

From Cap to Cloak: The Evolution of “Little Red Riding Hood” from Oral Tale to Film

By

Tina-Louise Reid

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Chairperson Chuck Berg

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Catherine Preston

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Kevin Willmott

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The Thesis Committee for Tina-Louise Reid  
certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

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Chairperson Chuck Berg

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## Abstract

As co-written with scholar and storyteller Angela Carter, Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984) represents a unique case of adaptation as it radically revises the figure of "Little Red Riding Hood." *The Company of Wolves* transforms the pervasive myth of coming-of-age folklore by stimulating hallucinatory visions embedded in a structure effectively simulating the unconscious logic of dream. This paper investigates the evolution of the mythos in the original Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale, its progression and eventual reworking in Carter's literary and filmic takes, as she shifts the focus from the frightened, naïve girl clad in red, reliant on male heroes to the sexually awakened, self-reliant young woman in a crimson cape. To make the texts transparent, this essay analyses *The Company of Wolves* and its sources through the lenses of adaptation theories including those by George Bluestone and Sarah Cardwell whilst exploring Angela Carter's relationship to fairy tale as chronicled by Jack Zipes. The mechanisms and symbols of the dream imagery manifested in *The Company of Wolves* distinguish Carter's and Jordan's feverish brainchild as an enticingly instructive exemplar of rendering unconscious desires visible and visceral on celluloid.

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Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984) represents a unique case of adaptation. As co-written with scholar and storyteller Angela Carter, this film radically revises the figure of "Little Red Riding Hood" by drawing from Carter's fairy tales featured in her short story collection *The Bloody Chamber*. In addition to the multiple layers of literary reference stemming from 17<sup>th</sup> century French fairy tale author Charles Perrault via Carter, *The Company of Wolves* translates the pervasive myth of coming-of-age folklore by stimulating hallucinatory visions embedded in a structure effectively simulating the unconscious logic of dream. This paper investigates the evolution of the mythos in the original fairy tales, its progression and eventual reformulation in Carter's literary and filmic takes, as she shifts the focus from the frightened, naïve girl clad in red, reliant on male heroes to the sexually awakened, self-reliant young woman in a crimson cape as primarily illuminated by fairy tale expert Jack Zipes. To make the texts transparent, this essay analyses *The Company of Wolves* and its sources through the lenses of adaptation theories whilst exploring Angela Carter's relationship to fairy tale. The mechanisms and symbols of the dream imagery manifested in *The Company of Wolves* distinguish Carter's and Jordan's feverish brainchild as an enticingly instructive exemplar of rendering unconscious desires visible and visceral on celluloid, which continue to shape the visions of writers and filmmakers to this very day as most clearly evidenced in Catherine Hardwicke's *Red Riding Hood* (2011).

### **An Oral Her-story**

Before examining the permutation of Little Red Riding Hood presented in *The Company of Wolves*, our exploration benefits from tracing the progression of this folk tale figure. Carole Zucker observes that various oral renditions of Little Red Riding Hood

exist in Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Celtic, Teutonic and American Indian cultures. “In all the early versions of the tale, LRRH [Little Red Riding Hood] outsmarts the wolf in a variety of clever moves, and escapes” (Zucker p. 1).

As similarly recounted by Terry Windling, contemporary artist and editor of fairy tale collections for adults, the heroine of “The Grandmother’s Tale” - the earlier, oral version of “Little Red Riding Hood” that preceded yet influenced Charles Perrault’s well-known and beloved 1697 published version - looks and acts a bit different from the Red Riding Hood to which contemporary readers are accustomed (Windling p. 1). Fairy-tale scholar Jack Zipes presents French folklorist Paul Delarue’s recounting of the oral tale as follows:

### **The Story of the Grandmother**

There was a woman who had made some bread. She said to her daughter:  
“Go carry this hot loaf and bottle of milk to your granny.”

So the little girl departed. At the crossway she met a wolf, the werewolf, who said to her: “Where are you going?”

“I’m taking this hot loaf and a bottle of milk to my granny.”

“What path are you taking,” said the werewolf, “the path of needles or the path of pins?”

“The path of needles,” the little girl said.

“All right, then I’ll take the path of pins.”

The little girl entertained herself by gathering needles. Meanwhile the werewolf arrived at the grandmother’s house, killed her, put some of her meat in the cupboard and a bottle of her blood on the shelf. The little girl arrived and knocked at the door.

“Push the door,” said the werewolf, “It’s barred by a piece of wet straw.”

“Good day, Granny. I’ve brought you a hot loaf of bread and a bottle of milk.”

“Put it in the cupboard, my child. Take some of the meat which is inside and the bottle of wine on the shelf.”

After she had eaten, there was a little cat which said: “Phooey! ... A slut is she who eats the flesh and drinks the blood of her granny.”

“Undress yourself, my child,” the werewolf said, “and come lie down beside me.”

“Where should I put my apron?”

“Throw it into the fire, my child, you won’t be needing it anymore.”

And each time she asked where she should put all her other clothes, the bodice, the dress, the petticoat, and the long stocking, the wolf responded: “Throw them into the fire, my child, you won’t be needing them anymore.”

When she laid herself down 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 nostrils you have!”

“The better to snuff my tobacco with, my child!”

“Oh, Granny, what a 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 woolen 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 realized 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 (Zipes, *Stick* pp. 33-34).

Throughout his brilliant academic career specializing in the cultural evolution of fairy tale, American scholar Jack Zipes has applied numerous approaches in examining fairy tales, especially all of the oral and literary variations of “Little Red Riding Hood.” With his recent memetic study (the concept of the meme as coined by British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins as now applied to explain the persistence of cultural motifs), Zipes identifies elements from ancient world tales that undeniably informed the following, canonical Little Red Riding Hood motifs: a girl clad in red; a forest encounter with a wolf/werewolf or ogre; the grandmother’s murder; the predator’s



decapitation or disembowelment; the story's end with a rape or a rescue (Zipes, *Stick*, p. 29). As Zipes correctly denotes, these motifs are not contemporary nor are they unique to the era in which Perrault or the Grimms were writing. These themes also occur in other times, places, societies and genres. Zipes substantiates this claim by quoting from Graham Anderson's *Fairy Tale in the Ancient World*:

[Anderson] demonstrates that there were numerous tales, references, and allusions to these motifs in antiquity: "It seems clear enough that, despite the absence of a name for the heroine in Pausanias' story of Euthymus and Lykas, we do have one good clear 'take' of the traditional Red Riding Hood in antiquity; and a whole dossier of other partly converging hints surrounding a girl with a 'flame-red' name and associations; the circumstantial evidence of a 'Hercules and Pyrrha' version is likewise strong. The available material offers us two things: the skeleton of a story in which a child, male or female, is threatened, raped or eaten by a figure with wolf or ogre associations, then disgorged or otherwise reconstituted with or without the substitution of a stone, while the wolf-figure is drowned or killed, and a 'flame-girl' (in whatever sense) survives the drowning to see new life brought from stones. The tally of Red Riding Hood tales is quite impressive" (Zipes, *Stick*, p. 29).

Antiquated scholastic prejudices against fairy and folk tales deeming them as lesser forms of literature have persisted throughout western culture. As indicated by Zipes but not fully clarified by him, contemporary classists and folklorists have eschewed looking at the connection between the fairy tale form and Greco-Roman literature and lore. Since this genesis remains unclear, looking at pervasive patterns and memes has opened up the study and fairy tale interpretation in expansive critical and historical ways. Anderson highlights the cross-culturally recurring motif of characters swallowed by great fish, which figures prominently in a myriad of stories to show that societies will exalt such a remarkable tale to the deserving status of being committed to cultural memory either in oral or written form (Zipes, *Stick*, pp. 29-30). By accepting this premise, Zipes

further explains Anderson's hypothesis of the "widespread diffusion of folktale," a process that has led to numerous versions replete with deviances, misrecollections, corrections and variations. Correctly, he stresses that tales and their reinventions will not be transmitted in identical forms as societies progress. Another lingering fantasy first perpetuated by nineteenth-century proto-anthropology (that modern scholars seek to dispel) lies in the belief that oral storytellers merely interchanged motifs to generate new stories based on the finite number of motifs that appear to be shared by popular tales. Certainly, tales and their variations at times converged or became confused. Borrowed motifs and hybrid tales exist yet Zipes argues that this is a marginal occurrence in tale diffusion. As one looks at international tale-types, it is obvious that initial integrity and inner logic remains. Tales told were eventually written down with the most memorable motifs communicated in concrete form to guarantee their survival (Zipes, *Stick*, p. 30).

As Zipes continually contends in The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood and all of his subsequent reworkings in newer essays, "Little Red Riding Hood" is a rape tale, one in which the heroine survives or dies after her violation – a cautionary tale about dealing with predatory males in animalistic form. Zipes traces the origin of this literary fairy tale to violent male sexual fantasies about women. The placing of responsibility or blame for Little Red's fate in the tale is where the contradictions lie resulting in conflicting versions. Primarily, Zipes illustrates the transformation of the folk tale in oral form from a recounting of a young woman's social initiation into the literary versions by Charles Perrault and the Grimm Brothers into a rape narrative that places the blame on the heroine for her own attack. "Such a radical literary transformation is highly significant because the male-cultivated literary versions became dominant in both the oral

and literary traditions of nations such as Germany, France, Great Britain, and the United States, nations that together exercise cultural hegemony in the West. Indeed, the Perrault and Grimm versions became so crucial in the socialization process of these countries that they generated a literary discourse about sexual roles and behavior, a discourse whose fascinating antagonistic perspective shed light on different phases of social and cultural change” (Zipes, *Stick*, p. 28).

Zipes further examines Little Red Riding Hood’s linguistic and memetic form as related to post-Darwinian evolutionary theories about instincts, adaptation and survival to determine exactly why it still resounds in popular culture. He posits that within canonical fairy tale motifs, a germ unites them, contributing to the memetic appeal as a tale evolves and is disseminated. In the case of “Little Red Riding Hood,” Zipes considers this continually appropriated germ at the center of its discursive form to be the rape, violation and devouring of a young boy or girl (Zipes, *Stick*, pp. 28, 32). In the desire to make a tale their own, storytellers and writers created variants of “Little Red Riding Hood” as mental representations that ultimately went public. Ultimately, the tropes became fixed with Charles Perrault’s published 1697. Zipes considers these other versions as interventions in the tale’s evolution. The perpetual interaction of primary [the core yet changeable form] and secondary [that which takes shape in the social sphere such as the literary genre] speech genres as delineated by Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin explains the manner of fairy tale propagation. Once 17<sup>th</sup> century raconteurs and writers heard “Little Red Riding Hood,” the tale underwent many reinscribings incorporating mythic and religious elements whilst communicated current regional, societal views involving gender roles, violation and survival (Zipes, *Stick*, pp. 32-33).

