



T1512

NC 0033277 1



National College of Art and Design

Visual Communications

NATURE OF THE BEAST

Interpreting the fairytale in films for adults

by Marianne Lee

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and
Complementary studies in Candidacy for the Degree
of Bachelor of Design

1995

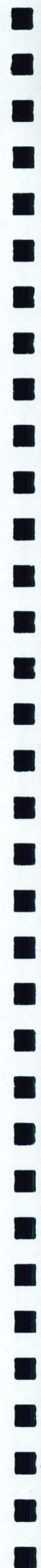
Acknowledgements

Tony Fitzmaurice *For research assistance and advice*

Neil Jordan *For interview and insight*



Children do not stay young long in this savage country. *Angela Carter, The Company of Wolves*



Contents:

Introduction	pg 1
Chapter 1: Girls who cry wolf Power and puberty in <i>The Company of Wolves</i>	pg 3
Chapter 2: Absolutely Fantastic Defining and visual- ising the fairytale	pg 13
Chapter 3: Telling Tall Tales The feminine nature of fairy tales and fantastic literature	pg 20
Chapter 4: Beauty by the Beast Woman as Icon in <i>La Belle et la Bete</i>	pg 28
Chapter 5: Morals of the Story Audience and the attraction of the film fairytale	pg 32
Conclusion	pg 43
Bibliography	pg 45

Introduction

.....the revival of fantasy is related to the belief that fantasy helps to explain the fascination, and so the power of cinema. (Petrie, 1993 pg 2)

Violent, political, theatrical, and erotic, the fairytale is an ideal vehicle for adult fantasies. This thesis will attempt to discuss the transfer of the fairytale to the medium of cinema interpreting familiar icons and symbols of the original children's versions to explain the enduring relevance of the fantastic with adult audiences. While children may be enthralled by the fairytale on its fundamental narrative level, the visualisation of familiar plots and characters for a sceptical adult viewer provides the director with a challenge; if the intended audience is definitely adult, narrative and visual devices must be considered to engage and entertain. The plot structures of most fairytales are universally familiar, therefore the director cannot rely upon the element of narrative surprise alone. Nor can s/he expect the seemingly transparent moralities of the tales to sustain relevance for the adult viewer.

An analysis of two examples of this fairytale-for-adults genre will suggest various methods by which a director may approach such a subject. Initially, the source material of each film will be considered, as the adaption of any literary text entails some scrutiny of the mythology contained in the original. If the director approaches the source with a certain empathy, consideration of the author's motivating intent may reveal the fundamental ideology of the film.

The films which will be discussed are both based on fairytales- Neil Jordan's 1984 film, *The Company of Wolves* on Angela

Carter's short story of the same name, which is in turn a revision of Little Red Riding Hood, and Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bete*, a narratively straightforward interpretation of Mme Leprince de Beaumont's 18th century story, *Beauty and the Beast*. These films compare and contrast with each other, suggesting how the directors succeeded in creating adult films within the fairytale genre. Both were directed as films by men, but were written by women; a closer look at female fantastic literature will reveal the feminine link with fairytales, from 18th century female gothic to contemporary female authors.

The themes and characteristics of fairytales are evident in many modern films, (Roxanne, *Pretty Woman*, *Star Wars*, *Blue Velvet*, for example), if not as immediately recognisable as subversions as *The Company of Wolves*, or *La Belle et la Bete*. The adult appetite for fairytale film suggests that the gulf between child and adult is not as wide as is generally perceived. This thesis will attempt to investigate the nature of this attraction, as well as question how it is particularly powerful when expressed through film. The fascination which the fairytale continues to wield through to adulthood suggests the integral role it plays in modern culture; the political and social issues it grapples with are still controversial, reflecting perhaps society's permanent need to mythologise its fears and evils, if not to comprehend them, at least to contain them.



Frontispiece and Fig 1.1: Little Red Riding Hood by Jessie Wilcox Smith, 1911, 1916



Fig 1.2, 1.3: Perrault as illustrated by Walter Crane, 1874





Chapter 1 Girls who cry wolf

If you were to make a film that referred to Beauty and the Beast you'd be invoking the fairytale rather than the Cocteau film version of it. And that was the real reference: fairy-tales. *Neil Jordan* (Taylor and Jenkins, 1984)

A pubescent girl is warned by her grandmother never to eat windfall apples as she recoils from the worm-infested fruit she has just bitten into. Corruption lies at the heart of the revisionist fairytales of Angela Carter, and is a prominent theme in Neil Jordan's 1984 film of her short story The Company of Wolves .

While at first Jordan appears to have encountered the same difficulties in his re-telling of a fairytale (in this instance Little Red Riding Hood) as Cocteau had forty years beforehand, distinctive differences exist which ultimately created two very dissimilar films. The original challenge was the same; transfer a fairytale centuries old, rooted in the realm of childhood, to the cinematic screen as a film for a very adult audience, retaining the quintessential landmarks while creating an underlying allegorical emphasis. *La Belle et la Bete* achieved this without excluding a potential child audience; *The Company of Wolves* is, however, a specifically adult film, hallmarked by scenes of violent sexuality which earned it an 18 certificate on its 1984 release.

The primary difference is evident before a single scene is considered, in the original source material. While the basic structure of Beauty and the Beast existed in oral and literary form all over the world prior to Madame de Leprince de Beaumont's re-write in 1745, hers is credited with being the

definitive version. Cocteau remained absolutely faithful to it. No documented version of Little Red Riding Hood existed before Charles Perrault's story of 1695, which was published in Histoires au Contes du Temps Passe two years later. Perrault's over-indulged, naive heroine is duped by the wily wolf, who engages her in verbal foreplay before devouring her unceremoniously.¹ This Little Red Riding Hood indisputably forms the internal structure of *The Company of Wolves*, but it cannot be claimed that Jordan adheres to its boundaries- if a matriarchal allegory can be made, *La Belle et la Bete* is dutiful daughter to its source. The Company of Wolves is wayward grand-daughter.

Jordan not only based *The Company of Wolves* on Carter's short story, but collaborated with her on the screenplay. And while Mme de Beaumont's prose is ingenuous and unequivocal, Carter's is anything but. The Little Red Riding Hood that Jordan visualises is seething with sexual overtones, while folklore and feminist ideology simmer side by side in a hotpot of surrealistic imagery. This unique blend of bold language and innuendo appealed to Jordan

The single most important factor that drew me to Angela's work- which to me is like nothing else- is that its both so dramatic and so graphic. She has this iconoclastic very steely intelligence..... she also has this incredibly fertile imagination and thinks very strongly in terms of imagery.(Taylor and Jenkins, 1984)

While the metaphor may be vague, the language never is.

The wolf is carnivore incarnate and he's as cunning as he is ferocious; once he's had a taste of flesh then nothing else will do.(Carter, 1981, pg 110)

Although the script contains definite expansions on the original prose, these additional images are concordant with more direct

visualisations of the story, and are due as much to Jordan's empathy with the literary vision of Angela Carter as to the fact that she had a close personal involvement with the script. In 1983 Jordan completed his second novel, The Dream of a Beast, a surreal account of human transfiguration in an urban environment. This detailing of the thoughts and emotions of a man undergoing physical mutation (into a never-specified beast) ensured that Jordan approached *The Company of Wolves* with a personal understanding of metamorphosis; the influence of his own writing is evident in the crossing over of imagery. In his novel, the man/beast gazes into a pool of water and sees a circle of eggs. He lifts one, and the heat of his hand/paw causes it to crack open, displaying a cherub. When Rosaleen climbs the tree and discovers the eagle's nest, she watches in amazement as the eggs hatch open to reveal tiny carved human babies.(Jordan, 1984, pg 51)

The addition of such an image never seems extraneous. This is a result of Jordan's conscious structuring of the film, which he terms 'associative' i.e the narrative becomes secondary to the visualisations of Freudian image association.

Instead of the forest meaning danger, the wolf meaning sexuality, and the granny authority, we tried to let images and stories come to us in an associative way, and follow them for the pleasure of it.(Taylor and Jenkins, 1984)

Jordan intended that the pleasure derived would be that of recognition; initially, the recognition of various symbols and motifs, ultimately, recognition that this is a variant of Little Red Riding Hood.

In that sense, I wanted the culmination of the film to be that this is the story of Little Red Riding Hood.(Taylor and Jenkins, pg 1984)



Fig 1.4 : A worm-infested apple, a symbol of corrupted innocence in The Company of Wolves



Fig 1.5 : The eggs which Rosaleen finds in the eagles nest.....



Fig 1.6: crack open to reveal carved human babies

While Jordan looks to association to suggest much of the film's imagery and dialogue, it was necessary to remain within a narrative structure to ensure this recognition occurred. By expanding the character of Rosaleen's grandmother (she merits barely a paragraph in Carter's original story) they procured a voice to proclaim

(a) the 'associative' stories within a story related as educational bed-time tales (the village girl who transfigures a wedding party, the bridegroom who deserts his bride to return to the wild as a wolf)

(b) words of wisdom on men, wolves, and local superstition (never trust a man whose eyebrows meet in the middle, never eat a windfall apple)

Jordan and Carter also devised the subsuming dream-plot where the entire fantasy could be contained within Rosaleen's pubescent nightmare. As an anchoring device, the addition of Rosaleen's dream to the screen-play works. It serves, however, a double function. Marina Warner states that

The gateway to fantasy (and especially erotic fantasy) when translated to screen is opened in sleep or dreams. The dreaming woman becomes a key figure in fairytale movies. It is through fantasy, through the uses of enchantment that she achieves her passage from one state to another, that she manages to tame or otherwise come to terms with the Beast. (Warner, 1993, pg 30)

We are given sufficient information as the film begins to know that Rosaleen is the younger of two sisters, that she lives with her parents and older sister Alice, and that the relationship between sisters is antagonistic. There is an implication that she is in early adolescence, going through a 'phase'. The physical and mental conflict of adolescence is mirrored by her bedroom;

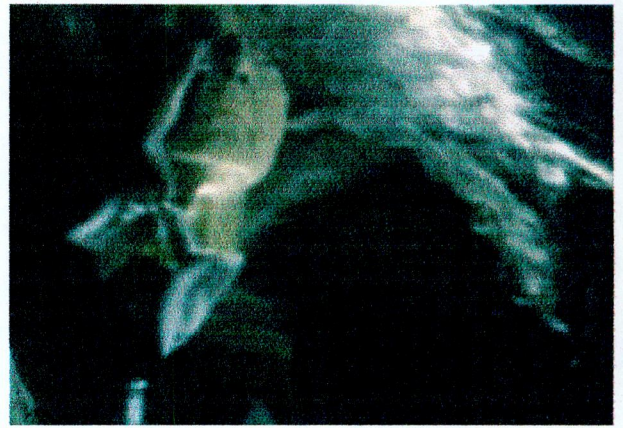


Fig 1.7: Visualising a fairytale- Granny's head is struck from her shoulders and shatters like porcelain

