

Tanith Lee's "Wolfland" and Suzy McKee Charnas's "Boobs"
- Modern Tales of Magic

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Modern Tales of Magic

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Tämän pro gradu –tutkielman tavoitteena on tarkastella kahta novellia, Tanith Leen "Wolfland" ja Suzy McKee Charnasin "Boobs" (Leena Peltosen suomennos "Tissit" 1990) feministisen sadunkirjoitusperinteen näkökulmasta. Pyrin analysoimaan kirjailijoiden tapaa käyttää fantasian, gotiikan ja groteskin kuvastoa merkityksiä luodessaan. "Wolfland" perustuu Perault'n ja Grimmin veljesten klassiseen satuun Punahilkasta, ja vaikka "Boobs" ei olekaan versio "Punahilkka" –sadusta, sillä on useita yhtymäkohtia "Wolfland" –novelliin. Molemmissa novelleissa keskeisenä aiheena on muodonmuutos ihmisestä sudeksi itsepuolustuksen keinona ulkoista, fyysistä uhkaa vastaan.

Muodostaakseni kulttuurisen viitekehyksen novellien päähenkilöiden muodonmuutoksen analyysille, esittelen pääpiirteittäin metamorfoosin esiintymisen klassisessa ja keskiaikaisessa eurooppalaisessa kirjallisuudessa ja kansanperinteessä sekä 1800- ja 1900-lukujen populaarikulttuurissa. Tanith Lee ja Suzy McKee Charnas onnistuvat kiehtovalla tavalla yhdistämään elementtejä niin kreikan ja rooman mytologiasta kuin myöhemmästä kansanperinteestä ja kirjallisuudesta.

Tanith Lee ja Suzy McKee Charnas ovat molemmat valinneet kirjallisuudenlajeikseen science fictionin ja fantasian ja tässä erityisesti feministisen goottilaisen sadun. Historiallisesti englantilaiset ja amerikkalaiset naiskirjailijat ovat suosineet kirjallisuudenlajeinaan gotiikkaa 1800-luvulta alkaen ja myöhemmin science fictionia ja fantasiaa, koska nämä genret mahdollistavat monipuolisemman aihe maailman ja henkilö hahmojen esittämisen ilman yhteiskunnan määrittämiä, perinteisiä sukupuolirooleja.

Vaikka "Wolfland" ja "Boobs" käsittelevät hyvin vaikeita aiheita, kuten perheväkivalta ja seksuaalinen ahdistelu, novellit kuitenkin ovat selviytymistarinoita. Novellien naispäähenkilöt kieltäytyvät hyväksymästä perinteistä alistuvaa ja uhriutuvaa naisen roolia vaan muodostavat itse olemisensa henkiset ja fyysiset rajat. Novelleissaan Lee ja McKee Charnas palauttavat sadunkerrontaan naistenvälisen vuoropuhelun ja perimätiedon välittämisen, jotka puuttuvat esimerkiksi Perault'n ja Grimmin veljesten "Punahilkka"-saduista.

Hakusanoja: Feministinen satu, Punahilkka, ihmissusi, fantasia, gotiikka, groteski.

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1. Introduction

In this study my aim is to examine two short stories, Tanith Lee's "Wolfland"¹ (1980) and Suzy McKee Charnas's "Boobs"² (1989), via the tradition of feminist rewriting of fairy tales. I will analyse the short stories from the point of view of fantasy, female Gothic and the Grotesque. The fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood" has clearly inspired Lee in her "Wolfland" and although "Boobs" cannot be considered as a rewritten tale about Little Red Riding Hood, it nevertheless is analogous to "Wolfland", as in both the stories one of the carrying themes is self-defence through metamorphosis: taking an appearance of a werewolf. As the werewolf is a central figure in "Wolfland" and "Boobs", I will also examine how metamorphosis, particularly lycanthropy has been depicted in literature. Furthermore, as it can be argued that the basis of "Wolfland" and "Boobs" lies in European fairy tale tradition, I will analyse the structural elements and narratological techniques of the short stories in comparison with the traditional fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood" of Charles Perrault and the Grimm Brothers. For this purpose, I have created a model structure (see Appendix I). When quoting from Tanith Lee's "Wolfland" and Suzy McKee Charnas's "Boobs", I will use the abbreviations "W" and "B", respectively. In this thesis I define "Wolfland" and "Boobs" as tales of magic, which definition originates from the Aarne-Thompson classification system of Indo-European fairy tales. The folklorist Satu Apo defines the tale of magic of the AT classification system as a long, fictive narrative having at least one wondrous element, such as a transformation or an experience or deed that surpasses human performance. In my view, Apo's definition can be applied to "Wolfland" and "Boobs."

¹ Lee, Tanith. "Wolfland." *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. Ed. Jack Zipes. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993, pp. 122-147.

² Charnas McKee, Suzy. "Boobs." *Children of the Night: Stories of Ghosts, Vampires, and "Lost Children"*. Ed. Martin H. Greenberg. Nashville: Cumberland House, 1999, pp. 11-35.

1.1 Background and the Material of the Study

My intention is to study feminist rewriting of traditional fairy tales in the context of Lee and McKee Charnas's short stories. Also, I will examine how the two writers make use of fantasy and the Gothic genre and the Grotesque in their work, how the imagery of fantasy, the Gothic and the Grotesque appear in "Wolfland" and "Boobs". In women's literary history in Britain and the United States, the Gothic and later fantasy and science fiction seem to have been much-favoured genres, all used now and again more or less consciously in search of artistic freedom.

Another phenomenon closely linked to the two short stories is lycanthropy. Cassell's *Concise English Dictionary* defines lycanthropy as a mental illness in which the patient believes to be a (were)wolf. Furthermore, lycanthropy means a belief in a form of witchcraft by which human beings turn themselves into wolves.³ In the sixteenth century in the English language the words *werewolf* and *lycanthrope* appear to be interchangeable.⁴ In order to present a contextual framework for "Wolfland" and "Boobs", I will give an overview of the historical existence of lycanthropy in literature, folk beliefs, folklore and in contemporary fiction and entertainment. Also, the depictions and images of the protagonists as werewolves in "Wolfland" and "Boobs" will be analysed.

Finally, I will examine the structural and narratological elements of the short stories. "Wolfland" and "Boobs" are tales that might be defined as adult fantasy, fairy tales for adults that do have recognisable fairy tale elements in them but whose story lines at the same time break the traditional fairy tale patterns of, for example, Charles Perrault and the Grimm Brothers. It interests me to study the similarities and differences that the two short stories have in relation to the classical "Little Red Riding Hood." As a basis, or a starting

³ Cassell's *Concise English Dictionary*. London: Cassell, 1994.

⁴ Otten, Charlotte F. *A Lycanthropy Reader. Werewolves in Western Culture*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986, p. 8.

point at least, of the structural analysis I am tempted to use the research done by the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp on the fairy tale and its functions⁵, as well as the work by the Finnish researcher of folk tradition and literature, Satu Apo, even if their theories are not directly applicable to the short stories I have chosen to study.

Tanith Lee (1947-) is a prolific British author of science fiction, fantasy and horror who has to date published over 40 novels and more than 200 short stories. She has also written books for children as well as scripts for radio plays and TV series for the BBC. Interestingly enough, her first adult fantasy novel was published in the United States in 1975, after several rejections from British publishers. Jack Zipes (1993) describes Lee as a writer “going against the grain of sexist classical fairy tales.”⁶ Suzy McKee Charnas (1939-) is an American writer whose genres are likewise science fiction, fantasy and horror. On her home page on the Internet she comments on her outlook on life and writing: “My life experience so far has led me to...feminism (the search for gender parity)...”⁷ In an interview by Denise Dumars (2000) McKee Charnas says that “everything I write is likely to reflect my awareness of gender problems.”⁸

Both Lee and McKee Charnas have adopted science fiction as one of their genres; a genre that has traditionally been rather male-dominated. Kingsley Amis writes in *New Maps of Hell* (1975) that “science fiction’s most important use...is a means of dramatising social enquiry, as providing a fictional mode in which cultural tendencies can be isolated and judged.”⁹ Even though “Wolfland” and “Boobs” are not actually examples of science fiction, but rather stories having fantastical elements, Amis’s claim is quite accurate in

⁵ In *Morphology of the Folktale*, published in 1928 in Russian and translated in English in 1958 and revised in 1968, Propp presented his view that fairy tale plots consist of identical functions, that is characters’ actions, regardless of the concrete form of the actions or the plot of the tale.

⁶ Zipes, Jack. *Don’t Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. Ed. Jack Zipes. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993, p.15.

⁷ <http://www.suzymckeecharnas.com/Autobiography.html>. Obtained March 23, 2004.

⁸ Dumars, Denise. *Altered Lives, Altered Loves: Tiptree Award Winner Suzy Mckee Charnas*. Dateline: Friday, September 22, 2000. <http://www.cinescape.com>. Obtained March 23, 2004.

⁹ Amis, Kingsley. *New Maps of Hell; A Survey of Science Fiction*. New York: Arno Press, 1975, p. 63.

their context; both comment on, among other things, the position of women first as victims (of male violence) and later describe the move away from the victimised state. Donna Heiland (2004), in turn, defines Gothic and science fiction as being “flip sides of the same coin”¹⁰, the Gothic looking traditionally to the past and science fiction to the future. Also, Brian W. Aldiss (1986) describes science fiction as “the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe”, and the genre “is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode.”¹¹

¹⁰ Heiland, Donna. *Gothic & Gender. An Introduction*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, p. 164.

¹¹ Aldiss, Brian W. with Wingrove, David. *Trillion Years Spree. The History of Science Fiction*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1986, p. 25.

1.2 Rewriting Fairy Tales – Writing Fantasy and Science Fiction

Jack Zipes has studied the reshaping of age-old fairy tales and their motifs into what he calls “experimental feminist fairy tales” for the purpose of provoking “readers to rethink conservative views of gender and power.”¹² For example, the presentation of traditional sex roles in fairy tales, the depiction of heroines as “damsels in distress”, and subsequently the passive role of female protagonists are such problematic issues that have been given attention. Because fairy tales can often be seen as reflecting the contemporary value systems or moral norms of the societies in which they are written and have (had) a central role in the education of children, they are thus of special interest for writers wanting to explore those, often rather invisible or *internalised*, moral codes.

“Little Red Riding Hood”, among other stories, evolved from the Perrault and Grimm versions onwards into a story about morality, directed especially at young girls. Zipes (1993) suggests that Little Red Riding Hood is “not really sent into the woods to visit grandma but to meet the wolf and to explore her own sexual cravings and social rules of conduct.”¹³ And as she fails to conform to the expectations of society regarding the behaviour bourgeois girls, she must be punished. The psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim (1975), in turn, writes that “Little Red Riding Hood” implies that “the child does not know how dangerous it may be to give in to what he considers his innocuous desires, so he must learn of his danger.”¹⁴ Even though Bettelheim is obviously of the opinion that “Little Red Riding Hood” is good education for children of both sexes, it is difficult to think of a male equivalent to Little Red Riding Hood. The contemporary term one might speak of here is *gendered upbringing*.

¹² Zipes (1993) p.13.

¹³ Ibid, p. 239.

¹⁴ Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1975, p. 176.

In the Preface of *Don't Bet on the Prince* (1993) Zipes comments on the rewriting process as follows: "Created out of dissatisfaction with the dominant male discourse of traditional fairy tales and with those social values and institutions which have provided the framework for sexist prescriptions, the feminist fairy tale conceives a different view of the world and speaks in a voice that has been customarily silenced."¹⁵ Joanna Russ (1983) comments on the silencing, which in her view concerns women but also race and class are of significance, by saying that when "women writers and other 'wrong' groups [are] practicing art, the techniques of containment, belittlement, and sheer denial are sometimes...very illogical."¹⁶ Russ mentions such, perhaps already historical, methods of hindering women's writing as "denial or pollution of agency", and "double standard of content", when analysing women's work. The belittlement and denial simply mean doubting women's ability as authors, and if the authorship has been established the work is condemned as something no woman should have ever written. Russ describes the position of women writers by saying that "Literary history is, I think, familiar with the Catch 22 by which women who were virtuous could not know enough about life to write well, while those who knew enough about life to write could not be virtuous."¹⁷ The double standard of content is labelling some experiences in life as more valuable than others. Russ writes about the social invisibility of women's experiences, which makes these experiences less valuable. According to Russ, there is a "belief that manhood is 'normative' and womanhood somehow 'deviant' or 'special.'"¹⁸

Women's writing has easily been labelled as *confessional*, that is, of lesser value as literature. Russ quotes the critic Julia Penelope's thoughts on the phenomenon; according to Penelope, "this pejorative label combines two ideas: that what has been written is not art

¹⁵ Zipes (1993), p. xi.

¹⁶ Russ, Joanna. *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. London: The Women's Press, 1984, p. 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 25.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 41.

and that such writing is shameful and too personal.”¹⁹ Penelope continues that “male accounts of intense, autobiographical experience are not usually put down by being called ‘confessional.’”²⁰ In this context the poet Anne Sexton is mentioned. She is known for writing about women’s experiences, also about the unpleasant ones and was thus labelled a confessional or *hysterical* writer; the fact that she committed suicide most probably multiplies the image. Sexton has rewritten many old fairy tales as poems that are a mixture of the old stories and modern (female) realism and everyday life; one of her poems “Red Riding Hood”, which is included in her collections *Love Poems* (1969) and *Transformations* (1971), is her way of (re)telling the fairy tale. Angela Carter is similarly a novelist who has been inspired by the old fairy and folk tales and has created “a provocative fiction which challenges conventional ideas of sexuality, of age, and of male-female relations.”²¹ Her short story “The Company of Wolves” published in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) likewise retells the story of Little Red Riding Hood.

A means by which women have used to avoid the afore-mentioned strands of criticism is to stay on the periphery, to choose genres of writing that are “less valued”, and not part of “high culture”. Joanna Russ confesses: “When I became aware of my ‘wrong’ experience, I chose fantasy. Convinced that I had no real experience of life, since my own obviously wasn’t part of Great Literature, I decided consciously that I’d write of things nobody knew anything about, dammit. So I wrote realism disguised as fantasy, that is, science fiction.”²² Tuire Laurinolli (1987) writes in the article “Joanna Russ – kuvien särkijä”²³ that inside science fiction a movement called the New Wave was formed in the United States and Britain in the 1960’s. The movement was known for experimenting with

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 29

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Clark, Robert and Healy, Thomas. *The Arnold Anthology of British and Irish Literature in English*. London: Arnold, 1997, p. 1546.

²² Russ (1984), p. 127.

²³ Laurinolli, Tuire. ”Joanna Russ – kuvien särkijä.” *Tieteiskirjallisuuden maailmoita*. Ed. Matti Savolainen. Helsinki: Kirjastopalvelu Oy, 1987, p. 122.

different literary forms and the raising of social consciousness. The afore-quoted Joanna Russ was one of the movement's key figures and in her work she breaks the traditional form of the novel and the norms of science fiction. Her concern has been that even though science fiction has found radical solutions to problems, the traditional sex roles have not been questioned. According to Laurinolli, the types of personality based solely on biological sex are products of society. In American society there exists an ideal of sexual polarisation in which the masculine qualities of aggressiveness, courage and rationality and the feminine qualities of tenderness, patience, intuition and passivity are strongly put in juxtaposition. What is more, children are from early on socialised according to these attributes. In the 1970's the amount of women writing science fiction in the United States and Britain rose and Laurinolli mentions Suzy McKee Charnas as one of the writers of science fiction who took up the genre at the time. Laurinolli²⁴ notes that the image of women and of human beings in general in science fiction is breaking away from the stereotypes and that new issues are being explored, including the position and problems of women along with the questions of power relations and violence.

In the Introduction of *More Women of Wonder* Pamela Sargent (1976) describes science fiction as "an unstructured think-tank in which authors of different points of view can paint different solutions or eventualities suggested by present problems or situations."²⁵ Science fiction and fantasy seem to offer women writers the kind of artistic freedom that would not be possible in other genres, and as Joanna Russ remarked, she writes realism *disguised* as fantasy. Sargent seems to be of the same opinion as Russ when saying that science fiction offers women "a freer rein than other types of writing."²⁶ Women writers of science fiction and fantasy have been able to start the process of changing the rather limited image of

²⁴ Ibid, pp. 124-125.

²⁵ Sargent, Pamela. *More Women of Wonder. Science Fiction Novelettes by Women about Women*. New York: Vintage Books, 1976, p. 1.

²⁶ Ibid, p. xlviii.

women inside the genres. It might be added, though, that turning around the traditional sex roles may be too simple a solution and will not suffice in the long run. In her (science) fiction Joanna Russ has created a female character called *Alyx* (the first novel in which *Alyx* appears is *Picnic in Paradise* that came out in 1968) who has both feminine and masculine characteristics and whose persona is “not limited by any outside rules.”²⁷ This is what science fiction and fantasy are at their best; presenting characters, both male and female, who are without constraints based on gender and unrestricted by expectations possibly presented by the society in which they are created.

²⁷ Laurinolli (1987), p. 126.

