

ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
FILM AND TELEVISION MASTER'S PROGRAM

Children, Monsters and Mothers
Where the Wild Things Are and Beasts of the Southern Wild

Ece Bulut

113603004

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Istanbul

2017

Başlık (orijinali)
Başlık (Türkçesi/İngilizcesi)

Öğrenci Adı Soyadı
Öğrenci Numarası

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Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih : 29.12.2017

Toplam Sayfa Sayısı: 64

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

- 1) Çocuk
- 2) Canavar
- 3) Anne
- 4) Oteki
- 5) Abjekt

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

- 1) Child
- 2) Monster
- 3) Mother
- 4) Other
- 5) Abject

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ABSTRACT

Main purpose of this thesis is to conduct an analysis of the relationship between the child protagonists, monster and mother figures in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Spike Jonze, 2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Benh Zeitlin, 2012). The relationships between these figures are examined through Robin Wood's ideas on the 'other' (1979) and Julia Kristeva's theory of abject (1982). The psychoanalytical approach in the text consists of formation of the other through repression and formation of the self and separation from the mother through abjection. The borders separating the approved and 'not-approved', as well as 'mine' or 'I' and 'not-mine' and 'not-I' are common separators for both the other and abject. This communality provides the plane to handle otherness and abject together. The child protagonists and the monster figures are examined as the others, relying on ideas of invented categories and meaning machines. The depiction of the child protagonists as feral children help to build a 'human' and 'not-human' duality that also shapes around the border of approved and not-approved. This characteristic also functions as a similarity between the monster and the child. Beside the similarities the child and the monster have, the monster figures and the mother figures are examined as cultural and social abjects. The similarities between the mother and the monster are handled with respect to their relationship to the child. Food loathing, which is the 'most archaic abject' according to Kristeva, is used to build the links between monsters and mothers by the act of eating, consuming, involving in one's body. The thesis shows a set of relations and similarities common to child protagonists, monster and mother figures through reading scenes from the two films.

Key Words: Child, monster, mother, other, abject, border, separation, eating, feral

ÖZET

Bu tezin ana amacı *Where the Wild Things Are* (Spike Jonze, 2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Benh Zeitlin, 2012) filmlerinin çocuk kahramanları, canavarları ve anne figürleri arasındaki ilişkinin analizini gerçekleştirmektir. Bu karakterler ve figürler arasındaki ilişki Robin Wood'un (1979) 'öteki' kavramı ve Julia Kristeva'nın (1982) *abject* kavramı çerçevesinde ele alınacaktır. Film okumalarında kullanılan psikanalitik yaklaşım baskılama ile benliğin şekillendirilmesi ve *abject* ile anneden ayrılma süreçlerine odaklanır. Onaylanan olguları onaylanamayanlardan ayıran, 'ben'i 'ben olmayan'dan ayıran ayraçlar hem 'öteki' kavramı hem de *abject* teorisinde ortaktır. Bu ortaklık öteki kavramını ve *abject* teorisini birlikte ele almak için uygun bir zemin ortaya koyar. Çocuk ve canavar figürleri yaratılmış kavramlar ve anlam makinaları olarak değerlendirilip öteki olarak ele alınırlar. Çocuk kahramanların vahşi çocuklar olarak resmedilmeleri, 'insan' ve 'insan olmayan' ikileminde 'onaylanan' ve 'onaylanmayan' kavramlarıyla da örtüşür. Bu canavarlar ve çocuklar arasında ortaklık sağlayan bir karakteristik özellik haline gelir. Çocuğa ve canavara ait benzerliklerin yanı sıra canavarlar ve anneler de sosyal ve kültürel *abject*ler olarak ele alınırlar. Canavar ve anne arasındaki benzerlikler çocuk figürleri ile olan ilişkileri üzerinden değerlendirilir. Kristeva'ya göre temel bir *abject* olan yemekten iğrenme kavramı, yiyerek tüketmek, yiyerek vücuda ekleyerek diğerinin varlığını sonlandırma ekseninde her iki filmde de sık sık tekrar eder. Yemek eylemi çerçevesinde canavarlar ve anneler arasında bağlantı kurmak için kullanılır. Bu tez her iki filmde sahnelerin okunması ile çocuklar, canavarlar ve anneler arasında bağ kurmayı amaçlar.

INTRODUCTION

There is a certain relationship between children and monsters. It can be a relationship of fear as well as a relationship of resemblance. The monsters that hide under beds or crawl out of walls when children are alone might not be the monsters from outside but the ones from within. Maybe this could be the explanation to why in daylight, when children are not afraid of monsters, they release their own monsters and become “menaces”.

Monsters have always been there, either within us, or out there chasing, and sometimes facing us. They were there in the 4000 year old Sumerian myth *Gilgamesh* as *Humbaba*. They are in most of the Greek and Roman mythology, as *Chimera*, *Harpies*, *Satyr* and many more from all around the world. They were the ones to make the hero, because the hero could not be the brave one without them. The hero needs the supernatural to fight. All the unordinary, a-normal and deviant are the ‘super’ naturals. They are either out there or within. They make the hero once they interact.

Based on this argument, I will try to show the relationship of monsters and children as a relationship of partnership and resemblance. Their similarities make them counterparts. I will start by looking at depictions of children and monsters in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Spike Jonze, 2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Benh Zeitlin, 2012). I will try to show the overlapping patterns of relationships both child protagonists have with monsters or monstrous beasts. Afterwards, I will move onto the relationships of the protagonists with their mothers to show another layer of similarities between monsters and mothers using Julia Kristeva’s abject theory.

One of the questions to start with is: 'What is a monster?' Monsters come in different forms and shapes, but they have similar functions. They create a feeling of fear and intimidation. They are the exact opposite, mirror image of everything that is good and comforting. They are the Hyde to Jekyll. When we look at archaic definitions of monsters, the first thing we see is a dual system of thought that separates good from bad. According to D. S. Lamb;

Among primitive peoples every material thing, every action, and every form of thought had its deity or demon. If we divide everything, visible and invisible, actions and models of thought, into good and bad, helpful and hurtful, we shall find that almost without exception the good or helpful things were personified by forms that are natural or normal and comely, and the bad or hurtful by forms that are unnatural (so-called), abnormal, and uncomely, perhaps even hideous and monstrous. (Lamb, 1900, p.278)

The tendency to create or define a monster was always there along with the need for them, residing right next to the tendency to define everything in duality, as good or bad. Everything that differs from the norm needs a label to be defined. Searching on an answer to the same question, a linguistic explanation by John Cech (2015) shows the relationship between monsters and human:

The very word for monster goes back to ancient terms for an "omen," a "portent," or a "prediction." Our earliest taxonomy for monsters comes to us from ancient Babylonia, where there was an attempt to categorise malformed foetuses into three groups: as monsters in excess (those with six fingers); in "default" (four fingers) or "doubled" (two thumbs). (Cech, 2015)

The monster is the malformed, unordinary, uncommon one. The one that is not normal. Depending on what the 'normal' is, or depending on what people desire normal to be, monsters change shapes, colours and functions. As Jack Judith Halberstam puts it "monsters are meaning machines" (Halberstam, 1995, p. 21). Monsters identify the 'other' than the normal.

Children as young humans but not yet adults are also the awkward, odd ones. They are not adults, they are not yet considered as complete and whole

people, who are accomplished enough to fulfill the definition of being a person, therefore they require another category. Children function in their own rhythm with a different set of rules, like monsters. They cannot find a stable, fixed place in social constructs; the definition of a child changes according to the perspective at given time. James R. Kincaid in his book *Erotic Innocence* (2000) states that “our child” did not exist before the seventeenth century. The child started emerging as a social and biological category, around the eighteenth century. The evolution of the child brought it to a place that “(...) we can watch as the modern child takes shape, divorcing itself from the adult gradually until it is very nearly an alien, unknowable and not quite real.” (Kincaid, 2000, p.53) Different social norms and perspectives define the child as a different thing depending on the need at the time. The child as we see it now is different from us, it is an alienated, ‘othered’ creature as Kincaid describes. Joseph L. Zornado, whose book *Inventing the Child* (2001) will be my reference, has the same line of thought as Kincaid and states that the Child is an invented entity.

There are several different attributes given to the child since Victorian Era. The category of child was being held open for construction as desired. Enlightenment period virtues required an innocent child, as illustrated in a painting of Reynold, where the child was dressed all in white and pastel colours, sitting in nature. Freud rejected the idea of asexual child, which was embraced by the Romantics, and came up with Oedipus Complex theory. Mark Twain’s children Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn were rather savage. The child became untamed in full sense with Victor, known as the *Wild Boy of Aveyron*, a child who grew up in forests with wild animals. The French government at the time shifted this meaning by using it as an opportunity for their education policies. The child with the focus on future and confidence in power of education represented the new world.

The concept of child bears additional meaning and changing attributes; it has been innocent, wild, savage, hopeful, it has even been the 'dream' and the future. The set of characteristics the child carries varied throughout time. The state of child-ness, or what a child is, was also a matter of needs. It has its own meaning machine like monsters have their own, along the lines of Halberstam's (1995) definition.

I used Halberstam's (1995) definition of meaning machines for monsters and listed my reasons for considering children as meaning machines with their own technologies, similar to monsters. I argue that both children and monsters, with their similar functions, are counterparts. They are both "the other". Robin Wood (1979) defines otherness as anything that bourgeois ideology can neither accept nor get rid of completely. According to Wood (1979), bourgeois ideology has two ways to deal with otherness; rejecting and annihilating it or rendering it safe and assimilating it. The psychoanalytic significance of the other is "(.) that it functions not simply as something external to the culture or the self, but as what is repressed in the self and projected outward in order to be hated and disowned" (Wood, 1979, p.27). The other is not something new, strange or from outside. The other is just the reflection of the disliked, repressed self in another. Wood, while listing versions of other in American culture, includes women, the proletariat, other cultures, ethnic groups within the culture, alternative ideologies, deviations from sex norms and children.

In this sense monsters have other shared traits with children, besides being meaning machines; both are othered and classified as not generic. So it is very likely that these two will be making friends. Yet, the idea of a monster is still horrifying to most children. Their encounters are mostly evoking fear in the child. Most of the time, the child thinks that the monster is there to 'eat' the child. Lots of mythical, traditional and modern monsters have their terrifying powers from the powers of consumption of souls and bodies. Some examples to list are Dementors of J.K. Rowling from *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of*

Azkaban (1999) , the ghostly beings living in Azkaban that feed on peoples' fears and give a kiss that turn their victims into shells of bodies, Jabberwock of Lewis Carroll from *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) has "jaws that bite" and "claws that catch", *The Red Riding Hood* is the most famous example with a child protagonist, who is saved from the stomach of the monstrous bad wolf. Being consumed is being non-existent. That threat of non-existence is the source of the fear monsters generate in children.

