The Liberation of the Female Figure in Fairy Tales: a *Red Riding Hood* Case Study

Tânia Rodrigues

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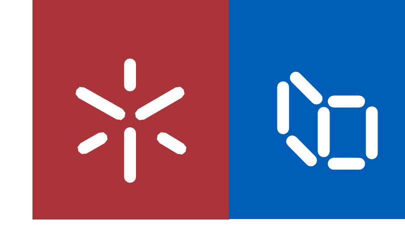

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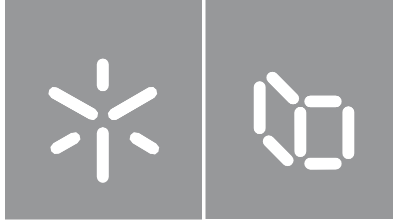

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Dissertação de Mestrado
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Trabalho efetuado sob a orientação da
Professora Doutora Margarida Isabel Esteves da Silva Pereira

outubro de 2022

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To Sofia Lopes, my personal ray of sunshine and one of the strongest women I know, for casting away my dark clouds and showing me endless support. May our friendship last beyond eternity.

STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism or any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration.

I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Code of Ethical Conduct of the University of Minho.

A LIBERTAÇÃO DA FIGURA FEMININA NOS CONTOS DE FADAS:
O CAPUCHINHO VERMELHO

Resumo

Os contos de fadas possuem um encanto especial, quase mágico, tanto para as crianças como para os adultos. De facto, muitas vezes, após um período de desencanto, o ser humano vê o seu interesse de infância nos contos de fadas voltar com renovada paixão. De certo modo, foi esse mesmo retorno aos contos de fadas – à sua magia e significados ocultos – que impulsionou esta dissertação.

A maioria dos contos de fadas que conhecemos sempre estiveram ligados ao estereótipo masculino da donzela em apuros. No entanto, desde meados do século XX, este estereótipo tem sido contestado por vários autores ao rescreverem vários contos de fadas numa perspectiva diferente. A donzela não mais está em apuros mas transforma-se na heroína; há uma "libertação" da figura feminina.

De entre todas as reescritas, as reescritas do famoso conto *O Capuchinho Vermelho* são talvez as mais interessantes do ponto de vista feminista. Com efeito, nestas reescritas a heroína parece 'libertar-se' do estatuto de vítima que havia adquirido nas versões clássicas – nomeadamente nas versões de Perrault e dos irmãos Grimm – ao fazer as suas próprias escolhas. Por esta razão, decidi focar a minha análise neste conto em particular e nas suas reescritas.

As principais questões que esta dissertação procura responder são: como evoluiu a personagem Capuchinho Vermelho de vítima a heroína – como foi "libertada" – e em que medida o conto tem sido usado como veículo de discussão de questões feministas.

Palavras-chave: Angela Carter; Eliana K. Arnold; feminismo; Nikita Gill; reescritas.

THE LIBERATION OF THE FEMALE FIGURE IN FAIRY TALES:
A *RED RIDING HOOD* CASE STUDY

Abstract

Fairy tales have a special charm, almost magical, for children and adults alike. In fact, after a period of disenchantment, the human being often sees their childhood interest in fairy tales return with renewed passion. In a way, it was this personal return to fairy tales – to their magic and hidden meanings – that prompted this dissertation.

Most of the fairy tales we know have always been linked to the male stereotype of the damsel in distress. However, since the mid-twentieth century, this stereotype has been challenged by a number of authors when rewriting several fairy tales in a different perspective. The damsel is no longer in distress but becomes now the heroine; there is a ''liberation'' of the female figure.

Of all the different fairy tale retellings, those of the famous *Little Red Riding Hood* are perhaps the most interesting from a feminist point of view. In these rewritings the heroine seems to 'free herself' from the victim status she had acquired in the classic versions of the tale – namely in Perrault's and the brothers Grimm's versions – by making her own choices. For this reason, I decided to focus my analysis on this particular tale and its retellings.

The main questions this dissertation seeks to answer are: how has the character of Red Riding Hood evolved from victim to heroine – how has she been liberated – and to what extent has the tale been used as a vehicle for feminist issues.

