

THE BEAST WITHIN: ANIMALIZATION IN ANGELA CARTER'S REVISION OF "LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD"⁵

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Abstract: "Little Red Riding Hood", considered a cautionary tale, deals with female sexuality, and the concepts of morality and the forbidden. This article investigates the gendered revision of "Little Red Riding Hood" in Angela Carter's "The Company of Wolves" (1979) with a particular focus on the subversive strategy of animalization and its connection with corporeity and "the beast within." It departs from a textual analysis of Carter's story and the theories of Kristeva, Braidotti, and Butler in order to explore the extent to which the tale (de)constructs the notions of female sexuality and offers different models for individual and cultural regeneration.

Keywords: (post)modern fairy tales; Little Red Riding Hood; female body; animalization; Angela Carter

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Resumen: "Caperucita Roja", clasificado como relato aleccionador, está relacionado con la sexualidad femenina y los conceptos de "lo moral" y "lo prohibido." El presente artículo pretende analizar la versión de "Caperucita Roja" escrita por Angela Carter: "The Company of Wolves" (1979), centrándose sobre todo en la estrategia subversiva de la animalización y su conexión con la corporalidad y "la bestia interior." Partiendo del análisis textual del relato y las teorías de Kristeva, Braidotti, y Butler se explorará hasta qué punto esta versión ofrece una nueva (de)construcción de los conceptos de la sexualidad femenina y de la identidad de género.

Palabras clave: cuentos de hadas (post)modernos; Caperucita Roja; cuerpo femenino; animalización; Angela Carter.

1. "ONCE UPON A TIME": RED RIDING HOOD LITERARY REVISIONS

The tale of "Little Red Riding Hood" continues to be told and retold in many countries all over the world. On the surface it is a moralizing, cautionary tale, which warns young

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girls about the dangers that lurk in the dark forests of life. Yet deep down, it still fascinates with its references to repressed desires and the forbidden present in the story through taboo notions such as female sexuality, sexual initiation, cannibalism and monstrosity.

This article is concerned with the postmodernist gendered revision of "Little Red Riding Hood" by Angela Carter entitled "The Company of Wolves". Its main purpose is to explore the extent to which this fairy tale revision (de)constructs the concepts of female sexuality and gender identity through the animalized body and offers different representations and new models for individual and cultural regeneration. The particular focus of this study resides on the subversive strategy of animalization and its connection with corporeity, which has not been systematically analyzed in terms of the revisions of "Little Red Riding Hood." Given the large disregard of the much wider amalgam of messages on female sexuality and the complexities of identity offered by animalization, this article will seek to redefine this technique as a subversive literary strategy using existing theories, while providing a systematic analysis of Angela Carter's short story. This evolutionary exploration of "the beast within" can be seen as a powerful tool of female self-discovery leading to alternative paradigms.

The concept of animalized body is ambiguous, taking into account the common associations with animalization. According to critics such as Mark S. Roberts (2008), any reference to animalization brings to mind racism, colonization, sexism and even genocide.⁷ While acknowledging its negative connotations related to oppression, this paper will focus on animalization purely in the subversive context of sexism. Even in feminist revisions this particular strategy has often been criticized, underestimated and judged to be either a grotesque feminist cliché or a mere pornographic representation of traditional gender roles. Critics such as Patricia Duncker (1984), Avis Lewallen (1988), and Robert Clark (1987) argue that this type of liberated, animalized sexuality within the "strait-jacket" of the fairy tale tradition "mimics the set pieces of the pornographic encounter" as they express serious doubts as to the "possibility of a constructive use of pornography" (Benson, 1998: 38). The present study aims to challenge the existing disregard of the strategy of animalization. The principles of Post-structuralism, Postmodernism, and especially Post-colonialism and Feminism provide the background for the analysis of the selected short story and for the theoretical subversion of the traditionally negative concept of animalization. Some of the critics mentioned include Kristeva, Althusser, Foucault, Bhabha, Spivak, Irigaray, Cixous, Butler, and Braidotti. It will also be necessary to cite experts on the topic of subversion within the fairy tale, such as Jack Zipes and Cristina Bacchilega. The theoretical notions discussed include the concepts of monstrosity, the abject, "the other," mimicry, the female body and sexuality, and gender identity.