### Needles and Pins

As Zipes aptly observes, the sympathies of the oral version of “Little Red Riding Hood” as represented by “The Story of the Grandmother” lie with the young peasant girl of an indeterminate age, who bravely adapts to intelligently deal with the hostile world surrounding her. The oral versions suggest a sewing community social ritual that determines if a young girl coming of age will be able to handle not only a needle but also the opposite sex (Zipes, *Stick*, p. 33). The focus on fashion and finery in Little Red Riding Hood has further significance and Yvonne Verdier sheds even more light on this initiation rite. As Verdier discovered, when the girl encounters the wolf along the way to visit her grandmother in one variation on the oral tale, he gives her the choices of taking the path of needles or pins. Before the Industrial Revolution, the majority of women’s labor revolved around making cloth and clothes. Women sewed and spun yarn and yarns to pass the time. At puberty, girls apprenticed for one winter season with local seamstresses, symbolizing a girl’s transformation from a child into a young woman. This time was not merely about learning a trade but earning refinement as in the gathering of pins. By the time the girls reached fifteen, they were allowed to go dancing and to accept pins from boys as they courted the girls; by throwing pins into the fountain, girls assured themselves a sweetheart (Windling p. 4). While pins marked the path of maidenhood, needles demarcated sexual maturity. Verdier keenly indicates, “...as for the needles, threaded through its eye, in the folklore of seamstresses it refers to an emphatically sexual symbolism. Prostitutes once wore needles on their sleeves to advertise their profession” (Windling p. 4).

Drawing further from Verdier's study, Zipes acknowledges that the earliest recognized 14<sup>th</sup> century oral version of Little Red Riding Hood serves not only as a warning tale but also as a celebration of a girl's maturation. Upon the onset of puberty, peasant girls from the French regional districts of the Loire, Nièvre, Forez, Velay, and the Alps apprenticed in needlework. As the oral tale symbolizes self-assertion via conflict and education, the young girl replaces her grandmother by eating her flesh and drinking her blood. The grandmother's death in the folk tale represents the preservation of custom.

As Verdier maintains:

the tale effectively reveals the fact that women transmitted the physical capacity of the procreation among themselves, even though the radical character of this transmission illuminated the conflictual aspect, a rivalry which ends in physical elimination, the relationship of women among themselves concerning this matter. Classified the maturation of their bodies, women find themselves divided and unequal. Perhaps one can see here the principal source of the violence in their conflicts. There are a number of tales which develop this aspect of elimination in the relationships among women, whether they be among women of the same generation ... or among women of different generations ... Moreover, it is remarkable that each successful conquest of physiological capacity concerning the female destiny is marked in the tale by the acquisition of technique which is the equivalent in the stage of learning, and even in a certain order – the proper order – in the society: needlework for puberty, kitchen for the proper procreative function, flushing out for the hour of birth. All this knowledge and technique are in the hands of women in the traditional peasant society. These are the true 'cultural goods' which are opposed in the tale to the ways of "nature" (the wolf devours the grandmother in the flesh). This knowledge imparts the "domestic" vocation ... a function which again underlines the autonomy and power of women in regard to their own destiny in this traditional peasant society (Zipes, *Trials*, p. 24).

The early published versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" have persisted in popularizing the cautionary thrust of the folk tale for naïve little girls yet the oral version extolled female initiative and maturity by featuring laundresses that assist the tale's

heroine escape whilst drowning the wolf [bzou] (Windling p. 1). Not only was this plot point lost in translation, but also other grizzly components such as cannibalization, degradation and urination did not appear in print. “The Grandmother’s Tale” details the girl unknowingly preparing her own granny for dinner, a striptease that the girl performs to distract the beast (suggesting his sexual hunger for flesh) as well as a ruse about needing to relieve herself outside that culminates in her fleeing to the river where the laundresses come to her rescue [also referring to her rite of passage as assisted by wise village women] (Windling p. 3).

Of course, in certain oral tale variations, Little Red does not always win her wager with the wolf. Although Delarue’s synthetic piecing together of “The Story of the Grandmother” may not be the exact form in which it was told at the time, the critical consensus of scholars and anthropologists verify that this oral form existed before Charles Perrault committed his version to writing in 1697, “making the tale memetically unforgettable” (Zipes, *Stick*, p. 35). With his sophisticated revision of the oral tale, he made “Little Red Riding Hood” the exemplar advocating the value of the proper Christian upbringing and adherence to societal decorum. Zipes proposes that Perrault injects his own fear of women and sexual desires into the written tale, reflecting similar male (mis)conceptions of his time that women desire seduction and domination. “In this regard, Perrault began a series of literary transformations that have caused nothing but trouble for the female object of male desire and have also reflected the crippling aspect of male desire itself” (Zipes, *Stick*, p. 35).

Local fashion trends of times in which the Red Riding Hood fairy tale was translated became woven into the narrative thread. Perrault clad his heroine in a

chaperon, a hood-like hair covering. The Brothers Grimm, after numerous revisions of their initial 1812 version strongly reminiscent of Perrault's tale, have their Little Red don the famous red cap in 1857. When their translated tale gained popularity in Victorian England, cloaks were all the rage thus transforming the apparel of Little Miss Hood into the iconic hooded cape (Windling p. 8). Perrault's red chaperon transforms the innocent yet resourceful peasant lass of the oral tale into a naïve and spoiled bourgeois girl with the tainted, carnal color red recalling the devil and heresy. In addition, Perrault makes several other changes to the oral tale including the race with the wolf to Granny's house that Little Red perhaps want to lose, even, as well as not being bright enough to escape the wolf through trickery. This results in her suffering the same fate as her grandmother. Salvation is not possible. Instead, Perrault simply offers an ironic moral in verse form warning little girls to beware of strangers lest they fall victim to the deserved consequences. From Perrault's point-of-view, sex is sinful and playful sexual relations outside of the institution of marriage is akin to rape, which results from the girl's irresponsibility (Zipes, *Stick*, pp. 35-36).

The 1812 Brothers Grimm version of "Little Red Riding Hood" was also based on an oral tale retold to them by a middle-class young woman of Huguenot descent. Their most significant contribution and alteration of the fairy tale involves the prominent and cautionary role of the mother warning Little Red to not stray from the path on her way through the woods. To lead her astray, the Grimm wolf literally entices our heroine to stop, smell the flowers and enjoy nature. During her distraction and rosebud gathering, the devilish wolf beats Red to her grandma's house. Granny and Little Red fare better as far as not being cannibalized or raped but still require saving by huntsman. "Only a

strange male figure can rescue a girl from herself and her lustful desires” (Zipes, *Stick*, pp. 36-37). Carole Zucker also illustrates that Perrault revised these fairy tales adding morals as well as sanitizing the references to cannibalism beyond the wolf eating the heroine’s grandmother. Similarly, the later version by The Brothers Grimm directed at children removes the sexual threat by implementing the valiant huntsman to save the girl with the red cap (Zucker p. 1).

### **The Salon – Wolves in Baroque Finery**

During the time of Louis XIV, a new breed of wolfish predator loomed at large. Charles Perrault set down his version of Red Riding Hood and other *contes de fées*, or fairy tales as they were christened, gained great acclaim in the literary salons. Many of the writers that mingled in the salon were indeed women. The salon offered a place where women and men could partake in intellectual conversation outside of the royal court confines (Windling p. 6). Neither is it so far-fetched to assume that the stories were made more genteel for mixed company nor that the warning about wolves in disguise were meant for the ladies interacting with the charming men at the salon. As Zipes attests, these aristocratic women developed the literary fairy tale as a sort of parlor game as a means to demonstrate their education, wit and conversational prowess. “In fact, the linguistic games often served as models for literary genres such as the occasional lyric or the serial novel. Both women and men participated in these games and were constantly challenged to invent new ones or to refine the games. Such challenges led the women, in particular, to improve the quality of their dialogues, remarks, and ideas about morals, manners, and education and at times to oppose male standards that have been set to govern their lives. The subject matter of the conversations consisted of literatures, mores,



taste, and etiquette, whereby the speakers all endeavored to portray ideal situations in the most effective oratorical style that would gradually have a major effect on literary forms” (Zipes, *Myth*, pp. 20-21).

Although it is not exactly clear when the literary fairy tale was designated as an acceptable game, it originated out of the “jeux d’esprit” in the salons towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The female participants referred to folk tales and spontaneously interjected related motifs into their conversations as literary divertimenti for their listeners’ amusement. In addition to being amusing, women were able to portray themselves and their own interests as well as represent and parade proper patrician manners with emphases placed on the oratorical rules demanding poise and formlessness. Ironically, these rules called for making the tale appear off-the-cuff whilst adhering to guidelines, valuing the embellishment, improvisation, and experimentation of recognized folk or literary motifs. “The procedures of telling a tale as ‘bagatelle’ (triviality) would work as follows: the narrator would be requested to think up a tale based on a particular motif; the adroitness of the narrator would be measured by the degree with which she/he was inventive and natural; the audience would respond politely with a compliment; then another member of the audience would be requested to tell a tale, not in direct competition with the other teller, but in order to continue the game and vary the possibilities for linguistic expression” (Zipes, *Myth*, pp. 21-22).

By the 1690s, the salon fairy tale was all the rage. Both female and male intellectual writers documented their tales in hopes of publishing their unique takes. “The most notable writers gathered in the salons or homes of Madame D’Aulnoy, Perrault, Madame de Murat, Mademoiselle L’Hérteir, or Mademoiselle de La Force, all of whom

were in some part responsible for the great mode of literary fairy tales that developed between 1697 and 1789 in France” (Zipes, *Myth*, p. 22). Interestingly, the French contemporary literary salon aesthetic produced oral tales and written stories markedly anticlassical in nature, especially in creative rebellion to Nicolas Boileau, the champion of Greco-Roman literature as the writing models. Since many of the fairy tale writers were women, a definite distinction exists between their tales and those composed by men.