Keywords: Angela Carter; Eliana K. Arnold; feminism; Nikita Gill; rewritings.

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Introduction

Once, there was a girl who left the path.

Once, there was a wolf who waited for her.

Arnold, *A Letter from Elana K. Arnold,* 2020

Charles Dickens once said that Little Red Riding Hood was his first love (cf. Orenstein: 2003, vii). I say she was one of my first inspirations. Having been one of the first Grimms' fairy tales my mother read to me and one of the first Disney animation films I have watched, I absolutely adored the little girl in red as a child. I found her journey incredibly compelling and its happy ending filled me with hope. However, as I grew older, I understood my mother's and every parent's underlying intention when telling this story. It was meant to warn me and all other children of the dangers of walking through forbidden paths alone and, most importantly, talking to strangers.

As Orenstein (2002) mentions, "Little Red Riding Hood" became "the quintessential moral primer" (p. 4) and its lesson became "the age-old parental adage: Don't talk to strangers" (p. 6). Both girls and boys were told this tale before bedtime and repeatedly heard the warning not to talk to strangers, not to walk away from your parents on the street, not to go with anyone they did not know. All children, regardless of their gender, saw themselves in the little girl in red and were scared of the big bad wolf, and the dangers of the outside world it represented. However, as I grew into a young woman, I noticed the tale took on a different meaning for young women than it did for young men, and the warnings changed. As a young woman I was warned not to walk alone, especially at night; to always be aware of my surroundings and the people around me, especially men; to make sure that I dressed properly and my clothes did not attract any unwanted attention. On the other hand, my male counterparts never heard these type of warnings; they were free to roam the night as they pleased. It made me wonder: at what point do women continue to be Little Red Riding Hood and men become the wolf?

The realization of this telling difference between how young women and men were treated made me look at the tale with a new set of eyes and truly read the message underneath the pretty little red hood – if little girls do not do as they are told, they deserve the pain they will most definitely feel. It actually made me look at all my childhood fairy tales with a new set of eyes and prompted an interest in fairy tales, folklore, and its representation of women. An interest that has accompanied me throughout my academic life and brought forth this dissertation.

When the time came to choose a dissertation topic, I knew I wanted to study the evolution of women's representation in fairy tales, but I was struck with a small problem. The world of fairy tales is, in a word, immense. Therefore, thoroughly analyzing all existing tales, or even only a few, would be a task of immeasurable difficulty. In order to make this project feasible, I decided to reduce the analysis to one particular tale, the one which started it all, "Little Red Riding Hood".

This is one of the most beloved fairy tales by both folklorists and feminists, and thus one of the most studied. In fact, from Alan Dundes's *Little Red Riding Hood: a casebook* (1989) to Sandra L. Beckett's *Red Riding Hood for All Ages: A Fairy-Tale Icon in Cross-Cultural Contexts* (2008) there have been a number of authors making her the sole object of their studies and piling "an entire cosmos of meanings on this small girl's shoulders" (Orenstein, 2002: 4). Studies and meanings that cross borders. In Portugal, it is worth highlighting the work of Francisco Vaz da Silva and his *Capuchinho Vermelho: Ontem e Hoje* (2011), a vast collection of different versions of the tale translated into Portuguese accompanied by insightful comments on their origin and meaning. Despite this, I believe there is still much to be discovered about and learned from this little girl in red, and that this dissertation with its analysis of more recent rewritings/adaptations of the tale is a valuable step in the study of "Little Red Riding Hood".

The main goal of this dissertation is to analyze the evolution of the character of Little Red Riding Hood – from a cunning little girl in the oral tradition to a helpless one in the literary tradition, to a fearless and independent girl in modern versions of the tale – and try to ascertain what each version of the girl says about how women were and are viewed in society. How have authors from the second and third waves of feminism liberated this character and how has the tale been used as a medium for feminist issues? In order to achieve said goal and answer these questions, I have decided to focus my comparative analysis on two classic literary versions of the tale – namely Charles Perrault's "Le Petit Chaperon Rouge" and the Brothers Grimm's "Rotkäppchen", a rewriting/adaptation from the end of the twentieth century – Angela Carter's "The Company of Wolves", and two from the beginning of the twenty-first century – namely Nikita Gill's "The Red Wolf" and Elana K. Arnold's *Red Hood*.