The last decades of the 20th century and the 21st century constitute a critical analysis of the new Postmodernist versions of the original tales. Susan Sellers thus comments on the difficult balancing act of the rewriting of myths and fairy tales: "To follow the figure of Little Red Riding Hood and stick to enough of the path so as not to get lost completely, while taking in whatever flowers or strangers we encounter on the way" (2001: 29). She further explains that feminist rewriting can be perceived as both "an act of demolition" and "as a task of construction – of bringing into being enabling alternatives" (Ibid. 30). This

⁷ For a detailed study of animalization as oppression see Mark S. Roberts' *The Mark of the Beast: Animality and Human Oppression* (2008).

vision of Postmodernist revisions is shared and further explained by Cristina Bacchilega, who proposes a mirror metaphor in order to illustrate the three phases of fairy tale rewriting: reflection, refraction, and artifice. The first phase, often called mimetic, reflects traditional schemes, the second phase has been termed constructive or refractive since changes are introduced and new alternatives arise, while the last stage is considered to be subversive, as it reveals the artificial ideological construction of traditional tales.⁸ Bacchilega thus explains the three phases of subversive fairy tale rewriting:

Postmodern fictions, then, hold mirrors to the magic mirror of the fairy tale, playing with its framed images out of a desire to multiply its refractions and to expose its artifices. Frames and images may vary, but gender is almost inevitably the privileged place for articulating these de-naturalizing strategies. And while this play of reflection, and framing might produce ideologically “destructive”, “constructive” and “subversive” effects, the self-reflexive mirrors themselves are themselves questioned and transformed (1997: 23–24).

Possible criticisms about whether a true revolution in thought can be achieved within oppressive patriarchal schemes seem valid issues to be addressed. Stephen Benson voices these concerns in the following way: “Can fairy tales as, traditionally, miniature carriers of a conservative ideology of gender be appropriated to critique, and imagine alternatives to, traditional concepts of gender and its construction, given the history of their role in the installation of these very traditions?” (1998: 37). Two important critics can be cited in defense of the strategy of subversive fairy tale rewritings: Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva. According to Foucault’s theories, resistance never occurs outside of power; rather, there are numerous points of resistance “present everywhere in the power network” (1990: 95–96). Giving special focus to feminist rewritings, Julia Kristeva points out that any influential revolt must necessarily be understood and thus it has to occur within the hegemonic order of the social-symbolic (qtd. in Sellers 2001: 30).

The hidden ideological purpose of fairy tales as instruments for the creation of social structure and order is more than evident. More specifically, according to one of the most important fairy tale critics, Jack Zipes, they influenced gender roles and social relations, which were traditionally connected to religion through the concept of morality (Zipes, 2012: 40–42). In the case of Perrault’s version of “Little Red Riding Hood”, the little girl is clearly portrayed to be a “fallen woman,” as she does not fight back the obvious seduction of the wolf (Ibid. 169). She is then eaten by the wolf as punishment for doing what she wanted rather than what was proper and socially accepted. These limitations on female freedom, present in the original versions of the story, sparked a need to distort this traditional vision by the “subversion of the original medium.” Subversion could be understood simply as “the departure from the traditional mode” or “greater experimentation” within a given discourse (Zipes 2012: 107), yet in the light of feminist theories, this strategy could furthermore be said to question the social status quo.

8 The idea of artificial construction of gender roles is prevalent in such critics as Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler and the concept of “performativity.”

In her short story, Angela Carter successfully uses the marginal discourse and the social and political subversion that characterize Postmodernism⁹. Since the beginning of the 20th century different subversive strategies have been used to distort traditional, strongly patriarchal fairy tales. These gendered revisions of the fairy tale have nowadays become quite commonplace. The fiction of Robert Coover, Tanith Lee, Margaret Atwood, Jeanette Winterson (Benson, 1998: 49), and particularly as in the focus of the present study, of Angela Carter constitute the renaissance of the fairy tale which has been going on for the past decades.

The themes related to the forbidden, such as sexuality, monstrosity and cannibalism continue to fascinate modern readers and provide new twists on the tale. Some 20th century revisions include Catherine Storr's 1967 tale of "Little Polly Riding Hood" in which the clever and independent girl outwits the wolf; the 1972 subversive version of the Merseyside Women's Liberation Movement in Liverpool in which the little girl saves her grandmother and kills the wolf; and Tomi Ungerer's 1974 emancipatory rewriting of the story with a happy end where the wolf and the girl marry (Zipes, 2012: 179–180). There are also many versions written in defense of the wolf. These include Iring Fetscher's 1974 "Little Redhead and the Wolf" and Philippe Dumas and Boris Moissard's 1977 "Little Aqua Riding Hood" (Ibid.). Here, it is inevitable to mention the 1992 Bestseller *Women Who Run with the Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estés. This intercultural collection unfolds myths, fairy tales, and stories of the "wild woman archetype" with fresh perspectives. There is a connection between the traditionally naïve Little Red Riding Hood character and the evil wolf, which restores women's instinctive and intuitive nature. This connection between woman and animal (wolf) constitutes the main assumption behind the subversive strategy of animalization.