Making friends with the other is a very particular change because it not only means to develop an understanding of the enemy but also means overcoming fears within oneself. This feeling of familiarity changes the 'othered' status, both in human and of the monster too. It changes the monster into the one that is like the child and liked by the child. The feeling of 'familiarity' and its relation to the word 'family' also speaks for the parallel relationship I see between the mother and the child like the monster and the child. The relationship between the mother and the child is never a single dimensional, solely positive, full-of-love relationship.

At this moment I turn to Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection as an analytical tool. Abjection is the primary form of repression according to Kristeva. Before abjection the infant is in the state of *chora*, where the child considers itself in unity and same with all. Abjection is the moment that the self of the child and others including the mother, get separated. It is the initiator of the formation of the "I", and it's a violent, traumatic break. Yet, abject is something that the self does not experience only once, but continually lives with. Just like the other, defined by Wood, the abject is persistently there, neither accepted nor demolished.

The primal other for Kristeva is the maternal and the mother. The first and most important abject and the fascination and attraction to it, as well as the disgust and repulsion it creates, never leaves us. The first thing that people

“othered” is the maternal. The mother is the initial “other”. This very first other, also creates a negative feeling as well as love in the child. And this negative feeling, in several ways similar to the fear of the monster, manifests itself in a form of termination. The fear of being eaten is not a fear that comes up for monsters only, mothers can consume children too. The source that feeds, nourishes, creates life and keeps it going can also cease it. The desire to feel the comfort of chora can result in going into a phase where the self was not separated from the mother yet. The love and desire for the mother is also a longing for a stage where the self was not separated from the mother hence the child and the mother were one, the child was inside the mother as if consumed by her. This very complicated, multilayered relationship reflects itself to several aspects of life. It is hard to point to because of the unpleasant dynamics it entails that bring a mechanism of repression along with it. Therefore depicting it through stories of children and monsters is a suitable symbolism that the two films I want to work on are built around. I admire the way the two films I will be working on handle a very delicate issue like this, without creating a heavy, gloomy atmosphere. Instead they reflect the vulgar, rough and disturbing qualities of abject in a way that can still be appreciated.

I will be looking into film adaptation of the phenomenal children’s book *Where The Wild Things Are*, written by Maurice Sendak (1963) and directed by Spike Jonze, together with *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) directed by Benh Zeitlin, which is also adapted from a children’s theatre play. I will be focusing on the relationship between protagonist Max and the wild things and Hushpuppy and the aurochs as the monsters through Robin Wood’s ideas about the other. I will try to make a reading of the relationship of Max and his mother as well as Hushpuppy and her mother based on abject theory of Kristeva (1982). I will try to lay similarities and overlapping traits these figures exhibit, to argue that the child, the monster and the mother all show traits of the other and abject.

My intention will be to show that there are common elements in these two films and how they relate to otherness and abject theories. I will be looking at the fear and attraction the child protagonists have for the monsters. Their fear of being left alone and being eaten, ceasing to exist and how that evolves into acceptance and courage after overcoming their fears will be in my focus. I will use abject theory to examine the relationship between child protagonists and monsters as well as the relationship between the mother figures. I will also use the recurring eating theme, relying on Kristeva's (1982) ideas on food repulsion as one of the most archaic forms of abject. I will be making points on eating, consuming, adding to one's body as a way of bringing the other's self to a halt, to stop it from existing and how that relates to abject, which plays around both *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012).

I will try to trace fears that are embedded into childhood with feelings of admiration, love and disgust they entail. I will be using Julia Kristeva's Theory of abject as a tool in trying to link these to the symbols of mother and maternal, which are depicted in these two films. My methods will be textual analysis and discourse analysis.

I consider *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) to be exceptional films to work on with abject theory. Most of the works produced on film and abject theory use gothic, horror, splatter/slasher cinema genres. The reason might be the obvious repulsion and intimidation these genres create with grotesque and graphic scenes. The two films I choose, on the other hand, are rather 'clean'. 'Child friendly' is possibly another way to describe them. I find this rather ironic, considering that I aim to make points of the children as monsters and mothers as no different to monsters as sources of repulsion in frame of this thesis. Both *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) give precious material to work on. The presentation of the mother figures and monsters make these films a rich source

of application, to show the links between what Wood (1979) describes as the other and Kristeva (1982) describes as abject.

The monster is the dark side of ones own character. The self tries to push away everything it rejects and feels ashamed of. Those rejected, repressed dark aspects make the shadows and the monsters. The dark side of the self can be seen in Cain or Encode, or Gollum, or the werewolf, the serpent, or Lucifer. Humanity has been putting great effort into teaching children how to deal with the dark side, the shadow or the monster.

The 'monsters' are also the rejected groups in societies. The immigrants, the sexually deviant, those who do not take part in the production and consumption mechanisms are the monsters.

The relationship with the rejected, the not-appreciated ones is a tool to understanding what one cannot accept about oneself, personally and socially. The monster, or whatever that cannot be accepted, is not something from outside, it is and it was always within, from inside. The only way to get trough the fear and intimidation the monster creates is to meet the monster, understand it and accept it.

Both characters, Max and Hushpuppy, follow their shadows, meet them and see themselves in them. Then accepting the nature of their existence, they let the monsters (and mothers) be.

Their entanglement with the monsters is an analogy for their relationship with their mothers. The mother, who was once no different then the self, becomes another person, the other, the abject. Max runs away from home and his mother, to go to where the Wild Things live, Hushpuppy's mother had left after her birth so she has to take on a quest to find her. Both child protagonists deal with monsters in order to come to a consensus their

mothers. The monsters become a symbol of all things that are wild and intimidating, at the same time they become symbols of all things not accepted, including the mother. The other is not only the monster or the mother, the shadow and the child who owns the shadow are also the others.

I find great importance in meeting one's demons, making peace with them and letting them be. I am amazed by the achievement of the two films, that they manage to tell a very delicate and complicated process in their own simple ways.

1. CHAPTER ONE

1.1. The Imagined Child

Finding an undeniable definition or explanation of the child is not possible. The answers to the question change depending on when and where this question is asked. Even finding an agreed upon answer at the same time or on the same geography is not always possible. The only thing that never changed is the people who make the definition. It is always adults.

Therefore, the child is considered an invented concept. The adult invents the child by defining what a child is, depending on the dominant ideology. Then the child, which experiences “the human culture” and “human style of relationship” at the hands of the adult, produces the dominant culture. This way “the adult invents the child and constructs the world” (Zornado, 2011, p.3)

Different dominant ideologies and changing cultures required different definitions to the child and invented different children, with certain common traits. As it will be impossible to go over all here, I will limit my examples to the Western culture and to the last couple of hundred years, as the films I will later use to base my arguments are from the last two decades and both from North America. I will base my arguments and supporting examples on Joseph Zornado’s (2001) ideas of “Invented Child”.

Zornado (2001) argues that both biological restrictions and social ideologies interrupt and separate the child from the mother and the father. Loss of body contact as well as dualist ideologies that separate the body from the self create a “detached child”, according to Zornado (2001). He argues that this type of parenting is perfected by Western ideologies to a limit that it became the “ambient reality” and “ideological obviousness”. He adds that “Blaming

the child for adult detachment is a central element to this tradition”(Zornado, 2001, p.5). According to Christian worldview, Adam’s sin defined the human race as a fallen race, Eve’s disobedience made human miserable. One of the biggest lessons from the book of Genesis is that there is no bigger sin or fault than the disobedience of the son to the father. The body never became neutral after this. It was the site of sinful and oedipal desires and required taming by the mind. Expressions of emotions are considered improper behaviour or misbehaviour. The child learns early on from the adult world that the culture will not approve this or that, although the rules are inconsistently applied. Teaching the child denial of human experiences, according to Zornado (2001), results in repression and control becomes ideal. I will later come back to repressions and their relation to ‘otherness’.

Looking at the stages of the so-called progressive Western ideologies and culture, influence of the Christian ideology and its repressive, punishment oriented influences can be traced for centuries. English colonisation of the New World brought the Puritan ideologies there too. In the New World, human relations had a hierarchical patriarchy, with apostate, native and the child at the bottom of it. In the new setting where the institutions and the civilisation that created the ideologies were a long way away, the family became more important for the production and regeneration of the dominant culture. The family, the congregation and the school were the institutions which believed that the punishment and violence done to children was “for their own good”. The adult world of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries defined the child’s “misbehaviour” as a result of its sinful, wilful and animal nature. Looking at early nineteenth century slavery and perspectives that govern the relationship between the slave and the master, similarities to the relationship of adult and child and teacher and student can be seen. Those in power, namely the law owner had a God-given right and responsibility to dominate those who were beneath him. “The slave was a “grown-up child” and should be treated as such, was a common euphemism of the time” (Zornado, 2001, p.25). Considering

that the slavery was abolished a hundred and fifty years ago, the relational structure between adult and the child continues; the child must obey the adult. Freud's work makes this clear, with it's child, "flawed from birth" (Zornado, 2001, p.28), like the Puritan child. According to Freud, unconscious mind and childhood experiences are connected and the drives of the child come from birth. He, according to some, is notorious for creating the sexual child in this manner.

Looking at James Kincaid's ideas from his argumentative work *Erotic Innocence* (2000), is important when talking about the sexual child. He defines the nineteenth century's American child as "The American Dream Child" and describes it as "(..) child of power, somehow in contact with sources of primal energy (not excluding sexual energy) adults would like both to deny and to claim as our own" (Kincaid, 2000, 63). He adds that the adults are never sure to worship this child or spank it. This child is the host of the savage children, like Tarzan or the boys from the book *Lord of the Flies* (Goldig, 1954), from nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This new, feral child is not like the pure and passive child of the Romantics. It is closer to the nature, it is not dressed in white, it is running around half naked covered in mud. It is wild and independent, at least in decision making. Kincaid, digests Freud's sexual child and the American Dream Child into a prepubescent child, idealised by adults as a reflection of their melancholy for their own lost innocent childhood. Yet he adds "The child's love, Freud asserts, is "boundless", demanding everything, which is attractive enough as an idea; but Freud also reminds us that the child's desire is infinite, has no concrete aim, and is thus always doomed to frustration" (Kincaid, 2000, p.72).

Talking on the sexuality of the invented child is tricky, not only because talking about children and sex is tricky as it is, but also because "dominant culture has a tendency to treat all children straight, while we culturally consider them asexual" (Cobb, 2005, p.120). The sexuality of the child is ignored and

repressed, if not interpreted as something else, like other repressed drives and social actions and characters. Closely linked to the concept of repression, and inseparable from it, is another concept that deserves mentioning; the other.

1.2. What Makes the Child the Other?

Repression, like all other psychological mechanisms, has several functions that enable us to go on with our lives, such as self-control, developing thought and memory processes, recognition and consideration of other people, as Robin Wood (1979) mentions in his article too. On the other hand, surplus repression is specific to a culture and functions as a mechanism of conditioning of people for certain roles. Repression tells us to control our feelings, surplus repression dictates what to feel. Keeping in mind that most of the repression is structured in the infancy, it is safe to say that basic repression makes us human as we define it and “surplus repression makes us into monogamous heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists”(Wood, 1979, p.25). He lists sexual energy, bisexuality, particularly female sexuality/creativity, and sexual children as the repressed categories of our society.