As for the structure of this dissertation, the main body of work will be divided into four main chapters. The first chapter will consist of an analysis of the theoretical concepts, its general definition and history, on which the work is based – fairy tales and feminism. The second chapter will look at how the patriarchal values of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries reshaped the story into a warning tale for young girls by comparing the two aforementioned literary versions to the most recognized oral version, "The Story of Grandmother". The third chapter will look at how second-wave feminists reclaimed the little

girl in red, and the fourth will look at how third-wave feminists further liberated Red Riding Hood and how she has become an inspiration for a whole new generation of women. Following these four chapters, I will present the conclusion, where I will summarize my findings and thoughts, and hopefully answer the aforementioned questions.

I would like to conclude this introduction with a quote from Orenstein's own introduction to her book *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked: Sex, Morality, And The Evolution of a Fairy Tale* (2002):

> Little Red Riding Hood does not, of course, represent every woman or even an average woman, if such a woman could ever be said to exist. Nor does her tale encapsulate the thinking of a society, be it seventeenth-century France or twenty-first-century America. It is not the whole truth. But it provides a way in. (p. 15)

Chapter 1 – Theoretical Framework

1.1. Fairy tales – a history

> Imagine the history of fairy tales as a map [...] and you will first see two prominent landmarks, Charles Perrault's *Histoires et Contes du temps passé* (Tales of Olden Times, 1697) and a little nearer in the foreground, the Grimm Brothers' *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales,1812-17).
>
> Warner, *Once Upon a Time,* 2014

Be it through the voice of our parents who, in soft whispers, told us stories that were meant to rock us to sleep or through the words read by flashlight under the blanket late at night, almost all of us have had contact with fairy tales. Who has never dreamt of being the princess with the glass slipper who, once freed from the shackles of her evil stepmother and stepsisters, marries the most handsome prince in all the kingdom? Or the prince who, in his eternal quest for heroism, rescues the princess from the tower? I, as many people, grew up with Perrault's and the Brothers Grimm's fairy tales and for a long time these were the only two mountains on my world-map of fairy tales, using Warner's analogy. These two immense mountains shine so brightly that seeing beyond them becomes an arduous undertaking, however, "as your eyes adjust to the dazzle, several more features of the scene begin to grow in definition" (Warner, 2014: xiii). Suddenly, several roads and paths materialize. Roads and paths that lead us to the North, to the circumpolar regions, to the East and to new mountains – Hans Christian Andersen's Tales, the Russian tales and their terrible Baba Yaga, *The One Thousand and One Nights.* These beautiful mountains and paths are surrounded by a glistening body of water, what Warner (2014: xv) calls the *Ocean of Story*. This ocean is rummaged daily by writers, painters, screenwriters, comic book artists, producers, ad designers and even songwriters, all of whom seek inspiration. The world of fairy tales is immeasurable and, as said by Warner (2014), "[t]his map of fairy tales still contains many unexplored corners and much terra incognita [...]" (p. xvi). When it comes to fairy tales, virtually everyone recognizes their existence and can even tell one or two. Nevertheless, it is quite rare to find someone who actually knows what defines a fairy tale or even what its history is. In fact, what defines a fairy tale? In what remote place are we to find its history? These are the questions I will try to clarify in this chapter.

The definition of the fairy tale has been a source of considerable dispute for quite some time now; however, most seem to agree that the first step in understanding what defines the fairy tale is to analyze the term itself. The expression 'fairy tale' comes from the translation of the French expression *conte de fees*, which was coined by Madamme D'Aulnoy in her 1697 collection of tales. Having reached this point, a pertinent question arises – were there not any fairy tales before the end of the seventeenth century? There were, though its denomination and, to some extent, its characteristics were different, as we will be observing later on.