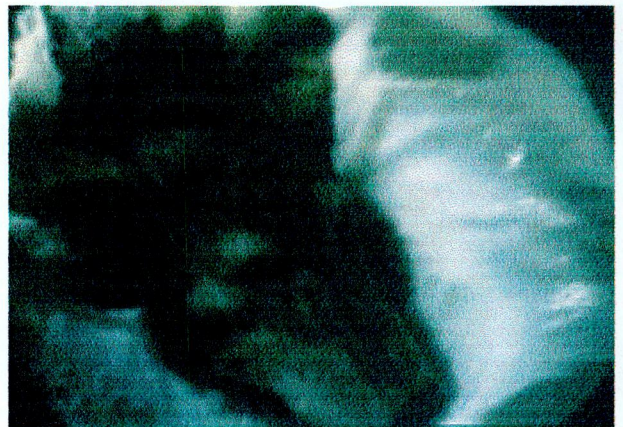


Fig 1.8: The decapitated head of the wolf lands in a vat of milk



Fig 1.9: and reverts to it's human form

a book entitled 'The Shattered Dream' lies on the pillow beside her sleeping form, prophetic of the film's climax. As she sleeps she will dream *The Company of Wolves*, a dream in which she will enact her pubescent fears and desires. And this is the second reason for establishing Rosaleen in this restless dream; from here-on we are aware of her pubescent state, and realise fully it's relevance in the events to follow. This implies what Angela Carter states literally

Her breasts have just begun to swell,.....her cheeks are an emblematic scarlet and white and she has just started her woman's bleeding, the clock inside her that will strike, henceforward, once a month. (Carter, 1981, pg 113)

Barbara Creed sees associations between the moon and its effects on animal and plant life as a link between menstruation and night creatures such as wolves, vampires, witches and bats. She cites various examples of historical superstitions regarding menstrual blood and it's powers- the ability of a menstruating woman to sour milk and wine, the link with witchcraft, the exclusion of menstruating women from churches and sexual intercourse.(Creed, 1993, pg 64)

Carter's heroine wears a shawl, knitted for her by her grandmother that had the "ominous, if brilliant look of blood on snow."(Carter, 1981, pg 113) This shawl is further described as "red as her menses", while the film grandmother describes the wool as "red as a berry, red as blood"

It appears as if Jordan/Carter intended Rosaleen's shawl to symbolise menstruation, a physical manifestation of puberty, the herald of adult sexuality. Academics are undecided on the relevance of this symbolisation in the original fairytale, suggesting a medieval fear of the devil, sin, and violent emotion.² There

are further possible links between Rosaleen's menses and the dream-world of wolves which she creates. Consider Walter Evans comment on the were-wolf and it's thirst for blood.

the were-wolf's bloody attacks which occur regularly every month are certainly related to the menstrual cycle which suddenly and mysteriously commands the body of every adolescent girl. (Creed, 1993, pg 650)

The wolves in this instance are symbolic; the association of the supernatural with pubescent females (the belief, for example that poltergeists frequent households containing teenage girls) points to a perception of female sexuality as a conductor of mysterious psychic energy. The most important feature of Rosaleen's period is what it heralds- her sexual awakening. While the sexual metaphors of Perrault's Little Red Riding Hood are ambiguous, the sexuality of *The Company of Wolves* is unambivalent. The "real reference" for *The Company of Wolves* was not simply fairytales; the main reference was Angela Carter.

Angela Carter's heroines frequently appear bewildered, apprehensive of the onslaught of sexual power, but allow themselves to follow its demands once its strength becomes evident. Power is what Rosaleen desires; the wolves she dreams of are representative of social and sexual freedom. Her first demonstration of this power within her fantasy is the assault upon her tormenting sister by a pack of wolves. Her grandmother tells a story which concludes with a husband beating his wife, and she asks, "When the real wolves mate, do the dogs beat the bitches afterwards?" The wild seems preferable to the world of humans, where men dominate through physical strength. When she tells her mother the tale of the spurned village girl's transfiguration of her erring lover's wedding party, she is questioned as to what possible pleasure such revenge would bring it's perpetrator. She



Fig 1.10: Rosaleen's sister, Alice, is pursued by wolves



Fig 1.11: Rosaleen's country home is transformed into the setting of a 18th century wedding in her dream



Fig 1.12: The pregnant witch seeks revenge



responds "The pleasure would come from knowing the power that she had". There are further associations here with witchcraft and the mysterious powers of the female body (Carter refers to the girl as a witch; she has been 'wronged' by her wealthy lover and is heavily pregnant, while he weds another woman of equally high birth- Carter, 1981, pg 111) This desire for power is logical when Rosaleen's position in her household is considered; the youngest, not thought capable of making decisions or assuming adult responsibilities. The entire film is a manifestation of her dream-wish fulfilment, with the structural theme of metamorphosis. Traditional fairytale gender boundaries are interchanged, a distinctive feature of Carter's writings. Judith Still comments

The gender positions of The Bloody Chamber are mutable and shifting; the phallus can pass from a male to a female character and back, and some episodes take place in an imaginary order in which both female and male are transformed into beasts and hence have little access to symbolisation..... (*my emphasis* Still, pg 233)

Rosaleen, experiencing personal transfiguration (that of child into woman) visualises the power she covets through the wolves, who although detested and feared, hunted and cursed, are capable of instilling dread in the hearts of men and are free.

Carter informs us that "Before he can become a wolf, the lycanthrope strips naked." (Carter, pg 113) When the heroine confronts the hunter in Granny's cottage (Granny has already been devoured) she casts her clothes into the fire, until she is "clothed only in her untouched integument of flesh." (Carter, pg 118) Stripped of human trappings, she is ready for what she truly desires; re-birth as a wolf.

This climax scene is altered considerably for screen. Rosaleen discards her shawl, but otherwise remains clothed. She

volunteers the kiss which the huntsman has won, but it is bait. When he approaches she seizes his gun and shoots him in the arm. This precipitates the metamorphosis. Despite the ensuing mutation, Rosaleen does not seem overly perturbed; she caresses the surprisingly docile wolf who now stands on the cottage floor. She realises the full extent of her sexual omni-potence, her innate knowledge and sensuality endow her with a new power to meet the wolf as an equal. This is a reversal of the beast-to-man fable; Rosaleen knows that this sexuality can seduce the man, and can seduce the beast if and when he reveals himself. Her attempt to repel her true desire (the seizing and shooting of the gun at the young man) marks and emphasises the final point where she can refuse to acknowledge impending womanhood and revert to childhood. Ultimately, however, she is unable to resist the call of nature- adulthood cannot be procrastinated. As Marina Warner writes

The company of wolves here stirs desire far more profoundly than would the highest pattern of princes.
(Warner, 1992 pg 10)

Bettelheim identified the marriage which habitually punctuates the fairytale as a symbol of rebirth; this rebirth is a fundamental theme in all forms of traditional fable. While *La Belle et La Bete* reverts dramatically and disappointingly to stereotype with its bearing away of Belle and her Prince of Blandness, *The Company of Wolves* rebels with a parodic marriage.³ Rosaleen has already altered with the loss of childhood.

Little Red Riding Hood lost her childish innocence as she encountered the dangers residing in herself and the world, and exchanged it for wisdom that only the 'true born' can possess' (Bettelheim, 1976, pg 183)

Rosaleen, armed with this wisdom, celebrates this rebirth



Fig 1.13: Rosaleen encounters a handsome stranger in the forest on the way to her grandmother's cottage



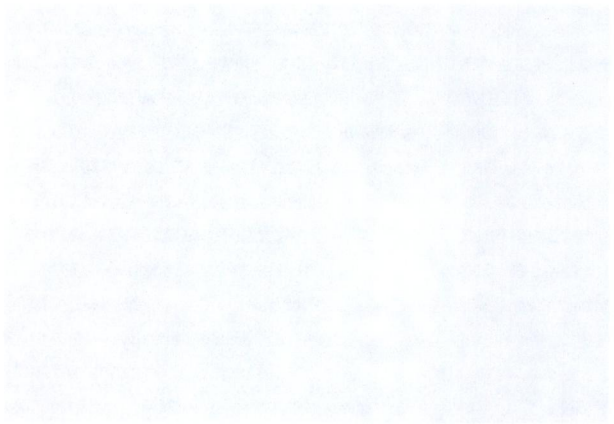
Fig 1.14: The stranger arrives at the cottage with blood on his lips



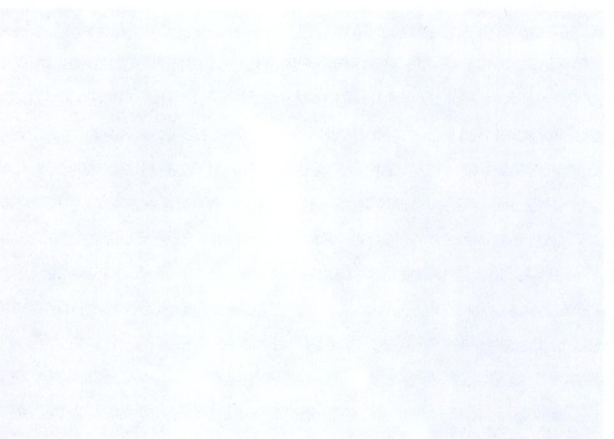
Fig 1.15: The stranger is threatened with his own gun



1911-12-13
1911-12-13



1911-12-13
1911-12-13



1911-12-13
1911-12-13





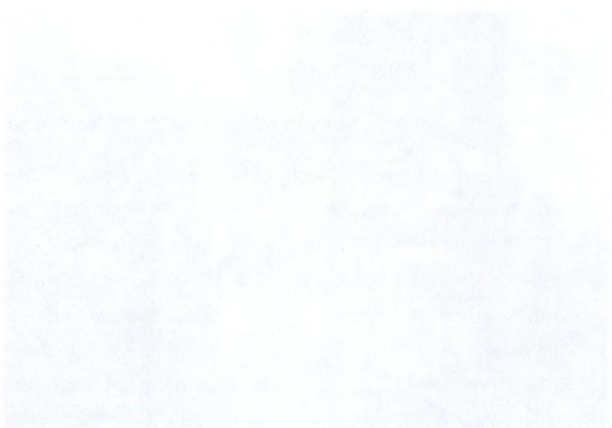
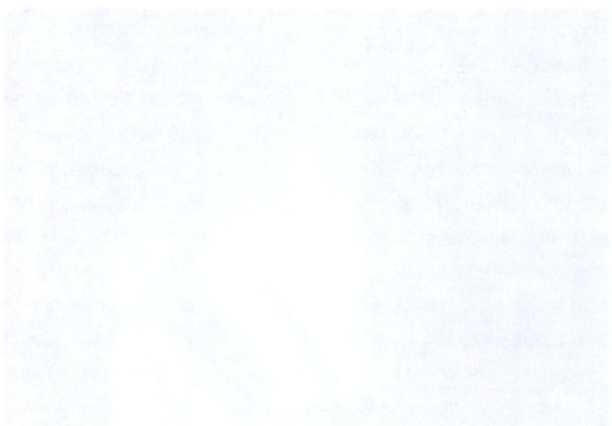
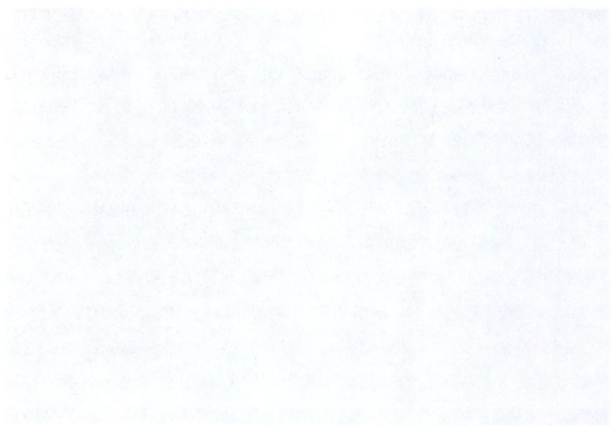
Fig 1.16: The wolf is caressed by Rosaleen