Inseparable from the concept of repression, comes concept of “the other”, which psychoanalysis deals intensively with.

Otherness represents that which bourgeois ideology cannot recognise or accept but must deal with (as Barthes suggests in *Mythologies*) in one of two ways: either by rejecting and if possible annihilating it, or by rendering it safe and assimilating it, converting it as far as possible into a replica of itself. The concept of Otherness can be theorized in many ways and on many levels. Its psychoanalytic significance resides in the fact that it functions not simply as something external to the culture or to the self, but also as what is repressed (though never destroyed) in the self and

projected outward in order to be hated and disowned. (Wood, 1979, p.27)

Along with other people, the Wood's list of the others include women, the proletariat, other cultures, ethnic groups within the culture, alternative ideologies and political systems, deviations from the ideological sexual norms like homosexuality and bisexuality and finally children.

Wood (1979) considers children to be the most oppressed section of the population, because liberating children without completely liberating ourselves is not possible. Supported by Freudian theories, the repressed within ourselves is the hated expression of ourselves in others. Repressing the child aims to make it into a replica of the creator who invented the child.

Literature and cinema which deals with the other has an easy to spot, basic pattern or formula, so to say. It is based on the relationship of the normality and the other, which might be any of the categories listed above or come in form of the monster. Whereas the normality has its defined and structured shape, the other or the monster can come in different forms, depending on the period and society's basic fears. These fears carry a disguise, similar to the way dreams use material from recent memory to express conflicts or desires that may go back to early childhood.

In some cases, the fears and the monster are not in disguise. It is depicted plainly as it is on the screen or described on the page. In most of these cases, the monster is staged with the child. The two films I will be handling in terms of otherness and abject theory are such examples. I will examine some scenes from *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) to show how the child protagonists and monsters are depicted as the other.

1.3. Children in *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*

I have used the term feral child to describe a certain type of child that came on stage in early nineteenth century. Although the term feral child is used by several people including Kincaid (2000) and queer theorists, the best known work on it is from Kenneth B. Kidd. His book *Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale* (2004) is about the fascination American culture has in boys. Kidd (2004) describes feral tales as a literally but still folkloric narrative of animal-human contact in which childhood has the leading role. Books by Horatio Alger and Mark Twain are prominent examples of the genre.

I see matching patterns and similarities between protagonist from the films I work on and feral children. But more than proving Max and Hushpuppy being feral children, the function of feral child and the link between the feral child and the other, the monster is in my focus. Michael Cobb on feral children says “(..) provoking all sorts of tensions about who will count as human, what will count as human, and whether or not conventional understandings of “civilisation” and morality will be either challenged or fortified by the feral boy and his story (..)” (2005, p.121) to describe the “inhumane” side to the feral child because it challenges the civilisation by falling out of the norms and dominant ideologies. And even so, adults do not know whether to spank it or adore it, as Kincaid (2000) commented.

Children’s representations on feral tales as well as the first image that comes to mind along with the feral child is a kid with the company of an animal, in nature. The wildness of the feral child is squeezed into the animal metaphor set in nature. The animal in picture represents the inhuman, the not-human. The allegiance with the animal allows the child to not grow up, but grow sideways. The teleological relationship with the adult and the dominant ideology is shifted. The feral, wild, animalistic, monstrous children give the

impression that they will never grow up, because what is defined as growing up is accepting the dominant ideology and not being the other any longer. I will try to show this connection of the child and the other with examples from *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012).

The introductory scenes from *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) are clear and direct examples to this. In *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012), Hushpuppy is seen sitting on the ground of an interior space, in her underwear and white, torn, dirty tank shirt. She is shaping a piece of mud with water into a strange form. Then the camera sees a tiny bird she's holding in her hand very close to her ear. She tries to place the bird onto the mud nest she made. The bird chirps. On a cut to the exterior we see a pig laying on the ground among some grass and car tires, sleeping. Hushpuppy enters the frame, she is in the same clothes with rubber boots. She touches the pig to feel the animal's heartbeat. This shot cuts to different views from the yard that she and her father live in with various animals and lots of industrial junk. She is seen holding different animals to her ear to listen to their heartbeats through her voiceover saying "All the time, everywhere, everything's hearts are beating and squirting and talking to each other in ways I can't understand". Her presentation with different animals in the yard is along the lines of feral children. The viewer is introduced to her relationship with animals before other human. She is depicted as a part of the society of animals, living in a very contemporarily wild surrounding with farm animals and industrial junk around them.

Max's introduction in *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) is more punk, compared to the calm of Hushpuppy, it's a lot of rumble and screaming and rolling around, trying to tell which tail belongs to the real dog and which to the human animal in wolf outfit. The scene opens with Max chasing the family pet in their home wearing a wolf outfit that will be an important part of his identity. He constantly screams, only stops for a brief moment to laugh in an

anti-heroic manner. The dog barks without a breath, it is not possible to say whether he is fine with what is going on or not. As they come down the stairs Max takes a fall. Without stopping to see if there are any causalities, he keeps going after the dog holding a fork in his hand to the camera and screaming with his mouth open to show all his teeth. They go around the living room, stepping on couches and jumping on the table. The chase seems to end when Max grabs the dog but their loud howl goes on with barking and screaming until title appears on their frozen image. The two have a good dynamic and harmony. Maybe not so much like the soft lulling harmony of Hushpuppy and her surroundings. More of a beastly, wild, monstrous harmony.

Even only by looking at the opening scenes of both films, it is possible to say a lot about the protagonist at hand. Their bondings are more with animals than with people. Max's representation shows a wild, untamed child. Hushpuppy is in harmony with all things living and wild. They are not only twentieth century depictions of feral children, they are standing out too. They do not fit into the categories designed for the society and dominant culture.

Their assigned clothing is a signifier of this as well. Max is seen in the wolf outfit he will be wearing for most of the film. He is a human in disguise of a wild animal, who behaves wilder than the domesticated house pet. Hushpuppy's panties and old dirty tank top that she walks around the yard in, signals poverty at first glance, then lacks to signal gender. Her gender ambiguity and the redundancy of gender in her environment is also underlined by her father asking her "Who's the man?" repeatedly through out the film and getting angry when someone from their society calls her "Good girl!". The otherness of both protagonists are obvious from the first sight on. Max's representation as a beastly menace who behaves like an animal makes him the kind of child that no parent (adult) would like to have. Hushpuppy's gender ambiguity already falls apart from the dominant ideology and culture norms. They are the ones Wood (1979) describes as the others.

The otherness of the child protagonists in *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) is depicted in several other scenes. Both kids have an unnormative setting that they actually fit into. Contrary to the modern society these places have other rules and regulations, their habitants have different habits compared to societies run by dominant ideologies. Max, after a fight with his mother in which he bites her and she screams that he's out of control, travels to where the Wild Things are, where monsters of the film live in their chaotic harmony. They enjoy games of breaking and smashing things, they sleep in piles and they pretty much do what they feel like when they feel like it.

Hushpuppy lives in Bathtub, a small settlement separated from mainland by a water dam and sea. It is not clear how people who live here make money or if they even use money. When introducing Bathtub, Hushpuppy's voiceover is heard saying "The Bathtub got more holidays than the rest of the world" over images of residents in Bathtub drinking, screaming, dancing and celebrating in a very visible condition of poverty and unsanitary. The atmosphere these images create is very similar to the scenes of Wild Things, in which the Wild Things accept Max as their king and ask his first order and he replies "Let the wild rumpus start!". Following his command, the Wild Things start to wrestle and throw around one another. Both protagonists fit into these uncommon, unclean, disorderly societies. These unnormative settings which the protagonist live happily at, support their otherness.

The type of child that is created and reflected through Hushpuppy and Max is a strong example of how the child can easily be the other.

2. CHAPTER TWO

2.1. The Monster as the Other

Similar to the invented child, monsters can also cover multiple definitions, all of which change depending on the topic and the perspective of the speaker. The negative meaning they are attributed can be a matter of discussion yet I consider it safe to say that the word monster resonates something/anything bad even before creating a physical form in mind. The monster in this sense is a metaphor or meaning machine as Halberstam (1995) defines. In this section, I first aim to define the monster using ideas of Judith Halberstam (1995), Ken Gelder (2000), John Cech (2015), Marie Helene-Huét (1993) and then show that the monster as a meaning machine, is also the other, like the child, based on ideas from Robin Wood (1979). Finally I will make a connection between the monster and Julia Kristeva's (1982) theory of abject through otherness of the monster.

The monster was always a part of the self, used to define the limits of the self by separating the "I" from the other. "(...) beginning in childhood, starts to make the choices that define him, the things that will become his "I," and the things that will be relegated to the "not-I," the unacknowledged, rejected, or repressed psychic material (...)" says John Cech (2015) when he simplifies one of the biggest principles behind psychoanalysis and also the formation of monsters. All the things that help defining the self by setting the limits of the self are pushed to the other side of a border. They are repressed, or in other words thrown under the bed where they sometimes crawl out of and scare the self by showing the relations and bonds the self has to things rejected and disliked.

The monster has always been around. It was there in the first myth as Humbaba, it was in the fairy tale as the bad wolf, the beast, the scary sea creature, the dragon, it was Behemoth, Leviathan in Bible, Minotaur, Satyr, Sphinx in Greek and Roman Mythology, it was Azazel to Jews and Ifrit to Muslims, it is Frankenstein and Mr. Hyde. It became the Alien and serial killer in modern days. The shape of the monster changed, the powers and impact of its damage changed with the look of the monster. The need for the existence of the monster was undefeatable because it was a necessity, a requirement for the self.

On the ethimologic background of the word monster, Helene-Huét says "Several traditions linked the word monster to the idea of showing or warning. One belief (...) held that the word monster derived from the Latin *monstrate*: to show, to display (*montrer* in French)." (1993, p.86) Around three hundred before Christ, monstrosity was anything that did not take after its parents. "According to Aristotle, the first beginning of this deviation is when a female is formed instead of a male"(1993, p.86) In Aristotle's thought, the monster was also the one showing "false resemblance" to things it was not related to. Resembling a different family, falling out of the nest, belonging to another group, being an outsider are considered different forms of the other and different species of the monster. "Monster can exaggerate difference itself, sitting outside 'normal', socially-accepted definitions- especially definitions of what counts as 'human' (Gelder, 2000, p.82). Most basic definition of monster excludes all things humanly good. They can be genetic hybrids, they can be formally incomplete or grotesquely excessive. With the parts it lacks and the parts unmatching, the primitive monster is stripped off humanity, it is deprived and stripped of all good things that being human entails. Medusa as the woman who turns into a monster after being raped by Poseidon is a piercing example. After losing her humanity with her virginity she becomes a monster and turns anyone to look at her into stone without question or forgiveness. Once she

loses all mercy she had before losing her humanity, Medusa becomes perfect example as a monster which is a non-human being.