Returning to the question at hand, in her book *Once Upon a Time – A short history of fairy tale* (2014), Warner defines the fairy tale according to six characteristics. The first of these characteristics is its size. Obviously, its length must be short and, even though there is not a specific page limit, we know that the term no longer applies to lengthy novels, as it once did.

The second characteristic mentioned by Warner is its familiarity:

> [...] fairy tales are familiar stories, either verifiably old because they have been passed on down the generations or because the listener or reader is struck by their family resemblance to another story [...]. (Warner, 2014: xvi)

Let us picture this scenario, you awake in an ancient library, you stand up and walk among the dusty shelves. Suddenly, as if guided by a mythical force, you stop and pick up a hefty old book. Carefully opening the book, you see a tale entitled "Sun, Moon and Thalia". Most likely, it will be the first time you read this tale; notwithstanding, you will be surprised by the similarities to our well-known "Sleeping Beauty" – the sleeping maiden, the princely young man and the happy ending. These are recognizable motifs regardless of the storyline, which leads to the third and fourth defining characteristics. According to Warner (2014):

> [...] the necessary presence of the past makes itself felt through combinations and recombinations of familiar plots and characters, devices and images; [...] fairy tales are generically recognizable even when the exact identity of the particular story is not clear. (p. xviii)

A tale, even if written nowadays, manages to keep up with that illusion of antiquity and orality, of story told from generation to generation, all through the use of "certain kinds of characters [...] and certain

recurrent motifs [...]" (Warner, 2014: xix). And what do these characters and motifs have in common? They are created through the use of language, our fourth characteristic. Language is used in such a way in fairy tales that simple words such as stepmother, apple, mirror, forests, castles and toad can evoke visceral emotions in the reader/listener.

The fifth characteristic is the presence of magic; in our author's words: "[s]upernatural agency and the pleasure of wonder are interwoven in the character of the fairy tales." (Warner, 2014: xxii). There is always something of magic in the fairy tale, something that goes against the laws of physics, but which delights us in such a way that for a moment we believe in its existence. During the reading of a fairy tale, there occurs what Samuel T. Coleridge called the *suspension of disbelief*[1], for a little while we put aside our critical capability, transform the incredulity into credulity and believe that a kiss from a prince can defeat a poisoned apple and reanimate the princess.

This gullibility continues even after we have read the last word, when we believe with all our heart that our lives will also have a happy ending. *And they lived happily ever after,* the happy ending is perhaps the biggest trademark of fairy tales and thus our sixth characteristic. Each time we heard a fairy tale, we were filled by a sense of hope, if the little girl in red had her happy ending, we could have it too. However, as always in life, every rule has its exception and the little girl was not always saved.

Now that its meaning is clearer, it is time to address the fairy tale's history. The first thing we must keep in mind when discussing its history is the fact that it all started with orality. From the moment humans developed the use of speech and invented languages, they have been using it to tell stories. As Jones (2002) says: "The majority of the world's best known and most loved fairy tales [...] were all initially the product of folklore." (p. 2), meaning they all have their roots in oral stories transmitted from generation to generation. This is what Jones calls the preliterate heritage[2], the knowledge transmitted from generation to generation by cultures that had not yet employed writing as a cultural medium, which leads us to the impossibility of addressing the full history of the fairy tale in a single chapter. Therefore, I shall focus on the highlights of its history in print and later its jump to the big screen. Without further ado, let us embark in this journey through time and space.[3]

Our first stop is in the second century, in our beautiful Ancient Rome. The myth "Cupid and Psyche" is written by Apuleius and included in his *Metamorphoses* (also known as *The Golden Ass*). Some

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[1] Samuel T. Coleridge introduced the term *suspension of disbelief* in 1817 with his *Biographia Literaria: Or, Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions,* a collection of his thoughts and opinions on literature.

[2] In his book *The Fairy Tale: the magic mirror of imagination* he discusses this concept in relation to fairy tales in greater detail in a sub chapter entitled "The Preliterate heritage".