2. "THE BEAST WITHIN": ANGELA CARTER'S GOTHIC FOREST

Angela Carter is perhaps the first name which comes to mind when we think of modern revisions of fairy tales. Her contribution to the retelling of the fairy tale has become an inherent part of her, so much so that she is remembered as a "benevolent witch-queen" and the "Faerie Queene" (Benson, 1998: 31). The story to be analyzed is found in her collection of tales *The Bloody Chamber* published in 1979. This collection, according to Salman Rushdie, is Carter's most memorable accomplishment, a "masterpiece... the most likely of her works to endure" (Ibid.). This collection is indeed a literary milestone as it has been said to have "turned the key" opening the door to a "hidden room" of women's sexuality and desire (Bacchilega, 1998: 22). Her stories have additionally been analyzed as "Gothic tales" (Armitt, Wisker), thus emphasizing the importance of horror in Carter's layered genre intertextuality. Lucie Armitt, for instance, focuses on the "spaces and frames of the Gothic" within *The Bloody Chamber* (Benson 1998: 34). *The Bloody Chamber* has also been called "a gleeful, subversive commentary on her earlier work" (Benson, 1998: 61). This remark can easily be applied, among others, to Carter's earlier translations of Charles

9 Gerardo Rodríguez Salas analyzes marginality and subversion as some of the main aspects of Postmodernism in *Katherine Mansfield: El posmodernismo incipiente de una modernista renegada* (2009).

Perrault's fairy tales (Bacchilega, 1998: 9). These translations submerged Angela Carter in the world of the fairy tale and have inevitably influenced her creative literary universe.

"The Company of Wolves" is the most famous of the three tales known as Carter's *Little Red Riding Hood* trilogy, which also includes "The Werewolf" and "Wolf-Alice." Although all three focus on retelling the ancient folk tale of the innocent girl and the wolf from different perspectives, the chosen short story is the one which best exemplifies subversive animalization. Before starting the analysis it is important to keep in mind that in Postmodern literature all final truths and straightforward conclusions disappear; rather different levels of meaning emerge as "presence is replaced by... volatile and unstable identity – beast or beauty, tiger or bride, wolf or girl" (Ibid. 18). "The Company of Wolves" reveals controversial issues hidden under the surface of the original "Little Red Riding Hood."

This story is Carter's most well-known retelling of the Little Red Riding Hood, particularly due to its 1984 film adaptation by Neil Jordan. However, it must be admitted, there is little consensus when it comes to explaining the meaning of Carter's tale, possibly because the intention to "lay a grid across her work and read off meanings from it" (Benson 1998: 45) has always failed utterly. This literary discussion has generated numerous opinions on the subject. While it is virtually impossible to explain it all, even a fraction of the tale is worth it, always keeping in mind two things: the "space for the reader's activity", this individual interpretation to which Carter kept her tales open, along with "her constructive avoidance of closure," which could be "recognized as her adoption of the model of folkloric narration as an ongoing process" (Ibid. 46). While Carter "questions and provokes her fairy-tale sources" (Ibid. 46), she also participates in that tradition by retelling the stories.

In this particular instance, we find an introduction to the superstitious cold world of the upland woodsmen of the northern country. According to the fairy tale tradition of the timeless present, no specific details are mentioned, except that it is winter. Curiously, the narrative presents itself, in an echo of Perrault's version, as a cautionary tale, warning all "unwary travellers" of the dangers of the wolves: "Fear and flee the wolf; for, worst of all, the wolf may be more than he seems" (Carter 1979: 138)¹⁰. Yet this warning is not completely one-sided: on the one hand there are horrific references to wolves as "shadows... wraiths, grey members of a congregation of nightmare" (137), and on the other there is an attempt at providing an explanation for their actions and even a tinge of sympathy for them: "wolves grow lean and famished" (137), "that long-drawn, wavering howl has... some inherent sadness in it, as if the beasts would love to be less beastly if only they knew how and never cease to mourn their own condition" (139). Right at the opening of the narrative Carter proves that a single truth is impossible. Thus the oral storyteller makes an effort to reveal different aspects of the tale, which we then piece together as we may. The ability to decode as an active reader allows us to follow the main narrative along with the numerous oral folk tales. It would be impossible to analyze all the stories found in "The Company of Wolves" in depth, so after a brief reference to these folk tales, we will focus entirely on the main narrative about the wolf who was more than he seemed.