Just like the definition of the child changed, the monster changed too, it rotated around the other, which is defined by the ones accepting the dominant ideology and culture. For the settlers of the New World, the Indians and then the negro were monstrous. They were the ones without manners, with beastly ways. Mix raced children of negros and 'white people' were considered another sort of freaky hybrid, a monstrosity of itself, holding onto the Aristotelian ideas. When the ethnical other was assimilated in the dominant culture, the monster stopped carrying a race. The monster had to adapt to changing times, as different times needed different monsters. Victorian monsters, like Frankenstein, had a body that enveloped some sort of a soul, unlike the ancient monsters that were deprived of all human traits including a spirit. The monster was at the service of the dominant culture to provide its need of the other and serve as a metaphor signalling the relation between the two. Coming to date "(...) within contemporary horror, the monster, for various reasons, tends to show clearly the markings of deviant sexualities and gendering but less clearly the signs of class and race" (Halberstam, 1995, p.4) maybe because contemporary politics at least try to give the impression that ethnicity has ceased to be a defining trait for the other, and sex and gender are still bigger taboos.

What's important is not the shape or size of the monster, but its function. The monster shows, indicates, signals. It is a tool. It is a metaphor and a mechanism. Halberstam, in his book *Skin Shows* (1995), argues that the monster is a meaning machine and a technology that functions as itself "when it is able to condense as many fear-producing traits as possible into one body" (1995, p.21). Therefore it is a meaning machine that can represent gender, race, nationality, class and sexuality in one body. All that dominant ideology and culture represses, rejects and defines as "not-I" or in this case "not-human" is

condensed into the monster. The monster produces the negative figure for the negative identity. "Monsters have to be everything the human is not, and in producing the negative of human (...) make way for the invention of the human (...)" (Halberstam, 1995, p.22) The existence of inhumane monster defines the normal, hence the human by its existence. And the monster is carved out of all things that are considered not normal or the other. Things that are relegated to the "not-I" as John Cech (2015) describes, the repressed categories of the society listed by Robin Wood (1979) are the basic elements of the monster defined by Halberstam (1995).

From this perspective, along with several other things Wood (1979) listed, the child and the woman fall into categories of the other and also the monster. The invented status of the child I argued in the first section makes the child into a meaning machine, like the monster, and enables it to be used as a metaphor too. The child plays around the border that separates the positive from the negative. It can be interpreted as the pure child of the Romantics and also as the sexual, feral, almost not-human child from the nineteenth century. It is conceived to be asexual and straight at the same time. The ending of childhood is a border which is very hard to locate. The child stands at the margin of classifications and raises ambivalence. The unstable, changing nature of the child pushes it to an uncanny area that falls on the other side of the border that secures the "I" and the culture. Considering that "Monstrosity most often resides at (or is relegated to) the edge of culture, where categories blur and classificatory structures begin to break down" (Gelder, 2000, p.81) the child, which was the other according to Wood (1979), can also be the monster.

The borders that John Cech (2015) and Ken Gelder (2000) mention, which separate good from bad, differentiate human from non-human and clean from dirty are requirements and fundamentals of dominant culture. Things that fall in-between or outside these borders, the things that blur the lines cause confusion, dislike and they are not appreciated. What is not included and

accepted in the self is negated by the self, the things that are not “I” threaten the “I”. Julia Kristeva’s theory of abject, which I will use to examine the children, the monsters and the mothers from *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012), deals with what falls on the other side of the borders. Barbara Creed defines abject as;

“The place of the abject is ‘the place where meaning collapses’, the place where ‘I’ am not. The abject threatens life; it must be ‘radically excluded’ from the place of the living subject, propelled away from the body and deposited on the other side of an imaginary border which separates the self from that which threatens the self.” (Creed, 1989, p.65)

According to Kristeva’s theory, all things that define the accepted norms by being the opposites of them or that are not fully fitting into the frame by being a mixture of the positive and the negative are considered abject. Things that set the difference between the self and the not-self, the human and the not-human, alive and dead are fundamentals in theory of abject. Bodily wastes such as shit, blood, urine, sweat, saliva are abject. They are reminders of what was once living and is no longer alive, hence dead and not-living. They fall in the grey area between what is considered “mine” or “I” and “not-I” because they were once in the body, a part of the body. Now that they are out of the body and on the other side of the imaginary border, they become reminders and parts of the ultimate abject, the corpse, the not-living. The self tries to clean itself off of these constantly, they are considered unclean in many cultures including modern dominant ideologies.

The never-ending attempt of cleaning and purifying takes on a broader lever on the social plane. As the corpse represents the opposite of the spiritual, bodies without souls like prominent figures of horror movies and gothic literature such as vampires, zombies or figures of science fiction like aliens, androids and robots also become abject. “Were creatures, whose bodies signify a collapse of the boundaries between human and animal” (Creed, 1989, p.66)

fall into the category of abject. Things that were objects of repression and therefore classified as the other, which are pushed out of the borders of the self during its formation both in an individual and social level, and shovelled under the bed of the socially confirmed human became monsters. The monster comes in many forms, it “(..) may be the outcast, the outlaw, the parasite, the pervert, the embodiment of uncontrollable sexual urges, the foreigner, the misfit” as Halberstam (1995, p.27) puts it. The monster, as a meaning machine constructed of social negatives and as a reminder of all that is considered not-human, is abject in this sense. The initial negative feeling and visual imagery attached to monsters, whatever their characteristics may be, are also traits of abject and its relation to body wastes and repulsion they raise.

The child, as an invented entity that re-invents the society as it was invented in the first place, takes all negatives, turns them into the monster and pushes the monster away. The monster that hides under the bed keeps staying in the shadows or in closets when the child grows up, only to come out from time to time. No matter how much the body is purified, everything that is abject will come out of it again at some point. No matter how much effort is put into purifying the society and hiding the monster, it will come out again too, “(...) abjection is not something of which the subject can ever feel free - it is always there.” (Creed, 1989, p.66) The persisting existence of abjection leaves the subject with a pendulum of disgust and admiration to it. The subject, no matter how much he despises it, will take a look at the abject that he tries hard to get rid of and terminate. The abject itself will be rejected but its signifier will be used excessively in language, people will be “sick of things”, will not “give a shit about things”. In the same way, the monster will be hated but it will have a strong role in fairy tales, an important place in literature and cinema, it is given a corner in mainstream TV and even politics has an element dedicated to the monster. The monster will fascinate and attract the child. The child will fear it but keep thinking about it.

Based on the discussion I led for the invented status of the child, which makes it into a meaning machine, and its similarities with the monster, which is also a meaning machine and abject according to Halberstam (1995), I will argue that the child and the monster are counterparts as different types of the other and they are both abject. I will lay examples from *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) to support my ideas in the following part of this section. After working on the similarities of the child and the monster using Kristeva's theory of abject (1982), and Wood's (1979) ideas on the Other, I will move onto the female figures as mothers in the films I work on to show their abject status relying on Kristeva's view and Barbara Creed's arguments, "(...) woman is specifically related to polluting objects which fall into two categories: excremental and menstrual." (Creed, 1989, p.66). Kristeva's theory considers all maternal things abject, but before moving onto that argument, which I will take on in the third section, in which I will be aiming to show resemblances between the mother and the monster, I will analyse some scenes from *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012).

2.2. The Monsters of *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*

I have previously used the term feral child for describing child protagonists from the films and made a point of the "inhumane" side of the feral child and how it challenges the society by giving mixed signals about who is human and who is not through the feral child's association with the wild animals it is depicted with. Max and Hushpuppy fit into the definition of feral child not only because they are introduced with the animals they live with, but also because the wildness and otherness entailed in their personalities resonate with the "not-human" presented by the monsters in both films. I will use scenes from the films to argue that the otherness I engage with them also advocates for abject.

Considering monsters to be characters of the films, I would like to start with their introductions and how Max ended up where they live. There are seven Wild Things, Carol, K.W., Douglas, Ira, Judith, Alexander and Bernard. Two of them, Carol and K.W. are more important for Max as they have more bonding and closer relationships. I argue that Max comes to a resolution on his relationship with his mother through the bonding and struggle he has with these two characters, which will be a part of the third section, for now I will focus on their first interactions and common traits. Max, as a character carrying traits of the feral child, is represented as a lonely child. First quarter of *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) has several scenes showing Max playing alone by himself. A scene in which his sister's friends crush down an igloo he made while they were trying to play with him creates a contrast between him and his sister as two different children, one who fits in with the society and the other not doing so well in getting along with other people and groupings. Max's bond with his mother on the other hand is much stronger. After trashing his sister's room, his mother helps him clean and when he sees his mother trying to work under pressure and in stress, Max tries to cheer her up. He lays under the desk she works at, plays with her stocking while telling her a story about a vampire which lost it's teeth because it bit on a building. Max travels to Where the Wild things live on a night his mother brings home a date and refuses play with Max to spend time with her date. He comes down the stairs from the opening scene of the film in his wolf costume again, has yet another temper tantrum, bites his mother and runs away. He runs the streets to find a small pier with a tiny boat, he gets in it and travels on sea for days and nights to arrive at a place where he sees the Wild Things for the first time. The often occurring losses of control Max shows, be it playing with the dog or destroying his sister's room out of anger, bring up a beastly side in him. This attitude is on the other side of the approved human's imaginary border, where bad, unconfirmed, unapproved things stand at.

The viewer sees the Wild Things for the first time from Max's point of view where he's hiding among trees and rocks, peeping. The Wild Things look like different animals in oversize, with bodies standing erect on two feet like human. Their outlook is the mixture of animal and human that Barbara Creed describes as "Were creatures, whose bodies signify a collapse of the boundaries between human and animal" (Creed, 1989, p.66). The Wild Things, with their confusing existence are abject themselves, they are what Creed (1989) describes as "the collapse of meaning" by their confusing existence which is neither in the frame of human nor animal but a strange mixture of both and a violation of borders of both.

Max looks into the distance where Carol is smashing big rounded nest like structures, in a manner similar to Max's tantrums. The other Wild Things try to tell Carol that it is a crazy thing to do as he tries to explain that he is doing it to "Eliminating the crazy" from their lives. When others refuse to help him, Carol claims that he is the only one who cares and says "Fine, I'll just be on my own side, by myself." which Max relates to, being a lonely kid. Leaving his hiding spot, Max runs full speed into one of the structures and smashes it by running through it. Coming out of the other end the camera sees Max in his wolf costume howling and screaming like he was in his introductory scene in which he was coming down the stairs with the dog, only now he is surrounded by the monsters. When he stops Carol approaches and starts smelling Max, like most animals do when they see a new comer. In return Max sniffs and smells Carol, like an animal or the monster they both are. Carol and Max snarl at each other, first viciously then playfully and Carol's first sentence to follow is "See, this guy gets it". Their meeting and mutual understanding is a proof of them being counterparts, as the child and the monster, they are both abject because the way Max behaves and looks is also falling between categories. He is a boy dressed in a wolf costume, who acts like a beastly animal. He is accepted by the other, the monster as someone who understands the other side of the border. It is not clear if Max is a child or a Wild Thing.