Fig 1.17: Rosaleen transfigured as a she-wolf



Fig 1.18: She escapes into the forest



with marriage; she becomes a she-wolf and leaves with her spouse (the metamorphosised hunter) through the cottage window as the search party arrives. The transformation of Rosaleen into the she-wolf is a definite rebirth; she rejects the world of men for that of beasts. In doing so she avenges Belle and all other heroines condemned to patriarchal eternity.

Notes

1: Perrault did not facilitate the escape of Little Red Riding Hood by supplying the avenging hunter, a character added by subsequent storytellers such as The Brothers Grimm.

2: Jack Zipes, author of The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood believes Perrault added the red cap feature to the oral tale as a symbol of the devil, while Bruno Bettelheim argues that it clearly represents menstruation.

3: In the original story this union is described as thus: "She will lay his fearful head on her lap and she will pick out the lice from his pelt and perhaps she will put the lice into her mouth and eat them, as he will bid her, as she would do in a savage marriage ceremony." (Carter, 1981, pg 118)

Chapter 2: Absolutely Fantastic

The classification of *The Company of Wolves* as horror is inevitable if erroneous. It is difficult to place it within any preconceived genre; critics have wavered between fairytale, horror, comedy, art, feminism, and surrealism. While not wishing to contribute to genre wrangling, it is interesting to discuss *The Company of Wolves* in terms of horror/fantastic, as the structuring of the film reveals a conscious effort to avoid pure sensationalism, so often a feature of horror. Tzvetan Todorov defined the term 'fantastic'⁴ (art and literature)

The text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described. (Carroll, 1990, pg 149)

This definition is discussed by Noel Carroll in The Philosophy of Horror where he contributes his own contrasting definitions of horror and the fantastic

..... thus, whereas the fantastic is defined by an oscillation between naturalistic and supernatural explanations, horror requires that at some point attempts at ordinary scientific explanations be abandoned in favour of a supernatural, or sci-fi explanation. (Carroll, 1990, pg 149)

At this point it is obvious that *The Company of Wolves* qualifies as fantastic; the opening sequence establishing Rosaleen's dream-state places all events within a naturalistic dream explanation. The ambivalent ending results, however, in final ambiguity between reality and fantasy.

Carroll further believes that the creation of the fantastic (literature or film) must entail a conscious effort by the

writer/director to keep all facts as indecisive as possible.

This indecisiveness must be woven into the fabric of the story..... the narrative must modulate the flow of information in such a way that the alternative hypotheses are advanced and sustained, or, at least, in such a way that both are advanced and neither is irretrievably undermined until the moment of discovery. Of course, in the pure fantastic, neither alternative is ever satisfactorily defeated.(Carroll, 1990, pg 150)

When viewed as a unit (as opposed to two separate narratives) *The Company of Wolves* could be read as naturalistic were it not for its conclusion. That is, all supernatural events within the dream-narrative could be easily explained as the nightmare hallucinations of a young girl. The end, however, ensures that we must eternally vacillate between logic and fantasy; we must return to where Rosaleen sleeps restlessly, while downstairs wolves have broken through a painting and are swarming through the house. They eventually invade Rosaleen's bedroom, crashing through her window. Toys and furniture smash as she wakes up screaming. While logic dictates that this is still part of her dream, the realism of the presentation persuades otherwise.

While this dream-plot was necessary to frame and support the main narrative, the deviation from the original story (which ends equally ambiguously)⁵ proved technically problematic for Jordan to realise. An original concept of allowing a completely naturalistic ending was abandoned for a deliberately enigmatic conclusion. Another possibility involving the girl disappearing through the floor, Cocteau-style, was dismissed due to technical limitations. (Cocteau achieved a very satisfying materialisation of Belle through a wall in *La Belle et la Bete* , 1946, as well as his miraculous mercury mirrors in *Le Sang d'un Poete* , 1930, and *Orphee* , 1950) The chosen ending however, is effective, and certainly conveys the desired ambiguous climax. The final



Fig 2.1: Rosaleen, asleep and dreaming



Fig 2.2: A wolf jumps through a painting, invading reality



Fig 2.3: Shattered toys in Rosaleen's bedroom

scream is not one of fear; its orgasmic release signals the symbolic ending of childhood and rebirth.

While *The Company of Wolves* can be defined as fantasy due to these oscillations between reality and unreality, the fairytale does not fall precisely into this category. The nature of fairytales requires that all normal conceptions of reality are suspended absolutely. Attempts are never made to explain the events as scientific or otherwise; they are accepted as being part of what constitutes the 'normal' world of the fairytale- a world where the fantastic is so commonplace it replaces reality altogether. Angela Carter writes in a similar vein. The extraordinary events are never questioned or doubted, but occur as a different type of 'reality'. Freud argued that the fairytale could not be classified as fantastic (referred to as the 'uncanny') as in fairytales

the world of reality is left behind from the very start, and the animistic system of beliefs is frankly adopted. Wish-fulfilments, secret powers, omnipotence of thoughts, animation of inanimate objects, all the elements so common in fairy stories, can exert no uncanny influence here. That feeling cannot arise unless there is a conflict of judgement as to whether things which have been 'surmounted' and are regarded as incredible may not, after all, be possible; and this problem is eliminated from the outset by the postulates of the world of fairytales. (Freud, pg 373)

Freud referred to literature however; it can argued be that the fairytale film is a separate and distinctive exception to this theory. Cocteau believed that when filming the fairytale, the camera replaced the narrator, a view which Marina Warner concurs with- "The camera acts as an anonymous narrator, in the same way as the storyteller." The realism of the film medium in comparison to any of the other two-dimensional arts ensures that a film-fairytale, although fantastic, is often as credible as reality itself, particularly with the advancement of special effects and photography. Christian Metz believes that

The material existence of the filmic images (along with all issues from it: stronger impressions of reality, superiority of perceptual precision and therefore of the power of incarnation) helps recover some advantages that compensate more or less completely for the images' alien origin. (Metz, 1976, pg 135)

Freud's theory can be applied to Disney fairytale, as the animated medium entails an immediate relinquishing of normal reality. The potency of film as a medium for creating reality from fantasy ensures that an audience cannot view the fairytale on celluloid in the same light as the fairytale in its literary form.

The categorisation of *The Company of Wolves* as horror is perhaps due to the explicit scenes of lupine metamorphoses than any other reason. It is difficult to see how Jordan could have avoided this graphic imagery; if, indeed, Cocteau's *verisme* is applied here, it appears that hyper-realism was necessary to give the film credibility, considering the adult audience it was created for. Jordan states that *The Company of the Wolves* utilised the fairytale to "say more adult things" (Lee, Nov 1994), and that the inclusion of graphic imagery was justified as it mirrored the dark complexities of Carter's imagination.

The film has been criticised in that it literally spells out what was always (and should have been left) inherent in this particular fairytale; namely the implied sexual nature of the relationship between Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf. Richard Combs felt that

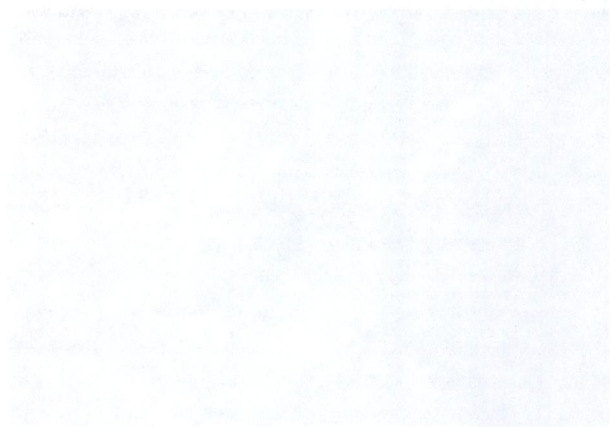
what should have been a riot of storytelling of dreams opening into old wives tales and then into reinterpreted old fairytales like Little Red Riding Hood tends towards a stilted explication of the *content* of all these stories.

concluding the opinion that "it is a film that has written



Fig 2.4, 2.5, 2.6 : Graphic images of metamorphoses





it's own review." (Combs, 1984) If *The Company of Wolves* appears all-knowing in its offering of a conclusive synopsis of the symbolism of Little Red Riding Hood, it must be reiterated that this film is not simply, (as *La Belle et la Bete* is) a visualisation of the fairytale of Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. It is a homage to the prose of Angela Carter, a writer who consciously seized the fairytale to project a definite viewpoint. Neil Jordan states that they have "deliberate polemic intent" (Lee, Nov 1994) Responding to the charge that the explications of metamorphoses and child sexuality are extraneous and sensationalist, Jordan is emphatic.

It was a whole world, Angela's- it was making use of a fairytale to say more adult things. That's the way she used fairytales. So that's the way I made the movie. I just wanted to say the same things as her story did. I deliberately wasn't faithful to the story, just used Angela's working methods. (Lee, Nov 1994))

Jordan states that he has never been particularly interested in fairytales. His specific interest lies in metamorphosis and the bestial; this is evident from his other work, both film and literature. Even films that are rooted in harsh reality are infused with a surreal atmosphere and dialogue. In *Angel* a musician becomes a cold-blooded killer as he pursues the murderers of a deaf girl. *The Crying Game* features a reformed I.R.A member who falls in love with a beautiful nightclub singer who subsequently reveals herself as male. His most recent film, *Interview with the Vampire* is based on Anne Rice's cult novel of vampire metamorphosis. Dramatic jolts in narrative create startling twists in Jordan's plots which seem ready at any moment to segue into fantasy. As Duncan J. Petrie comments

Jordan's characters often encounter nightmare worlds

which they must negotiate rather than push aside precisely because they are unacknowledged dimensions of reality.