1.3 The (Female) Gothic – Another Women’s Genre

It can be argued that the Gothic genre gave similar freedom of authorship for women writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as fantasy or science fiction give to contemporary women authors. Ellen Moers writes in *Literary Women* (1986) that in female Gothic “woman is examined with a woman’s eye, woman as girl, as sister, as mother, as self.”²⁸ The development of the Gothic genre can hardly be discussed without mentioning Ann Radcliffe and her novels *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797). Radcliffe is most often described as a conventional writer, as one who was very conscious of the decorum of her time, but in the Gothic novel she found “a device to send maidens on distant and exciting journeys without offending the proprieties”²⁹, as Moers phrases it. The wondrous journeys of maidens at a time when “For heroines, the mere walking was suspect.”³⁰ were possible as long as they happened inside the Gothic castle that “however much in ruins, is still an indoor and therefore freely female space.”³¹ Furthermore, under the threat of an assault, rape or murder even, the Radcliffean heroines are able to do such things that otherwise would not be allowed; “scurry up the top of pasteboard Alps, spy out exotic vistas, penetrate bandit-infested forests.”³²

In 1764 Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* was published, which according to E. J. Clery (2003) is “generally regarded as the first Gothic novel.”³³ *Otranto* was not received particularly well, as critics above all wondered whether Gothic fiction could have a contemporary author. The Gothic age was namely considered “a long period of barbarism, superstition, and anarchy” starting from the final ruin of the Roman Empire

²⁸ Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. London: The Women’s Press, (1963) 1986, p.109.

²⁹ Ibid, p.126.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 130.

³¹ Ibid, p. 126.

³² Ibid.

³³ Clery, E. J. “The Genesis of ‘Gothic’ Fiction.” *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 21.

by Visigoth invaders in the fifth century AD and extending to the Renaissance. Furthermore, the term *Gothic* signified “anything obsolete, old-fashioned, or outlandish”³⁴ for Walpole’s contemporaries. Clery mentions, however, the Gothic Revival in architecture in the mid-eighteenth century, which was the most obvious justification for the use of the term the “Gothic novel.”³⁵ The novel itself as a genre was indeed a novelty at the time, something between (medieval) epic, or romance, and moral instruction for the young. Walpole’s innovation, then, was to combine realism, that is “naturalistic characterization and dialogue of the novel”³⁶ and supernatural elements of romances. After all: “Moral messages would be useless if not joined to compelling narratives that stirred the emotions of the reader.”³⁷ Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, it must be added, was mocking the contemporary orthodoxy, according to which fiction should be above all educational and portray life as it is without any unnatural features.

If Walpole had written his *Otranto* as a “half-serious novelty”, as Clery phrases it³⁸, Clara Reeve took up Walpole’s challenge to create a new mode of writing more seriously. Her novel *The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story* appeared in 1777 and like *Otranto*, it is set in the time of the Crusades. In *The Old English Baron*, however, Reeve is more careful with the use of supernatural elements and “expands the description of everyday actions and events”³⁹ in stead, which was more to the contemporary taste. Consequently, she wanted to keep her narrative “within the utmost *verge* of probability”⁴⁰, as she mentions in the preface of her work. Reeve did her part with *The Old English Baron* in advancing the acceptance of Gothic writing, although Walpole was most critical of its predictability: “Have you seen *The Old Baron* [sic], a Gothic story, professedly written in imitation of

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, p.24.

³⁷ Ibid, p.23.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 33.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Otranto, but reduced to reason and probability! It is so probable, that any trial for murder at the Old Baily would make a more interesting story.”⁴¹ Walpole himself had to wait quite sometime for (commercial) success, but despite of his criticism, Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* was received much better and the first edition sold well; the success must have been greatly valued by a women writer who at the beginning of her career had doubts about entering the writer’s profession: “I formerly believed, that I ought not to let myself be known for a scribbler, that my sex was an insuperable objection.”⁴²

However conscious Reeve was of her remarkable status as a women writer, Donna Heiland (2004), nevertheless, pairs *The Old English Baron* and *The Castle of Otranto* as portrayals of “classic patriarchal societies” and “the passage of power through the male line.”⁴³ Both the stories have at their core a disrupted patriarchy, that is, a struggle of the rightful heir to claim his inheritance. Female authority, on the other hand, does not exist and women’s role is reduced more or less to procreation. Sophia Lee’s *The Recess: A Tale of Other Times* published over the years 1783-85 offers a slightly different view compared to the Gothic of Walpole and Reeve, it is namely a narrative “of both English history and women’s authority.”⁴⁴ *The Recess* is set in the reign of Elizabeth I and deals with the historical rivalry between her and Mary Queen of Scots. As Heiland points out, by this setting Lee makes her readers “consider what it might mean to discuss public and private identity in the lives of women who could imagine themselves in positions of political power”⁴⁵ at a time when women’s sphere of life was above all the privacy of the home. Furthermore, the position of women as rivals for power would direct the readers to think

⁴¹ Clery, E. J. *Women’s Gothic. From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*. Devon: Northcote House Publishers, 2000, p. 30. Walpole’s quote comes from his letter to William Cole, 22 August, 1778.

⁴² Ibid, p. 27. Reeve’s quote comes from the opening “Address” of her collection of poems *Original Poems on Several Occasions* published in 1769.

⁴³ Heiland (2004), p.12.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 20.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 21.

about “the relationship between England’s explicitly patriarchal system of government and the women who contended for the role of ‘patriarch.’”⁴⁶

The story continues in the next generation as Mary’s fictional twin daughters, potential (and rightful) heiresses to the English throne are like their mother persecuted by Elizabeth. If the “matriarchy” in question is no more humane than the patriarchies of Walpole or Reeve, it is, nevertheless, the *maternal* line that is of importance; maternal history was indeed a rarity in the contemporary fiction. In “Wolfland”, Tanith Lee actually depicts a similar situation, in which the protagonist Lisel is to take her maternal grandmother’s place as the wolf goddess’s charge and thus become the mistress of Wolfland. Besides persecution, *The Recess* presents also great solidarity between women. One of Mary’s daughters imprisoned in Jamaica is helped to freedom by a black woman who presumably is a former slave but one who has thrived in life. According to Heiland (2004), this kind of “vision of interracial solidarity is perhaps fanciful, for white European women in the late eighteenth century were as much part of the colonial project as anyone.”⁴⁷ However utopian the crossing of racial, cultural and class boundaries in *The Recess* is, Lee makes clear her view that such “solidarity is necessary for women to escape the literal and figurative constraints on their lives”⁴⁸ in a patriarchal society.

Returning to Ann Radcliffe, according to Clery (2000), it was she who “established Gothic as a recognizable literary mode.”⁴⁹ Ellen Moers similarly stresses the significance of Radcliffe’s works for the formulation of the whole Gothic genre by saying that already in the 1790’s Radcliffe “set the Gothic in one of ways it would go ever after: a novel in which the central figure is a young woman who is simultaneously persecuted victim and

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 20.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 28.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Clery (2000), p. 50.

courageous heroine.”⁵⁰ It is also worth noting that when Radcliffe was writing *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which is partly set in Italy, she had never been abroad, in fact, she hardly knew any other places than London and Bath. Radcliffe wanted to include in her writing the kind of phenomena women were only beginning to experience, such as travelling. Also, Radcliffe’s works are expressions of frustration for women’s restricted everyday life; confinement to the home, financial dependency, the extreme demand of respectability, which manifested itself as “the terrible danger of slippage from the respectable to the unrespectable class of womanhood”⁵¹ and the forced, if needed, male protection offered by the father, lover or husband that could easily turn into actual “imprisonment of women.”⁵²

Even if Ann Radcliffe’s works show sensitivity to the contemporary moral decorum and her “resolutions are all conventionally ‘happy’ with the marriage of the heroine to the hero”⁵³, she nevertheless *transgresses* the boundaries set for the life of a late eighteenth century woman. As Coral Ann Howells (1989) defines it, Radcliffe’s transgression is simply her being “a woman writing and asserting the freedom of the creative imagination as an artist’s right.”⁵⁴ Howells continues that in describing women’s thoughts in her novels, Radcliffe goes beyond the “legitimate feelings of duty” and “honourable love and fear” as she deals with “women’s utterance of desire”, however hastily the expressions of (sexual) desire are negated or silenced.⁵⁵ Inside the genre, Radcliffe is free to explore the kind of female experiences and emotions that are almost unheard of, for example in the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, the heroine of the novel is simultaneously afraid of and attracted to

⁵⁰ Moers (1986), p. 91.

⁵¹ Ibid, p.136.

⁵² Howells, Coral Ann. “The Pleasure of the Woman’s Text: Ann Radcliffe’s Subtle Transgressions in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*.” *Gothic Fictions. Prohibition/Transgression*. Ed. Kenneth W. Graham. New York: AMS Press, 1989, p. 154.

⁵³ Ibid, p.152.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.153.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.158.

the villain of the story, and she makes him an object of her erotic fantasy. Such sensual feelings are possible only in fiction, when the heroine is at the mercy of the Gothic villain.

According to Ellen Moers, Ann Radcliffe was “the most popular and best-paid English novelist of the eighteenth century.”⁵⁶ Regardless of her popularity, Radcliffe most probably had to be careful in her literary work and she was perhaps faced with the afore-mentioned “Catch 22” situation affecting women writers of the time. She was, after all, breaking literary as well as gender boundaries as a writing woman. Interestingly, Moers makes a leap from Gothic to science fiction by suggesting that a generation later Mary Shelley made the Gothic novel over into what is today called science fiction with her *Frankenstein* (1818). Shelley’s protagonist was not the Gothic heroine but Shelley did use Gothic imagery and created a “birth myth”⁵⁷, as Moers calls *Frankenstein*. Giving birth is, along with (female) physical sexuality, a subject that did not much appear in British or American literature, and especially not in women’s writing, until the lifting of the “Victorian taboo”⁵⁸ at the end of the nineteenth century.

It seems that from early on, women writers have flourished in genres that are on the periphery. If the choice of genre was something of a necessity for Radcliffe’s (female) contemporaries, women writers from the 1960’s and 1970’s onwards have chosen Gothic, science fiction or fantasy perhaps much more consciously. In Radcliffe’s time, the creation of “alternate worlds”, for example, in the Gothic genre was a necessary “ploy” for women in order to describe tabooed phenomena and to locate female protagonists in settings outside the proper women’s sphere, the home. The denial or pollution of agency as methods of literary criticism that Joanna Russ discusses have presumably from early on influenced the kind of literature women have chosen to write. As Kenneth W. Graham

⁵⁶ Moers (1986), p. 91.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 92.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

(1989) notes, “Ann Radcliffe’s are the novels of a respectable woman.”⁵⁹ Later generations of women writers have resented the masculinized canon and the idea of *Great Literature* and thus went off mainstream and into the Gothic, science fiction or fantasy, in which genres they have been able to write of their own experiences, and perhaps more as themselves, without the weight of literary criticism of “high culture” and without even aiming, so to speak, at the canon. Quite indicative of the issue at hand is Eugenia C. DeLamotte’s (1990) claim that the “great inaugurator” of the Gothic genre, Ann Radcliffe, is actually being “defined out of it.”⁶⁰ In DeLamotte’s view, there is “a tendency to see the ‘high’ form of Gothic as written by men and...a tendency to see Gothic in its fullest development as centering on a male rather than a female protagonist”, and following this logic “Radcliffe and her most famous work [*The Mysteries of Udolpho*] are easily relegated to the periphery of the genre she herself did most to define.”⁶¹

Moers draws attention to a similar phenomenon when claiming that especially later male authors that followed Radcliffe diminished the Gothic heroine to a victim, “a weakling, a whimpering, trembling, cowering little piece of propriety whose sufferings are the source of her erotic fascination.”⁶² This seems curiously to resonate with what, for example, Jack Zipes (1993) has said about Little Red Riding Hood, how she in the hands of Perrault or the Grimm Brothers has suffered a similar fate. The originally witty little girl ends up a defenceless female fighting futilely against her own sexual desires and the danger they put her in. This is also the image that modern Gothic writers, such as Lee and McKee Charnas wish to change; after all Gothic fiction has transgression at its core, transgression of national, social and sexual boundaries, and the boundaries of one’s own

⁵⁹ Graham, Kenneth, W. ” Emily’s Demon-Lover: The Gothic Revolution and *Mysteries of Udolpho*.” *Gothic Fiction s. Prohibition/Transgression*. Ed. Kenneth W. Graham. New York: AMS Press, 1989, p. 165.

⁶⁰ DeLamotte Eugenia C. *Perils of the Night. A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 12.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Moers (1986), p. 137.

identity, as Heiland describes the genre.⁶³ She also mentions that the Gothic is ever popular and “is constantly being reinvented in ways that address the realities of our current historical moment.”⁶⁴

Linden Peach (1998) defines Gothic as a subversive genre “giving expression to what is culturally occluded such as sexual fantasy and female desire.”⁶⁵ Peach analyses in his study works by Angela Carter and there are, in my view, some noteworthy parallels to be drawn also to Lee and McKee Charnas. According to Peach, Carter’s novels frequently subvert the Gothic genre; “themes and ideas first explored...in Gothic writing are re-examined, challenged and expanded.”⁶⁶ For example, in the short story “The Company of Wolves” (1979) Carter “toys” with the traditional idea of Little Red Riding Hood as only a victim; the ending of the short story being most revealing: “See! sweet and sound she sleeps in granny’s bed, between the paws of the tender wolf.”⁶⁷ Some critics, however, have noted that the ending may actually not be all that “challenging”. Patricia Duncker, quoted by Sarah Gamble (1997), says that when Little Red Riding Hood realises the inevitability of rape, she “decides to strip off, lie back and enjoy it.”⁶⁸

Carter’s “Little Red Riding Hood” exemplifies the Gothic tendency to blur the structures of reality, to depict a world in which “villains and victims are no longer so clearly defined”.⁶⁹ In Tanith Lee’s “Wolfland” the protagonist Lisel escapes the marriage her father quite possibly plans for her by becoming a wolf, like her grandmother had earlier saved herself from a probable death in the hands of her abusive husband. By the act, Lisel

⁶³ Heiland (2004), p. 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 156.

⁶⁵ Peach, Linden. *Modern Novelists. Angela Carter*. London, Macmillan, 1998, p. 28.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Carter, Angela. “The Company of Wolves.” *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. London: Collancz, 1979, p. 118.

⁶⁸ Gamble, Sarah. *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: 1997, p. 136.

⁶⁹ Heiland (2004), p. 156.

also acquires sexual freedom. In McKee Charnas's "Boobs" Kelsey's metamorphosis into a wolf is a reaction to sexual harassment.

In the next chapter, I will take a closer look at metamorphosis as a universal cultural phenomenon, as well as the development of the theme starting from European classical and medieval literature and ending with contemporary fiction and popular culture. To close off this introductory chapter, I will sum up my points of interest in this study. I am interested in the messages that "Wolfland" and "Boobs" convey, as they are in my view most intriguing and yet meditative short stories. Their position(ing) in women's literary history as feminist rewritings making use of fantastical and Gothic elements, and their possible structural and phenomenal ties to folklore are questions I intend to explore.

2. The Universal Metamorphosis

Pasi Klemettinen (2002) writes in his article *Many Faces of Evil*⁷⁰: “The concept of metamorphosis – of a person, animal, or supernatural being – into another form looms large in myths from around the world.” He suggests that the phenomenon “reflects the human belief in the existence of a soul or spirit – an entity capable of moving independent of the body and abandoning the body after death.”⁷¹ Klemettinen refers above all to Greek mythology where one essential feature is people and divine beings having the power to change form.⁷² In the Christian tradition the Devil’s ability to metamorphose into a man or a woman, an animal or a monster is notorious. It also largely explains the existence of werewolves, that is, human beings tempted and tricked by the Devil, often in disguise. According to Charlotte F. Otten, the editor of *A Lycanthropy Reader* (1986), a collection of trial records, historical accounts and essays on lycanthropy, in the Middle Ages in Europe werewolves were regarded as the Devil’s “captive agents”⁷³, and sometimes as actual incarnations of the Devil. These beliefs were held by the church and by lay people alike. The question of werewolves was problematic for the church, though, as it involved defining the Devil’s capability of performing miracles. It was in ancient Greece, however, that the first European literary works about metamorphosis, and especially about werewolves appeared.

⁷⁰ Klemettinen, Pasi. “Many Faces of Evil.” *Myth and Mentality. Studies in Folklore and Popular Thought*. Tampere: Tammer-Paino Oy, 2002, p. 132.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid. Klemettinen’s source is Irving Forbes’s *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths*, 1990.

⁷³ Otten (1986), p. 7.

2.1 Werewolves in European Folk and Literary Tradition

The poet Ovid's (43 BC-18 AD) *Metamorphoses* records, among other stories, a Roman version of the Greek myth, in which the infuriated god Zeus transforms King Lycaon of Arcadia into a wolf, a shape that best suits the king's evil nature. In Ovid's story about King Lycaon, the Roman god Jupiter replaces Zeus, but the story itself remains the same. Jupiter visits the king's court and reveals himself as a god. The proud king refuses to do Jupiter homage and plans on killing him when he is sleeping in order to test Jupiter's (im)mortality. The plan is not enough for the "Arcadian tyrant" and he tries to offer the god human flesh to eat. The omnipotent Jupiter, however, notices the deception and his "avenging flames" bring the king's house down, and the fleeing Lycaon is caught. Jupiter transforms the king into a wolf, but some of his features remain recognisable, as the god himself explains: "But, though he was a wolf, he retained some traces of his original shape. The greyness of his hair was the same, his face showed the same violence, his eyes gleamed as before, and he presented the same picture of ferocity."⁷⁴ Tanith Lee employs a similar technique, maybe consciously and reminiscent of the myth in "Wolfland", when the protagonist Anna attacks her husband as a wolf, and he recognises her: "He knows they are the eyes of Anna. And that it is Anna who then tears out his throat." (W, 145).