As salon expert Renate Baader correctly notes:

While Perrault’s bourgeois and male tales with happy ends had pledged themselves to a moral that called for Griseldis [a folk and literary figure found in written form in stories by Boccaccio, Chaucer and Petrarch; Griselda is bastion of wifely strength and dedication in obeisance to her regal yet brutal husband] to serve as a model for women, the women writers had to make an effort to defend the insights that had been gained in the past decades. Mlle Scudéry’s novels and novellas stood as examples for them and taught them how to redeem their own wish reality in the fairy tales. They probably remembered how feminine faults had been revalorized by men and how the aristocratic women had responded to this in their self-portraits. Those aristocratic women have commonly refused to place themselves in the service of social mobility. Instead they put forward their demand for moral, intellectual, and psychological self-determination. As an analogy to this, the fairy tales of the women made it expected that the imagination in the tales was truly to be let loose in any kind of arbitrary way that had been considered a female danger up until that time. After the utopia of the “royaume de temdre,” which had tied fairy-tale salvation of the sexes to a previous ascetic and enlightened practice of virtues and the guidance of feeling, there was now an unleashed imagination that could invent a fairy-tale ream and embellish it so that reason and will were set out of commission (Zipes, *Myth*, pp. 22-23).

Until the time of the salon, fairy tales for children did not exist in written form. It was still an oral tradition as governesses, servants and peers shared and embellished these tales with children. Literary fairy tales were utilized in the salon for men as means to express political dissatisfaction with the monarchy and for women as a method to conceive societal alternatives to the behaviors and indeed, attitudes that their male

counterparts prescribed. Ultimately, the aristocracy and haute bourgeoisie socially embraced this refined fairy-tale discourse. Although women were the initial writers, the tales mutated and introduced morals to upper class children, enforcing a civil, patriarchal code much to the detriment of women's newfound intellectual freedom within the salon (Zipes, *Myth*, 23-24).

### **The Perils and Trials of Werewolves**

When the oral versions of Little Red Riding Hood ran rampant, actual wolves still posed real threats to European villagers. Angela Carter imbues her werewolf lore in The Bloody Chamber with this tenuous atmosphere to create an authentic sense of this perilous time, raising the stakes of horror. From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, werewolf trials were held even for politically threatening men, not unlike the witch trials for women (Windling p. 5). Literary scholar Marianne Rumpf's research proves invaluable in documenting this disturbing practice as she reveals that the most prevalent European warning tales (Schreckmarchen or Warnmarchen) in the Middle Ages recounted child attacks in the woods by ogres, ogresses, man-eaters, forest wild people, werewolves or wolves. These stories sought to show the dangers of talking to strangers or admitting them into your house. "Rumpf argues that the original villain in French folklore was probably a werewolf, and that it was Perrault who transformed him into a simple, but ferocious, wolf" (Zipes, *Trials*, pp. 18-19). Not surprisingly, superstitious werewolf tales flourished in feudal period France.

During the time of the werewolf trials, men were charged with devouring children. The recorded cases number in the thousands to hundred of thousands. Culled from the files of historians Rudolph Leubuscher and Wilhelm Hertz, Rumpf details one

of the more infamous trials held in Besancon from December 1521 involving Pierre Bourgot and Michel Verdun. These men were convicted of having attacked and killed children as werewolves. “Bourgot described his transformation and feats in great detail. He admitted to having killed a seven-year-old boy with his wolf’s teeth and paws. However, he was chased away before he could eat his victim. Verdun admitted to having killed a small girl as she was gathering pears in a garden. However, he, too, was chased away before he could eat his victim. Four other attacks on small girls, which the two accused were supposed to have carried out, were mentioned in the same report...” (Zipes, *Trials*, pp. 19-20).

In France during the 1500s, People of every age were terrified to traverse the woods alone due to the fear of werewolf or wolf attacks. What proves most fascinating in Rumpf’s writing is the fact that the Little Red Riding Hood oral tales of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries emanated from the regions where werewolf trials were held in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Charles Perrault’s mother was raised in Touraine, where werewolf tales were pervasive due to the sensational case of Jacques Raollet. In 1598, Raollet was sentenced to death in Angers, Touraine, for transforming into a werewolf and killing children. After an appeal at the Paris Parliament, Raollet was deemed insane and committed to the Hospital Saint Germain des Pres. When this trial occurred, Perrault’s parents or even his nursemaid might have witnessed and certainly have heard of the events (Zipes, *Trials*, p. 20).

### **Doré and the Wolf’s Seduction**

In considering the significance of visual interpretation of fairy tale, it is helpful to turn again to another text by Jack Zipes. Gustave Doré (1832-1883) engravings that

illustrate *Little Red Riding Hood* are arguably the most famous and beloved images. He illustrated the 1862 edition of Perrault's fairy tales. Due to their striking nature, a myriad of editions used these same drawings, including Tom Hood's *A Fairy Realm* (1864) and Morris Hartmann's *Marchen nach Perrault* (1869). Doré's illustrations were well known in the West by the end of the 1800s, especially his iconic depiction of Little Red's encounter with the Big Bad Wolf. Other artists of his time and even today still envisage fairy tale tableaux in analogous ways (Zipes, *Prince*, p. 240).

Zipes applies semiotics to examine the connotations latent in Doré's illustrations. He identifies the striking features of Little Red and the Wolf as the signifiers and the concepts to which these signifiers refer as the signified to make sense of the overall sign of the image. As part of his strategy, Zipes reminds us that the signifiers that refer to each other within the image and to the text create a sensory impression. The way in which we as the reader or viewer choose to interpret the ultimate meaning of the patterns will be colored by our own conscious and unconscious reactions as well as the societal and historical context shaping the reception of sexuality. He reaffirms his point by quoting film theoretician Bill Nichols from *Ideology and the Image*: "Images are always particularized representations, a way of seeing is built in (since a way of seeing built them) and hence connotation is built in" (Zipes, *Prince*, p. 240).



Gustave Doré's version of Little Red Riding Hood's encounter with the Wolf  
 In focusing on Doré's illustration of Little Red Riding Hood's encounter with the

Wolf in the forest, Zipes selects the following expressive aspects: "the longing if not seductive look of Little Red Riding Hood as she peers into the eyes of the wolf and her faint smile; the enormous size of the powerful wolf who looks down into the eyes of the girl in a non-threatening manner; the proximity of wolf and girl who appear to be touching and to be totally absorbed in an intimate *tete-a-tete*" (Zipes, *Prince*, p. 240).

This image certainly informs Jordan's and Carter's later interpretations and filmic reenactment. Zipes intimates that we as viewers of this image act as a voyeuristic intruder upon a lover's rendezvous. Deeper meaning lies in this familiar image that is not as innocent as it might initially appear.

The signifiers indicate a scene of seduction. Zipes believes that Doré depicts mutual longing of the girl and wolf for each other. This viewer interprets their visual exchange more as mutual curiosity and identification. Since it is her face that we see in its entirety complete with coy glance, this image insinuates that the prime desire for the

enormous wolf is hers. His animalistic state epitomizes Little Red's libido and secret wish to be misled as well as the male sexual appetite that wants to dominate women by tempting them away from the righteous path:

The erotic display in Doré's illustration indicates a transgression of society's rules of sexual behavior and sexuality while at the same time it confirms what we suppose to be true about both women and men: women want men to rape them; men are powerful but weak beasts who cannot help themselves when tempted by alluring female creatures. Since the sexes prey upon one another and cause their own destruction in nature as opposed to society, then another implicit message is that there can be no "true" love, certainly no Christian love, in sexual intercourse practised outside of the institution of marriage. Only when sexual behaviour is domestically ordered as in the person of the mother and the father at the beginning and end of the fairy tale can sex assume its "proper" reproductive function in society (Zipes, *Prince*, p. 242).

Interesting questions that Zipes raises concerning Doré's illustration are why Little Red is not afraid of the Big Bad Wolf and why she would stop to talk to the strangest of strangers. An intelligent peasant girl would have immediately fled. A proper bourgeois girl would have avoided consorting with such a beast. Nevertheless, the heroine seeks his acquaintance as his influential shadow hovers over her. This shadowy region is where Zipes insightfully investigates the ambivalence of desire. In her quest for self-discovery, Little Red Riding Hood equally desires and identifies with the other. By looking into the wolf's eyes, she sees one possible reflection of who she might be or become as well as what she lacks. She recognizes the wolf outside as part of her inner self as the Wolf sees Little Red as his feminine aspect. The woods stand in stark contrast to society and its conventions; therefore nature represents the perfect place for exploration of self, symbolic exchanges, societal rebellion and desire fulfillment:

Yet, as much as Doré desired to depict the pleasure of recognition through a sexual symbolic exchange, he probably identified more with the wolf, and thus there is an indication in his illustration that the wolf seeks to dominate with his gaze which would cancel out mutuality. The text of the

tale dictated the wolf's gaze as phallic domination...and the conventions of society reinforced such male desire during Doré's time. In addition, the look or gaze of Little Red Riding Hood appears to invite the wolf's gaze/desire, and therefore, she incriminates herself in this act. Implicit in her gaze is that she may be leading him on – to granny's house, to a bed, to be dominated. She tells him the way, the path to the house. But where is she actually leading him? Why? (Zipes, *Prince*, p. 243).

French philosopher and semiotician Roland Barthes previously examined Doré's Little Red Riding Hood illustrations as culturally internalized, fixed images in "The Rhetoric of the Image". He indicates that text anchors meaning as linguistic messages used to counter the terror of uncertain signs found in images. "For Barthes, Doré's depiction of Red Riding Hood in bed with the wolf could have any number of interpretations, not least the potential sexual relationship between the pair. The text, according to his theory, counters the terror of this image by qualifying its meaning, establishing a specific reading for this depiction" (Bonner, *Visualising*). Although Zipes reads Doré images as highly sexualized, that is only one possible interpretation.