This resembles Carter's 'working methods'; the fairytale is a similar vehicle for her personal vision, which she fuses with a fascination for the fantastic.

I'm interested in the fantastic really. And I suppose fairytales is one of the simplest routes to that. (Neil Jordan, (Lee, Nov 1994)

Notes

4: Todorov divides the fantastic into two further categories- the 'fantastic marvellous' and the 'fantastic uncanny'. The former constitutes narratives which begin as fantastic, but conclude with a naturalistic explanation; the latter entails plots which end with an ultimately super-natural explanation. (Carroll, 1990, pg 149)

5: The story concludes with "See! sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf." (Carter, 1981, pg 118)

Chapter 3: Telling Tall Tales

Having established that *The Company of Wolves* is not purely horror, it is nonetheless essential to stress the integral role of fear as a key element in both it and *La Belle et la Bete*. While *The Company of Wolves* has frequently been classified as 'gothic' the reasons for this categorisation are never specified. When the definition is considered, however, it is apparent that both films clearly contain strong elements of this genre, elements which, when discussed, suggest why these apparently childish subjects have adult relevance.

Ellen Moers, in Literary Women, offers this definition of the gothic

.....the gothic is not so easily stated except that it has to do with fear. In gothic writings fantasy predominates over reality, the strange over the commonplace, and the supernatural over the natural, with one definite auctorial intent: to scare. (Moers, 1978, pg 90)

The analysis of Mario Praz is succinct to the point of understatement; in his essay on the subject he describes gothic as ".....the appeal of terror and mystery". (Praz, 1968 pg 8) Fear and the fairytale have always been bed-fellows; they teem with horrific beasts, parents plotting infanticide, witches, ghouls and goblins of malicious and evil intent. While children are entertained by the nobler aspects of the fairytale, they are simultaneously thrilled by the malevolent. Fear has traditionally been an element in the moral educating of children; if 'scare' is taken in the sense of a warning against the repercussions of wrong-doing, Moer's definition can almost be applied to the fairytale- fantasy over reality,

strange over the commonplace, and supernatural over the natural. The addition of the word 'enchant' to this 'auctorial intent' provides a fuller definition. From this an alternative reading of 'gothic' can be obtained- fairytales for grown-ups. 'Scare' with reference to the gothic had little to do with the shaping of morals, rather it was an "attempt to stimulate jaded sensibilities and as such its descendants are the modern horror film and science fiction fantasy." (Bigsby, 1987)

Ellen Moers names Ann Radcliffe, the 18th century author, as a pioneer of gothic writing, establishing an archetypal narrative of the genre "..... in which the central figure is a young woman who is simultaneously persecuted victim and courageous heroine." (Moers, 1978, pg 91) Many fairytales contain such a central figure. The young heroines of these tales are seldom, however, as resourceful as their gothic successors would be, perhaps owing to the ideals of feminine behaviour in the ages in which the tales were documented.

Beauty and the Beast in particular has many standard features of early gothic. Mme de Beaumont's tale of a beautiful girl imprisoned by a horrific beast simultaneously enchants and terrifies, with its sepulchral castle, gloomy forest, and repugnant beast; Cocteau exploited these gothic motifs to the utmost in his 1946 film, *La Belle et La Bete*. Written in 1756, Beauty and the Beast precedes Mrs Radcliffe's classic of 18th century gothic, The Mysteries of Udolpho

According to Mario Praz, gothic was feminine in nature from the beginning.

In no other century (18th) was woman such a dominating figure..... they discovered the *mal de vivre*, and the *vapeurs* They had vague inklings of a metaphysical anxiety. (Praz, 1968 pg 9)



Fig 3.1: Gothic imagery in La Belle et la Bete- Belle enters the castle

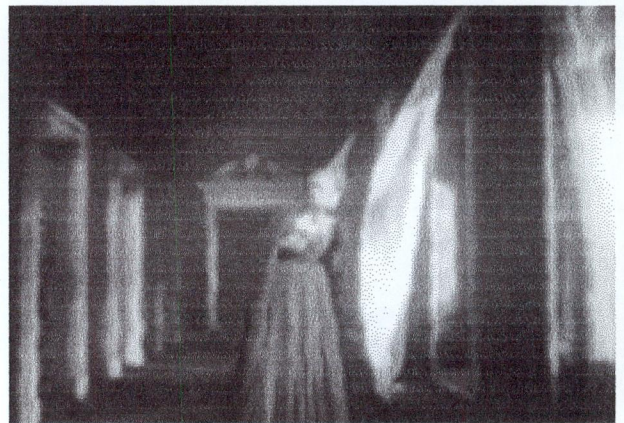


Fig 3.2: Passing through deserted halls



Fig 3.3: Encountering the Beast outside her bedroom

An interesting feature of gothic literature is the pre-eminence of women authors. The impassioned prose of writers such as Mary Shelley (Frankenstein 1818), Christina Rossetti (Goblin Market 1859), Emily Bronte (Wuthering Heights 1847), and Charlotte Bronte (Jane Eyre 1847) seems strangely at odds with the image of demure Victorian femininity. By the mid 1800s the "vague inklings of a metaphysical anxiety" had become a definite desire for self-expression, self-expression which often took the gothic form. Jane Eyre, for example, features the alarming Mr. Rochester, the 'castle' of Thornfield Hall, and a mad wife who 'haunts' the brave young heroine. Goblin Market, a narrative poem, tells a story of forbidden sexuality, heroic sacrifice, and feminine solidarity. Ellen Moers states this exquisitely euphemistic poem was "given to children in the days when children had stronger stomachs than they do today", (Moers, 1978, pg 100) suggesting the potential child appetite for the gothic. She also remarks on the Victorian device of crossing animals with humans to create monsters. The goblins of Rossetti's poem, for instance, possess different animal features, while Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights is described as "a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man". (The attraction of Cathy for the uncouth, rough Heathcliff is reminiscent of Rosaleen's attraction to the wolves.)

Moers further suggests that the existence and acknowledgement of childhood sexuality (on which both Wuthering Heights and Goblin Market depend) was of particular relevance for Victorian female writers. What Moers calls the "sexual drama of the Victorian nursery" (Moers, 1978, pg 105) proved the solitary source of physical contact with the opposite sex. These familial romps, while never implicitly incestuous, became the sole sexual fuel for the imaginations of what were, as Moers

points out, "literary spinsters." (Moers, 1978, pg 105)

This suggests an explanation for the undercurrent of illicit eroticism that co-exists with the often unrestrained passions of apparently celibate, platonic love in the writings of these Victorian women. Moers cites Wuthering Heights as an example of this barely contained sibling passion

Emily Bronte's view of childhood comprised nature and freedom, but not *innocence*; this may well be the particularly female component of her romanticism. The children in her novel are brutes, little monsters of cruelty and lust, like Christina Rossetti's goblins..... (Moers, 1978, pg 106)

This genre was fuelled by repression of one sort or another; the particular timbre of female gothic can only be explained by what set it apart from its masculine equivalent- social repression, sexual repression, economic repression. Considering Vivian Sobchack's suggestion that the bleeding of the heroine of *Carrie* is representative of "an apocalyptic feminine explosion of the frustrated desire to speak" (Creed, 1993, pg 78) it could be said that this was the 18th century literary equivalent. Michelle Roberts, in a review of Marina Warner's recent study of the fairytale, comments that

Warner argues convincingly that to read the narrator as female allows the tales to express all sorts of feminine concerns and obsessions (Roberts, 1994, pg 32)

while Warner herself states that it was the "suspect whiff of femininity" surrounding the fairytale which enticed her to study it. (A similar if rather dismissive view was held at The Athenaeum newspaper in 1847 on the new female gothic writings, which were termed "the eccentricities of woman's fantasy")

Modern female authors such as Angela Carter, Jeanette

Winterson, and Margaret Atwood are the inheritors of this legacy of gothic female rebellion.⁶ Marina Warner cites Carter as a literary doyenne of female sexual inception, writing candidly of erotic domination as equally satisfying for both the sexes. Her revisionist fairytales can be viewed as (a)infected, contaminated, corrupt versions of their politically correct predecessors (Brothers Grimm), or (b)restored to their former honesty ⁷(the oral versions in existence hundreds of years before Perrault) They are forthright in stating unequivocally what was inherent, whether intended or not by their noble documentarians, and adding an adjunctive feminism. Her comment in a review of the work of Betsy Hearne revealed her suspicion of modern diluted fairytales, censored for children, when she reprovigly stated that such tales are utilised to "house- train the id." (Warner, 1992, pg 10) Bettelheim, of course, believed in the necessity of psychological disciplining for children. There is evidence that Carter, despite her suspicion of this theory, read at least part of his classic work on the subject, The Uses of Enchantment. In a chapter discussing Little Red Riding Hood, a footnote tells of a latin story of 1023 where

we find some basic elements of 'little red riding hood': a little girl with a red cap, the company of wolves, a child being swallowed alive who returns unharmed, and a stone put in place of the child. (*my emphasis* Bettelheim 1976 pg 168)

This is an unusual and peculiar phrase; as The Uses of Enchantment was published in 1976, and Carter's collection The Bloody Chamber, which includes The Company of Wolves, was not written until 1979, there is every possibility that Carter discovered the title for her apologue in Bettelheim's academic study- a study which recommends the training of the id through

fairytale.

If Carter's tale can then be viewed as modern gothic Jordan's film accurately emphasises the dark complexities of her prose. Many features of literary gothic are echoed. A large house, filled with winding corridors and surrounded by mysterious woods is home to a young girl, tormented by the taunts of her sister and the changes taking place within her own body. In a struggle to escape she creates a gothic forest inhabited by ferocious beasts and the dream-wishes of her own psyche. Sets and costumes are rich reds and browns; the young heroine possesses a voluptuous innocence suggestive of budding sensuality; the monsters are at once glamorous, sexually potent and heinous, all of which would become archetypal features of the modern gothic film- *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and Jordan's most recent film, *Interview with the Vampire*, described as a "dreamy, elegant, and richly atmospheric Gothic film" (Dwyer, 1995, pg 12)) which he chose to work on because of its similarities with *The Company of Wolves*, and his need to re-enter what he calls "the dark forest" (Jordan also states that while Anne Rice, author of *Interview with the Vampire*, is a very different writer to Angela Carter, they both "make a connection between sexuality and violence which most male writers would never make") (Dwyer, 1995, pg 12)

While 17th century authors may have created their gothic with the intent to 'scare', sophisticated modern audiences may persuade themselves that to be terrified is not enough. The presence of a mysterious threat has always been a feature of successful gothic; what is more relevant to modern writers and directors is the potential interpretation of motifs and symbols which are woven into the fabric of the traditional gothic

structure, indicative perhaps of a more psychologically aware society. Marina Warner comments that the stories of Angela Carter "lift the covers from the body usually concealed in the fairytale" (Warner, 1992, pg 10) The appeal of such revisions with modern audiences points to a fascination with these revelations and metaphorical exposures, which outweighs any initial feelings that the restrained suggestiveness of their originals should be preserved.