Like Ovid's depiction of Lycaon's metamorphosis shows, the essence of the human body and soul, that is the psychophysical make-up of human beings, has for long puzzled poets and philosophers. King Lycaon is transformed into a wolf, because of his savage nature, and it can be assumed that his human psyche from then on lives in the body of a wolf. Jupiter remarks that Lycaon "uttered howling noises, and his aims to speak were all

⁷⁴ Ovid. "The Metamorphoses." Translated by Mary M. Innes (Harmsworth: Penguin, 1955). *A Lycanthropy Reader. Werewolves in Western Culture*. Ed. Charlotte F. Otten. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986, p. 228.

in vain.”⁷⁵ Similarly, Anna in “Wolfland” and “Kelsey” in *Boobs* retain their human consciousness and perform conscious acts while having a wolf’s appearance. In werewolf myths it also often happens that the wounds contracted by the wolf appear in the alleged lycanthrope. The Roman Petronius, Master of the Emperor’s Pleasures at the court of Nero, tells the story of a slave called Niceros in his *Satyricon* (1st century AD). Niceros witnesses his travelling companion, “a stout Fellow, and as bold as a Devil”⁷⁶, turning into a wolf. Niceros is on his way to see his mistress, the moon is shining and when they are passing a cemetery, Niceros notices that his companion who has left behind is naked and turns into a wolf right in front of his eyes, howls and disappears into the forest. When Niceros arrives at the farm where his mistress is staying “breathing his last”, she tells him that a wolf “has made a Butcher’s work enough among the Cattle.”⁷⁷ The wolf has escaped but a servant was able to wound the creature on the neck with a pitchfork. When Niceros gets back from his mistress, he finds his strange travelling companion bed-ridden with a surgeon tending a wound on his neck. Niceros then tells that “I understood afterwards he was a Fellow that could change his Skin; but from that day forward, could never eat a bit of Bread with him, no if you’d have kill’d me.”⁷⁸

As mentioned above, it is quite obvious that King Lycaon in *Metamorphoses*, and also *Satyricon*’s strange traveller, are conscious of their human-selves as wolves. In *Satyricon* Niceros’s companion does nothing to hide his metamorphosis. These ancient myths have had an influence on how later periods of time have perceived werewolves. Otten remarks that “the ancient myths are powerful warnings to humans to abstain from indulging bestial appetites and from obeying irrational promptings.”⁷⁹ Indeed, Jupiter is

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Petronius. “Satyricon”. Translated by William Burnaby, 1694. *A Lycanthropy Reader. Werewolves in Western Culture*. Ed. Charlotte F. Otten. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986, p. 231.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 233.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Otten (1986), p. 8.

worried about the human condition and at the god's council threatens to destroy the whole human race, which he considers to be worse than "the snaky-footed giants" who were preparing to take the sky as a captive. Otten continues that the ecclesiastical werewolves "are to be feared because of the wily stratagems of the Devil."⁸⁰ In the Middle Ages and later the werewolf belief of the common people was an interesting hybrid of ancient mythology and the teachings of the church. It has to be added, though, that learned philosophers could not find all-encompassing explanations either.

Most of the literary sources on werewolves after antiquity are by judges and theologians trying to solve the problem of metamorphosis according to the contemporary laws and doctrines on divinity, and date back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Witches and werewolves did cause some difficulty for the authorities, because if metamorphosis were to be considered a reality then one was guilty of heresy, as one would have to believe that also the Devil was capable of performing miracles, not only God. The common people, however, strongly believed in the existence of werewolves and there were many trials against alleged werewolves followed by convictions and executions in several countries in Europe.

Reflections of the myths of antiquity can be seen in the beliefs of the Middle Ages, although some significant differences can be found. In ancient Greece and Rome, metamorphosis had a moral dimension, moral decline was as destructive as an actual metamorphosis into a wolf or another beast, and human beings had power over their own inclinations. As Otten concludes, "The human soul that sinks in the werewolf myth to the level of a beast has made its own metaphysical transformation."⁸¹ Later, the Devil's interference was crucial and people became almost innocent victims of diabolical plots. Interestingly enough, also domestic crime such as adultery, a "scheming wife (and her

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid, p.225.

lover) are the agents of the transformation.”⁸² Otten explains this “puzzling change” with the medieval anti-feminist bias. What remained of the myths, however, was the belief that appearance can reveal a lycanthrope. A peculiar appearance, like dark complexion, matted mane-like hair or protruding canine teeth, was considered as a sign of a werewolf. In fact, as late as at the beginning of the nineteenth century a science called physiognomy studied and defined a person’s temperament according to his or her physical features; certain features would reveal dormant lycanthropy. This belief is employed by Tanith Lee in “Wolfland” when she very vividly describes the grandmother Anna’s “wolf-like” appearance. Also, many folk stories and trial testimonies tell about (were)wolves that have been wounded by their victims or hunters and the same wounds appear later in the alleged lycanthropes.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries among the academia, opinions on the existence of lycanthropes varied from total scepticism to total acceptance of metamorphosis, and in addition, there were those who took some sort of an intermediate position. Those who believed in metamorphosis, like the English philosopher and physician William Drage, argued that because the world was made of nothing by a “Spiritual Power”, the world may also be resolved into nothing by the same “Power”. The Devil, also a “spirit”, can thus have similar powers.⁸³ Drage’s countryman, Reginald Scot, on the other hand, doubted the Devil’s power “to alter human flesh into animal flesh” and regarded “sufferers from lycanthropic delusions as having the disease *Lupina melancholia* or *Lupina insania*.”⁸⁴ Those in between the two extremes believed in “diabolical (but illusory) lycanthropy, in which the Devil assumed the body of a wolf or he deluded

⁸² Ibid, p. 7.

⁸³ Ibid, p.10.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

humans into thinking they were wolves.”⁸⁵ The attitudes towards lycanthropy were thus hardly only superstitious fear.

Otten mentions that King James I of England, a contemporary of Scot and Drage, concluded in his *Daemonologie* published in 1597 (“demonology”, the study of demons or of evil spirits⁸⁶) that “werewolves were neither demon-haunted nor spirit haunted humans but, were self-deluded ‘melancholic’ humans who counterfeited wolf behavior; that in the absence of Reason, chaotic bestial impulses could run rampant.”⁸⁷ And in the words of King James I himself: “There hath indeed bene an old opinion of such like things; For by the Greekes they were called *lycanthropoi* which signifieth men-woolfes. But to tell you simplie my opinion in this, if anie such thing hath bene, I take it to have proceeded but of a naturall super-abundance of Melancholie....”⁸⁸ Modern medicine has diagnosed lycanthropes suffering from, for example, schizophrenia, bi-polar or drug-induced psychosis and hallucinations or autism, but according to Otten, as early as the seventh century an influential Alexandrian physician Paulos Aigina mentioned hallucinogenic drugs in the context of a disease called lycanthropy.⁸⁹ Again, there exists an interesting contradiction to Kelsey in “Boobs”, who contrary to being ill, feels that she has regained her former health and physical condition when in the form of a wolf.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ A definition given by *Cassell's Concise English Dictionary*.

⁸⁷ Otten (1986), p. 10-11.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 128.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 13.

2.2 From Trial Records to Folk and Fairy Tales

Otten's *A Lycanthropy Reader* tells the life story and presents the trial records of Stubbe Peeter, one of the most notorious lycanthropes in Europe who terrorised the surroundings of Cologne in Germany in the sixteenth century. Contemporaries describe him as someone who "from his youth was greatly inclined to evil and the practising of wicked arts, surfeiting in the damnable desire of magic, necromancy, and sorcery, acquainting himself with many infernal spirits and fiends."⁹⁰ Accordingly, "The Devil gave him a girdle, which being put around him, he was transformed into the likeness of a greedy, devouring wolf, strong and mighty, with eyes great and large, which in the night sparkled like brands of fire; a mouth great and wide, with most sharp and cruel teeth; a huge body and mighty paws."⁹¹ Stubbe Peeter would "walk up and down, and if could spy either maid, wife, or child that his eyes liked or his heart lusted after, he would wait their issuing out of the city or town"⁹² and "If he could by any means get them alone, he would in the fields ravish them, and after in his wolfish likeness cruelly murder them."⁹³ In 1589 he was put to trial and sentenced to death by torture on the wheel.

As can be concluded from the above descriptions of the character of Stubbe Peeter, the werewolf trials could hardly be held without great publicity and strong feelings. The trial records of Stubbe Peeter were translated into English in 1590 by an eye-witness of the trial and execution. However hair-raising the alleged crimes of werewolves were, sometimes "mitigating circumstances" were taken into consideration. Otten mentions a French court case in which a young boy called Jean Grenier was brought to trial in 1603.⁹⁴ Grenier was a self-confessed werewolf who claimed to have eaten a baby stolen from its cradle and

⁹⁰ Otten (1986), p. 69.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid, p. 70.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 9.

parts of young children among other beastly crimes. His becoming a werewolf was also aided by the Devil. “The Man of the Forest”, an alleged, secret affiliate of the Devil had given Grenier a special salve and a wolf-skin, which would turn him into a werewolf. The court, however, “recognised his mental aberration and limited intelligence and sentenced him to life in a monastery for moral and religious instruction.”⁹⁵ He spent seven years in the monastery but did not recover and died at the age of twenty, “scarcely human.”⁹⁶

During the witch hunts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries most of the suspects were women, but “werewolves” were almost exclusively men; an interesting point when considering my research material where the werewolves are specifically women. Also, the werewolves being the Devil’s advocates and receiving “girdles, salves or wolf-skins” from the Devil, were central elements in the werewolf beliefs around Europe. In Tanith Lee’s “Wolfland” Anna likewise uses special kind of flowers as agents of her metamorphosis, but there is nothing “demonic” in her calling of the goddess of the forest to give her the gift of transmutation, which indeed is a life-saving gift for Anna.

By the end of the seventeenth century when the witch hunts subsided, also the werewolf trials became fewer. Wolves were almost extinct in Europe, and thus the stories about werewolves lost their effect. Around this time Charles Perrault, among others, collected folk tales for his own use; his collection of fairy tales, which included “Little Red Riding Hood”, was going to be read at Versailles in the court of King Louis XIV. The downside of this kind of “preservation” of folklore was the loss of the rough edges, so to speak, of the old folk tales. The oral folk tale, on which Perrault most probably based his own version, was officially recorded by Paul Delarue in France in 1885. It was a story about a peasant girl, who is harassed by a (were)wolf, but is able to save herself by her own action. The

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

following dialogue from the end of Delarue's "The Story of Grandmother" shows the humorous side of old folk tradition often lost in the process of fairy tale writing.

When she laid herself in the bed, the little girl said:

'Oh, Granny, how hairy you are!'

'The better to keep myself warm, my child!'

'Oh, Granny, what big nails you have!'

'The better to scratch me with, my child!'

'Oh, Granny, what big shoulders you have!'

'The better to carry the firewood, my child!'

'Oh, Granny, what big ears you have!'

'The better to hear you with, my child!'

'Oh, Granny, what big nostrils you have!'

'The better to snuff my tobacco with, my child!'

'Oh, Granny, what big mouth you have!'

'The better to eat you with, my child!'

'Oh, Granny, I've got to go badly. Let me go outside'

'Do it in bed, my child!'

'Oh no, Granny, I want to go outside.'

'All right, but make it quick.'

The werewolf attached a woollen rope to her foot and let her go outside.

When the little girl was outside, she tied the end of the rope to a plum tree in the courtyard.

The werewolf became impatient and said: 'Are you making a load out there? Are you making a load?'

When he realised that nobody was answering him, he jumped out of bed and saw that the little girl had escaped. He followed her but arrived at her house just at the moment she entered.⁹⁷

Of course, as Perrault wanted his fairy tale, which he called "Little Red Riding Hood", to become "the literary standardbearer for good Christian upbringing"⁹⁸, he would exclude the rather crude elements, which exist in Delarue's version. In "The Story of the Grandmother" Little Red Riding Hood is, for example, tricked by the wolf into eating the grandmother's flesh and drinking her blood, which act of cannibalism most probably echoes the well-known court cases and crimes of the famous werewolves. Furthermore, Perrault changed the nature of the tale in another way. According to many interpretations, including that of Bruno Bettelheim⁹⁹, Perrault deliberately portrayed Little Red Riding

⁹⁷ Zipes (1986), p. 229.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Bettelheim (1975), p. 169.

Hood as a “fallen woman” with the sinful red hood, who wants to be seduced and who is consequently eaten/raped by the wolf, because she deserves it. In the “actual” encounters with werewolves, like in the case of Stubbe Peeter, the victims can hardly be blamed.

In 1812, the Grimm Brothers published their version of the tale, which also has become a classic. The Grimm version was much based on the tale by Perrault, but there are some significant changes. More emphasis is given to Little Red Riding Hood’s encounter with the wolf in the woods; after all, she is warned not to stray from the path by her mother, advice that she of course forgets. In Perrault’s fairy tale there is no mention of the mother warning her daughter. Also, the Grimm Brothers wanted to save Little Red Riding Hood and the grandmother. A hunter comes by the grandmother’s cottage and sees the wolf lying asleep in the bed. He cuts open the wolf’s stomach and frees the women. As Zipes comments on the Grimm version “Only a strong male figure can rescue a girl from herself and her lustful desires.”¹⁰⁰ Delarue’s folktale about “a courageous and cunning girl who was proving that she was ready to become a seamstress and could handle needles and wolves”¹⁰¹ is thus quite a contrast to the Grimm or Perrault version. According to Velay-Vallantin (1997), in the oral versions of “Little Red Riding Hood” from the province of Nivernais in France the girl “does not know whether she should choose ... the path of pins or the path of needles” when she is “training for her feminine role” as perhaps the seamstress or a peddler of goods.¹⁰² These oral versions, such as “The Story of Grandmother”, can thus be considered above all as part of women’s storytelling tradition.

From the Grimm version almost to this day, “Little Red Riding Hood” is a fairy tale in which men are the real actors and women are seen as male objects to be “ravaged”, or

¹⁰⁰ Zipes (1993), p. 230.

¹⁰¹ Norton, W. W. *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm*. First Edition. Selected and Edited by Jack Zipes. New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 2001, p. 744.

¹⁰² Velay-Vallantine, Catherine. “Little Red Riding Hood as Fairy Tale, Fair-divers, and Children’s Literature: The Invention of Traditional Heritage. *Out of the Woods. The Origins of the Literary Fairy Tale in Italy and France*. Ed. Nancy L. Canepa. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997, p. 334.

alternatively saved. It is the wolf that tempts Little Red Riding Hood to admire the wonders of the forest and pick flowers, making her thus forget her duty to the grandmother and the warnings of her mother. In the course of centuries, though, there have been numerous allusions in different versions to the desire of Little Red Riding Hood to be seduced, and even raped. Also, Little Red Riding Hood has been claimed to be the real temptress and the wolf is only acting like “any” other man would.

2.3 From Popular Culture to Mainstream Fiction

During the nineteenth century werewolf legends begin to appear as topics of commercial popular culture. As Charlotte F. Otten points out “The taste for werewolf fantasy seems to be insatiable.”¹⁰³ According to Otten, Clemens Houseman’s novel *The Were-Wolf* published in Britain in 1896 is “the classic werewolf story of the late nineteenth century” combining myth, fantasy and allegory.¹⁰⁴ The protagonist is a beautiful female werewolf that attacks the son of a virtuous family. The plot is rather a black and white battle between good and evil with misogynistic tendencies. The son saves his family and becomes a martyr and the werewolf loses its life. Hänninen and Latvanen (1992) claim that the plot of the novel is nothing more than “Victorian mumbo jumbo”, but they also admit that the case may not be that simple. The author is namely a woman who may have used her female werewolf as a means of “early feminist fling”¹⁰⁵ and had the beast killed only out of demand of the contemporary decorum. *The Were-Wolf* is also a worthy predecessor to the twentieth century feminist rewritings of old fairy and folk tales, like Tanith Lee’s “Wolfland.”

In the Fenno-Ugric language area there have also been many stories based on werewolf mythology. The Finnish novelist Aino Kallas’s *The Wolf’s Bride* (1928) is a story of an honest peasant and especially of his young wife who cannot resist the call of the wild and the temptations of the dark forces of nature and runs away as a werewolf to join a pack of wolves. Kallas’s emphasis is on the sexual side of the myth, rebelling against one’s community and enjoying one’s (sexual) drive. The villagers of course destroy the wolf-bride and even though Kallas hides behind her Christian narrator’s voice, Hänninen and

¹⁰³ Otten (1986), p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 283.

¹⁰⁵ Hänninen, Harto and Latvanen Marko. *Verikekkerit. Kauhun käsikirja*. Helsinki: Otava, 1992, p. 74.

Latvanen argue that her sympathies still lie with the wolf-bride.¹⁰⁶ Also, in the Bibliography of his article “Early Modern Horror Fiction, 1897-1949”, Brian Stableford (1990) identifies *The Wolf’s Bride* with its “confused morality and essential sympathy for the werewolf” as “a first step in the direction of Angela Carter’s apologetic tales of wolfwomen.”¹⁰⁷ The word *apologetic*, though, may seem odd when referring to works by Angela Carter, as one of her recurring themes is the empowerment of women, that is the move away from the traditional victimisation. Even if the fate of the wolf-bride is destruction, the transformation into a wolf is, nevertheless, a startling and intoxicating experience and a show of nature’s forces, sharpening one’s senses. Suzy McKee Charnas actually uses a similar technique in “Boobs” when describing Kelsey’s metamorphosis.

The German-Swiss author Herman Hesse’s novel *Steppenwolf* (1929) has become a world classic. *Steppenwolf*’s main protagonist Harry Haller is considered to be the author’s self-portrait. Haller is a 48-year-old loner who believes that under his sensitive and civilised surface lurks a wild “wolf of the plains”, a translation from the German “Steppenwolf”. Haller is torn between his belonging to the mediocre middle class and bourgeois society and the desire to escape the very same thing; the easy middle class life he leads, and at the same time despises. Heller’s adventures are half reality and half fantasy when he wanders the nightly streets of a German city of the late 1920’s and learns to enjoy the nightlife and also “discovers” sex. *Steppenwolf* is a journey into the unconscious of the protagonist, into his “wolfish” self that is unacceptable to the conscious self.