### **Carter, Fairy Tales, and Pornography**

At this point, sketching a portrait of Angela Carter's philosophy as a writer and adapter proves most advantageous to this study by revealing shared agendas with Neil Jordan as a writer and filmmaker. Carter's own words best illumine the sort of authors and stories that attracted her as an artist. In her afterword to her first collection of short stories entitled Fireworks, Carter confesses: "... I'd always been fond of Poe, and Hoffman – Gothic tales, cruel tales, tales of wonder, tales of terror, fabulous narratives that deal directly with the imagery of the unconscious – mirrors; the externalised self; forsaken castles; haunted forests; forbidden sexual objects ... The tale does not log everyday experience, as the short story does; it interprets everyday experience through a system of



imagery derived from subterranean areas behind everyday experience, and therefore the tale cannot betray its readers into a false knowledge of everyday experience. The Gothic tradition in which Poe writes ... retains a singular moral function – that of provoking unease. The tale has relations with subliterate forms of pornography, ballad and dream ...” (Carter 1995 p. 459).

As this passage expresses, Carter embraces the tale as an approach replete with Gothic, Romantic, Symbolist and Surrealist intent. Her interests in pornography and fairy tale seemed to culminate at the same time near the end of the 1970s. Cultural critic and fiction Marina Warner (who most certainly carries on where Carter left off) tells of Carter’s controversy in feminist circles due to her bold exploration of “women’s waywardness, and especially...their attraction to the Beast in the very midst of repulsion” (Warner p. 308).

In 1976, Carter was commissioned to adapt Perrault’s *contes de fées*. Two years later with The Bloody Chamber, Carter radically revises Perrault’s vision, especially repeatedly reworking variations of Beauty and the Beast within her own folk tales infused with wickedly fun mischief. As Warner playfully states that in this collection Carter “mawls governessy moralizers” whilst fortifying her modern, beautiful heroines with the courage “to play with the Beast precisely because his animal nature excites them and gives their desires licence ...” (Warner p. 308). The Bloody Chamber includes three werewolf-laden vignettes including “The Company of Wolves,” “The Werewolf,” and “Wolf-Alice,” which eschew Perrault’s polite, courtly modesty in favor of restoring brazen, earthy carnality to Little Red Riding Hood. The young girls in Carter’s tales are not meek little lambs but voracious creatures, who answer the call of the wild by straying

from the path and talking to the strange wolf that kindles their darkest passions. Just as she wrote three striking, subversive versions of “Little Red Riding Hood,” she also wrote two to three experimental versions of other classical fairy tales to explore the different plot and character facets to shed new light on contemporary social and sexual relations as well as archetypes and stereotypes. Carter probed father/daughter relationships and the bartering involved in marriages in her takes on “Beauty and the Beast,” whereas her substantial “Cinderella” trilogy investigated the mother/daughter dynamics of dependency and projection. As Zipes succinctly states concerning Carter’s literary agenda, “At the bottom of her profound interest in fairy tales was a fierce ideological commitment to overcome false dichotomies that separated the sexes and led to male dominance in all spheres of life, public and private” (Zipes, *Enchanted*, p. 134).

Not only do Carter’s fairy tales from *The Bloody Chamber* imbue the original characters with flesh and blood but also gives them teeth to fiercely bite, particularly the tales dealing with women’s persecution and violation. She deftly adds nuance and intricacy to her fairy tale adaptations. “The Company of Wolves” serves as an exemplar demarcating the shift in literary and filmic conversations and representations of the Little Red Riding Hood character from passive victim to inquisitive woman in search of adventure and desire. Until the Jordan film in 1984, most cinematic versions of Little Red had been based on Perrault, Grimm or a bit of both tales. Thankfully, through the work of Carter and other feminist writers, Little Red and other fairy tale maidens have continued to be more fully expanded and sensuously portrayed in all of the arts (Zipes, *Enchanted*, p. 135).

Warner explains that Angela Carter adored the lyricism and mystery inherent within the Northern European fairy tale, “East o’ the Sun and West o’ the Moon.” As a variation on the Cupid and Psyche theme, “a White Bear taking the role of Eros abducts the heroin, asking as he does so, ‘Are you afraid?’ She says, ‘No,’ and climbs eagerly on to his back to go forth into a new life with him” (Warner p. 310). This literary image recurs throughout all of Carter’s takes on Little Red Riding Hood.

In between Carter’s fairy translation and her own tome of tales, she wrote The Sadeian Woman, which analyzed the sexual politics of sadomasochism through the lens of the Marquis de Sade’s writings. As Jack Zipes acknowledges in his introduction to a recent edition of Carter’s translation of Perrault’s fairy tales, with The Sadeian Woman, Carter posits that women, feminists even, begin from a place of feeling disempowered as victims. “Instead of victimization she focused on how women could realize their deep sexual desires, whether sadistic or masochistic, and could determine their sexual and social roles with greater freedom. Much of the philosophy in The Sadeian Woman is fully developed in The Bloody Chamber, in which classical tales...are given unusual twists that open up the possibilities for sexual play and social transformation” (Carter 2008 p. x).

In Carter’s rendition of Perrault’s Little Red Riding Hood tale, she remains faithful to the content whilst reclaiming the sense of the country granny storytelling as she sits and knits by the fire, by sprinkling the translation with lively British colloquialisms, such as “gobbling up” (Carter 2008 p. x). As the rationale for this method, Carter recounted in her preface to an earlier edition her own childhood experience of her grandmother reading Red Riding Hood as the following: “My own

grandmother used to tell me the story of ‘Red Riding Hood’ in almost Perrault’s very words, although she never spoke one single word of French in all her life. She liked, especially, to pounce on me, roaring, in personation of the wolf’s pounce in Red Riding Hood [sic] at the end of the story, although she could not have known that Perrault himself suggests this acting out of the story to the narrator in a note of the margin of the manuscript” (Roemer p. 149). In the film adaptation *The Company of Wolves*, Carter and Jordan put the pounce back into Little Red Riding Hood, not by the restrictive yet doting granny but by the charming and seductive werewolf.

Carter’s appreciation of folk tales’ oral tradition led her to investigate the role of women’s voices with radio plays. In 1976, not only did Carter publish her translation of Perrault but also transmitted her first radio play, *Vampirella*, which she chillingly rewrote as a dark fairy tale for The Bloody Chamber (Crofts p. 40). She reformulated two other stories from this collection into radio plays – “The Company of Wolves” (1980) and “Puss in Boots” (1982). Although radio technology was key for Carter to actuate the mechanisms of her fairy tale realms, her plays proved mesmerizing because “even if stripped of all the devices of radio illusion, radio retains the atavistic lure, the atavistic power of voices in the dark and the writer who gives words to those voices retains some of the authority of the most antique teller of tales” (Crofts p. 40). Carter perceived the oral tradition as forging “the most vital connection we have with the imaginations of the ordinary men and women whose labour created our world”; therefore, for Carter, radio writing represented “an extension and an amplification of writing for the written page” as well as a reinvoking of the primal pleasure of oral storytelling (Crofts pp. 40-41).

In addition to an inner confessional narrative, Carter bestows listeners with an unmediated access to female subjectivity in the radio version of *The Company of Wolves*. In this play, Little Red Riding Hood directly addresses the audience as she interrupts one of Granny's old wives' tale graphically detailing a werewolf attack of a young girl (Crofts p. 49). Although in the play and the film, Granny fascinates Little Red Riding Hood with her sordid tales of warning, our heroine rejects Granny's path as expressed on a "thoughts microphone" for the radio recording. Interestingly, Rosaleen as Little Red Riding Hood does not resort to voice-over in the film; because, we are given direct access to her thoughts visually in Carter's and Jordan's dream world. If we do not see Rosaleen act out her thoughts, she boldly voices her emotions. In the radio version of *The Company of Wolves*, Red Riding Hood tells us the following about her state of being:

"... not such a little girl, for all that you baby me, Granny. Thirteen going on fourteen, the hinge of your life, when you are neither one thing nor the other, nor child nor woman, some magic, inbetween thing, an egg that holds its own future in it. An egg not yet cracked against the cup. I am the very magic space that I contain. I stand and move within an invisible pentacle, untouched, invisible, immaculate. Like snow. Waiting. The clock inside me, that will strike once a month, not yet...wound...up...I don't bleed. I can't bleed. I don't know the meaning of the word, fear. Fear?" (Crofts p. 49).

In Carter's short story, a narrator tells us about Little Red Riding Hood's physical maturation with similar imagery as "her breasts have just begun to swell," signaling the onset of menstruation, "the clock inside her that will strike, henceforward, once a month." Yet, she still contains untapped potential as "an unbroken egg; she is a sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of

membrane; she is a closed system; she does not know how to shiver. She has her knife and she is afraid of nothing” (Crofts 49-50). Egg imagery with similarly resound in the film version, to be explored a little further on in this paper.

### **Adaptation Theories Taken to Task**

In an attempt to find an adaptation theory that stands up to the task of dealing with the many versions of Angela Carter’s “The Company of Wolves,” adaptation scholar Thomas M. Leitch’s essay “Where Are We Going, Where Have We Been?” proves an excellent point of origin. Leitch summarizes Robert Stam’s approach as deriving from Bakhtin [also a grand purveyor of the carnivalesque, which also suits the grotesquery that crops up in Carter’s fiction] that recognizes the shortcomings of fidelity [which theorist Brian MacFarlane endlessly finds a bore as well]. Ever so poetically, Stam contends that fidelity is only one of “a whole constellation of tropes [for adaptation] – translation, reading, dialogization, cannibalization, transmutation, transfiguration, and signifying – each of which sheds light on a different dimension of adaptation” (Welsh and Lev p. 332). The terms “cannibalisation” and “transmutation” prove the most salient to this study, specifically with their metaphorical relation to the portrayed lycanthropy. Leitch states that following Stam’s critical trajectory leads to adaptation as intertextual studies, with a given text as a rereading of earlier texts and “every text, whether it poses as an original or an adaptation, has the same claims to aesthetic or ontological privilege as any other” (Welsh and Lev p. 332). By reconfiguring the proponents of adaptation study in such a way, fidelity loses its significance in determining a text’s success or failure. Leitch poses a series of new questions with which to interrogate a text:

How has a given adaptation rewritten its source text?  
Why has it chosen to select and rewrite the source texts it has?