After Max and Carol meet for the first time and get along, they keep smashing the things around, hitting at them with sticks and their bodies for a while more, until Max's eye catches Bernard the Bull sitting in one of the nest like structures. At the sight of Bernard, Max gets intimidated and stops. This scene is a moment of mixed feelings. Max, behaves like one of the Wild Things, acts like a monster and then sees one of the monsters and stops. An impression of fear, hesitation, curiosity is read on his face. It is the pendulum abject leaves the subject with. Max gets intimidated by what he imitates.

Rest of the Wild Things surround him, accusing him of breaking down their houses. As a solution to the problem at hand, Wild Things suggest they should eat him. They make a circle around Max, coming closer and closer to eat him, discussing if his bones might hurt their mouth. Max sees Carol in the distance keeping silent in the same cinematographic manner he was watching the Wild Things in the first place. As the others are about to make a move, Max screams them to stop. He talks them into not eating him as he possesses powers from ancient times and he is a king. His efforts pay and the Wild Things believe that he is the king. Carol, who has joined the circle now, asks him if he can keep out all the sadness and loneliness, Max confirms. The monster and the child, both suffering from very humane pains of loneliness and sadness, make a friendship in their wildness. Max becomes their king and as his first command he 'let's the wild rumpus' begin.

From the first scene on, Max's representation is on the tracks of the feral child. His friendship with the monster, which is built on the similarities, does not come as a surprise. Very naturally their first reaction is to smell, in order to decide if the other will be friend or foe. Snarling and growling come afterwards. Max starts to snarl at Carol and Carol replies back in the same manner of communication. A step ahead of smelling and snarling is biting. I find the recurring eating theme to be very fundamental. Max's depiction with the fork in his hand when he is coming down the stairs chasing the family pet,

his story about a vampire who loses his teeth because it bit on a building, how he bites his mother when he is angry that she has a date and the Wild Things considering to eat him as they think it is the best solution to any problem is, in my opinion, a repeating signal, like the chorus of wildness and monstrosity. "Food loathing is one of the most elementary and archaic forms of abjection" according to Kristeva (1982, p.3). Her example to her argument is the baby spitting the milk from its mouth. It is loathing and being disrupted, annoyed, repulsed about the food the subject consumes. Biting his mother in a temper tantrum leaves Max with a lot of mixed feelings, including a lot of regret as well. His feelings are so heavy that he runs away from home to travel to a land with monsters which also threaten to eat him at the same time discussing weather they might regret it in case his bones hurt their mouth.

The eating theme plays in *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) too from the first introduction of the monsters of the film, the Aurochs. Bathtub, the setting of *Beats of the Southern Wild* (2012) and home of Hushpuppy has a certain texture and character to it that I have tried to make a point of by arguing that the lack of normativity of it is a complimentary factor to the other personated in Hushpuppy before. All residents of Bathtub are the others. They fall out of the "monogamous heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists" described by Wood (1979) to explain the dominant, normative culture in America. They do not wear clean, in fashion clothing, they look like they have put on what was around and do not care about the stains and holes on them like the trousers and shirts Hushpuppy wears, which are torn all around. They do not travel in cars and boats, they make their own vehicles from parts and pieces of other stuff, Hushpuppy and her father Wink have a boat made out of the trunk of a car and some other pieces of industrial junk. Their homes are not apartment buildings or flats with rooms, they live in trailers with windows made out of washing machine lids or huts put together from different material. Overall the scenery and the props of the film has a shabby, stained, mix-match look with a patchwork of different objects that are all out of use, or expired in

the first place. The old, dirty, not in shape look of everything relates to unpurified society. The society in Bathtub is not clean from the abject.

Matching with the general lack of hygiene, the food that is consumed in Bathtub does not come in packages. They catch or grow what they eat. They share the food with the other living things they share their habitat with. Following the opening scene, which introduces Hushpuppy, Wink calls Hushpuppy to his part of their home for “eat-up time”. He tells Hushpuppy to share her food with the other animals as he takes a duck out of a cooler in his trailer-hut, lays it on the grill as a whole while other ducks and chicken walk around with the dogs and the pigs. The whole environment and how they eat looks messy, unclean, very fertile for food loathing Kristeva states as the most archaic form of abject. Food and its consumption has a significant meaning in *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012). After the sequence in which Hushpuppy’s voiceover is heard describing what Bathtub is like over visions of festivity, drinking and dancing in Bathtub, the last scene cuts to a massive pile of seafood poured into a wooden tank, while they are still alive and moving. The dark brown colour of the animals in close up which will turn into food, resembles excrement to build a strong link with repulsion and loathing. The way their extensions creep and move gives an unappetising feeling. The direct link and equal states between the human and the animal residents of Bathtub is built in scenes like this and also in lectures delivered by the school teacher Ms. Bathsheba, she is the one to introduce the monsters of the film, the Aurochs.

Once again after other celebrative scenes with Hushpuppy’s voice over, the sequence ends in cut to a jar filled with small bugs and sea animals like snails. Ms. Bathsheba’s face on the other side of it starts talking, first words to be “Meat, meat, meat”. We are now in school with kids looking like Hushpuppy, none in clean clothing or with brushed hair. Fitting in with the kids, Ms. Bathsheba is also walking around in her messy hairdo and faded clothing. The classroom has no desks or board, it is surrounded with shelves of

different sizes of jars and aquariums, filled with strange looking animals and plants. She continues her lecture “Every animal is made out of meat. I’m meat, ya’ll asses meat. Everything is part of the buffet of the universe”. Her words give an example to how the signifier of abject, in this case the word “ass” is used in language and also what she says sum up the perspective of this other world and it’s residents. Food is to be shared with other animals and all animals including the human animal is food.

Then she lifts her leg and shows a tattoo of a cave drawing on her thigh of some historical or mythical beasts and men looking tiny next to them with spears raised in their hands. The beasts in the tattoo are the Aurochs. Ms. Bathsheba describes them as “fierce, mean creatures” from old times when human were living in caves. She says any day now the ice caps will melt, the waters will rise and the kids need to learn how to survive that. Hushpuppy’s voiceover completes her words saying “Way back in the day the Aurochs was king of the world. And if it wasn’t for giant snow balls and the iced age, I wouldn’t even be Hushpuppy, I would just be breakfast” while we see the Aurochs frozen in ice caps. Along with eating, the motive of the king is a common theme to both relationships between the children and the monsters.

In difference to the relationship between Max and Wild Things, the Aurochs and Hushpuppy do not make friends right away. The images of the Aurochs flash at moments of stress for Hushpuppy. With every moment of pressure stress and anxiety, images of the Aurochs flash, running closer and closer to Hushpuppy to eat her. When she finds out that her father is ill after his return to their home in a hospital gown, the two have an argument because Wink wants to be left alone and Hushpuppy refuses to leave him. She screams that when he dies she will not be sad, but instead she will come to his grave and eat a birthday cake on it. Hushpuppy, takes the biggest abject, the corpse and the grave and combines it with the most primitive archaic abject, food. After this bold statement, Wink slaps her. In return she hits him in the chest

with her fist. Wink collapses. The approaching thunder clouds start growling and images of falling ice caps flash. The Aurochs are seen through the melting ice, still frozen. Later on when the storm hits and Hushpuppy is alone in her trailer-hut with some of the animals she lives with, images of Aurochs flash again. This time they are freed from the frozen ice covering them, running and coming closer. The close ups of the Aurochs with their dark fur wet and sticky from the ice they just broke out of, is on the same visual line with the sea creatures poured into the wooden tank. This matching texture from two different shots give a visual link to feeling of repulsion abject creates and also reminds that all things are meat as Ms. Bathsheba said. The biggest and the strongest creature as well as the smallest can be consumed.

Both films place a distance to be covered between the child and the monster in their first interaction. Like the way Max peeps at the Wild Things from a distance, the Aurochs are first distant to Hushpuppy only to come closer and closer. I interpret this physical distance as a metaphor. They don't get closer only physically, the child and the monster come closer to one another symbolically too, only to understand how similar to one another they are.

The child and the monstrosity or beastliness in it has a very straight forward, very direct depiction in *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012), set in the epicentre of food loathing and eating. After the storm hits, Hushpuppy and her father Wink look for other survivors. Once they found the other people who are left alive they set a meal to reminiscence the lost ones. The sequence starts with Wink pouring down lots of shrimp and crab from a bucket onto a table without plates. Hushpuppy is seen sitting on the very end of the table. She is not placed on a chair, she sits directly on the table crosslegged with her plastic boots still on. Other children are under the table, like most house pets take their place when there's a family dinner. Wink pours some shrimp and crab for them on the floor, right in front of them. The seafood makes a wet, sticky, sliding sound as it hits the floor. The look and the sound of the food is as if it had been

chewed or half-way digested and spitted out again. The kids rush into eating with their hands. They hold the tiny legs of the crabs, break them with their tiny fingers and put the pieces in their mouths in hunger and desire. Their placement under the table is resonating directly with a dog, a dog that the feral child would have as a companion, that the adult would not be able to tell the difference of who is human and who is not. The food that is given to them, just like everybody else's food, is so raw in terms of increasing appetite, it is so visually repulsive and the sound coming with it is so distasteful that abject is the only possible term to resonate to, along it with food repulsion.

On the other side of the table, which is over the table, Hushpuppy sits among the adults, watching them eat and talk. Then a man calls for her to come over and tries to teach her how to open up a crab easily by using a knife. When Wink sees this, he intervenes harshly. He takes the crab in hand, screaming "No Hushpuppy! Beast it!", breaks the shell in two by using his hands, takes the half of the crab to his mouths, sucks the liquid in it and keeps shouting "Beast it!". He lays another crab in front of Hushpuppy and orders her to beast it. Hushpuppy struggles with the hard shell for a bit, people around the table encourage her with their screams and cheers. When she finally cracks the shell, breaks the animal into two pieces and takes a part of it to her mouth to suck the liquid out of it, screams of approvement and applause fill the room. Declaring her victory, she steps on the table, stands on it filled with piles of crab shells and bits to be consumed as food, holds her arms to show her biceps and screams like an animal. All others in the room join her screaming, celebrating her beastliness.

The appreciated and approved way of eating in *Bathtub* is beasting. As repulsive as eating scenes may be, throughout *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012), the community of the film is approving this type of food consumption. They are praising their habits of eating and they do not call it simply eating. They beast the food. They live in a system where all things are meat, all living

things, big or small, are eligible to be consumed by others. Everything is to be consumed and the consumption of other living things is not simply eating, but beasting them. Because all things are beasts. All things in Bathtub, adult or child, animal or human, are beasts. The difference between human and not-human disappears in this society. The children in Bathtub know how similar everyone is to the monster.