In her article “Hurjan inhimillinen peto” (1992), Leena Peltonen regards Guy Endore’s novel *The Werewolf of Paris* published in 1933 in the United States as “perhaps the best

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 78.

¹⁰⁷ Stableford, Brian. ”Early Modern Horror Fiction, 1897-1949.” *Horror Literature. A Reader’s Guide*. Ed. Neil Barron. New York: Garland Publishing, 1990, p. 132.

werewolf novel in the twentieth century.”¹⁰⁸ The novel is loosely based on an actual case of lycanthropy in France in the nineteenth century, and its setting is Paris during the Franco-German war of 1870-71. The pubescent protagonist is a boy who is born out of a rape, and his birthday, the Christmas Eve, is an ominous date of birth of werewolves-to-be in European folk tradition. The actual metamorphosis takes place after his first encounter with physical sex. Much like in the case of Kelsey in “Boobs”, a step towards adulthood triggers the change. In Hänninen and Latvanen’s view¹⁰⁹ Endore studies his contemporary culture and the ways in which the denial of physical desire forced by society leads to an uncontrollable outburst of repressed drives. Similarly, Peltonen mentions the ambiguity of the protagonist, the struggle between his human self and the wolf element, as attributes of Endore’s novel.¹¹⁰

As mentioned earlier, especially during the Middle Ages the (were)wolf was an incarnation of all evil and sinfulness in the Christian religion, a personification of the Devil, and religious icons such as holy water, crucifixes or bullets made of sanctified silver were believed to be lethal weapons against suspected werewolves. Later werewolf-fiction diffused with folklore has made the werewolf a metaphor for nature, symbolising especially the animalistic, yet natural, side of the human psyche. Whitley Strieber has used this wolf-metaphor in his novel *The Wolfen* (1978) in which he criticises the exploitation of nature by the Western civilisation. In the novel a pack of not exactly werewolves but a special species of wolves with unusual intellect and social behaviour invade New York. The wolves had earlier lived in peace with the *real* Americans, namely Native American Indians, but the wrong-doings of the white man have driven them to prey in the city.

¹⁰⁸ Peltonen, Leena. ”Hurjan inhimillinen peto. Ihmissusi kansanperinteessä ja kirjallisuudessa.” *Haamulinnan perillisiä. Artikkeleita kauhufiktiosta 1760-luvulta 1990-luvulle*. Ed. Matti Savolainen and Päivi Mehtonen. Helsinki: Kirjastopalvelu Oy: 1992, p. 212.

¹⁰⁹ Hänninen and Latvanen (1992), p. 76.

¹¹⁰ Peltonen (1992), p. 234.

In his article “Contemporary Horror Fiction 1950-88”, Keith Neilson (1990) discusses the werewolf “as an innocent child of nature.” According to Neilson, the reader discovers in *The Wolfen*, “a tight, loyal, devoted family unit” with a rigid code as carnivores of only preying on the weak and sick.¹¹¹ The grandmother Anna in “Wolfland” also has special reverence towards the wolves on her lands; the land she regards as “theirs by right.” She explains the name and essence of her castle and the forest named “Wolfland” to granddaughter Lisel: “This, like the whole of the forest, was called the Wolfland. Because it was the wolves’ country before ever men set foot on it with their piffling little roads and tracks, their carriages and foolish frightened walls.” (W, 130). It seems that compared with wolves, Anna has little regard for mankind. In the short story there may also be a hint of religious sarcasm. As the wolf is a Christian symbol of evil (cf. Christ’s Sermon on the Mount: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”¹¹²), it appears quite fitting that the young Anna’s female servant would discuss the spirit of the forest, “an old goddess left over from the beginning of things, before Christ came to save us all”, who can give the gift of transmogrification.

During the twentieth century werewolf-fantasy of course adopted the medium of film. As the critic Michael Open (quoted in Anwell, 1988) points out, the cinema is the art of transformation “whereby still images are brought to life” and thus the werewolf movie is “a particularly apt subject.”¹¹³ But even if the imagery of (Gothic) horror and werewolves indeed make for “apt” cinematographic material, the difficulty with film according to Maggie Anwell is, “representing thought processes through externally defined images”,

¹¹¹ Neilson, Keith. “Contemporary Horror Fiction, 1950-88.” *Horror Literature. A Reader’s Guide*. Ed. Neil Barron. New York: Garland Publishing, 1990, p.183.

¹¹² Matt. 7:15, quoted in Otten (1986), p. 5.

¹¹³ Open, Michael. Quoted in Maggie Anwell’s article “Lolita Meets the Werewolf: *The Company of Wolves*.” *The Female Gaze. Women As Viewers of Popular Culture*. Ed. Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marsment. London: The Women’s Press, 1988, p. 84.

that is making special effects convey “troubling ambiguities...within the self.”¹¹⁴ Pekka Kilpinen¹¹⁵ (2002) similarly comments on the werewolf theme in films by saying that werewolves on the screen have from the beginning been odd-looking, hairy, pointy-eared and fanged humans, whereas werewolves in folklore *were* wolves. Kelsey in “Boobs” is of the same opinion; she notices that her metamorphosis is nothing like in films. She simply changes her shape without any struggle, screaming or breaking of bones created by a special effects man.

In 1984 Neil Jordan directed a film based on Angela Carter’s “The Company of Wolves” and on her script for the film, which is by the same name. The central figure is a young girl, Rosaleen, suffering from her first menstrual cramps. She dreams of a mystical medieval world inhabited by werewolves, in which her grandmother tells her both educating and warning stories about “men whose hair grows on the inside.” As the film progresses, the focus moves away from the rather gruesome stories of the grandmother towards the girl examining her own awakening sexuality and taking over the storytelling. The end of the film resembles the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood”; the girl finally meets the (were)wolf in the forest, but it appears that she herself makes the choice of binding her destiny to the wolf. When alone with the wolf in the grandmother’s cottage, she voluntarily throws her red shawl in the fire, which according to Anwell means that she thus discards “the role of the sacrificial victim along with her shawl.”¹¹⁶ Fire, of course, is an ancient remedy against werewolves and witches, and the burning of a werewolf’s human clothes will make the transformation irrevocable.

At the end of the film Rosaleen recites a poem that, in fact, in this particular context appears to somewhat mock the moralising fairy tale tradition.

Little girls, it seems to say

¹¹⁴ Anwell (1988), p. 84.

¹¹⁵ Kilpinen, Pekka. *Ihmissudet. Asiakirjoja ja kertomuksia*. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino, 2002, p.39.

¹¹⁶ Anwell (1988), p. 81.

never stop upon your way.
Never trust a stranger friend
no one knows how it will end.
As you're pretty, so be wise
wolves may lurk in every guise.
Now and ever 'tis the simple truth
the sweetest tongue has the sharpest tooth.¹¹⁷

Also, the poem seems to resonate with a similar one by Charles Perrault, which he added to his "Little Red Riding Hood". Perrault's "moral of the story", however, has no mercy, and his unfortunate Little Red Riding Hood is eaten/raped/killed by the wolf. Excluding some exceptions, like "The Company of Wolves", the age-old setting in which virginal, young and pretty girls or careless and beautiful women fall prey to all sorts of (male) monsters appears to prevail in literature and film alike, which is most probably why authors like Tanith Lee and Suzy McKee Charnas have felt the need to change this scenery.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 87-88.

3. “Wolfland” and “Boobs” – Changing the Scene

In the next chapters I will examine “Wolfland” and “Boobs” as examples of fantasy, but also from the perspectives of female Gothic and Grotesque, feminist (re)writing of fairy tales and the lycanthropy of literature and folklore. As mentioned earlier, the first generations of female Gothic writers, Ann Radcliffe among many others, seem to have overcome the hindrances of their sex by adopting the Gothic genre. Inside the genre they were able to “hide” their authorship behind the wondrous sceneries and settings, and stay respectable regardless of their profession. Later generations of women writers have similarly been rather genre-specific by favouring, besides the Gothic, such genres as fantasy and science fiction; the choices still being perhaps made partly out of necessity.

Consequently, the feminist fairy tale can also be seen as manifesting the dissatisfaction with the male-domination of (high) literary culture and the conservatism of traditional fairy tales. Sarah Gamble, in fact, writes that the fairy tale has been “regarded as a domestic and personal narrative form” that has “always been identified with women, who have played a large part in its development both as tellers and as writers.”¹¹⁸ Gamble analyses the rewritten fairy tales of Angela Carter by saying that she has worked “through a specifically feminist sensibility which consciously recovered a female tradition of storytelling obscured by the popularity of such male adapters as Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen.”¹¹⁹ The provocative and yet accurate thematic subversions of “Wolfland” and “Boobs” seem to imply a similar interest.

Both in “Wolfland” and “Boobs” the settings and sceneries are essentially Gothic. Lisel in the former is shown on a lonely forest road on her way to her peculiar grandmother’s castle. Kelsey’s transformation into a wolf in the latter happens at night in the moonlight. Ellen Moers discusses the female writer’s need, or of women in general, to “visualize the

¹¹⁸ Gamble (1997), p. 131.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

self” which is a result of sense of entrapment and social scrutiny that women experience as opposed to the personal freedom of childhood. According to Moers, these feelings manifest themselves in “the self-disgust, the self-hatred, and the impetus to self-destruction that have been increasingly prominent themes in the writing of women in the twentieth century.”¹²⁰ To say it simply, women writers have created monsters and freaks in their literature to reflect their anxieties about themselves and perhaps their role as women, and thus favoured the “Gothic horrors.” Whether consciously or not, Lee and McKee Charnas have modelled, however, what might be called “Gothic monsters”, that is female werewolves, into something physically beautiful, and instead of self-destruction the werewolf element brings self-preservation.

In her article “Postmodern Feminine Horror Fictions” (1996), Susanne Becker presents the idea of *feminine Gothic*, that is, “the Gothic formed by female subjectivity in the text”¹²¹ as opposed to “female Gothic”, a term by Ellen Moers for the Gothic written by women. The essential quality of feminine Gothic, then, is giving voice to the previously silent female protagonist, and later the especially silenced Gothic (female) monster. As an example of this phenomenon in modern literature, she gives Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) that tells the life story of Bertha Mason-Rochester, the “madwoman in the attic” of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847). Of course, *Jane Eyre* can be considered as *feminine Gothic*, the narrator being the protagonist, Jane Eyre, who speaks directly to the reader. Jane, however, looks at the monstrous Bertha with the eyes of Mr. Rochester, her husband-to-be. According to Becker, Bertha’s character in *Jane Eyre* is “a prototype of the sexual woman in the feminine Gothic: affirmative femininity turned into the monstrous – or, in narratological terms, into a voiceless textual *object*, controlled by the male gaze.”¹²²

¹²⁰ Moers (1986), p. 107.

¹²¹ Becker, Susanne. “Postmodern Feminine Horror Fictions.” *Modern Gothic. A Reader*. Ed. Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 79.

¹²² *Ibid*, p. 72.

By contrast, the character of Antoinette (“Bertha”) in *White Sargasso Sea* emerges as “a female speaking subject”¹²³ and expresses the claustrophobic horror of imprisonment the “original” Bertha experienced in *Jane Eyre*.

In the context of *White Sargasso Sea*, Becker mentions the “ongoing intense intertextualisation of feminine Gothic” and remarks that “dark, horrific plots around ‘madwomen’ like Bertha Rochester indeed seem to shape much of contemporary feminine writing.”¹²⁴ It can perhaps be argued that also the feminist fairy tale is, in fact, part of the intertextualisation process; in “Wolfland” the grandmother Anna is allowed to speak and justify her violent action she takes in the form of a wolf. “Kelsey the werewolf” in “Boobs” similarly has a clear and conscious mind in the wolf form. Besides giving voice to what indeed can be considered as monstrous beings, “Wolfland” and “Boobs” approach another literary theme that is essentially associated with the feminine, namely the image of grotesque female body.

In the Introduction of *The Female Grotesque* (1994), Mary Russo discusses a set of abject entities like blood, tears, vomit and excrement, “the detritus of the body that is separated out and placed with terror and revulsion (predominantly, though not exclusively) on the side of the feminine.”¹²⁵ In addition to being associated with the abject, the female body is in danger of “an exposure”. According to Russo, “the female is always defined against the male norm”¹²⁶, and against this setting it could be perhaps argued that such exposures of the female (body) as “overly rouged cheeks”, “a voice shrill in laughter” or “a sliding bra strap”¹²⁷ somehow seem to compromise the feminine body. Furthermore, Russo mentions such tabooed images as the pregnant or the aging body that are deemed as

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Russo, Mary. *The Female Grotesque. Risk, Excess and Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 12.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 53.

grotesque and unruly “when set loose in the public sphere”¹²⁸, and menstruation can be added to the list. Both “Wolfland” and “Boobs” offer strong bodily images of their female protagonists; Kelsey’s period is described with (graphic) detail in the latter, as is the grandmother Anna’s oddly “girlish” features. The topos of the female body and its presentation in “Wolfland” and “Boobs” will be examined more closely in the chapter 3.2.

Kelsey’s first period is the last straw for her and she becomes even more self-conscious and sensitive to the insults she hears at school. These kinds of unwanted advances are probably all too familiar to most girls and women at some point of their life. In the interview with Denise Dumars¹²⁹, McKee Charnas tells about the autobiographical elements that the short story has, “‘Boobs’ stays on a sort of intimate level with me, with a compartment of my childhood self that I drew on to write that story”. McKee Charnas’s storytelling in “Boobs” is indeed so convincing that the short story won the Nebula Award, which is given annually by the Science Fiction Writers of America.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 56.

¹²⁹ Dumars, (2000).

3.1 Tanith Lee and Suzy McKee Charnas – At the Fount of Female Gothic

In “Wolfland” the classical (maternal) grandmother is presented in the form of Anna the Matriarch, who has remained absent, living in her “chateau” outside the city in a forest, but who, nevertheless, has greatly influenced her granddaughter Lisel’s education. “Wolfland” begins with a scene where Lisel receives a gift from her grandmother, “A whirling cloak of scarlet velvet leapt like a fire from its box to Lisel’s hands. It was lined with albino fur, all but the hood, which was lined with the finest and heaviest red brocade.” (W, 122). Also reminiscent of the fairy tale, with the cloak comes a letter from Anna, in which she demands Lisel to come and visit her in Wolfland. Contrary to being an obedient granddaughter, however, Lisel is annoyed with the request to leave the luxuries of the city and travel “into the uncivilized northern forest.” She is nevertheless one day to inherit her grandmother who is “exceedingly rich” and thus decides to go, as she does not want to “incur Anna’s displeasure.” Once on the way, Lisel begins to forget “she had not wanted to come.” The scene is full of motion and anticipation; “The silver bells rang, and the fierce still air through which the horses dashed broke on Lisel’s cheeks like the coldest champagne. Ablaze in her scarlet cloak, she was exhilarated....” (W, 123). Like her predecessors in the forest, Lisel is not afraid, not even of the wolves. Quite conceitedly she replies to one of the outriders when they hear a wolf wailing somewhere near that she has never seen a wolf but “should be interested to see one.” (W, 124).

One of the features of female Gothic of Ann Radcliffe, for example, is the depicting of travelling scenes, “travel combined with rapture” as Karl Kroeber (1986) phrases it. He also mentions that the reader “is invited to share in a transport” and “to cross over into a new kind of experience.”¹³⁰ The creation of travelling scenes was, according to Moers, a

¹³⁰ Moers (1986), p. 128.

way for women to respond to the restrictions they experienced in their everyday lives.¹³¹ The depiction of Lisel's journey into the "Wolfland" indeed seems to echo with the female Gothic of past centuries, as even her emotions move from one extreme to another. Her initial irritation with having to leave home turns into "exhilaration" and excitement as the journey progresses. The travellers are surrounded by the silent Gothic forest that is "alive" and attends "any humanly noisy passage with a cruel and resentful interest" (W, 123), thus presenting an ominous premonition of what is to come.

In her sled Lisel has time to contemplate the approaching encounter with Anna. She has heard many stories of her peculiar grandmother and her allegedly abusive grandfather who had been "luridly murdered" many years ago. Consequently, her curiosity is getting the best of her and "rather than apprehension, Lisel was beginning to entertain a faintly unholy glee in respect of the visit and the insights it might afford her." (W, 124). Her thoughts and gleefulness are suddenly interrupted, however, when a black carriage that looks more like a hearse in Lisel's mind appears on the road. The carriage is sent by Anna and now Lisel has to make one of the first difficult decisions on her journey: Anna namely does not want the men of Lisel's father on her lands, and Lisel is requested to continue the travel in the protection of Anna's servants.

Lisel's journey into the Wolfland indeed reverberates with another, most (in)famous one, namely that of Jonathan Harker at the beginning of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the "arch-classic" of Gothic horror. Both embark on the journey with a sincere interest towards the host/ess, tinged with slight apprehension. Interestingly, both Lisel and Jonathan feel that their future (financial) well-being depends on the journey and on how they are received; Lisel is someday to inherit her grandmother's considerable fortune and Jonathan as a starting solicitor will have to make a successful trip to Transylvania to meet Count

¹³¹ Ibid.