Fig 3.4: The gothic setting of Rosaleen's country home, with her sister Alice running in the garden



Fig 3.5: Alice climbing the stairs to Rosaleen's bedroom



Fig 3.6: Rosaleen as Little Red Riding Hood

Notes

6: Examples of early 20th century female fantastic fiction include Djuna Barnes (whose 1936 novel, Nightwood, is described by Moers as "macabre fantasy"), Leonora Carrington, the surrealist writer of gruesome fairytales from 1937-1941, and Carson McCullers, author of gothic short stories in the 1940s.

7: Many of the earliest fairytales were of an explicit, macabre nature. Iona and Peter Opie, for example tell of a traditional version of Little Red Riding Hood from Brittany in which the wolf bottles the grandmother's blood and persuades the innocent heroine to drink. (Opie, 1980, pg 121) This gory detail could almost have been created by Carter herself.

Chapter 4: Beauty by the Beast

The rhythm of the film is one of narrative. I am telling the story. It is as if I were hidden behind the screen saying "Then such and such a thing happened." The characters don't seem to be living a tale of their own, but a life that is being narrated. Perhaps that's how it should be in a fairytale. (Cocteau, 1946, pg 38)

Historians are agreed on the link between Beauty and the Beast and the tale of Cupid and Psyche, included in Apuleius' work *Metamorphoses* (2nd century A.D), which dealt with the theme of transfigurations and their inception. Cupid, as God of Love, represented base sexual desires, while Psyche is the Greek term for the soul. Cupid is invisible, as opposed to the all too apparent Beast, but the tale features two malevolent sisters who attempt to convince Psyche that her bridegroom is in fact a hideous serpent. Apuleius, according to Robert Graves, transformed an ancient oral fable "into a neat philosophical allegory of the process of the rational soul towards intellectual love." (Opie, 1980, pg 181)

When Mme de Beaumont revised the story in 1756 she was thinking of a more practical application of the same ideal. Working as a governess for noble families in England, she was committed to the education of young women; the future of her pupils, however, was all too often predestined- arranged marriages with men of suitable birth, inescapable and unavoidable. Her tale of gradual love towards a physically unattractive suitor seems all too similar to the possible fate of her female students, who are gently advised to allow their husbands the chance to prove their desirability as life-companions through kindness and gentleness. Such unions may well blossom into mutual affection and respect if not exactly blaze with passion.

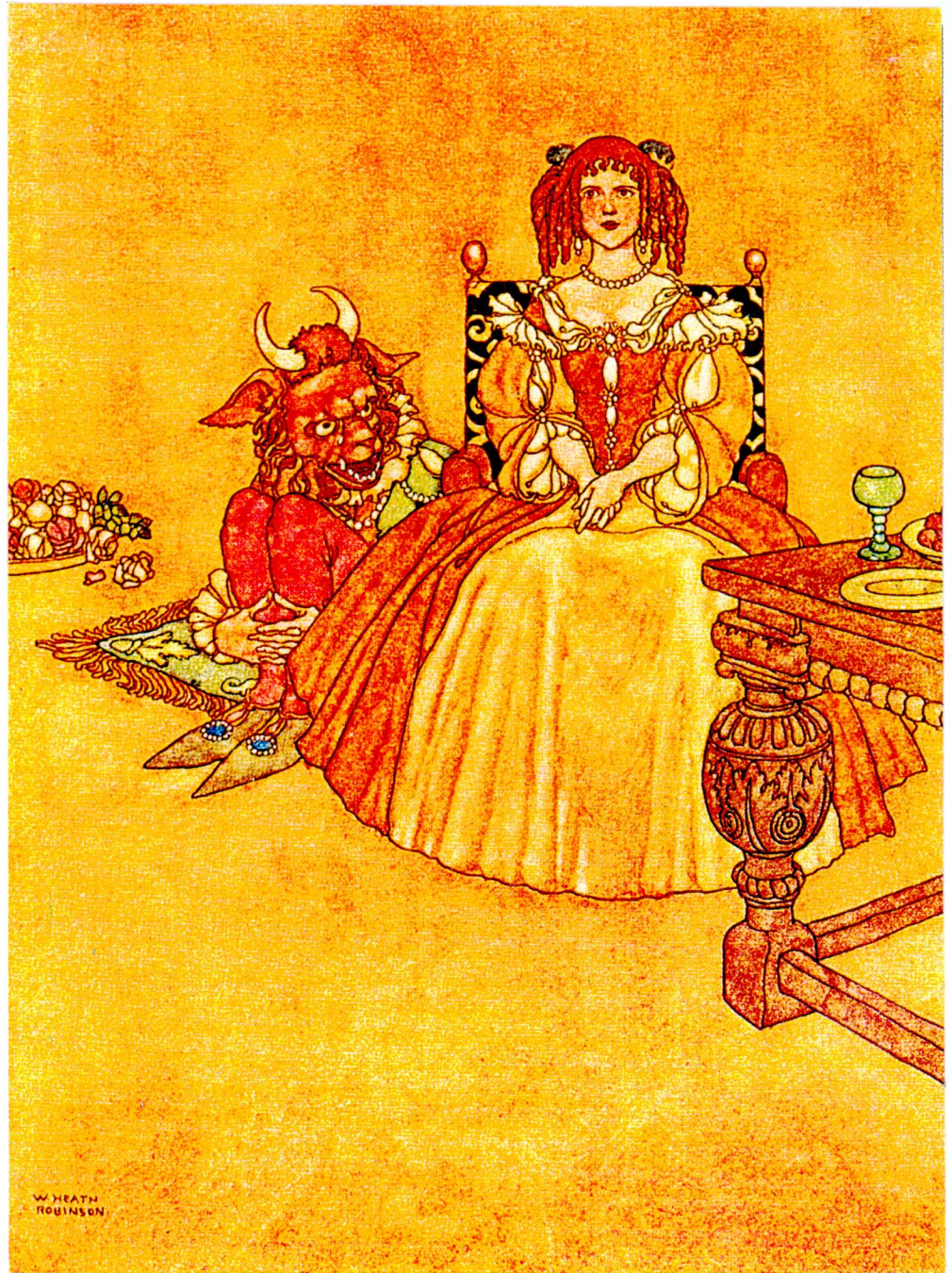


Fig 4.1: *Beauty and the Beast* by W. Heath Robinson, 1921





Fig 4.2, 4.3: *Beauty and the Beast* for children- Walter Crane, 1874





While this marital resignation may not be so relevant to modern artists and their audiences, the tale's theme of rebirth and rite of passage is. Such tales of female rite of passage appeal to female interpreters, from the gothic writers of the 18th and 19th centuries to modern authors of the fantastic.

Angela Carter also wrote a version of Beauty and the Beast entitled The Courtship of Mr. Lyon. (Carter, pg 1981) While this revision is akin to its predecessor in narrative, its theme focuses on the dangers of narcissism and over-indulgence of the pleasure principle. Carter's heroine, like Rosaleen in *The Company of Wolves* is human, susceptible to human vanities, follies, temptations and vices. The fairytale heroine is ever graceful, decorous, and serene, even in the face of the most traumatic terrors and evils. She is guaranteed to emerge from her adventures with her dress unsoiled, hair groomed, and virtue intact.

Mme de Beaumont's Belle is such a heroine; Cocteau preserves her as such. It suited his sensibilities to do so. Cocteau was essentially a surrealist, despite the fact that he was regarded as superficial and amateurish by the 'intellectuals' of the movement (His film *Le Sang d'un Poete* was, according to Alan Williams, "just the kind of 'artistic' work that Bunuel and his friends could love to hate" (Williams, 1992, pg 179) In *La Belle et Le Bete* he was, as Marina Warner says "reinterpreting Symbolist doctrine of the feminine role in creativity". This role was that of stimulus, a muse to inspire men to new poetic heights. This muse could be no ordinary flesh and blood woman; rather she was elevated to a sublime being, a distant shining Object to which the artist could stretch but never quite reach. The bland face of perfect beauty, epitomised by Jose Day in her role as Belle, facilitated the projections of male fantasy. The

Lady as Sublime Being then, becomes a universal icon in art and literature. Lacan commented that

writers have noted all the poets seem to be addressing the same person.....in this poetic field the feminine is emptied of all real substance. (Zizek, 1993, pg 95)

Unlike Rosaleen of *The Company of the Wolves* Belle is such an icon; perfect in beauty and goodness, she is essentially impassive, resigned to fate wheresoever it may lead her. Even her two conscious acts (the self-sacrifice in place of her father, and the decision to return to save the dying beast) appear pre-ordained; her goodness would not allow any other option. She does not seem frantic to escape the clutches of the Beast- if she feels strong emotions she represses them under a glacially calm facade. In short, she is as unnatural as her surroundings. This is of course a fairytale written in the 18th century, reflecting the social etiquettes and ideals of femininity of the day. Cocteau however, was intimate friends with some of the most famous and creatively independent women of the era, including designer Coco Chanel and feminist writer/philosopher Simone de Beauvoir. If Belle was representative of woman it is peculiar that he should have chosen, in an age of feminist advancement, to revert to an essentially medieval concept of femininity.

Slavoj Zizek believes that "the ideology of courtly love" (so typical of fairytales such as Beauty and the Beast) is narcissistic

Deprived of every real substance, the Lady functions as a mirror onto which the subject projects his narcissistic ideal- or to quote Christine Rossetti's sonnet 'In an Artist's Studio' which speaks of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's relationship to Elizabeth Siddal, his Lady: 'not as she is, but as she fills his dream.' (Zizek, 1993, pg 96)

Marina Warner characterises the Beast and his castle as representational of the fantasy world where "poets- like Baudelaire, like Cocteau himself- are sent through the love women inspire in them". Cocteau was homosexual, which suggests that 'love' in its erotic sense (as inspired by women) was not how Cocteau iconicised Belle. Belle is representative of absolute aesthetic beauty- this is how she is as "she fills his dream". She is sublimated as Cocteau's ideal of poetry. This is why he insisted on what Warner calls the "ravishing aestheticisation of the film"(Warner, 1992, pg 8) The distant shining object to which Cocteau stretched was not a woman but his dream of "an otherworldly creation of pure, transcendent beauty" (Ames, 1972, pg vi)) Cocteau commented in his diary after his first viewing of the completed film that

The film unwound me, revolved, sparkled, outside of me, solitary, unfeeling, far- off as a heavenly body.(my emphasis Cocteau, 1972, pg 130)

Contemporary reviewers dismissed the film as "old-fashioned and uncinematic", suggesting that the reason for this opinion stemmed from the neo-realism of post-war French cinema. When presented at the first Cannes film festival in October 1946, however, the film was awarded the Prix Delluc, an honour which must surely have flattered Cocteau's artistic vanity and somewhat justified his poetic vision.