[3] The following timeline was based on the section *Fairy Tale Timeline* of Heidi Anne Heiner's website *SurLaLune* <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com>.

scholars (Bacchilega, 1997, pp. 72-81; Anderson, 2000, pp. 61-71) consider this tale to be the ancestor of "Beauty and the Beast" ("La Belle et la Bête") by the French author Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont. The narrative of "Cupid and Psyche" begins as most modern fairy tales do, with a kingdom and a maiden with an insurmountable burden over her head, and ends the same: with a happy ending. According to Bacchilega (1997):

> The most significant links between "Cupid and Psyche" and "Beauty and the Beast" are the mysterious nature of the husband, whose invisibility or bestial appearance is the supernatural effect of divinity or enchantment [...] and the valorization of beauty over pride and vanity. (p. 73)

This takes us back to Warner's definitions and her notions of recognizable motifs that travel from one tale to another.

Let us yet again travel through time and space and we arrive in the year 860 in China where the first known literary version of "Cinderella" is written. In this version, called "Ye Xian" and written by Duan Chengshi, the hardworking and lovely maiden befriends a fish – the reincarnation of her dead mother – that is later killed by her stepmother. Ye Xian buries the bones of the fish in four pots and hides each pot under each corner of her bed; the fish's spirit helps her dress for and make her way to the New Year Festival. There, while running from her stepfamily, she loses her golden slipper that is then found by a peasant who trades it, initiating a chain of trades that ends with the slipper in the King's hands. He then proceeds to search for its owner and finally meets Ye Xian, for whom he falls in love. The tale ends like our well-known "Cinderella", with the King and the maiden happily married.

Fast forward to the ninth century, the believed date of the beginning of the compilation of what is perhaps the best-known non-European collection of tales, the *One Thousand and One Nights.* The book is a compilation of stories and folk tales from West and South Asia that were collected during the Islamic Golden Age.

Being swept away by the eastern winds, we leave Asia and land on Europe, specifically Italy of the sixteenth century. In 1551, Gianfrancesco Straparola published the first volume of his *Le Piacevoli Notti (The Pleasant Nights* or *The Facetious Nights)*, followed by the second volume in 1553. These two volumes are a compilation of seventy-five short stories, fables and fairy tales that later inspired well-known authors such as d'Aulnoy ("Belle-Belle ou Le Chevalier Fortuné", "Princess Belle-Eloile"), Charles Perrault

("Puss in Boots", "Donkeyskin") and the Brothers Grimm ("The Golden Goose", "The Four Skillful Brothers", "The Two Brothers").

The sixteenth century comes and goes, the seventeenth century begins and we find ourselves still in Italy. Giambattista Basile's *Il Pentamerone* or *Lo cunto de li cunti* (*The Tale of Tales*) is posthumously published in two volumes; the first one in 1634 and the second two years later. This collection is particularly important because it is the first full collection of European literary fairy tales; meaning that, unlike Straparola's collection, every tale fits the category of the fairy tale. Making it the oldest European collection of fairy tales since it predates Perrault's by around 50 years and the Brothers Grimm's by 200 years. Not to mention that in it we can find the predecessors of some of our most beloved fairy tales, namely "Sleeping Beauty", "Rapunzel" and "Hansel and Gretel".

Fast forward 50 years and travel around 1.300 km and we find ourselves in France. Even though "[...] the first wave of fairy-tale production in France (between 1690 and 1715) were written by women" (Harries, 2003: 17), the two best-documented moments by scholars were led by men. As Warner (2014) says: "The late seventeenth and early eighteenth century marks the start of the modern fairy tale as we know it, and Perrault and Galland are the key exponents [...]" (p. 49). In 1697, Charles Perrault publishes *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé* or *Les Contes de ma Mère l'Oye* – which was a major mark in fairy tale history as it shall be explained in detail in the second chapter of this dissertation – and in 1704, Antoine Galland publishes the first European translation of the *One Thousand and One Nights.* This was a particularly important moment in fairy tale history since "it was in the confluence of the European tale with the Oriental one that many of the defining features of the fairy tale genre crystallized" (Warner, 2014: 49).