Dracula, because the trip will in part define his professional development. Lisel has never before met her grandmother, just as Jonathan has never met Count Dracula, though bizarre rumours and whispers on both abound and make up for actual knowledge. With some annoyance, Lisel has to leave the pleasures of the city behind and Jonathan, in turn, feels that having left London behind, he is now exploring “one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe”¹³², namely the Carpathian mountains. The horror of his fellow travellers, all crossing themselves and talking about werewolves when they hear his destination, Dracula’s castle, by no means lessens his anxiety, even though he tries to reason with the situation and recalls having read that “every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians.”¹³³

Count Dracula has recommended a hotel for Jonathan, where he can stay on his way to the castle. Also, Dracula has sent a letter to the hotel informing Jonathan that his carriage will meet him on the way. Similarly, Lisel’s grandmother has kept in touch with her granddaughter mainly via letters, in which Anna’s tone seems somewhat imperative rather than inviting, much like that of Dracula. When changing into Dracula’s “calèche” (a type of carriage), Jonathan feels “a little strange and not a little frightened”¹³⁴ seeing his late companions again crossing themselves. On the forest road, Lisel does not doubt the origin of the carriage that has suddenly appeared in front of her sledge, she notices Anna’s flower device on the door of the carriage and receives yet another letter from Anna requesting her to “step into the carriage”, thus revealing that Anna has guessed Lisel’s hesitation. With a “slight” tremor, Lisel does as she is requested and seats herself “on the somber cushions” of Anna’s carriage, leaving her father’s outriders lingering “morose and indecisive” on the road. (W, 126).

¹³² Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, (1897) 1983, p. 1.

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 2.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 11.

Just as Jonathan is trying to make sense of his new and strange driver who has bright but reddish eyes, “a hard-looking mouth, with very red lips and sharp-looking teeth, as white as ivory”¹³⁵, Lisel felt “a pang of apprehension” when Anna’s servant, a dwarf, approaches her with Anna’s letter. The dwarf looks “like a small, misshapen, furry dog” and he addresses Lisel directly, ignoring the mockery of her outriders. Lisel is puzzled by the contrariness of the creature that is called Beautiful by Anna in the letter. And beautiful he is indeed; Lisel is “struck at once by the musical quality of his voice”, the angelic features of his face, golden locks of hair, and his “delicate, perfectly formed hand” (W, 125) that gives her the letter. Beautiful can hardly be considered monstrous but he has a freakish appearance, and thus the kind of exterior that Moers discusses in the context of modern female Gothic. Moers also mentions the “distortion of scale” as “the first visual effect employed by Gothic novelists in creating monsters.”¹³⁶ Also, “the Dwarf”, or “the freak”, a deviation from the norm, belongs to the imagery of (female) Grotesque, which theme will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The nature and character of Beautiful, who, despite his grotesque appearance, is a very dear and placid servant of Anna presents an interesting contrast her late husband, “a handsome princely man, whose inclinations had not matched his appearance.” (W, 124).

Suzy McKee Charnas’s “Boobs” takes the physical development of a young girl to an intriguing extreme. Kelsey Bornstein has a hard time accepting the changes that happen in her body. She is teased by the boys at school, and especially by a Billy Linden because she has developed faster than other girls. “‘Hey, Boobs!’ he goes, in the hall right outside Homeroom.” And later, “He made a grab at my chest, and I socked him in the shoulder, and he punched me in the face, which made me dizzy and shocked and made me cry, too, in front of everybody.” At home Kelsey’s stepmother Hilda tries to explain her the

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 10.

¹³⁶ Moers (1986), p. 101.

situation by saying that “You’re all growing up and the boys are getting stronger than you’ll ever be. If you fight with boys, you’re bound to get hurt. You have to find other ways to handle them.” (B, 12). Hilda’s words do not much comfort Kelsey as she is used to fighting with boys and being quite a match for them.

Like Lisel, Kelsey in “Boobs” inhabits the Gothic space and element, her wanderings as a wolf happen at night in the empty streets and parks of her hometown. For her the nightly setting and wolf’s appearance offer a temporary liberation from the daytime presence. By contrast, the werewolves of popular culture are often senseless, bloodthirsty monsters and the transformation is a terrible personal catastrophe caused by a werewolf-inflicted wound, or by some other supernatural incident that is not in the control of the “victim” and werewolf-to-be. Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) is a classical depiction of the duality of the human psyche and the story is seen to represent the human fear of the uncontrollable self. As Henry Jekyll confesses; “With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but two.”¹³⁷ Like Dr. Jekyll in the end has no control over his alter ego Mr. Hyde, Kelsey cannot influence her transformation. But for Kelsey the transformation is empowering and she embraces her wolfish “alter ego.”

Kelsey’s transformation is supernatural, or magical rather, as it comes quite unexpectedly and turns the unpleasant bodily feelings of a maturing, pubescent girl into exciting, new sensations and sense of freedom. Kelsey very consciously registers all the changes in her body as she transforms and after the first panic is satisfied with her new appearance, which she now takes instead of having her period she so much detests. The transformation happens again one night when Kelsey should already be sleeping, she gets

¹³⁷ Stevenson, R. L. “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.” *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The Merry Men. And Other Stories*. London: Aldine Press, (1886) 1974, pp. 48-49.

out of bed, undresses and stands in front of the mirror and simply hates what she sees. She pinches herself as if to punish her body for what it is doing to her, and recalls a girl from school who has fasted herself to death, which Kelsey can very well understand. It is full moon and Kelsey's period starts again. But this time instead of the usual cramps she experiences a transformation, she turns into a wolf. She is frightened at first but then she realises that she is thin, has long and powerful feet and she can run like the wind. She thinks to herself that her feet are perhaps a bit too big but then quickly realises that "I'll take four big feet over two big boobs any day." (B, 21).

Kelsey's transformation is actually quite manifold. It can perhaps be seen as a kind of "Gothic journey" into oneself, during which Kelsey's feelings range from fear and panic-stricken excitement to the revelation of being physically strong and ultimate satisfaction; "I was *gorgeous*." (B, 22) Kelsey has suffered from her changed human appearance at school and now on top of that her period starts, and she is afraid that everyone else can smell her. By contrast, when she is a wolf, *she* can smell everyone else. The first sensation she has as a wolf is the flowing of smells into her nose and head: "they were – I don't know – *interesting* instead of just stinky, even the rotten ones." (B, 15). Kelsey changes from the object of everyone's looks and mockery at school into the one who observes. Her senses are sharpened, she can hear, see and smell like never before, "It was like a whole different world, with bright sounds everywhere and rich, strong smells." (B, 22).

Kelsey's nightly wanderings as a wolf can perhaps be seen as reflecting the travelling scenes so characteristic to female Gothic. She roams the streets at night marking her territory in the way a wolf does, thus erasing the marks dogs have left, and she is hungry. She attacks a few unlucky dogs she comes across and enjoys the taste of blood. It is impossible to say how familiar McKee Charnas is with different studies on anthropology but she nevertheless makes accurate subversions of ancient beliefs and taboos concerning

girls at puberty. In many “primitive” cultures, for example, in Africa and among Native Americans, girls have traditionally been confined to solitude and fast when they have their first period. Sir James Frazer (1968) writes that “When a Delaware Indian girl has her first monthly period, she must withdraw into a hut at some distance from the village.” and “she must submit to frequent vomits and fasting.”¹³⁸ It is also mentioned that “Among the [Alaskan] Hareskin Tinnah a girl at puberty... [must not] taste blood, nor eat the heart or fat of animals, nor birds’ eggs.”¹³⁹

Kelsey at her puberty is far from being secluded when she metamorphoses and makes her nightly wanderings as a wolf. She, on the contrary, enlarges her personal space by urinating where dogs have left their own marks. Instead of fasting, she is *hungry*. She conjures up a plan how to get rid of her worst bully, Billy. As Kelsey, she makes him believe that if he meets her in a park alone, he can do whatever he pleases with her boobs, as long as he then leaves her alone at school. Kelsey, however, enters the park as a wolf, growls a little at Billy from the shadows to make him nervous and then bites his head off, literally. To her Billy Linden is “better than Thanksgiving dinner.” (B, 33-34). Kelsey has certainly found another way to handle boys, as Hilda has advised her.

Ellen Moers discusses “the proud place of the tomboy in women’s literature.” It appears that “in every age, whatever the social rules, there has always been one time in women’s life, the years before puberty, when walking, running, climbing, battling, and tumbling are as normal female as they are male activities.”¹⁴⁰ It seems that Kelsey is made to feel the unpleasant effects of puberty most strongly. She has to deal with a new kind of attention from boys, as she says: “I mean, I always used to wrestle and fight with the boys, being that I was strong for a girl. All of sudden it was different. He hit me hard, to really hurt...”

¹³⁸ Frazer, James. *The New Golden Bough. A New Abridgement of the Classic Work*. Ed. Theodor H. Gaster. New York: S.G. Philips inc., 1968, p. 585. Sir James Frazer’s anthropological study *The Golden Bough* was originally published in 1890 and a new version of the work, *The New Golden Bough*, came out in 1968.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 585.

¹⁴⁰ Moers (1986), p. 130.

(B, 12). It is as if Kelsey's maturing "tomboy" is tamed by the changed and malevolent attitude of the boys in her school. Lisel, in turn, is described as a strong-willed young woman of sixteen with a vain streak "skating fur-clad on the frozen river beneath the torches, dancing till four in the morning, breaking hearts and not minding." (W, 122) Lisel's mother died at childbirth when Lisel was born and her father has "let her have her own way, in almost everything." (W, 122). Lisel might be regarded as a kind of a "bachelorette."

Both Lisel and Kelsey have rather an innocent or naïve quality to them. They are in adolescence, the "brief period when the subject is not quite a child, but also not yet adult"¹⁴¹ that according to Gamble has intrigued also Angela Carter in her work.

Adolescence is the curiously stigmatised age, during which the Little Red Riding Hood of most versions, old and new, is sent into the forest to meet her wolf. The colour red surfaces in "Wolfland" and "Boobs", like in the fairy tale, as a sign of the girls' coming of age.

The story line of "Wolfland" follows, if loosely, that of the fairy tale but unlike one might think, the nowadays central element of the fairy tale, the red hood, did not appear in the oral folk version(s) that circled in Italy and France in the Middle Ages. It is in Charles Perrault's published version of the tale (France 1697) that Little Red Riding Hood is made to wear a red hat, *chaperon rouge*. Red, of course, is a most stigmatised colour; in life and literature it has represented passion, sin and the Devil, Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) being but one example¹⁴². The colour red is most elemental in both the short stories, the red cloak signifies Lisel's coming of age and thus her "duty" to her grandmother and Kelsey's second period triggers her transformation.

¹⁴¹ Gamble (1997), p. 6.

¹⁴² The symbolical significance of the colour red is, in fact, extensive. Red symbolises both ecclesiastical and secular power. For example, the colour term *cardinal red* originates from the colour of a cardinal's cassock, which is deep scarlet, in the Catholic Church (in Seija Kerttula's *English Colour Terms: Etymology, Chronology, and Relative Basicness*, 2002, p. 145. Kerttula also mentions the use of red in such well-known names as *Red Army* and *Red Cross*. In the army, red often appears in uniforms. Similarly, the Freemasons use red in their paraphernalia.

Lisel receives the red cloak with a request from Anna to come and meet her, thus forcing Lisel to decide for herself whether to stay or go, and this time her father's opinion really has no weight. When Kelsey's period starts, she becomes even more embarrassed and ashamed. According to Zipes, a red sign or hat was used to "stigmatise social nonconformists or outcasts"¹⁴³ in the Middle Ages and Reformation. Kelsey certainly suffers the fate of a social outcast at school when her bullying starts and she is afraid of having no friends left.

Zipes notes that there are, in fact, many interpretations of the *chaperon rouge*. In Perrault's time "*grand chaperon* indicated an older lady who was supposed to escort young women." He continues that "the fact that Little Red Riding Hood only has a small *chaperon* indicated that she does not have enough protection."¹⁴⁴ In Perrault's fairy tale there is no mention of the mother warning her daughter going on the possibly dangerous journey. In the Grimm's version Little Red Riding Hood is at least warned not to stray from the path by her mother. Both Lisel and Kelsey are at a crossroads in their lives, but unlike Little Red Riding Hood of the fairy tale, they both have female relations to give them advice on how to face the future, whether the two want to hear it or not. Kelsey has a very affectionate relationship with Hilda, who interestingly is nothing like the classical evil stepmother of Cinderella or Snow White, for example. Lisel's grandmother Anna makes Lisel consider the different perspectives of her life.

If the doom of Little Red Riding Hood in the fairy tale is due to the lack of (female) protection, the continuation of this disrupted discourse between different generations of women is central both in "Wolfand" and "Boobs." Hilda supports Kelsey in her decision to put away her favourite toy, a stuffed dog called Pinkie, with which Kelsey has slept since she was three. This is done as a sort of a initiation ritual into her budding womanhood

¹⁴³ Norton (2001), p. 745.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

celebrating the start of her period, as Hilda suggests “we should ‘mark the occasion’ like primitive people do, so it’s something special, not just a nasty thing that just sort of falls on you.” (B, 13). At the very beginning of “Wolfland” it is mentioned that although Lisel’s grandmother has remained physically absent in her life, she has nevertheless greatly influenced her upbringing, “Periodic instructions had been sent, pertaining to Lisel. The girl must be educated by this or that method.” (W, 122).

When Lisel is Anna’s guest, the grandmother tries the young girl’s mind in many ways. Lisel receives Anna’s letter in her sled daring her to continue the journey in the carriage with Anna’s escort. Once in the castle Anna ignores Lisel’s excitement of having been chased by wolves on the way. Furthermore, Lisel is described as a young woman “knowing very little of physical communion” (W, 134), but Anna has provided her with “a choice of books” in her bedroom that appear interesting to Lisel, but at the same time “outrage” her “propriety.” (W, 132). Although Lisel is quite upset of having been “brought to the wilds, told improper tales, left improper literature to read” (W, 133), she is quite willing to amuse herself by reading the books in her bedroom, “skimming over all passages of meditation, description of philosophy, confining her attention to those portions which contained duels, rapes, black magic and the firing squad.” (W, 132). As mentioned earlier in chapter 1.2, Zipes has interpreted the classical “Little Red Riding Hood” as a story of sexual exploration, in which the girl is made to test social rules of conduct, at her own cost. The wolf, then, has traditionally represented all the masculine dangers that can fall upon a young girl. In “Wolfland” the mediator of the presumable danger, as well as the protection against it, is the grandmother.

When Anna and Lisel sit together by the fire, Anna begins her story. It is very important for Anna that Lisel learns the truth of her grandfather, “You’re young, but you should know, should be told.” (W, 131). With gruesome detail Anna describes the abuse she

experienced in the hands of her husband. Anna asks Lisel if that is what she wants out of life, and adds that even if the husband were a good man, “which is a rare beast indeed” (W, 131), there is always the possibility of “an agonising death in childbed.” (W, 131). Lisel begins to wonder whether indeed her father has plans to marry her off, which is something she has never planned for herself. Consequently, Lisel “desired to learn more and dreaded to learn it.” (W, 131). If in the different traditional versions of “Little Red Riding Hood” the wolf is a metaphor for the danger strange men especially pose on young and careless girls, in “Wolfland” Anna seems to think that it is actually the fathers and husbands that threaten the well-being of women. In her story Anna touches on also societal elements. She speaks of “the irrevocable marriage vow that binds you forever to a monster” (W, 131) and “a chain that cannot be broken.” (W, 145). According to Anna, “no law supports the wife.” (W, 145). Like Little Red Riding Hood of the fairy tale, Lisel is initiated into womanhood, but however pre-destined her fate is, Lisel gets at least some say as to which path to take.

Much of past female Gothic, such as that of Ann Radcliffe’s for example, ends in marriage, which restores the peace and harmony in the heroine’s life. The feminist fairy tale, then, seems prone to create “women only” utopias¹⁴⁵, in which the destructive male element has been erased completely. In “Wolfland” at least there is no reconciliation in sight between the sexes, as Anna tells Lisel “Beautiful...is the only man of any worth I’ve ever met.” (W, 131). Beautiful, however, being a dwarf, a “freak” can be seen as belonging to another oppressed group for which, according to Zipes, the feminist fairy tale also speaks. For Kelsey in “Boobs” there is a bit more hope as at the end of the short story she begins to have healthier relationships with the opposite sex, as she goes on her first date.

¹⁴⁵ Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s novel *Herland* (1915) is an early example of feminist utopia as a form of social enquiry. In the novel Perkins Gilman presents a civilisation created by women without men. Ann J. Lane (1979) writes in the Introduction of the novel that Gilman Perkins “romps through the game of what is feminine and what is masculine...what is culturally learned and what is biologically determined male-female behavior.” P. xiii.

Zipes discusses the “mass-marketed tales of twentieth century” that “have undergone a sanitation process according to the sexual preferences of males and the conservative norms of the dominant classes in America and England.”¹⁴⁶ In “Wolfland” Lee deals with Anna’s (sexual) servitude to her husband, in one scene Anna offers herself to her husband, when he threatens to hurt the baby, Lisel’s mother: “Anna stood in her nightdress. She held a whip out to him. ‘Beat me,’ she said. ‘Please beat me. I want you to. Put down the child and beat me.’” (W, 143). Even though “Wolfland” is situated in some undefined past and the sexual inclinations of the grandfather could not be much worse, one of Anna’s midwives whispers to another that “it was beyond her how the master had ever come to sire a child since he got his pleasure another way, and the poor lady’s body gave evidence how” (W, 143), Lee’s depiction of Anna’s dire state is all too universal. And the fact is by no means diminished by Lee somewhat dwelling on the horrific details of Anna’s plight. But besides domestic violence, Lee describes a strong matrifocal family, in which knowledge and possessions are passed on along the maternal line.