Fig 4.4: The impassive face of sublime beauty- Belle as perceived by the Beast



Fig 4.5: Domestic Belle.....



Fig 4.6:and as the Object of the Beast's adoration

Chapter 5: Morals of the Story

As Cocteau saw himself as a poet first and foremost, utilising multi-media for his particularly personal form of self-expression, he had definite ideas as to what did or did not constitute his concept of poetry. It is possible to synthesise these ideas thus: poetry equalled the marriage between fantasy and realism. Cocteau was dogmatic in his manifesto for the achieving of this marriage, deliberately and zealously visualising the precise details of Mme de Beaumont's narrative and avoiding the temptation to wallow in the sometimes self-indulgent lyricisms and dramatics of his other work. "People have decided once and for all that fuzziness is poetic. Now, in my eyes poetry is precision, number". (Cocteau, 1972, pg 3) Cocteau believed in what he termed *verisme*, or truthism. This lay at the core of his style of film-making, which he referred to as 'documentary'. *La Belle et la Bete* seems incongruous with the normal understanding of the word documentary, the subject matter being absolute fantasy; Cocteau intended the term to refer to his method of documenting the events no matter how unreal or incredible. His precise treatment of this ethereal subject is in fact in absolute harmony with the refined, rather restrained prose of his reference. This documentary style was related to surrealism

If the surrealists use materials drawn from the imagination or sub-conscious, they will present these contents with such vividness that they will take on a real, hallucinatory quality. (Earle, 1987, pg 12)

Cocteau requested of his adult audience the "artlessness" possessed by children in their absolute acceptance of the fantastic in his introductory credits to *La Belle et La Bete*.⁸ In his diary

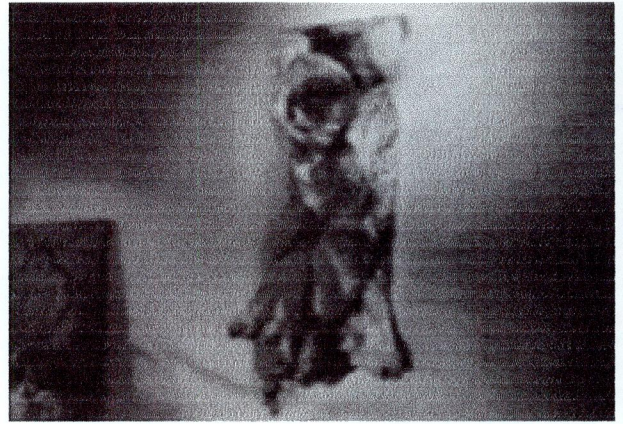


Fig 5.4, 5.5, 5.6: Visualisation of the impossible- Belle materialises through the wall of her father's house





Fig 5.7, 5.8, 5.9: Fantastic imagery in Le Sang d'un Poete- Jean Marais walks through a mirror



he emphasised the need for an non-prejudiced, open minded audience. He felt that the cinema, due to its realistic nature, was an ideal medium for his documentary style and fantastic subject.

.....I have the impudence to believe that the cinema which depicts the impossible is apt to carry conviction, in a way, and may be able to put a 'singular' occurrence into the plural. (Cocteau, 1972, pg 5)

The sumptuous visuals of *la Belle et la Bete* are a primary feature of attraction to the adult viewer. Cocteau referred to the paintings of Gustav Dore ("illustrating Perrault.....verging on the hideous"), Pieter de Hooch, Rembrandt, and Vermeer for visual inspiration for costumes, sets, tableaux, and lighting. Vermeer in particular suggested to him an uncanny atmosphere filtering through the hyper-realism of his genre paintings. George Amberg states that Vermeer's apparently ordinary subject matter is only a "pretext, a vehicle by which the universe of the fantastic is expressed"(Amberg, 1972, pg vii), an effect Cocteau himself strove for.

Both adult and child have a narcissistic identification with the fairytale as film. The identification of the adult viewer may be perceived as an extension of the identification of the child with its original literary source. What separates them is the adult inclination to analyse this identification through the naming and categorising of symbols and metaphors. While Cocteau obviously anticipated an audience for his poetry, his frank and detailed account of the filming of *La Belle et La Bete* is devoid of any reference to deliberate metaphorical intent. Bettelheim's analysis of Beauty and the Beast suggests many theories; the rose as loss of virginity, the Beast's castle as ultimate child narcissistic fantasy, the transfer of Beauty from father to Beast as a moral on the necessity of relinquishing oedipal attachments. Psychological



Fig 5.2: Jan Vermeer, *The Music Lesson*, 1644



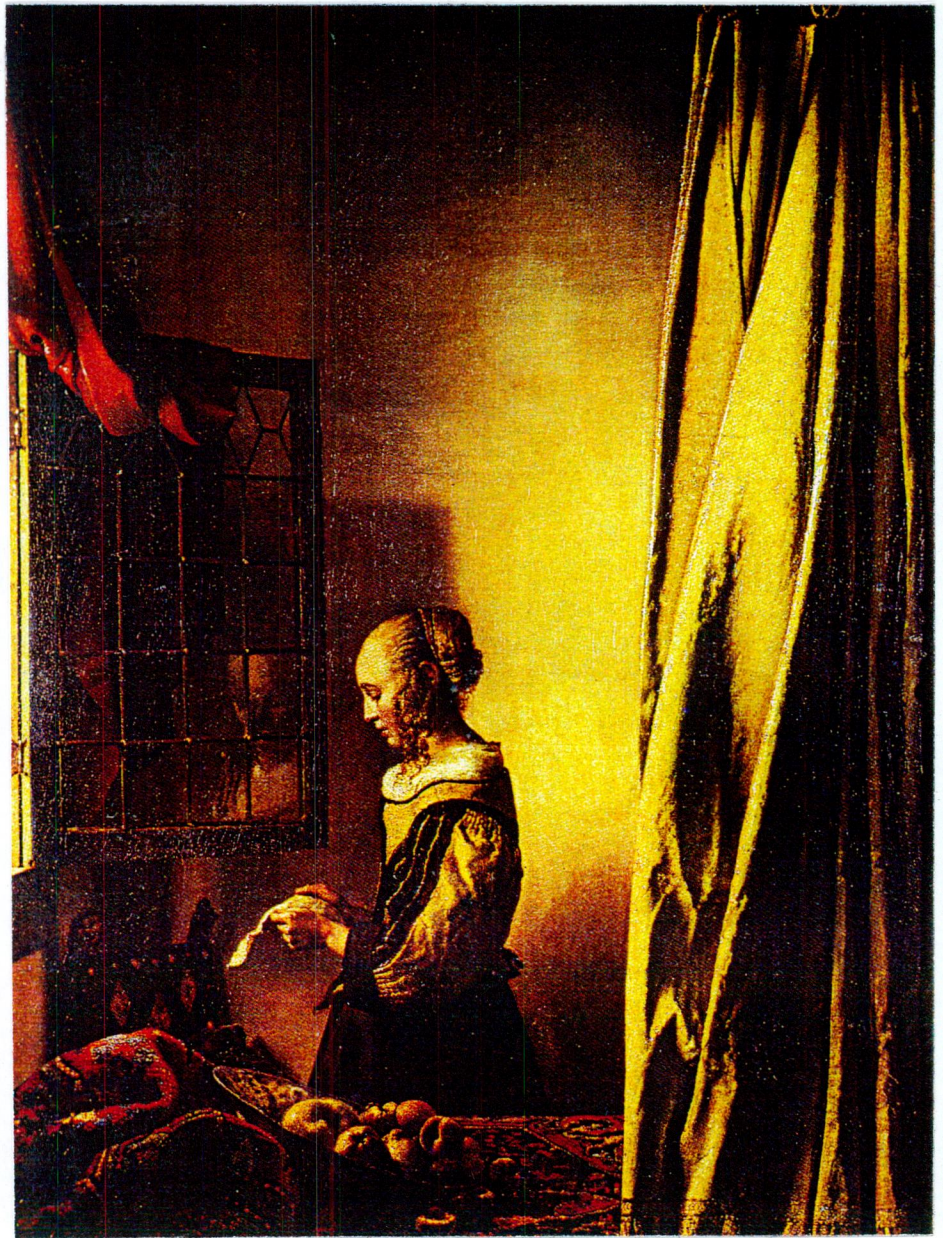


Fig 5.3; Jan Vermeer, Girl reading a letter at an open window, 1659





Fig 5.1: Pieter de Hooch, *A girl drinking with two men*, 1658



analysis of fairytales was unavailable to Cocteau; Bettelheim's work, regarded as revolutionary in the field, was not published until 1976. Although the film facilitates the transfer of any of Bettelheim's theories due to its proximity to the original, the absence of any reference to conscious metaphorical intent in his diary can only be taken as strong evidence that there is none. Every other detail is scrupulously documented, down to the serious eczema suffered by Cocteau during the filming. The fact is that *La Belle et la Bête* slotted neatly into his own artistic doctrine, without any additional metaphors or symbols. Cocteau himself stated "I chose that particular fable because it corresponded to my own personal mythology".(Amberg, 1972, pg vii) Cocteau perhaps identified with the torments of misinterpreted *Beast*- he rather valued his 'tortured poet' status

.....Cocteau remains the poet who speaks what he means, no more; who must be misunderstood because that is the poet's fate .(Rifkin)

Cocteau could not have imagined the extent to which fairytales would be dissected, metaphorically and functionally, in the latter half of the 20th century. What he was aware of was the narcissism of the audience, stating that "the film is made of the poet's craft, but the public makes it over into meaning, into the phantasm of their dreams".(Rifkin)

The concept of absolute childhood innocence is by now rather idealistic- even Bettelheim comments that

Fairytales underwent severe criticism when the new discoveries of psychoanalysis and child psychology revealed just how violent, anxious, destructive, and even sadistic a child's imagination is. (Bettelheim, 1976, pg 120)

It is somewhat ironic that these tales have become synony-

mous with innocent childhood fantasy, while simultaneously being condemned for their corrupting influence on the 'purity' of childhood. This is a recent accusation; cartoons have been similarly made scapegoat for the fact that every child entertains "murderous wishes and wants to tear things and even people into pieces". (Bettelheim) Fairytales are frequently violent and sadistic; they can hardly be blamed however for the 'inherent evil' of children. Erich Fromm notes that the aggressive nature of children is motivated by two powerful primal urges- (a)a desire to be free, and (b)the need to be what Fromm calls "effective" i.e to "accomplish, to realise, to carry out, to fulfil" (Fromm, 1984, pg 318) Both urges are thwarted by adults who "behave like any elite whose power is threatened. They use physical force, often blended with bribery to protect their position."(Fromm, 1984, pg 269) The child's inferior strength means s/he must resort to alternative methods of rebellion. The suppression of these urges although necessary, often leads to desperate attempts in adult life to 'effect'- "from drug and work addiction to cruelty and murder"(Fromm, 1984, pg 318) Children cannot be permitted limitless indulgence of these desires; Bettelheim's "monster" within the child is the pleasure seeking id which demands gratification at any cost. The fairytale is, then, one method of allowing the child express and conquer his/her fantasies of freedom; the child becomes the fairytale protagonist, empowered through fantasy yet learning the dangers of fulfilling the greedy desires of the pleasure principle (in for example, Little Red Riding Hood, Sleeping Beauty, and The Three Little Pigs) In the fairytale, evil is always punished. Bettelheim believed that the denial of the monster within the child is in fact detrimental to his/her psychological welfare, and that the fairytale is one effective method of

expelling fears and neurosis.