The stories embedded in the narrative tell of werewolves, witches, all types of transformations; while retrieving the oral tradition, these tales include some critical social and

¹⁰ From now on, references to Carter's tales will appear parenthetically only with an indication of the page number.

religious references, and clearly reveal Carter's gothic streak. The many superstitions and common beliefs of the region include the existence of werewolves, the story about a witch who turned a wedding party into wolves, an ointment from the Devil, and the belief that "if you burn his [a werewolf's] human clothing you condemn him to wolfishness for the rest of his life" (140). There are also some comments which seem to be critical reflections on humanity and society. The most mysterious of these is the following sentence: "We keep the wolves out by living well" (143). This statement offers various possible interpretations. The one that seems to fit best is related to the concept of evolutionary psychology. Basically, because we "live well," and all of our primary needs are fulfilled, we have lost the need to resort to our instinctive wild side. Even nowadays we would prefer to forget the existence of this instinctive part of us because it scares us. So we live in our world of culture, religion and morality and condemn any sign of animalistic instinct. This would explain why the notion of animalization brings "distaste" to many, as it subverts our socially-learned values and shows us something disturbing. Angela Carter herself seems to confirm this explanation with the following statement: "I do think that the body comes first, not consciousness... I often shatter pure and evocative imagery with the crude. But remember there's a materiality to symbols and a materiality to imaginative life which should be taken quite seriously" (Bacchilega, 1998: 7).

Now let us focus entirely on the main narrative: the tale about the girl and the wolf, which is subversive in both characters and plot. Right from the beginning, the girl is described as pure and innocent, yet also a "strong-minded" child who "insists she will go off through the wood" (141). On her way she encounters a young and handsome man, with whom she makes a bet about who will arrive at her grandmother's house first. Just like in the traditional versions, the grandmother is eaten, and the werewolf waits for the girl. What happens from the time Little Red Riding Hood enters the house has many possible interpretations. In short, it could be defined as much as a personal struggle for safety as a successful seduction. Who seduces who and why is less clear and will be discussed in detail further on. One could wonder whether the girl retains her human shape or becomes a she-wolf, as is suggested by the film adaptation of the tale. In the story it is not made clear, yet no references to her transformation are present. What is clear is that the ending is subversive and cryptic: "See! Sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf" (147).

3. THE SEDUCTION OF THE WOLF

In "The Company of Wolves" we find that the strategic use of animalization involves references to all of its three components: bestiality, instinctive sexual drive, and silence. The oral narrative technique of this cautionary tale warns us above all about a wolf who "may be more than he seems" (138). The caution does retain an echo of Perrault, yet it is much more ambiguous, as it could be interpreted in either a positive or negative way. A wolf may be "more than he seems" in that we have somehow misjudged him by perceiving him as purely evil, or in Perrault's sense the quote might refer to a wolf hiding under a cunning disguise. In this tale both possibilities are implied as the werewolf of the story is certainly more than he seems. The narrator warns us about the wolves, but also tries

to convey “their side of the story.” This ambiguous notion adjusts perfectly to Cohen’s definition of monstrosity as “a refusal of classification, a destabilisation of boundaries and normality” (1996: 7). In this tale, both the wolf and Little Red Riding Hood are also more than they seem according to Braidotti’s monster theories of disrupting the accepted system and breaking existing limits. Braidotti makes a connection between women and monsters in order to dismantle patriarchy’s strategy of presenting the female as the marginal other through a cultural process of subordination (1994: 64). Braidotti further explores the ambivalence which surrounds the “monsterisation of women” through the etymological origins of the Greek word “monster”, meaning horrible and wonderful at the same time (Ibid. 62). Both women and monsters fascinate and inspire fear; their construction as an abnormality leads to the need for their repression within the hegemonic system. Braidotti thus defines the monstrous body:

The monstrous body, more than an object, is a shifter, a vehicle that constructs a web of interconnected and yet potentially contradictory discourses about his or her embodied self. Gender and race are primary operators in this process. As a way of concluding, I would like to propose a redefinition: the monster is a process without a stable object. It makes knowledge happen by circulating, sometimes as the most irrational non-object. It is slippery enough to make the Encyclopaedists nervous; yet, in a perfectly nomadic cycle of repetitions, the monstrous other keeps emerging on the discursive scene (1994: 300).

This explanation links the animalized, monstrous body with numerous discourses on domination and submission, as well as with the shifting, unstable, nomadic identity. Female identity has often been interpreted as a “becoming process”¹¹, thus connecting with Braidotti’s view of the monster as “process.” According to this feminist critic, nomadic subjects express “the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity” (1994: 22). In other words, the notions of monstrosity and animalization are linked to the female identity and the female body in that they destabilize the accepted order and harmony, given their chaotic and volatile nature. Throughout this article we will see how Carter makes use of these shifting identities and the irrational circular discourse on monstrosity to create new paradigms.