When analysing the feminist fairy tale, Zipes mentions that “the historical re-examination and rediscovery of matriarchal features in folk and fairy tales constitute some of the most important work being conducted in the field.”¹⁴⁷ Zipes refers to an essay by Kay Stone “Things Walt Disney Never Told Us” (1975) in which she discusses a folk tradition in America and England that “portrays women in folklore as aggressive, active, clever, and adventurous.”¹⁴⁸ This is a tradition, however, that has been forgotten or deliberately suppressed in literature and mass media. Zipes continues that it is the “Disney and sanitised versions” of fairy tales that are nowadays more familiar, but at the same time women cannot relate to the female protagonists of these fairy tales in a very satisfying manner. And this is where the feminist fairy tale takes over.

¹⁴⁶ Zipes (1993), p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

Fairy tales have traditionally had an essential role in the socialisation process of children; from fairy tales children learn the kind of roles and positions they can have in their own life and the community they live in. Roberta Seelinger Trites (1997) notes in her *Waking Sleeping Beauty* that children's literature no longer focuses "so pointedly on socializing girls into traditional femininity."¹⁴⁹ Of course, television, teenage and women's magazines and the Internet are to great extent replacing traditional fairy tales as sources of information and gender images, and not necessarily for the better, one might add. "Wolfland" and "Boobs" contain such elements of violence that they are hardly bedtime reading for children, but they might be excellent reading for adolescent girls, and why not boys. Every girl has to go through the same experience as Kelsey, even if for most the physical development and maturing is not the kind of torment that it is for Kelsey. The unfortunate fact is, however, that probably every girl has at some point heard comments about her appearance and this usually happens, like for Kelsey, at a time when the body is changing and the mind is most sensitive, only just trying to accept and appreciate the changes. Of course, the situation may not be any easier for adolescent boys as the contemporary youth culture tends to be rather appearance-oriented, and the pressure to look good, or "right", does not escape young boys either.

With the help of fantasy Lee approaches one of the climaxes of a young girl's life, the beginning of menstruation, and offers her readers in the character Kelsey a strong figure to identify with. When talking about Lee's work and "Wolfland" in particular, Zipes stresses that "the celebration of the 'wolf' should not be misread as a celebration of 'brute power.'"¹⁵⁰ Anna and Lisel are seeking "contact with the wolfish side of femininity"¹⁵¹ and thus perhaps embracing the "nature" of the structuralist binary opposition "man-nature."

¹⁴⁹ Trites Seelinger, Roberta. *Waking Sleeping Beauty. Feminist Voices in Children's Novels*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997, p. ix.

¹⁵⁰ Zipes (1993), p. 25.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

The carrying theme in both the stories is self-determination rather than violence. In the next chapter, the focus will be on the actual metamorphoses of the female protagonists in “Wolfland” and “Boobs”, metamorphosis being a feature or a fate in fairy tales that is actually more common among male characters. Also, the metamorphosis of Wolfland” and “Boobs” presents itself as a life-preserving force as opposed to being a destructive one.

3.2. Images of Werewolves in “Wolfland” and “Boobs”

As discussed earlier, the image, causes and cures of lycanthropic metamorphoses have varied in the course of centuries; pagan beliefs have intermingled with doctrines of the Christian religion in European folklore, fairy tales and literary tradition. In Greek and Roman mythology, like in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, lycanthropic metamorphosis was a just punishment ordained by god(s) for someone living an immoral life. Also later, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, lycanthropic tendencies could be seen in a person’s appearance and evil nature, but for the actual transformation to happen, the lycanthrope was tricked and/or aided by the Devil. In a sense, the transformation was no longer in the “control” of the victim.

It seems that especially the character of Anna in “Wolfland” is closer to the lycanthropes of Greek or Roman myths than to the medieval werewolves, as she is very aware of the possible consequences of her transformation, which she consciously brings on herself. Anna is told by a peasant woman that once the wolf-magic is invoked, it is “yours, till you die”, and the reply to Anna’s questions “And then what? Payment? said Anna dreamily. Hell?” is, “Maybe.” (W, 142). Anna is thus hardly under any diabolical spell but chooses the “transmogrification”. For Kelsey in “Boobs” the transformation does come quite unexpectedly but she is able to adapt to the situation, stay in “sound” mind, and even enjoy her wolf appearance.

Werewolf legends abound in European folklore, but it was only after the actual, medieval werewolf trials had subsided that the (were)wolf appears in fairy tales meant especially for children and mostly reflecting a masculine threat to little naïve girls, like in Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood”. Clarissa Pinkola Estes, the author of *Women Who Run With Wolves* (1995), discusses the thematic shift in stories and fairy tales, for example,

from paganism towards Christian beliefs and moral norms. According to her, the informants of the Brothers Grimm and other fairy tale collectors of the past few centuries “sometimes ‘purified’ their stories” which meant that “an old healer in a tale became an evil witch, a spirit became an angel” and “Helping creatures and animals were often changed into demons and bogeys.”¹⁵² In Pinkola Estes’s view, the purifying of folk stories, even if done by the storytellers themselves, is especially harmful for women’s folklore. She claims that “This is how many women’s teaching tales about sex, love, money, marriage, birthing, death, and transformation were lost.”¹⁵³ And she continues that “Most old collections of fairy tales and myths existent today have been scoured clean of the scatological, the sexual, the perverse (as in warnings against), the pre-Christian, the feminine, the Goddesses, the initiatory, the medicines for various psychological malaises....”¹⁵⁴

It indeed seems that in many classical fairy tales, like “Little Red Riding Hood”, there does not exist the kind of “healer” character that Pinkola Estes discusses, a female sage or wisdom associated with an old age that one would perhaps expect. Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood” and later versions of the fairy tale lack the kind of female character that would be able to guide the little girl safely into adulthood, which actually is quite odd considering that fairy tales have historically been such a central element in the socialisation process of children. Also, especially female sexuality has been stigmatised and interpreted as a serious threat to the female protagonist in many fairy tales. Pinkola Estes mentions that some analysts like Bruno Bettelheim “have interpreted episodes such as those found in the Bluebeard tale as psychological punishments for women’s sexual curiosity.”¹⁵⁵ She refers to Bluebeard’s wife opening the door she is especially told not to open by her

¹⁵² Pinkola Estes, Clarissa. *Women Who Run With the Wolves. Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995, p. 14.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 47.

notorious husband in the fairy tale, and as Jack Zipes (quoted in chapter 1.2) also notes, Little Red Riding Hood in the woods is said to be exploring her own sexual cravings, and this at a high cost.

As examples of feminist storytelling taking ingredients from horror, fantasy and the Grotesque, “Wolfland” and “Boobs” do offer rather different female characters than those “young pickled fairy tale “heroines” [that] are the Witches’ obedient and meek sisters who have agreed to have their lives preserved for service in patriarchy”¹⁵⁶, as Kaarina Kailo (1994) describes the female protagonists’ position in Western fairy tales. Anna in “Wolfland” is very unlike the sickly and powerless grandmother of the traditional fairy tale. Even though she is old and knows that death is approaching, she is determined to initiate her granddaughter into adulthood by offering Lisel a place as the wolf-woman’s charge, and thus also freeing herself. In “Boobs” it seems that the “evil stepmother archetype” of fairy tales is redeemed in the character of Hilda, who is Kelsey’s loving stepmother, and who does her best to guide Kelsey into womanhood, even if in an unsatisfying manner in Kelsey’s view; with Hilda’s advice Kelsey is rather defenceless at school facing the boys’ abuse.

Pinkola Estes is very keen on exploring the metaphoric connections between the feminine, nature and the wolf. As she concludes about women and wolves, “both have been hounded, harassed and falsely imputed to be devouring and devious, overly aggressive.”¹⁵⁷ Lee and McKee Charnas (re-)examine and reassess the predator/prey relationship by presenting the female protagonists as vulnerable on one hand and monstrously self-defensive on the other in their short stories. The idea and image of monstrous femininity and the female body, then, belongs to the imagery of the Grotesque. In fact, as Mary Russo (1995) explains, the terminology, *female* and *grotesque* “seem to

¹⁵⁶ Kailo, Kaarina. “Refusing to Hold Our Tongues: Women’s Folklore, Women’s Orality as Self-Recovery.” *Room of One’s Own*. Volume 17. Number 1 (March 1994), p. 87.

¹⁵⁷ Pinkola Estes (1995), p. 2.

collapse into one another in very powerful representations of the female body as grotesque.”¹⁵⁸ There certainly are elements in Kelsey, Lisel and Anna’s ways of being that can be deemed as grotesque.

In “Wolfland” Anna’s special relationship with the wolves on her lands becomes obvious before Lisel even enters her castle when a small pack of wolves “escorts”, as Anna puts it, Lisel on the way and one almost enters the carriage as if to test Lisel’s courage. Instead of being paralysed, even to Lisel’s own surprise, she confronts the wolf; “Her eyes also blazed, her teeth also were bared, and her nails raised as if to claw. Her horror was such that she appeared ready to attack the wolf in its own primeval mode, and as her hands struck the glass against its face, the wolf shied and dropped away.” (W, 127). When considering the scene as a version of Little Red Riding Hood’s journey to the grandmother in the fairy tale, Lisel definitely can hold her ground.

Once in the castle, Lisel has the opportunity to really observe her grandmother for the first time in her life. There is something odd in Anna’s appearance. She is said to be “in her eighty-first year” but she appears to Lisel to be no more than “little over fifty”; “a weird apparition of improbable glamour.” (W, 128). It seems that Lisel has some difficulty in classifying her grandmother:

Her skin, though very dry, had scarcely any lines in it, and none of the pleatings and collapses Lisel generally associated with the elderly. Anna’s hair had remained blonde, a fact Lisel was inclined to attribute to some preparation out of a bottle, yet she was not sure. The lady wore black as she had done in the portrait of her youth, a black starred over with astonishing jewels. But her nails were very long and discolored, as were her teeth. These two incontrovertible proofs of old age gave Lisel a perverse satisfaction. (W, 128).

Anna’s youthful features conflict with her old age, a contradiction that as such can be deemed as grotesque; “the fusion of realms which we know to be separated, the abolition of the law of statics, the loss of identity, the distortion of ‘natural’ size and shape”, as

¹⁵⁸ Russo (1995), p. 12.

Wolfgang Kayser (1981) explains the concept in the visual arts and literature from the Renaissance onwards.”¹⁵⁹ Lisel herself has similarly already revealed an ambiguous, animalistic side in her nature when defending herself against the wolf in the carriage. In fact, a sixteenth century German definition for “grotesque” is a “monstrous fusion of human and nonhuman elements”¹⁶⁰, referring at that time, though, mostly to fine arts.

Kayser also compares the world of the fairy tale with that of the Grotesque. According to him, “the world of the fairy tale could also be regarded as strange and alien. Yet its world is not estranged, that is to say, the elements in it which are familiar and natural to us do not suddenly turn out to be strange and ominous.”¹⁶¹ It appears that this is where “Wolfland” leaves the fairy tale genre and turns into the Grotesque. Lisel’s world does imitate that of Little Red Riding Hood, but with strong subversions. Lisel and the grandmother Anna are shown having dinner together, during which Lisel continues to make her unnerving observations. At dinner Anna is served “various dishes of raw meats” and when she notices Lisel’s surprise, she hopes that her “repast won’t offend a delicate stomach” and explains “I have learned that the best way to keep my health is to eat the fruits of the earth....” (W, 129).

Mikhail Bakhtin (quoted in Cavallaro, 2002) has posited the mouth “as pivotal in the production of grotesque effects”, and “eating has been traditionally demonised since ingestion, mastication and swallowing are intensely physical acts that insistently foreground our animal natures, and in extreme cases, evoke the dark taboo of cannibalism.”¹⁶² Cannibalism seems to be inherent in werewolf mythology, in Ovid’s story of King Lycaon and Jupited, and in different versions of “Little Red Riding Hood” alike.

¹⁵⁹ Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grotesque. In Art and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981 (1957), p. 185.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 24.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 184.

¹⁶² Cavallaro, Dani. *The Gothic Vision. Three Centuries of Horror, Terror and Fear*. London: Continuum, 2002, pp. 193-194.

In “Wolfland” and “Boobs” the tabooed subject is more than obvious; it is actually described in detail. Kelsey in “Boobs” attacks her bully in a nightly park:

I was wild inside. I couldn't wait another second. I tore through the bushes and leaped for him, flying. He stumbled backward with a squawk – ‘What!’ – jerking his hands up in front of his face, and he was just sucking in a big breath to yell with when I hit him like a demo-derby truck. I jammed my nose past his feeble claws and chomped down hard on his face. No sound came out of him expect this wet, thick gurgle, which I could more taste than hear because the sound came right into my mouth with the gush of his blood and the hot mess of meat and skin that I tore away and swallowed. (B, 33).

Anna in “Wolfland” waits for her husband one winter's night on a forest track:

Then he realizes something is behind him. He is not sure how he realizes, for it is quite soundless. He stops, and turns, and sees a great and ghostly wolf a few feet from him on the track.... Ten seconds later a warm and living weight crashes against his back, and he falls screaming, screaming before the pain even begins. When the pain does begin, he is unable to scream for very long, but he does his best. The final thing he sees through the haze of his own blood, which splashed into his eyes, and the tears of agony and the enclosing of a most atrocious death, are the eyes of the wolf, gleaming coolly back at him. (W, 144-145).

The above scenes present Kelsey and Anna as truly monstrous and determined to make their kill. Lee and McKee Charnas thus continue their study of the female as grotesque, and it seems that they try to dismantle stereotypical sexual notions of monstrous femininity. As Cavallaro mentions, following Bakhtin's thoughts on the mouth as a grotesque image, the mouth “has also frequently been employed as a symbol of voracious sexuality and has, accordingly, been conventionally associated with female eroticism on the basis of woman's objectification as a predatory monster.”¹⁶³ Kelsey and Anna are indeed predatory monsters who outwardly might even accommodate sexual readings, unless their actual personal survival both physically and mentally were not such central elements in the above scenes.

With the character of pubescent and menstruating Kelsey in “Boobs”, McKee Charnas examines the theme of female body as grotesque, or one being or making a spectacle. It

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 194.

seems that Kelsey experiences a transformation from being a public spectacle at school and hating her body into the one who, in fact, orchestrates the ultimate spectacle, with which she also frees herself from being the spectacle. Besides trying to deal with her changing body that suddenly feels strange and alien, Kelsey is also at the same time forced to protect this alien body of hers and to defend herself against teasing at school caused by the very same body; she is thus under a double burden. Kelsey's stepmother Hilda advises her simply not to mind; "Hilda had been saying all summer, Look, it doesn't do any good to walk around all hunched up with your arms crossed, you should just throw your shoulders back and walk like a proud person who's pleased that she's growing up." (B, 18). This, of course, is not so simple; as Russo (quoted in chapter 3) claims, the female is always defined against the male norm and the feminine is "the body marked by difference"¹⁶⁴, which makes the female body a deviation, a spectacle in a word.

As mentioned earlier in chapter 3.1, in many "primitive" cultures in Africa and among Native Americans, girls at puberty, and especially when they start menstruating, face different restrictions on their life, such as fast and confinement. In *Powers of Horror* (1982) Julia Kristeva presents her notion of abject, or abjection that threatens the borders of self and she examines the ways, in which "'proper' sociality and subjectivity are based on the expulsion or exclusion of the improper, the unclean, and the disorderly elements of its corporeal existence that must be separated from its 'clean and proper' self."¹⁶⁵ As Elizabeth Gross (1990) further explains, "Kristeva distinguishes three categories of abject, against which various social and individual taboos are erected: food, waste and the signs of sexual difference", and that all cultures seem to have some "corporeal processes that are abjected."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Russo (1994), p. 13.

¹⁶⁵ Gross, Elizabeth. "Body of Signification." *Abjection, Melancholia and Love. The Work of Julia Kristeva*. Ed. John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin. London: Routledge, 1990, p. 86.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 89.

In the third category of abject, sexual difference, according to Kristeva: “Menstrual blood...stands for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual); it threatens the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and, through internalisation, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference.”¹⁶⁷ Kristeva gives rather extreme examples of menstrual blood as polluting, or even life-threatening; among the Bemba in Africa, for example, a woman having her period can defile the fire she prepares food on, and thus the food becomes non-edible.¹⁶⁸ The origin of the pollution rites, according to Kristeva, is in the male-female power relations of societies; “the masculine, apparently victorious, confesses, through its very relentlessness against the other, the feminine, that it is threatened by an asymmetrical, irrational, wily, uncontrollable power.”¹⁶⁹ Kristeva also asks whether this condition could be “a survival of a matrilineal society.”

Dani Cavallaro (1994) discusses Kristeva’s concept of abjection in the context of high culture and claims that Western art and culture have “repeatedly constructed the female body as a principal manifestation of the abject due to its fluid, sprawling and leaky nature, demonised it as an unsavoury subversion of aesthetic ideals of unity and integrity, and accordingly subjected it to regimenting strategies intended to frame its boundlessness.”¹⁷⁰ In Western culture the female body is secluded or enclosed by presenting it in art as a “hermetically sealed icon of purity and beauty”¹⁷¹, thus denying it every show of corporeality. On her behalf, Kelsey is most graphic when describing her period, which she so very honestly hates; “The whole thing was so messy and disgusting, worse than she [stepmother Hilda] had said, worse than I could imagine, with these black clots of gunk coming out in a smear of pink blood – I thought I would throw up.” (B, 13). The

¹⁶⁷ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982, p.71.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 76.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 70.

¹⁷⁰ Cavallaro (1994), p. 204.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*.

stepmother Hilda, again, is the adult voice of “reason”; “That’s just the lining of your uterus.”, which, however, does not much comfort Kelsey, “Big deal. It was still gross. And, plus the *smell*.” (B, 13). Also, an interesting observation, if one made with a touch of irony, is the fact that Kelsey’s period indeed becomes lethal for Billy.