How have the texts available to us inevitably been rewritten by the act of reading?  
How do we want to rewrite them anew? (Welsh and Lev p. 332).

Angela Carter addressed similar questions through her writings and fairy tale revisions. In “Notes from the Front Line,” she said, “I try, when I write fiction, to think on my feet – to present a number of propositions in a variety of different ways, and then leave the reader to construct her own fiction for herself from the elements of my fictions. (Reading is just as creative an activity as writing and most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts)” (Crofts p. 46).

The original innovator of adaptation theory as it applies to film is George Bluestone with his thoughtful book Novels into Film. Yet it is important to challenge a few of his thoughts that undoubtedly come across as naïve these days, especially now that contemporary filmmakers (Stephen Soderbergh, Raúl Ruiz, Luis Bunuel, Neil Jordan, Michel Gondry and Stan Brakhage, to name a half dozen), since the inception of Bluestone’s ideas in the late 1950s, have created work that runs counter to what he proposed. In the section entitled “The Modes of Consciousness,” Bluestone argues that film fails in rendering the mental states of dream, imagination and memory in comparison with the written word (Bluestone p. 47). He says that film finds presenting streams of consciousness difficult, which reads as a bit counterintuitive considering filmmakers can create a smooth stream of images, especially via seamless editing. He states that film as a medium becomes challenged even further by the endeavor of “presenting states of mind which are defined precisely by the absence of them in the visible world. Conceptual imaging, by definition, has no existence in space” (Bluestone p. 47). Yet, George Macunias and the Fluxus Group showed that an artistic concept can exist as art on the

page or can be actualized in time and space; it is just a physical extension of the artist's imagination, that can be perpetrated by anyone to create their own version of art object or film.

Bluestone states, "... dreams and memories, which exist nowhere but in the individual consciousness, cannot be adequately represented in spatial terms. Or rather, the film, having only arrangements of space to work with, cannot render thought, for the moment thought is externalized, it is no longer thought" (Bluestone pp. 47-48).

Considering that he brings Henri Bergson into the equation (which greatly strengthens his look at the types of time in film such as chronological and psychological), he misses his own point. As Bergson astutely recognized, once you make a model for an experiment, you take the phenomenon out of its flow and thus alter its very nature. Therefore, a thought committed to print is not the same as the thought itself yet Bluestone thinks verbal language is more appropriate to conveying aspects of the mind than film is. The moment spent writing down an idea already interrupts the fluid flux of imagination. Through words on a page, the reader is led to re-imagine the thoughts of the characters or even the original author; therefore, would these thoughts not be greatly altered?

According to Bluestone, a film arranges external signs for the audience's visual perception for the inference of thought but it cannot show us thought directly (Bluestone p. 48). Nevertheless, filmic images can construct the dreams and memories of characters and ultimately the author and show these scenes with more immediacy than words, in the blink of an eye, at 24 frames per second. Of course, we know more about the phi phenomenon and how it discredits the didactic acceptance of persistence of vision to explain away the perceptual mechanisms of cinema, than Bluestone did in his day. The



way that we perceive film images functions in the same way that we see the everyday world. Our remembrance of a film image or event looks the same in our mind's eye as an actual event. What resonates more over time, an experience of an event or our memory of it? All the filmic artisans work with the writer and director to realize these fictional dreams and imaginings. Especially, in the case of *The Company of Wolves*, Jordan collaborated with Carter to bring a joint vision of dreamt desires and transformation to the screen; therefore, they present us a filmic world that matches the terrain of the heroine Rosaleen's unconscious mind. As she dreams just as we do, her mind integrates actual objects and anxieties of her everyday into her sleeping state, where she slips into the identity of Little Red Riding Hood. Director Neil Jordan and brilliant production designer Anton Furst desired to lend an air of familiarity to the sets that one cannot quite place, duplicating the déjà vu feeling one experiences when remembering a dreamt event in the waking world (Pramaggiore p. 29). By situating the world of *The Company of Wolves* in a dreamscape, Carter and Jordan overcame the "realistic tug of the film [that] is too strong," which Bluestone complains about in films that have dream sequences. In addition, Jordan does not employ the editing techniques that Bluestone abhors to indicate dreams such as dissolves and superimpositions (Bluestone p. 48).

Bluestone feels that in film adaptation, a filmmaker does not convert the novel, only a paraphrase of it with the novel serving as raw material only (Bluestone p. 62). This statement is not contentious in itself yet what he goes on to exclaim is "...what is peculiarly filmic and what is peculiarly novelistic cannot be converted without destroying an integral part of each. That is why Joyce and Proust would seem as absurd on film as Chaplin would in print. And that is why the great innovators of the twentieth century, in

film and novel both, have had so little to do with each other, have gone their ways alone, always keeping a firm but respectful distance” (Bluestone p. 63). Obviously, he never saw Raúl Ruiz’s adaptation of Marcel Proust. In *Time Regained*, Ruiz ever so elegantly make visually manifest the mechanism of memory as the bedridden figure of Proust remains in the present whilst being inundated by the involuntary memories of his past as his boudoir magically transforms into a room from his past, all through deft editing not involving the dissolve or superimposition. American film critic Phillip Lopate wholeheartedly agrees:

What Ruiz did was to take soundings of the Proust novel, and to reorganize them into a symphonic whole. Ruiz also boldly challenged the Bluestone assertion that “The novel has three tenses; the film has only one” by transporting a seated Marcel as spectator into his own recreated memories. Proust mixed up past and present, dream-self and real self, and this is what Ruiz does too with his thoughtful cross-sections or samplings of Proust’s text” (Lopate, *Novels*).

### **Cardwell and the Ur-Text**

Examining British adaptation expert Sarah Cardwell’s approach to television adaptation yields helpful tools and clues for the investigation and delectation of other media such as fairy tale and film. Although Cardwell offers a specialized method for researching adaptation that looks at the unique nature of television rather than merely applying a generic line of analysis derived from literary or film theory, it can readily be used to illuminate other literary and visual media, particularly the frequent occurrence of intertextuality. Certainly, Cardwell acknowledges theories previously postulated and does not cast them out entirely. Still, she chooses to chart new territory in adaptation theory. In the first chapter of *Adaptation Revisited* (2002), Cardwell proposes an alternative adaptation model that does not privilege the novel or source text above all else as the

ultimate art form or place of origin for subsequent versions. She calls for a deeper understanding of adaptation that borrows from the scientific realm of evolutionary and genetic postulations with visual adaptations as an organic progression in a natural selection of the best bits of the original entity. Cardwell elaborates, “It would be more accurate to view adaptation as the gradual development of a ‘meta-text.’ This view recognizes that a later adaptation may draw upon any earlier adaptations, as well as upon the primary source text. In a sense, this understanding of adaptation draws upon the model of genetic adaptation for its inspiration, in terms of its increased historicity and its recognition of the role that each and every adaptation, as well as the source text, has played in the formation of the most recent adaptation. It allows for generic development, as subsequent film or television adaptations draw upon previous ones, and it does not posit the ‘original’ source/individual adaptation relationship as a direct, unmediated and ahistorical one” (Cardwell, *Adaptation* p. 25).

Cardwell uses the adaptation of Shakespeare as a prime example of the writer of texts demanding the nuanced attention afforded by Cardwell’s alternative model. It is far too easy to regard Shakespeare’s plays as the ultimate version yet often times he was doing exactly what subsequent artists inspired by Shakespeare do: drawing on what came before. [We will not enter into the controversy of who actually composed Shakespeare’s best work]. Regardless, he derived his own folios from pre-existing histories, oral tales and writings. Considering that Shakespeare was also practicing and perfecting the art of adaptation, Cardwell proposes that subsequent “adaptations can be regarded as points on a continuum, as part of the extended development of a singular, infinite meta-text: a

valuable story of myth that is constantly growing and developing, being retold, reinterpreted and reassessed” (Adaptation p. 25).

Cardwell’s assertion to interpret each new version of a particular text as a myth, an ur-text that exists outside of and beyond each and any retelling proves most attractive, especially in the case of *The Company of Wolves*. It then becomes the challenge of every creator in any medium to determine the quintessence of a specific tale, “the most fundamental parts of the tale without which an adaptation would lose its identity as that tale” (Adaptation 26). Cardwell acknowledges that this is not a new concept yet she amplifies it from Susan Wilsmore’s discourse distinguishing this sort of entity – the ur-text – in looking at a work and the text. Wilsmore identifies that an artwork contains, “a cluster of ... essential [aesthetic and cultural] properties as is necessary to its very existence” (Adaptation p. 26). Cardwell claims this cluster for the purposes of analyzing adaptation. She considers precisely why this ur-text has been previously undetectable in traditional adaptation studies. It is undeniable that it exists in most adaptations yet it is difficult to define and quantify. A myth or ur-text is not concrete or visible. Still, this nebulous nature, this malleable quality proves most advantageous for a fresh approach to both adapting and investigating adaptation reflecting Cardwell’s playfully erudite consideration of what is (an) adaptation.

By offering the ur-text as a portal into accessing adaptations, this path presents as a slippery slope that fidelity adherents would rather not traverse. This model calls into question the stuff to which a retelling might be faithful. Cardwell brings Walter Benjamin into the discussion by recognizing that, “the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concepts of authenticity” (Adaptation p. 26). By offering a tacit, infinite ur-text rather

than the obvious, demarcated novel as the point of origin, unlimited potentialities arise as this ur-text might thrive and mutate with each retelling of a story. Cardwell looks to Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1989) as an effective, filmic adaptation of Shakespeare. When a work can be unharnessed from a rigid definition of fidelity, an organic and pertinent version might materialize. Rather than recreating the Middle Ages, Branagh transports his Hamlet to the Regency Period onscreen. Cardwell shows that what makes this version so effective is not fidelity to the Shakespeare's intended play [yet there are specific concessions that Branagh does make to Shakespeare by restoring previously missing dialogue] but the pursuit of an ultimate performance capturing the essence of "Hamlet" (Adaptation p. 27). This also does not discount the existence of a definitive performance of *Hamlet* as presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company with Mark Rylance onstage clad in pajamas. Essentially, what begins in a particular form does not need to stay in that same format to be essential. Nor does it need to be fidelitous. Eventually, Cardwell concludes that a screen adaptation from literature creates a discrete artwork worthy of being treated as such (Adaptation p. 28). As Cardwell indicates, a preoccupation with the source novel would disallow "the programme's own agenda, its artistic choices, its emphases and voice" (Cardwell, Davies p. 181). Before exploring Carter's and Jordan's choices, emphases and articulation of voice, it is helpful to chronicle the events that led to their collaboration.