When the main narrative of “The Company of Wolves” begins, we immediately perceive a difference between this new Red Riding Hood and the original little girl. Carter’s character is described from the very beginning as a “strong-minded child” who “insists she will go off through the wood” (141). Unlike the traditional character, this postmodernist one does not go on an errand for her mother; she makes her own decision to go, even though she defies her father, who would not have let her go had he been home. The lack of a patriarchal figure gives the girl a possibility of freedom and maturity. The story begins with a personification and animalization of the forest: “The forest closed upon her like a pair of jaws” (141). This ominous image foreshadows the dangers she will encounter. Let us examine the subversive animalization of Red Riding Hood in detail.

11 This view is shared by many feminist critics: Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Rosi Braidotti, Margaret Atwood, among others.

Whereas, in the 19th century version, the Brothers Grimm remove all sexual references from the tale, in Carter's "The Company of Wolves" the descriptions of the girl are full of sensual details which foreshadow the sexual encounter in the last scene. The following quotes paint an erotic image of instinctive sensuality and hint at some animalistic traits of Red Riding Hood:

Children do not stay young for long in this savage country. There are no toys for them to play with so they work hard and grow wise but this one, so pretty and the youngest of her family, a little late-comer, had been indulged by her mother and the grandmother who'd knitted her the red shawl that, today, has the ominous if brilliant look of blood on snow. Her breasts have just begun to swell... her cheeks are emblematic scarlet and white and she has just started her woman's bleeding (141).

She stands and moves within the invisible pentacle of her own virginity. She is an unbroken egg; she is a sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of membrane; she is a closed system; she does not know how to shiver. She has her knife and is afraid of nothing (141).

The girl with the red shawl is presented as pure and innocent, and as a "strong-minded child" who is fearless because she has yet to experience the world. She is just becoming a woman and does not yet know what that entails. She is an "unbroken egg" a "sealed vessel," a "closed system," untouched by any man or by the cruel reality of the world. The circular metaphors in this section could be interpreted as Kristeva's notion of the Semiotic and the eternal feminine linked with the cycles of nature, and thus inherently with sexual reproduction. The girl has enjoyed love in the safe bubble of her familiar world. Fear is generated by terrible experiences, and she has none. She "has her knife" and is prepared to venture into the forest of life. These traits create an image of instinctive strength, animalistic fearlessness and determination, which shift the girl's identity towards a web of contradictory discourses as theorized by Braidotti in her theory of nomadic subjects. There is another interesting chain of metaphors connected to her red shawl, as seen on her white skin, which once again reflects Kristeva's notions of the eternal feminine and the order of the Semiotic. In this first description we are given the first piece of the puzzle; her shawl has the "ominous look of blood on snow". This could be interpreted as her introduction into what life is. Blood symbolizes pain and death, but it also hints at sexual initiation and life. The snow, apart from implying her purity, could also reflect on life, which is not untouched purity and goodness; it involves pain, sacrifice, and suffering, as she is about to learn. The colors of her cheeks, "emblematic scarlet and white", confirm the previous metaphor of life burning in her. Through this instinctive representation, the girl is further linked with Kristeva's pre-linguistic Semiotic, and distanced from the dominant language and logic of the Symbolic order. The whole description is considered subversive animalization because it connects the girl, almost a woman, with her body, by what Cixous referred to as a transgressive celebration of the female body and one's own instinctive sensuality, in order to reclaim women's language, history and their lives (1990: 1232). This part of female identity has always been associated with the pleasure of men. In this case, Carter combines the strategic use of silence with a transgressive vision of female sexuality in a

web of contradictory paradigms. It is this instinctive sensuality which opens up the way for the new Red Riding Hood's sexuality to emerge. This description is a way of rediscovering that which has been traditionally been twisted into immorality, shame and sin.