It can be argued that some sort of fear of matriarchal power drives Anna’s husband, when he orders the yellow flowers that grow on the lands to be burned. He is afraid of them, because as a child he was told frightening stories about the flowers by a woman who used to nurse him. The flower that is now Anna’s personal device is the agent of her transformation, and the magic is soon going to be Lisel’s; a matrilineal inheritance, which indeed was fatal to Anna’s husband. Anna offers Lisel liqueur made from the yellow flowers she herself ate to receive the power of transmutation. The scene is, in fact, another subversion of the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood”, in which the girl is supposed to bring the grandmother wine. Anna explains to horror-struck Lisel; “Now, sit fool, and be quiet. I’ve put nothing on you that was not already yours. Look in a mirror. Look at your hair and your eyes and your beautiful teeth.” (W, 145). Consequently, Lisel indeed is initiated and takes her grandmother’s place, as once invoked, the wolf-magic becomes hereditary.

With the initiation, Lisel is given also sexual freedom, which might not as such have been possible had she stayed under her father’s influence, and had a possible organised marriage taken place. But in the wolf form, Lisel is able to contemplate her wolf lovers;

Her heart struck her over and over. She did not know what she felt or if she believed. Then a wolf sang in the forest. She lifted her head. She suddenly knew frost and running and black stillness, and platinum moon, red feasts and wild hymnings, lovers with quicksilver eyes and the race of the ice wind and stars smashed under the hard soles of her four feet. A huge white ballroom opened before her, and the champagne of the air filled her mouth. (W, 147).

As opposed to the classical “Little Red Riding Hood”, Lisel’s first expressions of sexuality are not the first steps towards destruction. Furthermore, the dark, violent and destructive sexuality associated with werewolf stories, be it the case of medieval Stubbe Peeter or Guy Endore’s *The Werewolf of Paris* (1933), is replaced by a young girl’s sensuality and awakening sexuality.

For Kelsey in “Boobs” the wolf element means the return of freedom of movement and physical integrity she has lost after the teasing at school begun, which also subverts the image that comes from werewolf mythology or much of popular culture. As opposed to losing physical and mental health, Kelsey gets her self-confidence back little by little. Quite paradoxically, if one considers the above-mentioned monstrous images of werewolves, it is a wolf that Kelsey is able to admire herself in the mirror and accept her appearance, which can be rather difficult for young girls, and for adult women as well: “My face was terrific with jaggedy white rip-saw teeth and eyes that were small and clear and gleaming in the moonlight.” (B, 21). Also, at the end of the short story Kelsey is going on her first date and thinks; “I am still pretty nervous, to tell you the truth. I have to keep promising myself that I will not worry about my chest, I will not be so self-conscious, even if the guy stares.” (B, 35).

Kaarina Kailo expresses her concern about Western fairy tales producing rather limited images of women’s accepted behaviour, she discusses “the typical polarized models of femininity that girls end up internalizing as the good/bad gender-specific modes of behaviour that are...disempowering for them.”¹⁷² She continues that “Desirability in a girl is equated with all forms of Self-starvation; intellectual, critical, psychological and sexual.”¹⁷³ The strength of feminist fairy tale as a mode of writing, a genre even, comes from breaking the customary images of women in fairy tales as selfless “sacrificial lambs”

¹⁷² Kailo (1994), p. 87.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 88.

like the traditional Little Red Riding Hood, and giving the female protagonists freedom to manoeuvre and express themselves, without the moralising undertone of some classical fairy tales.

In “Wolfland” and “Boobs” very difficult themes of domestic violence and sexual harassment and violence are discussed. Yet both stories can be considered as describing personal survival and empowerment. Indeed, the female protagonists, however hurt, refuse the mental and physical self-starvation that Kailo mentions. The metamorphosis brings out a violent and predatory element in Anna and Kelsey’s nature that is, however, required for their survival. Also, Anna with her weird physiognomy and the menstruating Kelsey are hardly such icons of purity and beauty that Western art, according to Cavallaro, has tended to make women into. And finally, the inter-generational female discourse disrupted in classical fairy tales seems to be reinstated in the short stories.

In the next chapter, I will examine the structural and narratological elements of “Wolfland” and “Boobs” in order to see how their story lines, themes and character types differ from or comply with those in the fairy and folk tale tradition.

3.3 Some Aspects of Plot and Character Development in “Wolfland” and “Boobs”

In this chapter I will explore the following question: What kind of narratological and structural solutions that Tanith Lee and Suzy McKee Charnas use in their writing? For this purpose I have created a model structure (see Appendix I) that includes the episodic components of “Wolfland” and “Boobs”, along with the traditional fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” of Perrault and the Grimm Brothers. Within this model it is possible to examine the content of each story separately, but also in comparison with the others.

My approach is diachronic in the sense that I partly use the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” as a subtext for my analysis; “Wolfland” is clearly a “successor” of the fairy tale, to use the definitions by Robert Scholes (1974) in *Structuralism in Literature*.¹⁷⁴ In the model the presentation of the episodic components is essentially linear, and in my analysis I will concentrate on the syntagmatic surface structure of the stories, which according to Slomith Rimmon-Kenan (1986) is “governed by temporal and causal principles” and carries the actual narrative content of a story.¹⁷⁵ Of course, synchrony also defines the analysis as each particular episode and its significance to the narration is examined in all the three stories. In the model I have divided “Wolfland”, “Boobs” and the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” into five chronological episodes, which are NAMING, REQUEST, JOURNEY/THREAT, RESOLVING THREAT (WITH HELPER), RETURNING HOME¹⁷⁶.

In devising these episodes and in deciding on the appellation I have used as a point of reference, or departure at least, Vladimir Propp’s pioneering work on the structure of Russian folk and fairy tales. In his *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), which has become a

¹⁷⁴ Scholes, Robert. *Structuralism in Literature. An Introduction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974, p. 17.

¹⁷⁵ Rimmon-Kenan, Slomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. London: Methuen, 1986, pp. 10-11.

¹⁷⁶ See Appendix I.

much-disputed classic, Propp presents the idea that there exist 31 stable fairy tale component types, that is “acts of character” or functions¹⁷⁷, of which all fairy tales are composed. In addition, there are seven “spheres of action” corresponding to eight character types.¹⁷⁸ According to Satu Apo (1986), who has studied Finnish folktales in her doctoral dissertation and “modernised the Propp-type description of plots”, Propp’s work does have its limitations and inconsistencies; she argues that his model can be used accurately only in describing the structures of fairy tales with a masculine hero¹⁷⁹, for one, which, of course, is of great relevance for my work.

The five episodes, then, in my structural model have been devised reminiscent of Propp’s work, but their formulation is based on the ideas on the surface structure of narratives presented by Rimmon-Kenan in his *Narrative Fiction* (1986), which is a compilation of narratological theories. The definition of what I call an episode is in Rimmon-Kenan’s terms an “event” that “can be classified in two main kinds: those that advance the action by opening an alternative (‘kernels’) and those that expand, amplify, maintain or delay the former (‘catalysts’).”¹⁸⁰ Also, when examining the narrative levels and time in the episodes of “Wolfland” and “Boobs”, I will refer to Rimmon-Kenan’s work.

The Russian fairy tale material that Propp used in his study falls into the category of “Tales of Magic”¹⁸¹ in the fairy tale type index describing Indo-European fairy tales devised by the folklorist Antti Aarne and published in 1910. In her doctoral dissertation

¹⁷⁷ Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press, (1968) 1994, p. 21.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 80.

¹⁷⁹ Apo, Satu. *Ihmesadun rakenne. Juonien tyypit, pääjaksot ja henkilöasetelmat satakuntalaisessa kansansatuaineistossa*. Mikkeli: Länsi-Savo Oy, 1986, pp. 347 and 62.

¹⁸⁰ Rimmon-Kenan (1986), p. 16. Rimmon-Kenan refers to Roland Barthes (1977) and Seymour Chapman (1969).

¹⁸¹ Thompson, Stith. *The Types of the Folktale. A Classification and Bibliography. A Translation and Enlargement of Antti Aarne’s Verzeichnis der Märchentypen*. Second Revision. Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia, 1964. Stith Thompson revised the index in 1928 and again in 1961, and the index is today known as Aarne-Thompson (AT) classification system. In the system “Little Red Riding Hood” is identified as AT 333, or “The Glutton” with the following description: “The wolf or other monster devours human beings until all of them are rescued alive from his belly.”

Apo defines the tale of magic as a long, fictive narrative having at least one wondrous element; a magical artefact, a talking animal, a supernatural human character, a transformation, an experience or deed surpassing human performance, and so on. Apo bases this definition on the Aarne-Thompson classification system, and this is also a definition I would give for “Wolfland” and “Boobs”, and hence the title of this thesis.

As mentioned earlier in chapter 3.1, Charles Perrault added the red hood into the oral folk tale that has become known as the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood”, which act Christina Bacchilega (1997) calls “a metonymic naming of the protagonist.”¹⁸² Because of the naming and especially the meaningful colour red, the girl’s character is tinged with (sexual) guilt before the actual narration even begins. According to Bacchilega, Perrault “justifies the tale’s violent outcome by pointing to the devil-associated red garment as evidence of the victim’s complicity.”¹⁸³ The initial “innocence” of the oral folk tale is thus abolished. In “Wolfland” the gift Lisel receives, a luxurious “cloak of scarlet velvet leapt like a fire from its box” (W, 122), functions as a device of intertextual identification, “naming” Lisel as Little Red Riding Hood.

The information given at the beginning of “Wolfland” certainly defines Lisel as a willing recipient of sumptuous gifts from her grandmother; and consequently, the grandmother Anna as a manipulating “puppet master”, which role setting to great extent is sustained till the end of the story. Inside the episode of NAMING in “Boobs” there is actually a foreshadowing of a later scene, which in my view is the climax of the whole story. Rimmon-Kenan replaces the term foreshadowing, because of its “psychological” and “cinematic-visual connotations”, with Gerard Genette’s term “prolepsis”, “a narration of a

¹⁸² Bacchilega, Christina. *Postmodern Fairy Tales. Gender and Narrative Strategies*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, p. 55.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 57.

story event at the point before earlier events have been mentioned.”¹⁸⁴ Prolepsis creates a suspense “revolving around the question ‘How it is going to happen?’”¹⁸⁵

The suspense is certainly built up at the beginning of “Boobs”, as Kelsey reveals that “I already showed that dork Billy Linden.” (B, 12). Her remark is immediately followed by Billy’s “voice”: “‘Hey Boobs!’ he goes, in the hall right outside Homeroom.” (B, 12), which is a similar metonymic naming that happens to Little Red Riding Hood. Kelsey being teased at school and her getting the mock name define what will happen later in the story, just as Little Red Riding Hood’s naming sets the (under)tone of the fairy tale. In “Wolfland”, Lisel receiving the cloak and her ensuing identification as “a Little Red Riding Hood” similarly directs the reader’s expectations. In this sense NAMING can be regarded as a catalyst, not yet opening an alternative but laying the ground for the next episode, in all the three stories.

The setting of the second episode REQUEST is essentially domestic. In the Grimm Brothers’ “Little Red-Cap” the mother carefully instructs her daughter on how to behave on the way and in the grandmother’s house. In “Boobs” the atmosphere is similar, Kelsey’s stepmother is giving advice for her on her period and on how to handle boys at school who are becoming physically stronger. Kelsey in fact would rather stay at home but her stepmother and father make her go to school. Lisel in “Wolfland” is faced with a request from the grandmother, she has to decide whether to obey or not. In fact, the choice is not actually Lisel’s, or her father’s for that matter, to make; “‘I shan’t go’ said Lisel. They both knew quite well that she would.” (W, 123). In this episode “Wolfland” is closer to Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood” where the mother does not in any way instruct the girl; Lisel also receives no actual mental support from her father when making the decision and preparing for the trip.

¹⁸⁴ Rimmon-Kenan (1986), p. 45.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 48.

In the third episode JOURNEY/THREAT I have included the elements of making a journey and facing a threat, which are present in all the three stories. In the fairy tale the girl (or the grandmother) is not given much chance of survival on her own, as she gullibly reveals to the wolf in the woods where she is going. As Christina Bacchilega writes in her *Postmodern Fairy Tales* (1997) about the two classical versions of the fairy tale, “the girl is either too naïve to survive or so unreliable that she must be saved from herself” and in comparison with oral tradition “[t]he *literary* tradition...does lock the protagonist into a gendered and constricting chamber.”¹⁸⁶

In “Wolfland” the development of the threat imitates the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood”; Lisel has to leave the paternal home and make her journey to her grandmother’s castle through the wolf-infested forest. Once safely in the castle, it seems to Lisel, however, that the grandmother poses a bigger threat than the wolves on the way. The grandmother Anna personifies a character going against the traditional grain; as opposed to being the customary weak and sickly grandmother, she is youthful and strong, to a grotesque degree, and presents a problem of categorisation for Lisel. When analysing Tzvetan Todorov’s study on Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, Robert Scholes (1974) articulates Todorov’s thoughts on “culture-bound codes of values” that “are important structural elements.”¹⁸⁷ According to Todorov these elements, or laws that are “being taken for granted by a cultural community, are not so likely to be articulated by attributive propositions”¹⁸⁸ (i.e. narrative sentences). It can be argued that the character of Anna makes visible some of these cultural norms by not being or acting like the traditional grandmother of the fairy tale.

¹⁸⁶ Bacchilega (1997), p. 58.

¹⁸⁷ Scholes (1974), p. 115.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

In her *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler presents the idea of gender as being performative, that is, a performance and “constituting the identity it is purported to be.”¹⁸⁹ Consequently, “The mark of gender appears to ‘qualify’ bodies as human bodies; the moment in which an infant becomes humanized is when the question, ‘is it a boy or girl?’ is answered.”¹⁹⁰ Bacchilega (1997) continues Butler’s thought and discusses the process of “girling”, which is a means of attaining to the somewhat fictional norm of femininity.¹⁹¹ In her view, the postmodern fairy tale re-articulates these norms on gender and subjectivity by exposing their constructedness.¹⁹² For Kelsey in “Boobs” facing her womanhood is more or less “shock therapy”; she has to hear mortifying comments on her appearance and face even a physical threat. She has a loving and supporting family but she is, nevertheless, being subjected to a process of “girling”. When her bully at school has hit Kelsey and broken her nose, her stepmother comforts her by saying that “I’m sorry about this, honey, but really, you have to learn it sometime. You’re all growing up and the boys are getting stronger than you’ll ever be. If you fight with boys, you’re bound to get hurt. You have to find other ways to handle them.” (B, 12). It appears that the boy’s aggression is not condemned, but it is Kelsey who has to change her behaviour in order to survive.

In “Wolfland” the threat that the grandmother Anna poses to Lisel in her mind culminates in the scene where Lisel is trying to escape after seeing a wolf inside the castle in the night, and Anna catches up on her in the stables. In fact, the scene is reminiscent of Little Red Riding Hood finding the wolf in the grandmother’s cottage. Lisel asks her grandmother a series of questions when she notices that the horses are also afraid of Anna; “Do they fear you because you ill-treat them?” and “Then do you think it wise to keep such a pet in the house?” Anna tells Lisel that the horses fear her because she smells of

¹⁸⁹ Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 25.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 111.

¹⁹¹ Bacchilega (1997), p. 22.

¹⁹² *Ibid*.

wolf and the wolf Lisel saw in the night was indeed her, and Anna finally reveals to Lisel “Grandmère is a werewolf.” As a reply, Lisel snarls with irritation and panic; “You’re going to eat me, then.” (W, 139). From this point onwards the mystery begins to unravel. Anna takes Lisel back to the castle, calms her down and tells her story; “Relaxed, Lisel leant back in her chair. She gazed at the flames in the wide hearth. Her mad grandmother began to speak to her in a quiet, floating voice, and Lisel saw pictures from the fire. Pictures of Anna, and of the chateau, and of darkness itself....” (W, 140-141).

Anna’s story begins with Gothic imagery and clear intertextual connections to “Little Red Riding Hood.” As a young bride Anna waits for her husband;

How young Anna looked. She was in her twenties. She wore a scarlet gown and a scarlet cloak lined with pale fur and heavy brocade. It resembled Lisel’s cloak but had a different clasp. Snow melted on the shoulders of the cloak, and Anna held her slender hands to the fire on the hearth. Free of the hood, her hair, like marvelously tarnished ivory, was piled on her head, and there was a yellow flower in it.... Someone called. It was more a roar than a call, as if a great beast came trembling into the chateau. (W, 141).

Anna is indeed depicted as a Gothic heroine trapped in a castle at the mercy of her monster of a husband. At the same time the scene mirrors Little Red Riding Hood’s encounter with the wolf in the grandmother’s cottage, both scenes can be seen as implying sexual violence; in “Wolfland”, of course, Anna’s story does more than imply. Anna tells Lisel her whole life story, her distress as an abused wife, her giving birth to Lisel’s mother and having to hide the child and eventually taking an appearance of a werewolf and killing her husband.