### **Fairy Tale Conspirators – Where Carter and Jordan Meet**



Neil Jordan (1950- ) and Angela Carter (1940-1992) met at a commemorative celebration of centennial of the birth of James Joyce in Dublin. At this time, Channel 4 commissioned Carter to adapt her radio play *The Company of Wolves* into a 30-minute script. Jordan thought that it would be better to integrate Carter's others short stories into a film script with the dreaming girl as a portmanteau device containing the other tales like a matryoshka (Russian nesting doll). The film's structure fulfills Edgar Allan Poe's line of poetry, "All that we see or seem/Is but a dream within a dream," as it features a series of stories told within the main story as well as dreams within dreams. As portrayed in the film, dreaming equates with artistic creativity. In *The Company of Wolves*, storytelling becomes a means of transformation and liberation for the Little Red Riding hood heroine to find and define herself. Her search for self is analogous with the writer's search for a voice and purpose (Rockett p. 39).

Once Jordan and Carter “mapped out an outline of proposed scenes which she then wrote up” throughout the summer of 1983. Jordan recalls, “once we had agreed on the structure, the writing seemed to flow quite naturally from it, since it gave free rein to Angela’s own taste for narrative subversions” (Crofts p. 108). Appropriately, British media researcher Charlotte Crofts likens the hybridization of literary and film studies to the in-between state of the werewolf. “Indeed, the central figure of the werewolf can be seen as an extended metaphor for the generic transformation performed by the screen adaptation of Carter’s story. As Paul Sutton and Annie White argue, the film is ‘an articulation of not only the kinds of transformations suggested by the device of the werewolf, but also an enactment of the very process of adaptation,’ further suggesting that it is ‘rather fitting that the werewolf should be read as symbolising the cultural hybrid which is literary adaptation’” (Crofts p. 113). Jordan, as Carter, was devoted to the philosophically alchemical manipulation of source texts. In the case of Jordan, he has been especially dedicated to working with the original authors of books including Carter, Patrick McCabe and Anne Rice to best instill their visionary essence to transform prima materia into the philosopher’s stone whilst showing all of the processes and stages to render the transformation (or transmutation in the case of the terrifyingly tantalizing werewolves). In specifying the essential identifiers of a given story, Jordan effectively translates the ur-text onto the silver screen.

As Irish film historians Emer and Kevin Rockett astutely identify, Neil Jordan’s oeuvre evidences a striking portrayal of character and bodily transformations with penetrable borders and mutable identities. As the Rocketts recognize, *The Company of Wolves* “is not a standard horror film; it belongs to the sub-genres of the female gothic,

the werewolf and the nightmare, as well as to the genres of (sexual) coming-of-age, fantasy, surrealism, expressionism and film noir...Jordan introduces us to a world that is not explicitly fantastic... It is within this second world, between the real and the other, or what is permitted and open, and concealed and transgressive, that *The Company of Wolves* hovers” (Rockett p. 37-38). The borderland that Jordan creates then surveys lies between waking and sleep, conscious and unconscious desires, girlhood and adolescence, humans and wolves (Rockett p. 38). Jordan investigated similar terrains in his novel The Dream of a Beast (1983) in which the world begins to subtly change as a man slowly turns into a beast, experiments sexually to discover aspects of his new identity.

### **The Dream’s Frame**

At the beginning of *The Company of Wolves*, Rosaleen (knowingly played by Sarah Patterson, who was twelve-years-old at the time) sulks in her room, situated in the present day of the early 1980s, with a tummy ache (easily read as menstrual cramps indicating the onset of puberty) as she slips into a dream. Both the room and the dream serve as transitional spaces for examining childhood innocence and curiosity as it gives way to the adult world of eroticism and desire. Two other times throughout the film, it appears as if Carter and Jordan bring us back to this scene as she awakens with a start from the intensity of her dreams; however, these scenes are only false interludes of waking up – she is actually still dreaming.

In addition to playfully exploring the fabric of dream and the unconscious, this framing device aids in accounting for any possible anachronisms in the dream state because this is a modern girl dreaming about what was once upon a time. Catherine Hardwicke in *Red Riding Hood* (2011), which borrows heavily from the



contemporizations made by Carter and Jordan, embraces anachronism whilst disposing of the dream structure and scoring her period piece with modern alternative rock songs that match the independence and determination of her lovely heroine in a hood. Jack Zipes takes issue with the framing device in *The Company of Wolves*; this is where we part company. He believes that this framing device undermines the integrity of the original story, screenplay and the dream section itself by contradicting the celebratory representation of Rosaleen, her taming of the wolf and her desire to transform. He discounts the collaborative effort between Carter and Jordan. He thinks the framing device that delineates waking from dream to be a flawed strategy for encasing all of the tales within the dream as well as the frame to be obvious and ultimately offensive to feminist sensibilities. As Rosaleen wakes from the dream, she screams in fright as the unbridled forces of nature, a wolf pack, break through her unconscious mind out of her dream to invade her bedroom. Zipes finds the handling of her menstruation and fear to be faintly comic. He does not recognize that maturation is scary, especially in a prim, ordered, bourgeois world where one does not mention biological functions. In her dream, Rosaleen learns to conquer her fears yet she has not faced them yet in real life. As will be later illustrated, Jordan's framing device serves to satirize the British upper class and the sanitation of the fairy tale by transporting our dreaming heroine to a setting more in sync with the oral tale depicting an intelligent peasant girl with a mother in touch with feminine cycles (Zipes, *Enchanted*, p.148).



The dream wolf penetrates the real world in *The Company of Wolves*.

Fairy tale expert Jessica Tiffin writes more genially concerning the framing device employed in *The Company of Wolves*. She finds the film to be true to Carter's pursuit of fairy tale revision and scrutinization of burgeoning female sexuality under the auspice of patriarchy. As the striking filmic actualization of Carter's tales, Tiffin finds Jordan's framing device to be a creative method to embed the tales, to give Rosaleen a voice and to justify the logic of seemingly disconnected, nightmare visuals. Quite rightly, Tiffin deems Rosaleen as a modern corollary to Lewis Carroll's Alice unabashedly facing the threats and thrills of her dreamy wonderland. Jordan's version of Rosaleen "evokes beautifully the child in Carter's tale 'The Company of Wolves,' who 'stands and moves within the invisible pentacle of her own virginity...she is a closed system, she does not know how to shiver.' The closed system is also that of fairy tale, each self-contained narrative an investigation not only of sexual subjectivity but also of narrative" (Tiffin p. 192).

Tiffin offers further thoughts and counters on another possible criticism of Jordan's framing of the main body of the film as dream. "Tolkien denies narratives framed as dream the status of fairy tale; he argues, 'if a waking writer tells you that his tale is only a thing imagined in his sleep, he cheats deliberately on the primal desire at the heart of Faerie: the realisation, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder' (Tiffin p. 194). Tiffin defends *The Company of Wolves* by positing that it avoids Tolkien's trap due to the visceral village setting that accesses a vivid psychological reality. In addition, she views Jordan's exploration of Rosaleen's adolescent dream and unconscious as a way to psychologically and symbolically empower Carter's feminist agenda. Jordan infuses Rosaleen's dream with marvelously Freudian condensation as well as Jungian archetypal alteration as the unconscious reworks fairy tale symbols and the everyday objects from the waking world take on new life in the dream realm (which will soon be explained in this text) (Tiffin p. 194).

Expressing fidelitous preferences, Zipes favors the framing device from the screenplay. The girl in the screenplay is called Alice and has a younger sister (Rosaleen in the film has an older sister named Alice). He goes on to recount the opening sequence as follows: "Alice is disturbed, and there is a "sense of oppressive and unfocused sensuality, adolescent turbulence" in the bedroom. She lies on her bed surrounded by toys, dolls, and fairytale books, one which exhibits Gustav Doré's illustration of "Little Red Riding Hood," and there is also a film poster picturing a werewolf. Her first dream is a nightmare in which she envisions herself moving from an artificial forest of dolls and toys to a real Forest where she is attacked and killed by a wolf. The death of the dream-

Alice brings about a transformation: the birth of Rosaleen, Alice's dream persona, who will face down wolves and determine her own destiny” (Zipes, *Enchanted*, p. 148).

### The Fairy Tale Dream Onscreen



The Dreaming Rosaleen (Sarah Patterson) in *The Company of Wolves*.

As visually translated by Jordan, he retains a great deal from Carter’s description. Wearing red glistening lipstick and make-up, Rosaleen restlessly sleeps with the British teen magazine *My Weekly* on her pillow with the feature story ever so aptly titled “The Shattered Dream.” Her room is littered with uncanny toys as well as the trappings of the adult world including a pink and white shapely satin and Chantilly lace-laden dress (Rockett p.41-42). From her sister Alice’s complaints outside her locked door, we know that Rosaleen has been trying on her older sister’s make-up again. The fancy frock suggests apparel for coming-out into society so that boys may begin to court Rosaleen. The dream world that she slips into appears concurrent with the time of Perrault’s fairy tale with the danger-tinged air of Carter’s original story – a village where wolves still

pose a physical threat. As the Rocketts rightly propose via the lens of Bettelheim, Rosaleen's dreams "move away from the intimacies of the childhood bedroom into a more obviously psychosexual world of Red Riding Hood. Into, in other words, the territory best explored by Bruno Bettelheim in The Uses of Enchantment (1978) in which he argues that the function of fairytales is to act as 'magic mirrors' into our inner selves, which help in the discovery of the path(s) to adulthood, contentment and independence" (Rockett p. 43).