As the girl in red walks through the forest, she encounters a handsome hunter. In contrast to her animalization, the hunter, who is in fact a werewolf, is personified. She realizes that she has "never seen such a fine fellow before... so they went together, through the thickening light of the afternoon" (142). The young man is a gentleman: he offers to carry her basket and "she gave it to him although her knife was in it because he told her his rifle would protect them" (142). In her infinite trust of the world, she places her life in the hands of this young "dashing huntsman". The personification of the wolf becomes more evident, as he is not only seen as young and handsome, but also as a worldly and learned man. In this tale the monstrosity of the wolf, as theorized by Braidotti, clearly disrupts the existing boundaries and binary oppositions. The werewolf in Carter's story escapes classifications, as he is both beast and man, instinctive animal and learned gentleman. Carter's innovative symbol is the compass, which works as a clear opposition to the path; hence the order of the symbolic, knowledge and logic is linked with the werewolf, while the girl's impotence is revealed by her association with the pre-linguistic silence of the Semiotic order. The fact that this object is associated with the wild werewolf makes us question his condemnation. He laughs when she tells him that "she should never leave the path... or she would be lost instantly" (142). The werewolf huntsman challenges the established social norms, while his compass seems to be a metaphor of free thought, science and experiment, in clear opposition to the superstitious-ridden, socially and religiously oppressed world. The young man proposes a bet because she does not believe he can get to her grandmother's house faster stepping off the path and using his compass; if he wins he gets a kiss. Hence the beginning of what Carter termed "a rustic seduction" All throughout the tale this personification of the wolf is linked to an intent of somehow justifying his actions: "that long-drawn, wavering howl has... some inherent sadness in it, as if the beasts would love to be less beastly if only they knew how and never cease to mourn their own condition" (139). In the very last line of the tale the wolf is also described as "tender," (147) thus clearly questioning the traditional image of the "big bad wolf."

Yet the werewolf is still true to his animal nature, he is "carnivore incarnate" (144). The pious grandmother tries to throw her bible and then clothes at him to protect herself against "these infernal vermin" (144). But nothing seems to work: "now call on Christ and his mother and all the angels in heaven to protect you but it won't do you any good" (144). Carter's repeated criticism of religion as useless protection against the world's evils is evident. There are two magnificent images of the wolf as night and nature: "The sticks in the hearth shift and hiss; night and the forest has come into the kitchen with darkness tangled in its hair" (144), "his nipples are ripe and dark as poison fruit" (144). This erotic description brings to mind the biblical forbidden fruit. Carter might be hinting at sexuality being the forbidden fruit for which Red Riding Hood will reach. The young man takes off his clothes, transforms into a wolf and eats the grandmother. Now it is time to wait for Little Red Riding Hood. The scene which unfolds as she walks in and realizes he has killed her grandmother has many possible interpretations.

The girl comes in “bringing with her a flurry of snow that melted in tears on the tiles” (145), another example of foreshadowing of both innocence and sorrow. Her first reaction upon realizing what has happened is the animal instinct to defend herself: “She knew she was in danger of death,” “she wanted her knife from her basket but she did not dare reach for it because his eyes were fixed upon her...” (145). She asks about where her grandmother is, to which he replies “There’s nobody here but we two, darling” (145). His eyes shine with a “diabolic phosphorescence” (145), his first instinct being to devour her. She realizes that they are surrounded by wolves and her chances of surviving are rather slim, yet she also feels sympathy for them: “It is very cold, poor things... no wonder they howl so” (146). The red of her shawl is once again compared to the “blood she must spill” (145) and further on to “the colour of poppies, the colour of sacrifices, the colour of her menses” (146). These cyclical metaphors are relevant in terms of Kristeva’s notion of the pre-linguistic Semiotic and the eternal feminine. All of these references make for a possible argument of her virgin sacrifice to the wolf. It seems that she consciously makes this decision and she no longer shivers: “since her fear did her no good, she ceased to be afraid” (146). Interestingly enough, now her actions seem very calculated and logical. We could interpret this as her taking on a different approach to save her life. At the beginning of the tale we are told that “the wolf is the worst for he cannot listen to reason” (138), yet it is not reason that she resorts to, but her animal sexual instinct. Thus, she offers herself as a sacrifice to the wolf; she has learned how the world works: “the wise child never flinched” (146). The echoes of the original tale resound in “What big arms you have. All the better to hug you with” (146) as the not so Little Red Riding Hood seduces the wolf:

What shall I do with my shawl?
 Throw it on the fire, dear one. You won’t need it again...
 She drew her blouse over her head; her small breasts gleamed as if the snow had invaded the room.
 What shall I do with my blouse?
 Into the fire with it, too, my pet.
 The thin muslin went flaring up the chimney like a magic bird and now off came her skirt, her woolen stockings, her shoes...
 ...now she was clothed only in her untouched integument of flesh.
 This dazzling, naked she combed out her hair with her fingers...
 Then went directly to the man with red eyes in whose unkempt mane the lice moved; she stood on tiptoe and unbuttoned the collar of his shirt.
 ... she freely gave the kiss she owed him (146).