3. CHAPTER THREE

3.1. The Abject and the Mother

Julia Kristeva develops Abject Theory, following the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan, using phenomenology, which is roughly, the study of appearances and consciousness. Kristeva considers the thetic phase the starting point for signification, a developmental stage of the child's subjectivity, Freud had linked it to Oedipal stage and Lacan to Mirror stage. Oedipal stage is the moment of awareness the Child has when it realises the mother is not almighty, because she lacks a penis. Mirror stage is a stage of development when the child recognises its image on a mirror and identifies itself with the image and therefore differentiates itself from the body of the mother. Both of these breaking and changing points aid developing of the self because they mark the moment the child realises that it is a separate being from the mother it had been living inside or almost attached to.

I will not go into detail of comparison between Freudian and Lacanian perspectives to Kristeva's theory, instead I will explain the theory of Abject and move onto the mother figure and its abject status. Then I will look at the relationships between the mothers, The children and the monsters from *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) through abject.

Before becoming aware that the mother's body is a separate entity, a different individual, the child is considered in a state of completion. Kristeva considers this state *chora*, and with her theory of abject, she claims that the separation from the mother takes place before the Oedipal stage or the Mirror stage. She borrows the term *chora* from Plato. It is "often translated to as

womb or receptacle” (McAfee, 2004, p.30) but Kristeva uses it to cover more than a spatial meaning, she uses it as a state. When the child is in chora, it is in a state in which “infant's psychic environment is oriented to its mother's body” (McAfee, 2004, p.30). The child, when in chora, doesn't need language. All needs of the child are provided without asking for them, therefore language is not needed. Babbles and murmurs the child produces lack meaning, they do not refer to objects and people in the environment of the child. When it becomes aware of the differences and when the meanings deepen, things change. The child learns that language can be used to point at things and events. At the same time, it begins to understand the difference between itself and the things surrounding it, Kristeva calls this important point the *thetic break*.

The Lacanian view suggests that language, which evolved for satisfaction of needs separates the child from the mother and considers language to be the Law of the Father. Kristeva's perspective also recognises the importance of language formation in separation but places the breaking point with the mother before Lacanian Mirror Stage, “when the infant begins to expel from itself what it finds unpalatable” (McAfee, 2004, p.47), this is the process she calls *abjection*.

Abject or *abjection*, according to Kristeva, is the state of rejecting what is other to oneself, and creating borders of the “I” by this. “The abject is what one spits out, rejects, almost violently excludes from oneself: sour milk, excrement, even a mother's engulfing embrace.” (McAfee, 2004, p.56) By rejecting something that the infant wants and lives on; like milk, or something that it desires; like the mother's embrace or by rejecting something that once was a part of the infant's body; excrement, it brings itself to see a separate being, with its borders between self and the other. For the creation of the self, the other is a requirement. The infant, which came to this world without a concept of difference and separation, and without borders, develops the borders by rejecting things and creates a self.

Abject is not only rejection but having a repulsion towards the rejected object as well because the abject not only makes the border between the self and the other, also threatens this imaginary border. Kristeva terms abjection as something which does not “respect borders, positions, rules”, that “disturbs identity, system, order” (Kristeva, 1982, p.4). The abject, by its existence, is the rejected but not repressed. It does not leave sight or cease its existence. Abject is always there to remind the subject of the border between it and the other, yet the existence of the abject and the repetition in it also threatens the border. This whole process creates repulsion. The self can never get rid of the abject. Abject will repeat itself over and over again. The body will produce waste as long as it lives. No matter how much one tries to clean itself off the dirt or get rid of the excrement, the living body will produce it again. As long as one eats, there will be shit. Hunger will drive the infant to the mother’s milk, once the infant is full again, the milk will be rejected and the infant will spit the milk out of its mouth. This will make the border between the self and the other, between the child and the mother over and over again. Each time the unwanted, the rejected thing will create a feeling of repulsion. Of this cycle of examples, Kristeva places food loathing as one of the elementary abjects and describes it graphically.

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, 1982, p.3)

She starts from the common feeling of disgust people have for the skin that forms on the surface of the milk and connects that border which separates liquid from air to the border that separates the infant from the mother and the father. Her detailed explanation of repulsion is a part of abject. The rejected object gives a certain negative feeling, yet the recurring desire and need for the same object is persistent in a way that the whole cycle of desiring, rejecting, feeling repulsion and yet desiring again repeats and becomes a fundamental of theory of abject. I tried to lay scenes of eating and build connections of them to monsters, repression and otherness in the films I work on. In the following section I will make more connections of food loathing, eating, consuming through the mouth and abject in this frame.

Most pointed case of abjection is the abject mother. Considering that abjection is the mechanism that helps the infant create a self by setting a border between the mother and itself, the child. "(...) the first "thing" to be abjected is the mother's body, the child's own origin." (McAfee, 2004, p.58) The mother becomes one of the first abjects, first thing to set a border between, to become the self. Abjection is the process by which an infant emerges out of the undifferentiated union of chora it has with its mother and surroundings. It does this by expelling, physically and mentally, what is not part of its 'clean' and proper self. In this way, it begins to develop a sense of a discrete "I". Yet the mother is also sought for over and over, the child has a need and love for the mother that attracts the child to the mother and the repetition of separation and attraction goes on and on, forming one of the heaviest abjects.

As well as the desire for food, the desire to go back into chora, be in the mother or be united with the mother turns into a longing and a threat too. The child, once setting the border between the "I" and "not-I" and creating the self, separates the mother from itself, pushes the mother away, like the milk it spits when it is no longer hungry. Yet, the need for milk and mother repeat. The abject is not something that the self or "I" can get rid of, it will always come

back, repeat itself, recur. The wish to go back into the mother will always come with the possible risk of losing the self. The possibility of the loss of self will always be a threat. What Freud calls *unheimlich* (un-home-like), the ultimate uncanny is not something unidentified, new or unknown, it is coded in the psyche and mind from the past, it is the ultimate familiar. Freud argued that “the uncanny is something which is secretly familiar, which has undergone repression and then returned from it” (Freud, 1953, p.245) He calls this “return of the repressed” whereas Kristeva calls it “maternal abjection”. The common idea to both is the desire the self has, to return to a state of unity with the mother, at a risk of a loss and fear of anxiety over losing the self and subjectivity.

This desire of the self is not a one time thing, it will repeat over and over again. The self, in an effort to maintain its subjectivity and individual existence, will try to push away, repress or throw the threat over the imaginary border at the same time it wants unity and going back to chora. The abject will always be there. What John Cech (2015) describes as the formation of the self that creates the other, gives existence to the monster. It is the same process Robin Wood (1979) describes by using the Freudian concept of repression to explain the other. What Freud considered repressed, is abject for Kristeva. Noelle McAfee (2004) uses the concept of repression and abject in a parallelism by stating that Freud argues that uncanny is actually not something unknown but rather familiar and has some through repression and came back again, and adds “He calls this phenomenon “the return of the repressed”; Kristeva calls it “maternal abjection.”(McAfee, 2004, 60) I argue that Kristeva’s abject mother is the other and the monster too. The repressed which constitutes the other is also the abject. The child, who creates the monster from its own self, by separating the ‘clean’, approved from the rejected, repulsive, also builds the same relationship with the mother. The child, rejects both the monster and the mother, yet needs and loves them. And as the child was once a part of the mother, the monster is a part of the child too. I will try to support

my ideas with analysis of scenes from *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beats of the Southern Wild* (2012).

3.2. Maternal Relationships and Children and Monsters in *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Beats of the Southern Wild*

Max's mother's first introduction is when he trashes his sister's bedroom in a temper tantrum, then goes into his bed to lie without doing anything. The mother comes home from work, finds Max in bed and asks what made him unhappy. When Max tells how his sister's friends smashed his igloo and his sister Clair did nothing about it, the mother says "I'd have done something about it". This is the perfect sum of relationship between the child and the mother; the mother is the one to do the thing the child had needed, wanted back when the child and the mother were both in *chora*, where language was not needed because all needs of the child were provided by the mother without asking for them, only now she was not there after the separation. The need for the mother and her embrace that gives the feeling of *chora* is not an ending desire as it can be seen from this scene. This introduction of Max's mother and the scenes that show the strong bonding and exceptional relationship between the two is making it easy to interpret Max's mother as the mother that Max, the child wants to stay at the embrace of.

This relationship works both ways, until it's broken. When Max's mother is having a hard time because of work, Max lies under the table she works on at home and tells her a story while playing with her stocking. The way he is under the table, covered, in nearly dark as if in a cave or a womb, and the very close relationship they have is, in my opinion, a representation of *chora*, where the child and the mother are not fully separated. The camera sees Max from above, from a high angle camera shot. Half of his face is in dark, the corner of the table is in the frame. Then the camera turns to Max's POV to get a glimpse of

the mother, this time from the ground to where her face can be seen among dark shadows of furniture and her body parts. The next shot to follow is Max touching the mother's foot, pinching the stitched line of her stocking and stretching it, fidgeting and playing with it, showing how they are also physically connected, as if in the womb by the umbilical chord.

Their harmony is disrupted when the mother brings home a date and instead of playing with Max, wants to spend time drinking wine and kissing on the couch with her date. When the mother decides to break the bond between the child and herself by making a decision, serving only her own subjectivity and only for herself where she excludes the child, like getting intimate with another man, the chora scatters. Max reacts strongly, throws another animalistic tantrum, bites his mother with the teeth he had exposed to the camera in his opening scene. Following this animalistic, "not human" behaviour his mother screams "You're out of control" at him and Max runs away from home.

After the separation of the self from the mother, the child, in this case Max, runs away from home and sails to where the Wild Things, the monsters live. For the formation of Max's self, the separation from the mother is followed by the meeting with the monster, the other abject. Following ideas of Wood (1979) and Cech (2015), I can say that the monster as the other is a counterpart of the child. Abject, with its principal of never ceasing to exist but coming again, is found in this relationship once again, after the abject mother. The repeating need for the mother and the desire to go back to chora reflects to the relationship Max has with K.W., one of the Wild Things, when she hides Max inside herself from another Wild Thing, Carol.

When the harmonious life of Max and the monsters shatter, Carol and Max get in a fight. Like a leitmotif of repetition, Max screams "You're out of control" at Carol. Carol loses himself and starts to run after Max, in a manner

similar to the tantrums Max has. After running away from Carol in the woods for some time, Max runs into K.W. She, in an attempt to keep him safe from Carol who had threatened to eat Max, says “Crawl inside my mouth. I’ll hide you”. The security provided by the covering embrace of a mother is offered by the monster, in form of swallowing, hiding inside the belly is also eating. What Freud describes as uncanniness is also the fear of falling back into the mother’s body which is the same as losing one’s own identity. K.W. offers Max security in return for loss of his self, Max steps into the uncanny by accepting to be swallowed by the monster.