Film critic James Rose coins useful nomenclature in distinguishing between the two versions of our heroine in *The Company of Wolves*: The Dreaming Rosaleen (the upper class girl of the contemporary world frame) and the The Dreamt Rosaleen (the village dwelling Little Red Riding Hood that we follow throughout the main body/dream of the film). As he relates, this play with duality within the narrative manifests as a Gothic trait (Rose p. 2). Rosaleen's unconscious casts everyone from Rosaleen's waking life as his or her own double in this dreamt realm. The objects scattered about Rosaleen's room already iconic as keepsakes found in any girl's room of her age, class and era take on a second symbolic life in her dream. Ever so subtly placed amongst ephemeral teenage trappings the camera rushes past the Gustave Doré illustration of Little Red Riding Hood in bed with the wolf posted on her wall. On a shelf in the Dreaming Rosaleen's bedroom, a jolly, bespectacled Granny doll holds a copy of Beatrice Potter's The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy Winkle, the beloved hedgehog heroine. This porcelain doll becomes the Dreamt Rosaleen's flesh and blood Gram as the Mrs. Tiggy Winkle appears as an actual hedgepig in one of the Dreamt Rosaleen's stories.



Little Red Riding Hood encounters the wolf in grandma's clothing as drawn by Gustave Doré.

Cuddly toys such as sailor boy and a teddy bear transplanted into Rosaleen's dream gain menacing intent as life-size creatures that still desire to cuddle yet are no longer perceived as sweet as they were in their miniature form. By reaching out for her, they terrify the fleeing Dreamt Alice as she encounters them in the primordial forest. In the Dreaming Rosaleen's bed chamber, a harlequin doll holds a set of panpipes – the musical score integrates their imagined sound to transition into the dream as this instrument sprouts from the forest floor as a massive formation of reeds resembling a pipe organ. The first part of Rosaleen's dream enacts a revenge fantasy on her nagging sister. As Alice is pursued and ultimately devoured by a pack of wolves, we see the Dreaming Rosaleen smile with satisfaction upon Alice's demise.

We first see the Dreamt Rosaleen at her sister's funeral, where her mother takes a crucifix from Alice's neck and places it around Rosaleen's neck as a token of protection yet she knows that the real danger are actual starving wolves and that knives or other

weapons are the best protection. The crucifix serves later to visually distinguish Rosaleen after she chooses to join the company of werewolf companions by the dream's and film's end. The mother is loving, practical, devout yet in touch with nature. Although Rosaleen's grandmother totes a Bible [and wears a mink stole, a living one at that], her brand of religion is heavily laced with peasant superstitions, especially in connection with the bestial nature of men and werewolves.



Granny (Angela Lansbury) knits a cape and weaves tales for her beloved Rosaleen in *The Company of Wolves*.

Granny (perfectly played by Angela Lansbury) refers to Alice as a “poor little lamb” and laments that she was on her own. Obviously, Alice must have strayed from the path, which is true considering that monstrous toys and dollhouses populated by rats frightened her off of it. Rosaleen questions, “Why couldn’t she save herself?” For Rosaleen certainly would, she walks bravely through the woods armed with an impressive knife that she is not shy about brandishing.

As a cautionary tale emphasizing the importance of staying on the path - both the sylvan and moral path, Granny tells Rosaleen about an innocent village maiden who marries a charming travelling man (Jordan film regular Stephen Rea). Through Granny and her stories, Neil Jordan and Angela Carter work in Carter's werewolf lore from her original The Bloody Chamber tales. This man's eyebrows met in the middle – a definite sign that a man is actually a werewolf. After a festive dance through the forest by the wedding party, the couple arrives at their cottage, where her brother has placed a hedgehog in their bed as a joke. Before the newlyweds can consummate their marriage, the traveller answers the call of nature upon seeing the full moon. He is not demurely “making water” outside rather than using a chamber pot as his naïve wife assumes; he has rejoined his wolf pack. After his mysterious disappearance written off as a tragic wolf attack, she remarries. Years later after settling into domesticity with three children, the first husband returns unannounced with tangled hair and ravaged clothes, demanding dinner. The woman swiftly serves him. His startling appearance and coarse demeanor makes her small children cry. Once the traveller realizes that she bore another man's children, he flies into a rage that culminates in his ripping his flesh from his face so that the wolf inside can spring out – for the worst wolves are hairy on the inside.

In this most horrific scene, made even more so with innovative special effects and animatronics, the gory musculature of the man agonizingly transmogrifies into that of a wolf. The second husband bursts in, lopping off the head of the wolf with a single blow. The wolfen head lands, sinking into a pail of milk. As the head re-emerges, it has reverted to its human shape. Since its expression was beautiful and serene, the wife



admits that the severed head's visage looked the same as on the day that she married the traveller, which inspires the current husband to strike his wife.

As James Rose notices, Rosaleen is not horrified by Granny's old wives' tale; instead, she remarks, "I'd never let a man strike me". "It is the inability of the story's female protagonist to defend herself that shocks her, not the werewolf who attacks her" (Rose p. 9). Film and theatre scholar Carole Zucker sees this story as evidence of Granny's view that "sexuality is inextricably bound up with bestiality, with the evil of the natural world, and with the irreconcilable split between nature and culture". Granny's sentiment is also confirmed by the fact that she believes that men are as nice as pie until they have had their way with you; afterwards, the beast is unleashed (Zucker p. 2).

Of course, Rosaleen's mother (portrayed with earthy verve by Tusse Silberg) believes that the beast in man meets its match in women. As described by Dreamt Rosaleen, a "clownish" village boy brings her a handpicked bouquet in wishing to walk with her after the church service. Her father (frequent horror film actor David Warner) teases Rosaleen by biting the heads off her flowers yet both her parents know that this is a natural, adolescent progression. Her parents allow her to walk with the neighbor boy, only if they do not stray from the path. Rosaleen dons the soft as snow, red as blood cloak that her Granny especially knitted for her. He tries to kiss her. She kisses him back, on her own terms, merely to show that kissing does not frighten her. When he is dissatisfied and wants another kiss, Rosaleen makes him chase her, eluding his capture by leaving the path and scaling an impossibly tall tree. Once off the path, the forest proves itself not terrifying but rather enchanting with march hares, white rabbits, coiling serpents and frogs that do not transform into princes (yet as later illustrated the princes do turn into

wolves) in the most surreal and striking dream scene *The Company of Wolves*. Not only the forest but also her own reflection offers a source of enchantment. Once up the tree, Rosaleen happens upon a stork's nest filled with eggs, a hand mirror and a pan pot of brightly hued blood-red lip rouge. This is the same hand mirror that rests on the Dreaming Rosaleen's pillow, as well as the lipstick color that symbolizes Rosaleen's sexual arousal and awakening and her jubilant acceptance of her newly hatched desire and desirability. Whilst magically hovering on the top branch looking into the nest, the Dreamt Rosaleen paints her lips and admires her reflection as the eggs crack to reveal Christ-like, porcelain babies. Visually, she is now a young woman full of reproductive and sexual potential. Parallel editing establishes a connection between Rosaleen and wolves. After she paints her lips, we see the bloody muzzle of the predatory wolf.



Rosaleen's coming of age as symbolized by the hatched egg and engagement with her reflection in *The Company of Wolves*.

After her suitor loses her, he runs back willy-nilly to the village. He becomes the boy who literally cried wolf as he discovers wolf-inflicted livestock carnage along the way. Rosaleen returns safely and calms her mother by showing her one of the Jesus baby figurines. The baby weeps and Rosaleen's mother smiles at the sight. Still, the fear of losing another daughter compels her father and the village men to construct a concealed pit with a duck as bait (as in Carter's written story) to ensnare the wolf. The men succeed in killing the wolf. When the father brings his trophy of a wolf's forepaw home, it turns out to be a man's hand complete with a ring. Although shocked, he says that, "Seeing is believing." Rosaleen also needs to touch the hand as proof. The men in her dream are

visually oriented; Rosaleen explores her dreamscape with haptic curiosity. She does not merely make discoveries by her senses; she comes to realizations by telling stories herself.

After Granny relates two grisly stories to her, she finds the confidence to try her own hand at weaving a tale for her mother whilst rebelling against the prohibitive myths of her Granny, which she begins with, “Once upon a time ...”. The tale serves to parody the Rococo opulence of Perrault’s salon. At a posh wedding banquet with British lords and ladies all powdered and wigged, a beautiful and visibly pregnant Scottish woman crashes the affair to seek revenge for groom’s violation and rejection of her. She casts a spell that breaks a real mirror, symbolizing the shattering of surface artificialities. Since she contends that wolves have better manners, these elegantly clad men and women amusingly transform into wolves in a tableau that deftly disintegrates into carnivalesque grotesquery underscored by delirious calliope-laden circus music as part of George Fenton’s lovely and effective score. This witch damns this company of wolves to serenade her baby nightly, as she rocks the babe to sleep on a bough of a tall tree – obvious images drawn into the tale from Rosaleen’s own exploration of the woods.



A playful poke at the Perrault's salon – the transformed wedding party in *The Company of Wolves*.

Once the snow has fallen, Rosaleen takes a basket of distilled spirits and oatcakes to Granny. The basket also contains a fierce-looking knife. The village boy wants to accompany her for protection. He guarantees her a safe passage, which she abruptly rejects by showing him that her knife is bigger than his is and that she is as brave and capable as she is pretty. On her way to Granny, Little Red Rosaleen encounters a princely Huntsman who is actually a werewolf in disguise [adeptly played with animalistic prowess by German choreographer and dancer Micha Bergese].



“I have the most remarkable object in my pocket ... ” The Huntsman (Michael Bergese) tempts Rosaleen into sharing her Granny’s basket of goodies in *The Company of Wolves*.

As the huntsman plays a game of enticement as he convinces Rosaleen to have a picnic with the basket intended for her Granny. He coyly toys with her as he describes “the most remarkable object in his pocket.” She accuses him of lying to which he replies, “Seeing in believing” (echoing her father’s very words). The Huntsman produces a compass that he bets as part of a wager. If she beats him to her Granny’s house by staying on “the dreary path,” he will award the compass to Rosaleen. If she loses as he takes short cuts off the path, she will owe him a kiss. When she repeats her Granny’s warning about werewolves, he playfully pounces on her as punishment. Although she is a bit anxious, she certainly enjoys this play and the attention from such a gentleman far more graceful than the silly village boys. He gives her his plumed hat as a token of good will as they begin their race. She pauses not to pick flowers and play with butterflies as in the Perrault version of the fairy tale but to examine her reflection once again in the hand mirror. She examines her make-up and ponders her attractiveness to the opposite sex. Parallels again are established through editing – this time between Rosaleen and the

Huntsman: her application of lip color is mirrored by the Huntsman smearing pheasant blood across his lips as his eyes have taken on a preternatural appearance in his partially aroused, lycanthropic state. In the Doré image, we may not have spied on a lover's rendezvous as Zipes contends but Jordan's interpretation in *The Company of Wolves* most certainly provides a sexually charged tableau for the audience to voyeuristically and pleurably witness.