This scene has been interpreted according to the concepts of masquerade, Irigaray’s notion of mimicry, and Butler’s theory of performativity by critics such as Catherine Lappas (Benson 1998: 42). Red Riding Hood’s animal instinct shines through as she sensually changes the fire in the werewolf’s eyes from hatred to desire. There is parody or mimicry of traditionally accepted gender representations in order to dismantle their artifice. Another critic similarly suggests that this “self-conscious enactment of femininity” is “a means of deconstructing its traditional status as self-evident image” through a process of denaturalization (Doane qtd. in Benson, 1998: 42). It is important to note that the girl is not submissive; she is sure of herself: she “knew she was nobody’s meat” (147). Butler’s notion of performa-

tivity is likewise made evident in the theatrical actions of the heroine: "She laughed at him full in the face, she ripped off his shirt for him and flung it into the fire" (147). Not only is she erotic, but she could also be said to embrace her wild instinctive side as she takes the initiative in the sexual encounter. It is made clear that "she freely gave the kiss she owed him," thus giving her control and freedom over her body, something which according to Spivak has been denied to women due to social, political and religious agendas. The male appropriation and objectification of the female body has also been seen as the repression of female intelligence and creativity. Important critics such as Gayatri Spivak discuss male anxiety about female sexuality and the political implications of the need to control women's bodies, as linked with such institutions as the nation and the family (1981: 181). In order to achieve true freedom, a positive re-appropriation of the female body is necessary. These notions of Cixous are clearly reflected in Red Riding Hood's transgressive appropriation of her own body and sexuality, while her instinctive actions of stripping and ripping off his shirt once more emphasize her silent strategy of resistance. Perhaps through burning his clothes, she condemns him to a lifetime of wolfishness, if we believe the superstition, yet she does the same with her own clothes. The animalization of Red Riding Hood is subversive, in that it creates new liberating paradigms; to quote Sellers, "this return to the animal body free from external prescription" allows the female protagonist to relate to the male "as an equal and without fear" (2001: 120). In terms of Braidotti's monster theories, this erotic bestiality, which leads to the girl's possible transformation into a she-wolf, constitutes a rejection of categories and hierarchical models, but also a way to embrace animalistic silence as criticism of the dominant system. The constructive possibilities of Kristeva's theories are evident further on:

She will lay his fearful head on her lap and she will pick out the lice from his pelt and perhaps she will put the lice into her mouth and eat them, as he will bid her, as she would do in a savage marriage ceremony (147).

Kristeva's notion of the "abject" or the "uncanny" is explained as "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (Kristeva 1982: 4). Within the "abject" then, some repressed notions of social taboos seem to be hidden. The notion of the "uncanny", as illustrated by the savage rites of the marriage ceremony, disrupts the rules of the system. It is in this liminal space, theorized by Bhabha as "third space," away from binary oppositions, somewhere between the subject and the object, in the "abject", that the new Red Riding Hood constructs her identity. Perhaps she herself will become a wolf, something that is implied by the film adaptation of the story, thus breaking all categories. This way, the strategy of animalization is redefined as a (de)constructive tool for discovering Braidotti's "nomadic" female identity. Irigaray's mimicry is also evident in this section, as the parody and masquerade of the artificial system of male control is reflected in the command "as he will bid her". Irigaray develops the concept of "mimicry" modeled on the earlier notion of "masquerade". Instead of offering arguments through logic, women rebel by a subversive exaggerated imitation of gender roles, through which they reveal artificial notions of representation and criticize their exploitation within the existing patriarchal social order (Irigaray 1991: 78). This distancing from the artificial construct

of gender representation is likewise evident in the concept of “performativity”, which is developed in reference to the subversion of female identity in Butler’s 1990 *Gender Trouble*. Butler understands gender as “an ongoing discursive practice... open to intervention and resignification” (1990: 33). She further claims that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender” because “identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Ibid.). These hybrid and (de)constructive visions of gender identity correspond with the liminal and heterogeneous representations of the monstrous body. If identity can be constructed through actions, then women writers should partake in its creation through cultural representations.

At the end of the story it is “all silent, all still,” “The blizzard died down,” “See! sweet and sound she sleeps in granny’s bed, between the paws of the tender wolf” (147). In the strategy of animalization, the third inherent connection between animals and women is constituted by their mutual silence within the hegemonic order of patriarchal language. The powers of language to construct and control our reality are discussed by Louis Althusser in his 1969 article “Ideology and the State”. Pam Morris explains that:

[Language] continually “reproduces” reality as a hierarchy of values which sustains the interests of dominant power. Language is the means by which these hierarchical values seem to us natural and true. It is in the interest of power to impose this ideological perception of reality as the only possible one, the unitary “Truth” (1996: 137).