Once he is inside K.W., Max is seen covered in bodily fluid, looking damp, wet, sticky. His untasteful depiction signals abject. All that the self considers unclean, unpure and tries to clean itself from, the bodily fluids, the repulsive things that are inside one’s body, to be thrown away and once out of the body creating great repulsion are covering Max’s body. Even the womb is full of abject once the separation from the mother and chora take place and the subject forms the self.

Max can hear K.W. and Carol speak from where he is. Carol says he can smell Max, K.W. tells him to go away, shouts the leitmotif once again. When Carol objects, she reminds him that he was threatening Max by eating him. When Carol finally leaves K.W. and Max talk for a while, with Max is still inside her. Camera takes Max’s P.O.V showing a dark tunnel like formation with a brighter opening at the end of it. The soft, greasy, dark coloured wall like parts of internal body move as K.W. talks, they dangle and wave, giving a similar affect like the shots of sea creatures and bugs from *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) that create a feeling of repulsion and abject. Max finds himself suffocated and stuck in a smaller space as the internal parts of K.W. start to close down on him. He says he can’t breath and asks to be moved out.

As I have mentioned before coming out of *chora*, separating from the mother is the formation of the self and abject according to Kristeva. The border of “I” and “not-I” is set by regarding things other than the self. The things that are “not-self” are the unclean, dirty things that create a feeling of repulsion and disgust. The coming out scene of Max from K.W.’s body is a perfect example to all I have tried to sum up, in a great resemblance to a re-birth scene. K.W. pushes her hand inside herself, grabs Max and takes him out through her mouth where he had entered. Max comes out head first, wet, sticky, pieces of bodily fluid and other matter covering him and his wolf costume. He separates his self from the mother once again, looking like the picture of abject, and only to say he wishes the Wild Things had mothers of their own. His very birth-like exit from K.W.’s body is a separation of the self from the mother. Whole scenery is a perfect example of abject.

The re-birth scene, in my opinion, serves my argument that the mother, the child and the monster are not so different from one another. Yet, the scene where Max is sailing back in the boat he came to where the Wild Things live is another strong example to the relationship the child and the monster have and the role of abject in this relationship. Max’s first journey was from the mother in direction to where the Wild Things are, which can be interpreted as a separation of the self after the *chora* shatters. This second journey that he goes back the same distance is to the mother, back home (*heim* as in Freud’s terminology *un-heimlich*). Abject maternal is again sought after. The child wants to go back to the familiar, to the mother again. When he is on the shore, all Wild Things come to say goodbye to him, only Carol is missing. Max gives hugs to other Wild Things, they exchange goodbyes with very meaningful declarations and wishes. Bernard the Bull says that he hopes Max says good things about them. Ira says Max was the first king they did not eat, which is odd and playful at the same time, considering that Max made the decision to go back to his mother when he was inside K.W.’s belly. When it is K.W.’s turn to say goodbye, she gives Max a big hug with her hairy large animal arms that are

human-like at the same time and says "I love you so I can eat you up". This is the core sentence of the connections I make with food loathing, maternal abject, the other and the mother. The desire to embrace one to an extent that it is no longer the other but a part of the embrace, belongs with the *chora* and the two different entities become a unity is also a very consuming state for both, to an extent that the self might be lost into the embrace never to exist unless it separates itself in a bold way that creates abject. This relationship, or the abject so to say, never leaves or ceases to exist. It is there with not only the mother but with the monster as well as Max and K.W. have it.

After they say goodbye, Max starts to sail back. At the moment he is departing Carol makes it to the shore to say goodbye to him. The two, Max and Carol, the child and the monster who are partners in more than just crime, say goodbye in a way similar to the way they met and made friends. Carol howls into the air in direction to Max. All Wild Things join, including Max.

Max, finally goes back home to his mother. The closing scene of the film is set in the kitchen, with Max eating happily, still in his wolf costume and his mother falling asleep while watching him eat. The child's repeating need for food and desire for the mother bring the closure in a full circle.

The other triangle I want to lay as an example to my argument is from the second film I cover. I have previously mentioned the setting of *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012), Bathtub and argued that the society in Bathtub is not purified from the abject. Hushpuppy's mother, as a part of Bathtub is also representing motives of abject, in both her depiction and by the absence of character from the story. Hushpuppy lives with her father Wink and learns about her mother from her father, so the mother figure in *Beasts* is only in memories of Wink and in Hushpuppy's mind as a voice talking to her.

One night Wink tells Hushpuppy that he will tell the story of her conception. His memory is presented as the only sequence Hushpuppy's mother is personated. Hushpuppy starts listening to her father as she lies on a pile of junk and dirt, chewing on a crab leg with other parts of the animal resting on her belly and chest. Wink says that when they first met with Hushpuppy Mummy -the woman who gave her birth but does not have her name in the story- they were so shy that they just kept drinking beers and smiled at each other. One time Wink got so shy that he falls asleep, he says. The memory starts rolling with the camera facing Wink sleeping on a beach chair in open air. As he is asleep, a crocodile is seen approaching him. Then a female figure enters the frame, mostly naked except the white, not fashionable, baggy cotton underwear she has on. She has a rifle in hand. Her face is never exposed to the camera, instead her braided dark hair and her hands preparing the rifle to shoot are seen in close ups. After the loud bang from the shot, the central part of her body, partially covered with the underwear is seen. She turns around to show the blood covering front of her body from her belly to her upper legs in a close up. In the following mid-shot she is seen leaning on the rifle, with legs apart to create a posture of a hunter in full confidence, with blood running from between her legs and covering front part of her body. This image is not only a depiction of a hunter, it is also the representation of a woman having her period.

I have previously mentioned blood as an abject and quoted Creed's ideas on woman as an abject by "(...) woman is specifically related to polluting objects which fall into two categories: excremental and menstrual." (Creed, 1989, p.66) Everything that belongs to the body but is now thrown out of it challenges the border of the self, as well as the separation of living and dead. What was once included in the "I", once it gets out the border of the "I" and becomes "not-I" become reminders of the ultimate abject, the corpse, the not-living. Therefore self tries to clean itself from these. People consider bodily fluids like sweat, pee, blood as repulsive for reasons of abject. Menstrual blood

is a very strong abject. Most religions and cultures consider women on their periods as dirty and exclude them from religious rituals and sometimes from the society until their period ends. The idea that menstrual blood is the blood coming from an ovum (female productive egg) which is not turned into a human being, resonates directly as not-living, hence dead. Therefore the menstrual blood is considered dirty, confirming the abject of it. The first depiction of the mother in *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) is abject. The abject depiction of the Mother, related to unborn child, takes place right after the father tells the child that he will tell the story of her conception.

From there on Hushpuppy's voiceover takes over, quoting from Wink, saying that her mummy is so charming that when she walks into a room all waters start boiling. The camera follows the woman, again dressed in white, this time in an almost see-through cotton dress, walks into a kitchen. Pots filled with water start to boil as she walks by them. When she reaches the oven at the end of the room, she bends over, opens the lid. Camera catches the steam coming out of the oven but the frame is occupied with her full hips as seen through the white dress she has on. Once again, the mother is not only the bearer of the child, but a sexual persona, like Max's mother. The mother presentations in both films are not only caregivers, they have their selves separated from the child. It is the child's task, in these cases, to create its self and set the border from the Mother. The child's struggle and effort to create its self through abject and throwing the Mother from the borders of the self makes the mother an abject like the monsters.

I have previously used Marie Helene-Huét's article (1993) on monstrous imagination to deliver Aristotle's thoughts about women and monstrosity. Aristotle sees formation of the female instead of a male as a monstrosity. Helene-Huét, developing on this thought, argues that this perspective makes the female and the monster associates as departures from the norm, saying "The monster and the woman find themselves on the same side (...)" (1993,

p.85). The mother and the monster are also counterparts like the child and the monster are. Repression that creates the other, as Wood describes, works for all agents that do not fit in with the “monogamous heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists” (Wood, 1979, p.25). The child, The mother and the monster are agents and meaning machines that are the others.

Looking at the mother figure in *Beasts*, this argument finds strong support when Hushpuppy travels to a floating brothel to find her mother after accepting her father’s terminal disease and the fact that he will die. The journey takes over seas, similar to the journey Max has when he travels to where the Wild Things live, in an attempt to separate his self from the mother. Hushpuppy and some of her friends jump into the sea without knowing where they might end up. A ship takes them on board. When they climb the deck of the ship, Hushpuppy tells the captain that she is going to her mother, the captain replies “That’s good place to go”. In a conversation the captain and Hushpuppy have, the captain tells her that he keeps all wrappings from all the chicken biscuits he ate during several years because they remind him of himself at the time he ate them and the smell makes him cohesive, Hushpuppy replies she wants to feel cohesive too. The recurring theme of eating, consuming by eating repeats parallel to the search for the mother and chora. The desire to feel united, whole, which is permanent in all of the characters, is evident in eating, consuming, taking into the body to embrace and be one with. The repeating cycle of needing the milk to feel full and rejecting the milk once the body is full goes on.

The captain takes Hushpuppy and the girls to a brothel. The working women, in their underwear or similar garments show great excitement when the kids walk in. Each takes one of the kids and starts slowly swinging to the music that plays. A woman sees Hushpuppy, standing watching the scenery and asks her if she needs anything, then takes her to the kitchen. The camera follows the woman from the same height it had followed Hushpuppy’s mother

when she was walking into the kitchen from Wink's memory, filling the frame with the woman's hips. The woman starts preparing a crocodile for frying. As she carves the flesh of the animal off from the thick skin with a long sharp knife, she gives some advice to Hushpuppy. She tells that life is a feast but Hushpuppy is just a waitress, and one day everything on her plate is going to fall to the ground and nobody is going to pick it up for her. She will have to do it herself.

The scenery here is of importance, both the brothel and kitchen. The setting of these women and the occupation attained to them makes them outcast in several cultures. Wood (1979) lists sexual energy on top of his list of repressed things in society and women are his second item on his list of others. The women working in sex industry are therefore cultural abjects like abject mother. Hushpuppy's search of the mother takes her to the culturally unapproved women; working women at a brothel. When the woman that might or might not be Hushpuppy's mother takes her to the kitchen, another important scenery for the mother - child relationship is on screen. A very important part of the maternal relationship is feeding. The unity of the mother and the child relies on the umbilical chord in the womb and later on breastfeeding. Remembering Kristeva's example to most archaic abject, the skin that forms on the milk and how the thing that gives life can also give repulsion, the unpure, unapproved abject woman can be the same woman who feeds and nourishes. Her advice on life with a metaphor of eating is also of importance considering the recurring eating theme throughout both films. Her main point by giving the life advice is that Hushpuppy is by herself to go through the troubles. The formation of the self is inevitable.