Anna’s story is retrospection inside the storyline of “Wolfland”, or an “analepsis” to use Gerard Genette’s term, that is “a narration of a story-event at a point in the text after later events have been told.”¹⁹³ To be exact, Anna’s story is an external, heterodiegetic analepsis (again Genette’s terms), as it provides “past information about...another character [than

¹⁹³ Rimmon-Kenan (1986), p. 46.

the protagonist], event, or story-line” and evokes “a past which precedes the starting point of the first narrative.”¹⁹⁴ Indeed, the analepsis into Anna’s life is a turning point for Lisel, and influences the decisions she will make. Also, the analepsis explains the odd rumours that Lisel has heard of her grandmother and grandfather, and Anna’s odd physical features. In terms of narrative levels, Anna’s story is a “hypodiegetic narrative”, that is a story told by a fictional character, constituting “a second degree narrative” inside the narrative within which it is embedded.¹⁹⁵ According to Rimmon-Kenan, a hypodiegetic narrative can have an “explicative function”, which means that “the hypodiegetic level offers an explanation of the diegetic level, answering some such question as ‘What were the events leading to the present situation?’”¹⁹⁶

In the fourth episode RESOLVING THREAT (WITH HELPER) Anna’s story gives an explanation to Lisel’s position as her grandmother’s guest, Anna expects Lisel to take her place as the mistress of the castle and the wolf goddess’s charge. The story also opens Lisel’s eyes to the demands that possibly await her, the subordinate role of wife and mother, if she does not take Anna’s offer. With the help of Anna’s story, Lisel makes the decision to follow her grandmother. It can be argued, then, that Anna’s story acts as a helper that resolves the threat that Lisel feels she is under when visiting Anna by revealing Lisel the truth of her grandfather and grandmother. Vladimir Propp defines his third sphere of action of the helper consisting of the following constituents “the spatial transference of the hero”, “liquidation of misfortune or lack”, “rescue from pursuit”, “solution of difficult tasks” and “transfiguration of the hero.”¹⁹⁷ The need for Anna to tell her story has brought Lisel to Wolfland, the inheritance Anna leaves for Lisel will secure her financially, by choosing Anna’s way of life, Lisel will escape any possible suppression by a violent

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, pp. 47-48.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 91-92.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 92.

¹⁹⁷ Propp (1994) p. 80.

husband and from “the irrevocable marriage vow” that would maybe bind her “forever to a monster” (W, 131), and finally the story indeed realises Lisel’s decision and ultimate transfiguration into a wolf.

For Kelsey in “Boobs” there does not exist an entity with a helper function as such that would clearly inflict a change, unless the metamorphosis itself be regarded as one. In *The Writer’s Metamorphosis* (1997) Kai Mikkonen writes that “metamorphosis is used to display, and possibly also to symbolically or rhetorically overturn, certain physical limits like ageing, death, or the domains of senses and organs, as well as some socially enforced differences like gender and ethnicity.”¹⁹⁸ For Kelsey the metamorphosis brings about an extreme sharpening of the senses and physical strength, by which means she can fight her bully. Also, with the metamorphosis, she is able to resist the malicious objectification at school and the negative body image that her changed human body is causing her. Kelsey remembers another girl from the school who “had starved herself to death” and who Kelsey understands perfectly; “She was trying to keep her body down, to keep it normal-looking, thin and strong, like I was too, back when I looked like a person, and not a cartoon that somebody would call ‘Boobs’ (B, 15).

When analysing Angela Carter’s work, her collection of rewritten classical fairy tales *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), for example, Peter Childs (2005) mentions “the importance of the body in women’s reclamation of their identities from the male gaze” as being a central element in her fiction.¹⁹⁹ When metamorphosing Kelsey is able to indeed reclaim her body by literally killing the boy who harasses her sexually, and by the act she also gains the freedom for herself to adapt to the changes in her body and eventually appreciate herself. For Kelsey the metamorphosis is clearly an act towards subjectivity, of

¹⁹⁸ Mikkonen, Kai. *The Writer’s Metamorphosis. Tropes of Literary Reflection and Revision*. Tampere: Tampere University Press, 1997, p. 76.

¹⁹⁹ Childs, Peter. “Angela Carter: The Demythologizing Business.” *Contemporary Novelists. British Fiction since 1970*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 103.

becoming a self-contained subject. In her metamorphosis she feels that she is herself actively making the change happen; “I mean it felt – interesting. Like something I was doing, instead of just another dumb body-mess happening to me because some brainless hormones said so.” (B, 19). For Kelsey the metamorphosis brings an element of self-control and empowerment in the midst of puberty and later self-confidence when another boy is teasing her similarly because of her looks, or when she is going on her first date. As Mikkonen writes, “In metamorphosis something is at once itself and something else; selfhood is both produced and effaced.”²⁰⁰ As a wolf, Kelsey certainly is conscious of her human self but her secret wolf identity gives her the means of survival in her human life; “The only thing that made life bearable was my secret.” (B, 27).

As mentioned earlier, Charles Perrault’s fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” ends with the wolf eating/raping the girl, and at the end of the story Perrault issues a warning directed especially to young bourgeois girls in the form of a moralistic poem. The Grimm Brothers present a strong male figure, the hunter, who saves the girl and the grandmother. Also, in the Grimm Brothers’ version the girl is able to take an initiative and has the idea of filling the wolf’s stomach with stones, which then kills him. Christina Bacchilega (1997) calls this ending “a ‘happy-family’ scene”, in which the girl is “domesticated”, as opposed to being “devoured” in the Perrault version.²⁰¹ As Bacchilega further notes, in both the stories “the girl is *inside* when the tale ends – inside the wolf’s belly for Perrault, or her grandmother’s home for the Grimms.”²⁰² In fact, the end settings of these traditional versions of the fairy tale are, thus, very similar to the sceneries of much of female Gothic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which the indoor is a freely female space, as mentioned in chapter 1.3.

²⁰⁰ Mikkonen (1997), p. 77.

²⁰¹ Bacchilega (1997), p. 58.

²⁰² Ibid.

The endings of both “Wolfland” and “Boobs” do take up the issue of returning home, or “domesticity” but instead of being forced inside any domestic structure, Lisel and Kelsey form their own mental and physical state of being and territory. Lisel is literally taken from the (Gothic) castle of her grandmother and initiated into the outside world; “Lisel tossed her head. Of course, it was all a lot of nonsense. She hastened out through the doors and over the winter park and followed her grandmother away into the Wolfland.” (W, 147). The ending also implies that Lisel is not going to return to her father’s home or care.

The ending of “Boobs” leaves Kelsey in a kind of “in between” state, in between home and outside world. As loving as her home is, Kelsey’s stepmother and father cannot provide her with the kind of means she would need to cope with the abuse at school. It is obvious that the wolf element has become a part of her self and that she will continue her nightly wanderings as a wolf. At the same time, however, Kelsey returns to the everyday social life at school and lives a normal young girl’s life. Also, her going on her first date at the end of the story, can be seen as signifying a “return home” and the acceptance of certain social norms. But it is her monthly metamorphosis that secures her peace at school; “Fat Joey somehow got to be my lab-partner in Science, and if he doesn’t quit trying to grab a feel whenever we have to stand close together to do an experiment, he is going to be sorry. He doesn’t know it, but he’s got until the next full moon.” (B, 35).

4. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have analysed two short stories, Tanith Lee's "Wolfland" (1980) and Suzy McKee Charnas's "Boobs" (1989), as examples of feminist (re)writing of fairy tales. The classical fairytale "Little Red Riding Hood" has clearly inspired Lee to write her "Wolfland", and even though "Boobs" is not a rewritten version of "Little Red Riding Hood", the short stories share the carrying theme of self-defense through metamorphosis: taking an appearance of werewolf in an essentially Gothic setting. I have examined how Lee and McKee Charnas employ the imagery of fantasy, the Gothic and the Grotesque in their work. The two short stories can be seen as following women's oral initiation and storytelling tradition, and women's mode of writing, starting from the Gothic of Ann Radcliffe.

In my study, I present the idea of a continuum of genres preferred especially by women. Ann Radcliffe set the standards of the Gothic genre with her works, such as *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and was able to send her maidens on wondrous journeys "without offending the proprieties", as Ellen Moers phrases it, indeed inside the Gothic castle and genre. Similarly, Clara Reeve did her part in defining the genre and gained considerable commercial success with her *The Old English Baron* (1777). Sophia Lee, in turn, discusses female authority and the possibility of women having political power in her work. In *The Recess* (1783-85), she describes strong female solidarity and stresses the importance of matrilineal inheritance. In Tanith Lee's "Wolfland" the maternal line is also of great significance.

Inside the Gothic genre, Ann Radcliffe and her contemporaries are able to posit women as protagonists and explore the kind of female experiences and emotions that are otherwise almost unheard of, like (sexual) desire or corporeality, and locate their heroines outside the

proper women's sphere, the home. The Gothic heroines indeed go beyond the allowed and accepted feminine feelings of love, fear and duty, even if the possible expressions of sensual desire or erotic fantasy are quickly silenced. It seems, then, that from early on women writers have favoured certain, somewhat peripheral genres, such as the Gothic and later fantasy and science fiction, which modes of writing have allowed them to present "alternate" worlds without gender constraints.

Indeed, already in Radcliffe's time there was a tendency to see the "high" form of Gothic as being written essentially by men and concentrating on a male protagonist, which means that later male authors diminished the original Gothic heroine to a "cowering little piece of propriety whose sufferings are the source of her erotic fascination", again to use Moers's wording. Many contemporary science fiction and fantasy writers, such as Joanna Russ, have resented the masculinised canon and the idea of *Great Literature*, and experienced a similar freedom of authorship when choosing fantasy or science fiction, as the early writers of female Gothic.

In the written fairy tale tradition, collectors such as Charles Perrault and the Grimm Brothers, continued storytelling and simultaneously changed the initiatory nature of oral folk tales. There are, for example, oral folk tales preceding Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood" (1697) that apparently have had an initiatory role preparing peasant girls for their occupation as a seamstress, for example. Like the heroines of the (masculine) Gothic genre, the Little Red Riding Hood of Perrault or the Grimm Brothers ("Little Red-Cap", 1812), has been robbed of her wit and cunning, and left at the mercy of the masculine wolf, to be rescued by another strong male figure, the hunter, that the Grimm Brothers added to the tale. Also, any possible celebration of the girl's coming of age present in the oral storytelling tradition has been replaced, starting from Perrault, by the cautionary and

moralising fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” directed at the education of bourgeois young women.

The feminist fairy tale can be seen as manifesting the dissatisfaction with the somewhat biased and sexist role settings and conservatism of traditional fairy tales. “Wolfland” and “Boobs” present rather provocative and yet accurate thematic subversions of classical fairy tales: the protagonists of the short stories certainly break away from submissive femininity and refuse to accept the traditional prescribed victimisation. The feminist fairy tale does have an important pedagogical aspect in changing the rather limited images of women’s accepted behaviour and breaking the polarised models of femininity of traditional Western fairy tales, that is, the disempowering good/bad gender-specific modes of behaviour that Kaarina Kailo discusses. Kelsey in “Boobs”, for example, offers a strong figure to identify with for girls experiencing puberty, as she defends herself against sexual harassment at school. Also, Anna in “Wolfland” is very unlike the traditional, sickly and powerless grandmother of the fairy tale.

“Wolfland” and “Boobs” are interesting combinations of fantasy and reality. The unfortunately realistic phenomenon, domestic violence, is the cause for the appearance of fantastical elements in “Wolfland.” The same thing happens in “Boobs” as the protagonist Kelsey’s inward rage at being sexually harassed at school finds an outward expression similarly in metamorphosis. As metamorphosis is such an essential element in “Wolfland” and “Boobs”, I have presented an overview of this universal cultural phenomenon in European literature and folklore as well as in contemporary fiction and popular culture.

In describing werewolves in the short stories, Lee and McKee Charnas have intriguingly taken elements from classical Greek and Roman myths and combined them with the beliefs and conceptions of the Middle Ages. Both Anna in “Wolfland” and Kelsey in “Boobs” retain their mental and physical health when metamorphosing, as opposed to

medieval lycanthropes that were the Devil's captive agents. In antiquity, personal responsibility for one's actions was essential, and the lycanthrope was hardly an innocent victim of diabolical plots. Anna in "Wolfland" especially is very conscious of the moral side of her metamorphosis that may lead to a punishment after death. Metamorphosis, however, is a life saving gift for Anna, and perhaps also for her granddaughter Lisel. Similarly for Kelsey, the transformation means social and physical self-preservation.

Furthermore, the werewolf-protagonists of "Wolfland" and "Boobs" do not have the somewhat ambiguous and contradictory nature and existence of many werewolves in early horror and Gothic fiction and contemporary popular culture. For Anna and Kelsey, the essence of the werewolf element is self-defence, and their behaviour seems, above all, rational. Indeed, whether consciously or not, Lee and McKee Charnas have modelled their "Gothic monsters", that is, female werewolves, into physically beautiful and strong creatures that instead of destructing themselves, secure their personal space and territory. Accordingly, in the tradition of feminist fairy tale and modern (female) Gothic, "Wolfland" and "Boobs" give a voice to the objectified and previously silenced monstrous femininity that Bertha Rochester, for example, represents in *Jane Eyre* (1847). The grandmother Anna in "Wolfland" is allowed to speak and justify her violent action as a wolf. Similarly, Kelsey in "Boobs" has a clear and conscious mind in the wolf form when she attacks her abusive classmate.

Besides Gothic imagery, the protagonists of "Wolfland" and "Boobs" are described as essentially corporeal beings; Kelsey's period is described with graphic detail in the latter, as are the grandmother Anna's oddly "girlish" features in the former. Also, Lee and McKee Charnas continue their study of the female body as grotesque when depicting Anna and Kelsey as predatory monsters making their kill. But in the case of Anna and Kelsey, these strong exposures of female body, do not in any way compromise them; by contrast,

the experiences are empowering. Indeed, Anna with her weird physiognomy and the menstruating Kelsey are thus hardly such icons of purity and beauty that Western art and literature has tended to make women into.

When comparing the two short stories with the classical version of “Little Red Riding Hood” within a model narrative structure devised for the purpose, I was able to analyse the episodic components of all the three stories in comparison with each other. All the three stories clearly tell about initiation of a young girl, but for the Little Red Riding Hood this initiation means a predestined fate, as the girl is metonymically named with the stigmatised colour red and thus tinged with (sexual) guilt. Lisel in “Wolfland” is identified as “a Little Red Riding Hood” when she receives the red cloak from her grandmother and she has to make a similar journey as her predecessor, but at the end of the story she can choose, which path to take. Kelsey receiving the mock name ‘Boobs’ functions as a catalyst for the following episodes in the story.

A central element in “Wolfland” is Lisel’s eyes being opened to unwanted future demands by the story that her grandmother tells her. For Kelsey in “Boobs” there does not exist such a clear helper function that would inflict a change, unless the metamorphosis is regarded as such. The stepmother Hilda’s advice proves to be inadequate for Kelsey, but in both the stories the inter-generational female discourse disrupted in classical fairy tales seems to be reinstated. And instead of destruction, or alternatively domestication that faces Little Red Riding Hood in the fairy tale, Lisel and Kelsey form their own mental and physical state of being and territory.

This study could be continued in many ways. At the end of this thesis I present a model narrative structure, inside of which I examine the structural elements and narratological techniques of “Wolfland” and “Boobs”, in comparison with the traditional fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” of Charles Perrault and the Grimm Brothers. My structural analysis is,

in fact, “a hybrid study” of meaning and structure. In a deeper and more comprehensive structural analysis, these elements (meaning and structure) could be separated and examined individually.

Also, it would be interesting to study further the overall phenomenon of feminist (re)writing of fairy tales and the later developments of the genre, or mode of writing. A further study could include a considerably larger amount of material and several other authors, such as Angela Carter, Barbara G. Walker, Dick King-Smith, Anne Sharpe and Michael Emberley.

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APPENDIX I

NAMING

LRRH according to Perrault/The Grimm Brothers²⁰³

- a little girl receives a red hood/a red cap made of velvet from her grandmother, and is from then on called Little Red Riding Hood/Little Red-Cap

B

- Kelsey is teased at school and gets the mock name 'Boobs'

W

- Lisel receives a cloak made of scarlet velvet from her grandmother, the gift does not have a literal naming function, but identifies Lisel as "a Little Red Riding Hood"

REQUEST

LRRH

- the girl's mother asks her to take a cake and a pot of butter/a cake and a bottle of wine to the sick grandmother; in the Grimms' version the girl is advised how to behave at the grandmother's house and not to stray from the path on the way

B

- Kelsey is comforted by her stepmother and her father because of the teasing at school and menstrual cramps

W

- with the cloak Lisel receives a letter from her grandmother requesting Lisel to go and see her; Lisel discusses this with her father

JOURNEY/THREAT

LRRH

- the girl meets a wolf on the way in the forest and reveals to him where she is going; the wolf goes to the grandmother's house and eats her, while the girl picks flowers

- the girl enters the grandmother's house and the wolf eats her too

-the Perrault version ends here with a "moral of the story"

B

- at school Kelsey is afraid of losing all of her friends because of the teasing; when her period starts, she metamorphoses into a wolf and makes nightly wanderings outside

W

- Lisel makes the journey to her grandmother's castle, is chased by wolves on the way

- in the castle Lisel is afraid of her grandmother, tries to escape but the grandmother notices the attempt and is revealed to be a werewolf

²⁰³The version of "Little Red Riding Hood" (LRRH) referred to is taken from *Perrault's Complete Fairy Tales*. Translated by A.E. Johnson & Others. London: Penguin Group, 1999. *Little Red-Cap* is taken from *The Grimm Brothers. The Complete Fairy Tales*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1998. The abbreviation used for Suzy McKee Charnas's "Boobs" is B and for Tanith Lee's "Wolfland" is W.

RESOLVING THREAT (WITH HELPER)**LRRH**

- a hunter saves the girl and the grandmother from the wolf's stomach; the girl has the idea of filling the wolf's stomach with rocks, which kills him

B

- as a wolf Kelsey kills her worst bully

W

- after hearing her grandmother's story, Lisel is to take her place as a werewolf

RETURNING HOME**LRRH**

- the hunter is happy with the wolf's pelt, the grandmother eats the cake and drinks the wine, the girl has learned her lesson not to stray from the path; in a later episode the girl meets another wolf, but is now able to defend herself together with the grandmother

B

- Kelsey has friends again at school and is going on her first date; she also continues to take a wolf's appearance every full moon

W

- Lisel does not return home, that is to her father, but stays with her grandmother and begins her life as a werewolf