History, postcolonial discourse, and Feminism abound in examples of marginal beings “silenced” by the colonizer or the oppressive system. Postmodern literature also tends to focus on absences and silences, all connected to Foucault’s concepts of Counter–Memory and Counter–History in order to retrieve the elements eliminated by the dominant ideology. Silence also evokes a connection to Kristeva’s notion of the semiotic, which is associated with women and the pre–linguistic phase, as opposed to the male linguistic phase of the symbolic, as well as her strategies for dissident writing. Language dominated by men has always been a feminist concern, in which silence, from being perceived as passive submission, has become one of the weapons of rebellion. Manuela Palacios González further explains this strategic use of silence:

[S]ilence as a strategy for resistance can only be envisaged as a first stage in the production of alternative ideologies. It is difficult to imagine how it can win other individuals and increase its power if it is not in circulation. In spite of its limitations and of our awareness that silence is the effect of power, it may be considered as a potential temporary strategy for the destabilization of hegemonic interests (2001: 203).

In Post–colonial texts, silence has also been interpreted as a liberating strategy, given that it “indicates a potential and shifting horizon of possible meanings” which “cannot be overwhelmed by any interpretation” (Ashcroft, 1989: 184). Silence is thus used as a subversive strategy, first to destabilize the hegemonic order, and later to reveal oppressive ideologies and offer strategies of resistance¹². Thus, the silent ending of the story is mys-

12 Gerardo Rodríguez–Salas analyzes the strategic use of silence in “The Boundless Ocean of Silence: An

terious, but we can guess that the two are lovers and the fierce wolf is now described as tender; somehow through her monstrosity she has pacified the beast by transforming his violent instincts into passionate sexual desire. The silence at the end of the tale might be interpreted as the marginal point of view on the story, as well as a new model of resistance to traditional gender relations, especially in terms of sexual encounters.

There has been a lot of criticism concerning this last scene. In the 1970's and 1980's there was a controversial debate involving the concept of pornography. In relation to this particular scene some critics argue that it is just a recreation of a typical sexual encounter, "the distilled essence of the entrenched binaries of patriarchal gender relations," with the dominant male and a pornographic 'display of affection' strictly for his pleasure" (Benson, 1998: 37). The real controversy lies in the extent to which pornography can be read as a critique and is capable of offering some alternatives, and this is clearly a complex issue related to the definition of pornography. Carter would probably refer to this tale as partly pornographic, yet she also defended the subversive power of pornography through her notion of the "moral pornographer" (Ibid. 38). Although this notion has been fiercely criticized, I would still argue that the animalized image of the girl in Carter's story is strongly empowering and constitutes a subversive reply to a world dominated by male sexuality and desire. Yes, the girl finds herself in an oppressive situation, yet her response is the subjugation of male dominance with "that instinctive patriarchal weapon" finally detached from masculinist control. The notion of the fallen woman is also subverted. She becomes the one who initiates the path, which has always been deemed improper and sinful. All these delicate intricacies of women's sexuality have long been repressed. Angela Carter chooses to venture into that mysterious labyrinth of female desire and lose herself among the actions of a sensuous Eve, who somehow redeems the fallen Adam. The postmodernist notion of a "volatile and unstable identity – beast or beauty, tiger or bride, wolf or girl" is ever present in this tale (Bacchilega, 1998: 18). The strategy of animalization, with its key components of bestiality, instinctive sexual drive and silence, helps to (de)construct the notions of marginality, the "Other" and that "volatile and unstable identity" theorized by Braidotti, Irigaray and Butler (Bacchilega, 1998: 18).

CONCLUSIONS

Animalization, along with its three main components of bestiality or monstrosity, instinctive sexual drive, and silence, offers some intriguing new models. Through its association with monstrosity, it breaks with established norms and escapes easy, stereotypical classifications. It offers a world of chaos and freedom, as new possibilities emerge beyond transgressed boundaries. Through an instinctive sexual drive, which Carter referred to as "constructive pornography" (Benson, 1998: 38), this subversive literary strategy offers new ways of appropriating the female body. The strategic use of silence as resistance further questions the established social and linguistic norms. In the "The Company of Wolves" the animalization of Little Red Riding Hood, grounded in her grotesque representation and instinctive sexuality, is quite literal, given that it is suggested that she herself might

Alternative to Language in Katherine Mansfield's "Doll's House" (2007).

become a she-wolf. The combination of monstrosity, instinctive feminine sexuality, and silence shift the girl's identity towards a web of contradictory discourses as theorized by Braidotti in her theory of nomadic subjects.

Given that animalization distorts, but at the same time reclaims female sexuality, it should be seen as part of the revolutionary effort to undermine patriarchal paradigms. "The beast within" is embraced, as new conceptions are offered. The process of animalization could thus be said to contribute to "a stripping away of all existing definitions of sexuality to reach a point of shared humanity, from which men and women can separately and collaboratively build anew" (Day qtd. in Sellers, 2001: 120). It seems that in Carter's tale the new Red Riding Hood finds greater fulfillment in the animal side of her nature.

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