Later when they are with the other women and children, with Hushpuppy in the woman's arms, as they swing like the others Hushpuppy asks her to come and take care of her and Wink. The woman says she can't take care of anyone but herself. Hushpuppy's voice is heard, saying that this is her favourite

thing, the woman replies that she knows. Hushpuppy's voiceover continues, saying that being held is her favourite thing and she can count all the times she has been held by only two fingers. The shot cuts to a flashback in which Wink is holding the new born Hushpuppy, who is covered in something that looks like placenta, to take her out to sunlight as the mother is heard of screen, shouting at Wink to bring the baby back. The way newborn Hushpuppy looks is similar to Max's look when K.W. takes him out of her body. The unappealing, unpretty looking sticky stuff covering the body resonates to abject. The baby is out of the mother's body, it now falls on the other side of the border that separates "I" and "not-I". Ending the flashback, back at the brothel Hushpuppy, as she is still in the woman's arms says "I need to go home".

With this scene, the mother's embrace that was so far a metaphor, becomes a physical depiction. The woman feeds Hushpuppy first, then takes her in her arms, hugs and embraces her and dances with her. The feeling of oneness, completion, cohesion, the feeling of *chora* is recreated. Hushpuppy says this is her favourite thing. Translating to the feeling of not needing anything, the feeling of being one with the mother is her favourite feeling. Yet she still has to get separated. The mother does not want to come with her and Hushpuppy does not want to stay. They both choose to be separated.

The longing to fall back into *chora* that comes with the danger of losing the self and subjectivity is not a one-time thing, rather a constant companion throughout life. Hushpuppy leaves the mother's embrace at the brothel but the self finds other forms of abject to relate to constantly throughout life. When Hushpuppy and her friends leave the brothel, they are seen walking fast over fields and open landscape. The shots with children at the centre of the frame cut to shots of the Aurochs. Matching the staging of the children, Aurochs, the monsters of the film approach land from the water they had been travelling in. Hushpuppy has a brown paper bag in her hand. As the kids led by Hushpuppy

are about to reach where the adults are, who circle Wink in his death-bed, the Aurochs step on land. Hushpuppy starts to go faster at first, in fear of the stronger animals that know the weakness in other animals' hearts and eat the weaker ones might eat her too. When the Aurochs come closer, other kids start to scream and run away. Hushpuppy keeps her pace with a look of determination on her face. When the monsters finally catch up on her, she turns around and looks at the beasts in the eye. After exchanging looks, the Aurochs bend a knee and sit on the ground, facing Hushpuppy. Hushpuppy, with her paper bag in hand, says "You're my friend kind of". A close up of the Auroch's eye is functioning as a tool to make the conversation mutual and gives confirmation to her statement. When she says that she has to take care of what is hers, the monsters of the film turn around and leave.

The child and the monster, as counterparts I argued, come together once again in this scene. Hushpuppy not only overcomes her fear of the monster, but also declares 'kind of' friendship with it, confirming that the child and the monster are one of a kind. The fear of being eaten by the monster is placed in Hushpuppy's words when she says the Aurochs are big mean creatures that sense weakness in heart and eat the weaker one. The fear of losing self and ceasing to exist is a real explicit fear when it comes to monsters and an underlying, hidden fear when it comes to mothers.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I focused on the relationships between children, monsters and mothers in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Spike Jonze, 2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Benh Zeitlin, 2012). My main goal was to make connections between these figures. My initial idea was to point at the representations of the child protagonists, Max from *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and Hushpuppy from *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) and monsters of these films, the Wild Things and Aurochs respectively to show similarities they carried.

The relationship of the two is enigmatic for me. The fear and attraction the child has for the monster and the changing, affecting capacity the monster has on the child was a metaphor for lots of other relationships, that even the grownups have in their adult lives. This symbolical representation of complicated layers of tangled and ambivalent relationship was very fertile for psychoanalytical reading. Another important figure, both to the films and to psychoanalytical theory was also represented in both films: the mother. Triangular relationship between the child, the monster and the mother, I argue, reflects a pattern of relationship that human beings experience throughout their lives for several times with different people. I chose to work on these two films through psychoanalytical theory and examine the relationship between the three for having a better understanding of the dynamics.

Considering that childhood is a constructed idea that is shaped by the dominant ideology of the time it is constructed in, it changes its definition depending on the need. Different cultures at different times give different qualities to what they consider a child. The changing definition makes it into a meaning machine, which can be used depending on the point of view. The child at the Romantic era is different from the modern child that is sexualised with its urges

and instincts coming innately. Joseph Zornado's idea of 'Invented Child' (2001) provided the ground I based my arguments on. He argues that the dominant ideology and culture define the child, and the child, later on, comes to define the culture it grows into based on the definition that was fed to it, in the first place. Following this idea, I argued that the child was an invented category, without a concrete meaning or definition. Thus it can be used as an empty category that can be defined as anything, positive or negative.

Monster, also as a constructed idea, has the same traits. Mythological monsters are mostly described as inhuman, lacking humanity and humane characteristics whereas gothic monsters were carrying somewhat of a soul and modern monsters are more like human but maybe coming from outer space. Jack Judith Halberstam's ideas on 'Technology of Monsters' (1995) states that monster is a fear-producing machine, functioning as a body of negative traits. I relied on his ideas as well as John Cech's (2015), who states monsters have been around all the time and they help make the people what they are. Combining these two points of view, I argued that the monster, with the negative meaning attained to it, is functioning as a polar opposite, which defines the other end of the dual categorisation, the positive and human.

Along with being meaning machines, both are target to repression that results in being 'the other' in Robin Wood's (1979) description of the other. He argues that repression in psychoanalytic theory results in human functioning properly by making people direct their lives whereas surplus repression results in the dominant ideology shape people into 'monogamous heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists' because it is culture-specific and conditions members of the culture from early age on, similar to the ideas of Zornado (2001) on 'Invented Child'. The mechanism of this kind of repression works on a level that it either rejects and annihilates the repressed or converts it into what it can accept. This process results in some groups of the society to be defined as the other. Wood includes children in his list of others.

Based on these overlapping traits and powerful relationship between the child and the monster, I aimed to argue for them being counterparts. For this purpose I focused on their outcast, out of the line presentations that were easy to find in *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012). Both child protagonists were depicted in a wild way, which matched with feral child of Kenneth B. Kidd (2004). Feral child is a child presented as a character in animal-human contact, challenging the perception of who is human who is animal through the wildness it carries. Both Max and Hushpuppy are introduced with animals in their settings. Their contact with the animals they are surrounded with is stronger than the contact they have with their peers or other people. This depiction of the protagonists made it possible to build links between them and the monsters as well as defining both as the other, namely un-human.

This dual differentiation between human and 'not-human' comes with the imaginary border that separates two entities. The same imaginary border exists in several differentiation mechanisms. The main function of this border is to separate the approved from the not-approved. An identical mechanism works in formation of the self in Julia Kristeva's abject theory (1982). She argues that the formation of the self starts with the infant setting a line between "I" and "not-I". This process she calls abject. Abject, or all things that are not "I" or fall on the other side of the border of approved and not-approved create a feeling of repulsion.

For the formation of the self, the infant needs to separate itself from the state it is in with the mother. The unity of the mother and the child, in which the child has no concept or sense of its own self or the world surrounding itself, is called chora (Kristeva, 1982). The child in chora considers the mother to be a part of itself with everything else. Once the separation of the self starts, the child has to set a border between what itself is and what is the other. All things that are pushed to the other side of this imaginary border are considered "not-I". All things that are "not-I" that threaten the border of the "I" are considered abject.

Kristeva (1982) defines rejecting food, spitting out the milk that comes from the mother and feeds the baby alive as the most archaic form of abject. Corpse, as the not-human, not-living is one of the biggest abjects. The bodily fluids, like sweat or excrement, that are pushed out of the border of the self and are no longer approved but also do not cease to exist but repeat themselves and come back again, remind the self of the other side of the border are strong abjects too. The feeling the self develops for such things is a mixture of repulsion and attraction at the same time.

The mother and all things maternal are also abject. The infant, while forming the self, separates itself from the mother and leaves chora. The mother becomes “not-I”, hence abject. Yet, the desire to go back into chora and be in the embrace of the mother raises again and comes with the danger of losing the self again. The mother, as the object of this ambivalent love which desires to have her closer and then pushes her away, becomes a monster too.

Monsters are not only imagined entities or scary creatures. Monsters are shaped by normativity to envelop things that norms reject. Those rejected things can be people, ideas or actions. Things that are sculpted into the monster are found in everyone that condemns the monster in an attempt to prove the purity of their selves by setting the borders between themselves and what they call the monster. The wish to push away this so-called ‘not-approved’ monster is not different from the desire that codes the mother as the purest source of love along with all things good and longs to be closer to her, only to push her away later. The struggle to clean the self or the society off the monster runs parallel to the pursuit to sculpt the mother as the purest. The shock that comes with recognising monsters within are similar to the disturbance that erupts when one realises that the mother is not that clean, on the contrary she is the first repulsion, the first abject.

Feral children carry a certain element of fascination because they signal this conflict in one existence. I consider the wildness and the beastliness they carry on them as a form of honesty. The ones that do not deny the monstrosity in themselves or meet their monsters and let these monsters be are the ones accepting the otherness in themselves.

Considering otherness as a fall-out from dominant ideology, not only children and monsters are others. All those who are rejected by dominant ideologies are willingly or unwillingly the other because they are pushed to the other side of a border that frames all that is accepted and approved. They end up being dehumanised by the definer of the ideology in order to maintain the separation and keep the border strong. What is kept inside the border is considered clean and pure, what is pushed to the other side of a border and recognised as repulsive, dirty, scary or monstrous is no different than what Kristeva defines as abject.

The monster that is on the other side of this imaginary border, yet also residing in everyone in different forms, is abject. The mother, who is dragged from one side of the border to the other is also abject. The mother becomes the monster. The child carries the monster within.

In light of these, the children and the monsters from *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) are fitting in with the definition of the other in Wood's (1979) perspective. I argued that they are counterparts, in the sense that they are both defined and shaped by dominant ideologies. Both films and the relationships of the child protagonists with the monsters provided readings that support my argument. The monster, as a not-human thing, an entity that is a meaning machine (Halberstam, 1995) to be shaped according to the need in order to represent that is not-approved, excluded, thrown out of the culture due to the negative attributes it bears, is also abject.

I came to the conclusion that the child and the monster are counterparts and the relationship the child has with the monster is similar to the relationship it has with the mother on the level of ambivalence of emotions. The mother figure and the monster figures carry certain resemblances. These common traits can be found in several different paradigms. The need to establish a 'good' that is disinfected of all things considered 'bad', reflects itself to several forms of relationship, both personally and on a broader level, sociologically only to arrive at a moment of acceptance that the two polar opposites are involving one another. This impulse deserves more research and work on several aspects, to come delightfully fruitful.

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