That of a  
Queen  
Her blistering eyes burned with rage  
While her crown was dripping  
Drops of  
Red.  
I begged to return home.  
But she...the queen  
Simply replied,  
“*This.*”

*This.*

*Is who*

*You're meant to be"*

and nothing more.

*Poem B:*

Mirror, Mirror  
 in my hand  
 tell me  
 who  
 should  
 rule  
 this  
 land?

*Tell the crowd how you write on mirrors*

*To redo*

*The past*

*Tell them how you*

*hope each word*

*will fade into the glass.*

Look at me.

Look at my reflection.

Look how she awaits,

For her day

of

glorious redemption.

*Reflecting temptress*

*Is what has been seen,*

*But tell them this,*

*“A queen  
is what  
I  
shall be.”*

Mirror, Mirror  
in my hand  
who  
should  
rule  
this  
land?

*I am the power  
within this glass.  
Tell them,  
tell the crowd  
I am the ruler  
who will wear  
the crown.*

Mirror you are truth,  
but a thief  
of my youth.  
Mirrors speak  
Only the language  
of time.  
Reflecting

A deep rooted  
fear  
of a once  
past lie.

*Tell the crowd  
how you and I  
have  
been suppressed  
and  
tied  
to the ground.  
We have been  
trapped behind this  
glass fortress.  
By those who  
claimed we  
are a much to  
powerful sorceress.*

Mirror, Mirror  
In my hand  
remind  
me  
why  
*I*  
should

be the ruler  
of this land.

*Your majesty  
is a  
piece of  
a  
greater  
Game.  
a  
game of the  
Name.  
Your majesty,  
it's time  
to play.*

So,  
as time dims  
my reflection begins.  
Mirror, Mirror  
in my  
hand.  
Why  
Should  
I  
rule  
this land?

*A*

*land run by  
rules where only  
knights and kings  
reign  
is all in the  
past.*

*Shade this past.  
Release this truth.*

*Keep who  
is meant  
to rule  
no longer  
trapped behind  
this Glass.*

Mirror, Mirror  
in my hand  
I command  
you release the  
rightful  
ruler  
of this  
Land!

Shards of  
glass crumble  
and fall  
into place  
revealing  
who  
should  
reign over  
this  
Mad  
Miraculous  
Land  
But,  
Be weary  
For You  
Must be  
Mad  
In  
Order  
To  
Rule  
This type  
Of  
Land.

A Queen  
suddenly  
rises  
from the  
beaten ground.

The one  
Who was  
Never  
Meant  
To  
Be  
Found.  
No  
Longer  
Will I  
Be trapped.  
I am released  
And  
Will Break  
The  
Rules of the game.  
Just wait  
And  
See.

The crowd will soon hail my name.

Mirror, Mirror

In my hand

I

Now

Reign

Over

This

Mad

Miraculous

Land.