Such id-repression is, in fact, a form of wish-projection onto the child by the adult. Children are by nature primeval; the younger the child, the less socially conditioned. One reason for the enduring appeal of the fairytale with adults is their association with childhood, which many seem loath to relinquish. Freud remarks that

When an adult recalls his childhood it seems to him to have been a happy time, in which one enjoyed the moment and looked to the future without any wishes; it is for this reason that he envies children. (Freud, 1975, pg 219)

Freudian analysis of fairytales is chiefly pre-occupied with the unconscious, and its adult manifestations as dreams and day-dreams. Therefore if the unconscious is suppressed in childhood, adults will retain the symbols and motifs of this repression through to maturity. Freud's interest in fairytales lay with their association with dreams and fantasies, which in turn revealed the neurosis of the dreamer (One of Freud's longest and most difficult cases was that of the infamous 'Wolfman', a young man who suffered many years from a hysterical fear of wolves- a phobia in which fairytales, including Little Red Riding Hood, played a significant role) If, as Freud believed, childhood is

.....not the blissful idyll into which we distort it in retrospect, and that, on the contrary, children are goaded on through the years of childhood by the one wish to get big and do what grown-ups do (Freud, 1975, pg 219)

many adults may still have complications of the id to resolve. Adulthood as perceived by a child is a magical playground for the id, where physical strength ensures the granting of every wish. Adults, however, realise that maturity does not automati-

cally bring freedom, and frequently long for the days of childhood when empowerment through fantasy was plausible and permissible. The adult fairytale film is therefore laden with symbols and associations of sexuality, desires and terrors, still relevant to the adult mind. The romantic notion of childhood innocence arouses nostalgia for what Cocteau terms "the artlessness of children". As Marina Warner states

The child both mirrors our potential and represents what we have forfeited. Therefore the child's mind, if one can enter it, holds the key to something beyond the reality principle.....This passing beyond the reality principle through the eyes of the child offers hope and change, which is one of the principle functions of the fairy tale.(Warner, 1993, pg 41)

This desire to be enchanted, thrilled, and mystified explains the enduring popularity of the modern gothic film, as well as fairytales aimed at a younger audience, such as Disney's 1992 *Beauty and the Beast*. Although Cocteau's film does not exclude children, its restrained elegance and moody glamour is more obviously intended for an appreciative adult audience; it is unlikely that any child could fail to be anything but incredibly bored with Cocteau's monochrome version in the wake of Disney's virtual reality technicolor. Disney's version is paradoxically more self-conscious than Cocteau's, almost every aspect revamped for a politically aware 90's audience. Belle is feisty heroine, closer in spirit to the archetypal gothic heroine than Jose Day ever was. Her intelligence is established immediately by the emphasis placed on her love of books, she replaces her eccentric father as authority figure in their household, she consciously repels Gaston the handsome boor and succeeds in establishing mental superiority over clumsy Beast. The problem with Disney's revision, despite (or because of) its attempts at

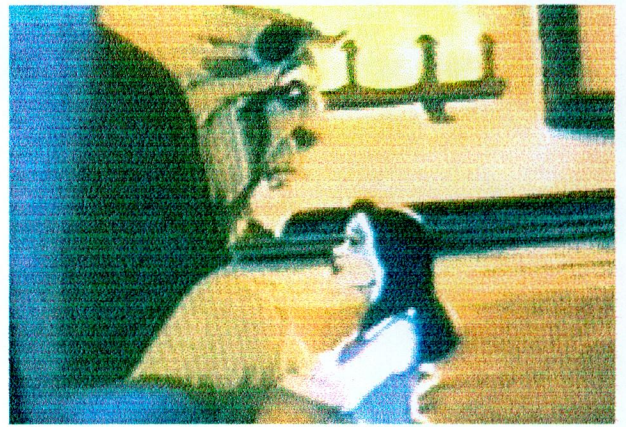


Fig 5.10: Disney's Beauty tames the Beast

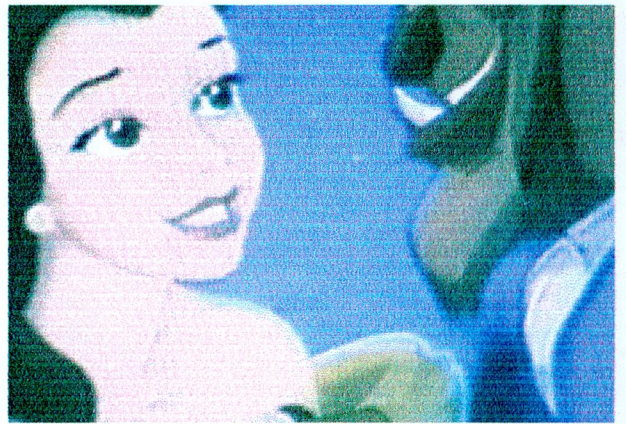


Fig 5.11:and is in turn charmed by his gentle nature

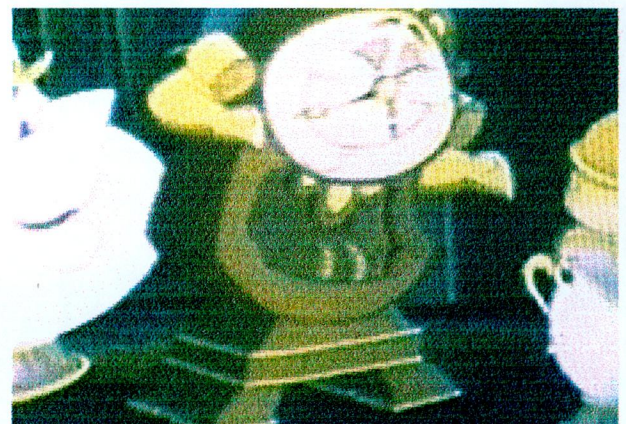


Fig 5.12: Inanimate objects come to life

appeasing the feminist establishment, is this self-consciousness. Disney's Belle is continuously surrounded by an animated circus of singing, dancing and wise-cracking household delph and appliances, who orchestrate the romance between the odd couple. Beast's dignity is often at risk- it is, after all, difficult to appear beastly and masterful when counselled by a candlestick, and groomed by a coatrail. By throwing a bright sunny light into the dark corners of the original narrative and sweeping out all vague threat and unpolitically correct eroticism (so delicately and sublimely handled by Cocteau) the story, while entertaining, loses its allure. The deliberate exclusion of the sensuality of the story is in consideration of the child audience, who (ironically) would probably be less offended than their parents.

An erotic frisson should have been inevitable, given the characteristics of the hero and heroine; each is an exaggeration of certain features of masculine and feminine. The inaccessibility of Belle adds to the sexual charge of Cocteau's film. She is forbidden; there is a permanent frisson of threat due to the possibility of Beast succumbing to his bestial instincts and assaulting her, despite the increasing awareness of his gentleness. Beast is often incapable of resisting his animalistic instincts; much to his shame he hunts and kills, his smoking paws proof of his guilt. His recurring proposal to Belle is reminiscent of Zizek's analysis of masochism ("The man-servant establishes in a cold, businesslike way the terms of the contract with the woman-master: what she is to do to him, what scene is to be rehearsed endlessly, what dress she is to wear....."(Zizek, 1993, pg 99) Beast establishes a ritual where Beauty is compelled to dine with him each evening, before asking her to marry him, despite the certain knowledge that she will refuse. He repeatedly



Fig 5.13: The Beast carries Belle, who has fainted, to her room



Fig: 5.14: The Beast burys his face in the cover from Belle's bed in anguish when she fails to return from visiting her dying father



Fig 5.15: The Beast places Belle on her bed

avows that she is mistress, and that he must obey her commands, but all times *he* is master; she is entrapped and must beg him to be allowed visit her dying father. As Zizek says

It is therefore the servant who creates the screenplay i.e who actually pulls the strings and dictates the activity of the woman (dominatrix): he stages his own servitude.(Zizek, 1993,pg 99)

this ritualistic nightmare can only be escaped when Belle responds to the Beast with compassion, marked in true fairytale fashion by the tears she sheds which reveal her deep love for him. She is rewarded for her lack of superficiality by his subsequent transformation into the handsome prince, ensuring a fairytale finale for herself and liberation for the Beast from his ghastly appearance. Belle has done more than prove that virtue is its own reward. In the moment of her compassionate gesture of love, she escapes her iconised state of Object and becomes human, transfigured along with the Beast.

(Zizek applies a similar theory to Jordan's *The Crying Game* where the theme of metamorphosis centres around transvestism and a soldier's love for a Sublime Lady who is subsequently revealed as male. The emergence of true love in this instance is given a Lacanian definition by Zizek

.....the sublime moment when eromenos (the loved one) changes into erastes (the loving one) by stretching his hand back and 'returning love'(Zizek, 1993, 105)

Although the transvestite is initially rejected by her former suitor, love eventually blossoms; this time it is 'real' as she is loved for her 'true' self.)