As per usual, The Huntsman arrives first and Granny is a goner (in both the screenplay and the film). He impersonates Rosaleen's voice. Using language from Carter's translation of Perrault, she tells him to "lift up the latch and walk in." He enters and swiftly kills Granny's mink that hisses at him. Just as in her stories, Granny continues to demonize the werewolf as she holds her Bible as a superstition shield and orders him back to hell. Truthfully, he tells her that he does not come from hell but from the forest. She puts up a good fight by throwing her Bible at his head and attempting to strike the Huntsman with a glowing red poker from the fire. She injures him by both defensive strikes and he licks his wounds like an animal. With a single, powerful blow, he knocks her head from off her shoulders and it breaks apart like a porcelain doll as dream logic prevails.

Beside the blazing fire that devours the undigested bits of Granny, the Huntsman waits for Rosaleen as his rocks rhythmically with a restrained intensity in Granny's chair. He impersonates Granny's voice inviting Rosaleen into the cottage. He tells her that Granny is fetching firewood from the woodpile outside. Considering how ungallant this is, Rosaleen realizes that this must be a lie. She looks out the window to see wolves decorating the wintry landscape. The full moon turns blood red in the night sky,

representing not only the wolf's carnage but also Rosaleen's sexual maturation. The equation of the lunar cycle with menstruation and lycanthropy derives from Carter's short story "Wolf-Alice" as well as the notion of women as werewolves. This visual emblem signaling the loss of innocence is repeated in Rosaleen's last story to the Huntsman of a wounded wolf-girl, wonderfully pantomimed by Gothic musician Danielle Dax (who entitled one of her albums *Jesus Egg That Wept*). She knows that Granny is dead from the burning tuft of grey hair and the discarded spectacles that she accidentally shatters with her boot heel. Rosaleen tries to stab the Huntsman but he stops her. He has her throw her hooded cloak into the fire. Although she begins the striptease, the Huntsman finishes it.

In the radio play, Rosaleen outwits the werewolf by having him strip. Without his clothes, he is unable to leave or pose a threat to the heroine. In the film, she questions if the Huntsman is only a man when he dresses like one. She goes through the litany of what big eyes he has and especially what big arms he has after he removes his shirt. Clothes do not make the man or in this case, the removing of them does not make a wolf. Like her, a being in-between girlhood and womanhood, he admits that he is also an in-between creature as his home is nowhere. He comes and goes between the world of man and wolf yet he loves the wolves' company. The Huntsman convinces to keep her promise of paying her debt by awarding him a kiss. The kiss startles her as she exclaims, "Jesus, what big teeth you have!" To which he seductively replies, "All the better to eat you with" – most assuredly not implying cannibalism. She shoots him with his own rifle. The gunshot to the arm sends him into a wolf-like retreat. He then transforms fully into a wolf in the most graphic yet eroticized manner.



Rosaleen apologizes, not realizing that wolves could cry. She identifies with him and no longer thinks of werewolves in the demonic way that her Granny tried to instill. To soothe him, she tells him the story of the wounded wolf. This story begins by showing the water well that we saw earlier in the title sequence of *The Company of Wolves*. The young female wolf emerges from its depths. A true innocent, a villager aims and shoots her in the arm. A priest bandages her wound. Her injury and innocence lost is represented by a white rose that turns blood red as one of her tears hit the petals. Although the priest asks her whose work she is, God's or the Devil's, he decides that it does not matter as he tends to her wound. She crosses the border back into the underworld. With this tale, Rosaleen comes to terms with her choice.



“I’ll tell you a tale of a wounded wolf ...” Rosaleen with the recently transformed Huntsman in *The Company of Wolves*.

### Seeing Is Believing – What Is Written Versus What Is Seen

Rosaleen's film tale differs from the one Carter provides for her to tell in the screenplay. Soothingly, she says to the werewolf in the screenplay, which she cradles, "I'll tell you a story, you pitiful creature, though you showed my grandmother no pity, did you? Yet now you're worse off than she... I'll tell you a story about love between two wolves." In this story, an old, outcast wolf brings a priest to bless his dying, she-wolf mate. As the priest touches her forehead, she transforms back into a woman and the wolf become an old man in rags. The man kisses his mate's forehead. Rosaleen's moral is: "So then the priest knew what any wise child could have told him, there are no devils, except the ones we have invented" (Zipes, *Enchanted*, pp. 148-149).

After she tells this tale in the screenplay, Rosaleen transforms into a wolf, rushes through the woods, joined by another wolf. Together these wolves in love run through the forest, past a doll's house towards Alice's room. The final screenplay passage reads as follows:

Alice stands up on the bed. She looks down at the floor below the bed. She bounces a little on the bed, as if testing its springs. A long howl can be heard—this time somewhere beyond the open door. Alice suddenly springs off the bed, up into the air, as if off a diving-board. She curls, in a graceful jack-knife and plummets toward the floor. The floor parts. It is in fact water. She vanishes beneath it. The floor ripples, with the aftermath of her dive. Gradually it settles back into the plain floor again. We see the room, for a beat, half-forest, half-girl's bedroom. There is a whining at the door. It opens, under the pressure of one wolf's snout. First the he-wolf enters, then the she-wolf. They nose their way around Alice's things (Zipes, *Enchanted*, p. 149).

Jack Zipes prefer the magical realism of the screenplay with its replacement of the distraught Alice with the transformed Rosaleen as she and her wolfen lover explore the remnants of Alice's childhood. Her immersion in the watery floor represents the fluidity

of her identity. Zipes preference for this ending results in a less than favorable misinterpretation of the film's end: "On the other hand the film ends on a blissfully ignorant note paraphrasing Perrault's sexist moralité in a voiceover spoken in a sweet and soft female voice:

Little girls, this seems to say,  
 Never stop along 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 any guise.  
 Now as then 'tis simple truth.  
 Sweetest tongue has sharpest tooth.

This scene and verse are a revolting contradiction that belies the screenplay and Angela Carter's original story and screenplay" (Zipes, *Enchanted*, p. 149).

Actually, the voice that we hear in voice over is Rosaleen's. Considering that Carter translated Perrault, this moral harkens back to his warning. Nevertheless, Rosaleen's tone sounds entirely ironic with sultry, biting edge rather than sweet and demure. Therefore, this dream frame is not useless as Zipes contends. Still, he does recognize and value the irony, sensuousness, horror and humor within the dream section of *The Company of Wolves*. Once the dream begins with the attack of Rosaleen's older sister, this gruesome occurrence sparks the storytelling and querying that readies Rosaleen for her later encounter with the dashing werewolf as well as informing her later social and sexual choices. Charlotte Crofts elucidates the dual function of the storytelling in the film – it contextualizes Granny's prohibitive, violent tales of aggressive men whilst bestowing a means for Rosaleen to express her own appetites. "In fact, by giving the main female protagonist a more vocal role, the film could be seen to offer a greater

spaces for the articulation of female subjectivity and desire than is available in the [Carter] short story” (Zipes, *Enchanted*, p. 149).

A storytelling duel ensues between grandmother and granddaughter not unlike the folk tradition of a young seamstress coming into her own to replace the older generation. Although Granny perpetuates superstition to scare Rosaleen into distrusting beastly men and relations with them, Rosaleen generates tales about outsiders that need love to end their marginalization. Rosaleen’s mother offers earthy interventions as she encourages Rosaleen to find her own way through the woods. It is her own connection to nature that allows her to recognize and save her own daughter in the end from the eager hunting party. “To a certain extent, the film “justifies” the werewolf’s devouring of the bigoted grandmother, whose aggressive storytelling is antiquated and needs to be replaced by her granddaughter’s” (Zipes, *Enchanted*, p. 149).

In the short story and the radio play, Red Riding Hood chooses to remain human and to lie down with the tamed wolf. In the film, the Dreamt Rosaleen makes the ultimate choice of liberation – to join the company of wolves as a wolf. By morning, she has transformed; we do not see her metamorphosis onscreen yet her mother recognizes the wolf as her daughter. After the search party of her family and a few villagers discover Rosaleen in her new state, she runs with the wolves. No matter which version of Angela Carter’s bold tale is told, she provides a creative space for readers to freely explore sexual desire whilst reclaiming the right for heroines to choose their own trajectory, whether it be the well-travelled passage or a jaunty route that diverges from the dreary path. From this point in the academic crossroad, future consideration of the elements from Carter that permeate the Little Red Riding Hood ur-text and their influence on successive literary

and filmic versions of this fairy tale as well as the imagery of parallels between the witch hunts and werewolf trials represent the future, lively road to travel.



***The Company of Wolves.*** 1984. Color. 95 minutes.

Director: Neil Jordan

Producer: Chris Brown, Nik Powell and Stephen Woolley

Screenplay: Angela Carter and Neil Jordan

Source: The Bloody Chamber, Angela Carter

Cinematography: Bryan Loftus

Editor: Rodney Holland

Special Effects: Alan Whibley

Animatronic Wolf: Rodger Shaw

Costume Design: Elizabeth Waller

Production Design: Anton Furst

Art Direction: Stuart Rose

Music: George Fenton

UK Opening 21 September 1984

American Opening: 19 April 1985

Distribution: ITC (UK)/ Cannon (US)

## CAST:

Angela Lansbury	...	Granny
David Warner	...	Father
Graham Crowden	...	Old Priest
Kathryn Pogson	...	Young Bride
Stephen Rea	...	Young Groom
Tusse Silberg	...	Mother
Micha Bergese	...	Huntsman
Sarah Patterson	...	Rosaleen
Georgia Slowe	...	Alice
Shane Johnstone	...	Amorous Boy
Dawn Archibald	...	Witch Woman
Richard Morant	...	Wealthy Groom
Danielle Dax	...	Wolfgirl
Jim Carter	...	Second Husband (uncredited)
Terence Stamp	...	The Devil (uncredited)

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