Belle must relinquish her exalted state the moment she reaches down from the pedestal on which she has been placed to respond to Belle. This is, of course, a fairytale; the beast is not

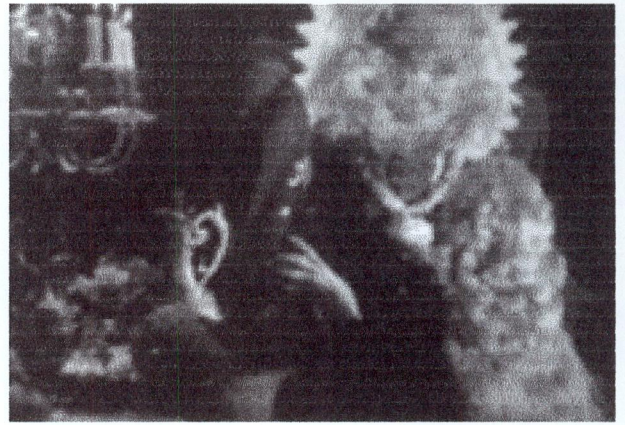


Fig 5.16: Belle begs the beast to allow her visit her father



Fig 5.17: At the Beast's insistence, the roles of Master/Servant are reversed



Fig 5.18: Belle comforts the dying Beast



Fig 5.19: The metamorphosis of Beast to Prince



*Fig 5.20: Belle's disconcerted expression mirrors her
unease*



Fig 5.21:but she resigns herself to a fairytale ending

transfigured into a man but into a prince. He is now the Sublime Object, and Belle risks losing his love now that the delicate balance between Object of worship and worshipper has been radically altered. This anxiety appears to be visible in Belle's disconcerted expression as she is claimed by the Prince. This Prince is a mirror image of Avenant, Belle's former uncouth suitor (both characters are played by Jean Marais, at one time Cocteau's lover) As Cocteau himself remarked, "This Prince Charming looks extraordinarily like Avenant and the likeness worries Beauty. She seems to miss the kind Beast....." (Cocteau, 1972, pg 3) Perhaps she is already regretful of the loss of her devoted admirer- Zizak believes a similar regret may lurk, half-ashamed of itself, in the heart of modern woman, to whom courtly love provided

all the features which constitute so-called femininity and define woman not as she is in her *jouissance feminine* but as she refers to herself with regard to her (potential) relationship to man, as an object of his desire.(Zizek, 1993, pg 108)

Belle's role as icon sways audience sympathies to the altogether more tangible Beast. Cocteau's Bete, in contrast to the cuddly toy Beast of Disney, is agonisingly torn between beast and man, struggling to contain his bestial instincts. Warner's description of the beast as he appears in modern Hollywood film (her example is *Edward Scissorhands*) as a creature whose "masculine strength outstrips its own desires"(Warner, 1992, pg 11) seems inaccurate when applied to Cocteau's beast. Warner believes that the duality of man, good and evil, as personified by the Beast, provides a positive male prototype, with the possibility of a "superior, virtuous brand of masculinity."(Warner, 1992, pg 11) The appeal of this theme for women authors lies in what she



Fig 5.22: The Beast stares in horror and shame at his smoking fingers, visible proof that he has killed



Fig 5.23: Struggling to control his bestial instincts



Fig 5.24: Lapping water from Belle's hands

terms the "refashioning of menace" i.e the recreation of a fantasy male ideal, where the noble aspects of masculine strength are perfectly complimented by more 'feminine' characteristics- gentleness, compassion and tenderness. This ideal appeals to a male audience, who, as Warner points out, are conscious of the fact that it "paints them, however apparently beastly, as tender, loving, and misunderstood." Not only then does the Beast embody ideal traits of the masculine, but the feminine also. The enduring empathy with the character results from the identification of both sexes with the tormented beast; each recognises within him an attraction to the opposite gender characteristics, while conditioned to remain within the stereotypical boundaries of their own sex.

This female attraction to the bestial, a regular theme in fairytales, is a forthright attempt to decipher the perplexities of female eroticism. While an undeniably masochistic element is attached to this attraction, a deeper fascination exists for the power which stimulates it. Rosaleen in *The Company of Wolves*, for example, envisions wolves to symbolise the sexual and social power she desires. Belle discards her Object status and unites with the Beast. Two halves of the same whole, they represent perfect dual harmony, each finding in the other what was denied by contemporary stereotyping- stereotypes of gender characteristics which have not altered considerably to this day.



Fig 5.25: Beast as ferocious animal, threatening and terrifying.....



Fig 5.26:and transformed into the charming hand - some Prince



Fig 5.27: The couple ascend to Happu-Ever-After

Notes

8: He states "Children believe in the stories they are told, they have complete faith." Jordan similarly comments that "children are so easily surprised because they have so little experience in life; but the adult surrealist has had a surplus of exposure to people and media; and it is by an act of supreme will that the surrealist can see things as a child."

Conclusion

Trust the tale, not the teller. (D.H. Lawrence)

In the latter half of this century, the fairytale became increasingly burdened with the weight of a plethora of psychological, political, and social metaphors and symbols. The 'true' meaning of fairytales, ingenuous or otherwise, will no doubt continue to incite debate for as long as they remain an inherent part of our culture; the reasons the fairytale retains its mystery and hence its fascination is not so much the ambiguity of the tale but the anonymity of the teller.

The earliest narrator of the oral fairytale had no face except that which was shown in the tale. In the fairytale film, the director replaces the narrator, who then conceals or reveals her/himself. Cocteau made a precise narrative film, the least autobiographical of all his works, yet displays his convictions, passions and ideals in every frame. Jordan's collaboration with Angela Carter reveals both artists overlapping views on childhood, femininity, and sexuality.

The nature of film is frequently that of a fairytale- through the visualisation of a fantasy we seek temporary empowerment, deliverance, love, and liberty. The fairytale is utilised by children for this purpose; as adults the fantastic world of Grimm, Perrault, Anderson, and Mother Goose is shifted to the media of literature, television, and cinema, with grown-up protagonists and settings. The adult fairytale-film is therefore the merging point of these separated worlds, a union which is by its contradictory nature singularly unsettling and provocative.

While adults approach a child audience with caution, an

adult audience facilitates freer expression. The teller may choose to simply state the narrative facts; the charm and fascination of the tale, however, lies in the telling. The modern Disney fairytale, despite carefully structured mythologies and moralities, is a film of sensations, each successive film surpassing itself in technical exhibitionism. Jordan and Cocteau deliberately distanced themselves from sensationalism; the fantastic nature of the fairytale entails, however, an attempt at a paradoxical realism to retain the credibility of the incredible.

As with the fairytale itself, the fairytale-film is most enthralling when it reveals the obscure face of the teller, glimpsed on occasion through the less interesting veil of preconceived and deliberated metaphors and Freudian symbolism. It is this insight and interaction with the viewpoint of the narrator which attracts and enchants the audience- the fairytale in all its forms shares "possibilities with the audience, mingles its knowledge with theirs, issues warnings and makes promises."(Warner, 1993, pg 34)

Though the teller may attempt to isolate him/herself from the tale once it has been related, they can seldom successfully do so. The challenge to the director of the fairytale-film is to reveal enough of her/himself to add conviction to the narrative, without destroying the delicate fabric of enchantment.

Bibliography

BOOKS

- AMBERG, George; Introduction to Beauty and the Beast, Diary of a film, New York, Dover Publications, 1972
- BETTELHEIM, Bruno; The Uses of Enchantment, London, Penguin, 1991
- BIGSBY, C. W. E; Gothic from A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms, ed. Roger Fowler, London and New York, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987
- CARROLL, Noel; The Philosophy of Horror, London and New York, Routledge, 1990
- CARTER, Angela; The Bloody Chamber, London, Penguin, 1981
- COCTEAU, Jean; Beauty and the Beast- Diary of a film, New York, Dover Publications, 1972
- CREED, Barbara; The Monstrous-Feminine, London and New York, Routledge 1993
- EARLE, William; A Surrealism of the Movies, Chicago, Precendent Publishing, 1987
- FREUD, Sigmund; Case Studies II, London, Penguin 1987
- FREUD, Sigmund; Essays on Art and Literature, London, Penguin 1975
- FROMM, Erich; The Anatomy of Human Destruction, London, Penguin 1984
- JORDAN, Neil; The Dream of a Beast, London, Vintage, 1983
- METZ, Christian; The Imaginary Signifier, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1982
- MOERS, Ellen; Literary Women, London, The Women's Press, 1978
- MULVEY, Laura; Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, from Film Theory and Criticism ed. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen,

New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985

NEALE, Stephen; Genre and Cinema, from Popular Television Film, ed. Tony Bennett, Open University, 1980

OPIE, Iona and Peter; The Classic Fairy Tales, London, Granada, 1980

PETRIE, Duncan; Introductory Essay to Cinema and the Realms of Enchantment, London, British Film Institute, 1993

PRAZ, Mario; Introductory Essay to Three Gothic Novels ed. Peter Fairclough, London, Penguin, 1986

STILL, Judith; Literature, from Feminism and Psychoanalysis, a Critical Dictionary, ed. Elizabeth Wright, Oxford, Blackwell 1992

WARNER, Marina, The Uses of Enchantment, from Cinema and the Realms of Enchantment, ed. Duncan Petrie, London, British Film Institute, 1993

ARTICLES

COMBS, Richard; "Perform and Tell" (film review), Sight and Sound, 1984

COMINSKY, Ray; "The Wolf at the Door" (film review), Irish Times, 1984

DYWER, Michael; "Interview with Neil Jordan" WEEKEND, The Irish Times, January 7 1995

HOBERMAN, J.; The Company of Wolves (film review) The Village Voice, April 30, 1985

LEO, John; "Sex, Death and Red Riding Hood", TIME, March 19, 1984, pg 41

MORGAN-GRIFFITHS, Laura; "Interview with Angela Carter", The Independent on Sunday, 30 October 1994

NEALE, Stephen; "Masculinity as spectacle", Screen, Vol 24, No. 61, November-December 1983, pg 2-16

PEARSON, Allison; "Article on Cocteau", VOGUE, March 1993, pg 52

RIFKIN, Adrian; "The Life of the Poet", Sight and Sound, pg 39

ROBERTS, Michelle; "Women who tell tall tales- book review", The Independent on Sunday, 30 October 1994

ROMNEY, Jeremy; "The Crying Game" (film review) Sight and Sound

ROMNEY, Jonathon; "Beauty and the Beast" (film review), Sight and Sound, October 1992, pg 45-47

TAYLOR, Paul; "The Company of Wolves" (film review), Monthly Film Bulletin, 1984

TAYLOR, Paul and Jenkins, Steve, "Interview with Neil Jordan", Monthly Film Bulletin, 1984

WARNER, Marina; "Beauty and the Beasts", Sight and Sound,

October 1992, pg 6-11

ZINTI, Adrian; "A Celebration of Enchantment", TIME, January 21, 1985, pg 33

ZIZEK, Slavoj; "From Courtly Love to The Crying Game", New Left Review, February 1993, pg 95-108

INTERVIEW

LEE, Marianne; Interview with Neil Jordan, High School Rathgar,
Dublin, November 24 1994

FILMS

ANGEL, (American title Danny Boy) Neil Jordan, Great Britain, 1982,

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, Walt Disney in association with Silver Screen, Warner Brothers, U.S.A 1991

CARRIE, Brian de Palma, 1976

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS, Tim Burton, U.S.A 1990

FRANKENSTEIN, Kenneth Brannagh, Great Britain 1994

INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE, Neil Jordan, Great Britain, 1994

LA BELLE ET LA BETE, Jean Cocteau, France, 1946

LE SANG D'UN POETE, Jean Cocteau, France, 1930

ORPHEE, Jean Cocteau, France, 1950

PRETTY WOMAN, Gary Marshall, U.S.A, 1990

ROXANNE, Fred Schepisi, U.S.A, 1987

STAR WARS, George Lucas, U.S.A, 1977

THE COMPANY OF WOLVES, Neil Jordan, Palace Productions, Palace Pictures, Great Britain 1984

THE CRYING GAME, Neil Jordan, Palace Productions with Channel Four Films, Mayfair, Great Britain, 1992