The next big moment in fairy tale history happened in the nineteenth century by the hands of the Brothers Grimm. By this time, the French fairy tales with their own morals and culture had 'invaded' all Europe and the Grimms felt the need to compile a book of tales that represented the essence of Germany and thus set out to collect fairy tales from every corner of the country. In 1812 and 1815, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm published volume 1 and volume 2, respectively, of *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*). This collection said to come directly from the mouths of the German peasantry (which we know today not to be the complete truth)[4] set off a train of imitations all through Europe and beyond. With the rise of nationalist movements came the need to create a national literature and many

[4] When the first volume of *Children's and Household Tales* was published in 1812, the Grimms presented it as an anthology of tales collected all throughout the country from the mouths of peasants. However, as Orenstein explains in her book *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked* (2002), nowadays we know this isn't completely accurate. "Their sources were not primarily wizened and wrinkled German country women, but more often their own mostly middle-class friends and family, who were familiar with a wide range of story traditions, including the fairy tales of France." (p. 48)

saw the Grimms' work as the example of how to do exactly that. In 1845, Peter Christen Asbjornsen and Jorgen Moe's *Norwegian Folk Tales* is published; followed by Aleksandr Afanasyev's first volume of Russian fairy tales in 1866. This train of imitation finally arrives in the United Kingdom in 1889 when Andrew Lang publishes the first of his twelve fairy books, *The Blue Fairy Book.* The twelfth and final book, *The Lilac Fairy Book* is published in 1910. The books were aimed at children and are still today regarded as classics. A year after Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book*, Joseph Jacobs publishes *English Fairy Tales* which was followed in 1893 by *More English Fairy Tales*. These two volumes popularized some of the world's best known versions of English fairy tales, namely "Jack and the Beanstalk", "Goldilocks and the Three Bears", "The Three Little Pigs", "Jack the Giant Killer" and "The History of Tom Thumb".

Time passes and the twentieth century arrives and with it the big and small screens begin their reign of power; naturally fairy tales accompany the change of winds and take the leap from the page into the big screen and although it happens a little all around the world, the forerunner is definitely the United States of America. In 1937, Walt Disney's first feature length animated film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, is released. The movie was received with such success that it started a wave of Disney adaptations of fairy tales that lasts to this day. On the small screen, the most prominent adaptation of fairy tales is the awarded children's TV series *Shelley Duvall's Faerie Tale Theatre*. Produced by Shelley Duvall for the Showtime cable network, it aired between September 1st, 1982 and November 14th, 1987 and it consisted of 27 episodes. Besides this move from page to screen, the twentieth century also marks the beginning of a huge wave of retellings, especially in the second half of the century. Here I'd like to highlight the publication in 1979 of Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber,* which will be discussed in detail further on.

If the twentieth century marked the jump from the page to the big and small screens, the twenty-first century marks its peak. The first decade is marked by releases in the animation field, namely the *Shrek* movie (2001) and its three sequels – *Shrek 2* (2004), *Shrek the Third* (2007) and *Shrek Forever After* (2010). Even though the two last movies received mixed reviews, all four were box office hits. What made them so appealing was the way they took all our favorite fairy tales and presented them with a family-friendly twist (my personal favorite being that the female characters of the movies take their destinies into their own hands and truly defend themselves against the dangers that surround them – unlike their classical counterparts). If the first decade was marked by the animation field, the second is being marked by the Hollywood live-action blockbusters. In 2011 there are two releases worth mentioning; the first one is Catherine Hardwicke's *Red Riding Hood* and the second is Daniel Barnz's *Beastly*. *Beastly* is based on Alex Finn's young adult novel of the same title and it is a retelling of our beloved *Beauty and the Beast*. The movie brings the story to our present day New York and turns the characters into high

school students. The following year sees the release of Rupert Sanders's *Snow White and the Huntsman* – this time our beautiful maiden does not sit waiting to be rescued by the handsome prince, instead she takes up arms and leads a revolution against the evil queen. Another year passes and it is the British fairy tale *Jack and the Beanstalk's* time to get revamped; Bryan Singer's *Jack, the Giant Slayer* is released. Finally, in 2014 one of my favorite fairy tale movie retellings is released – Robert Stromberg's *Maleficent.* In this beautiful and heartwarming retelling of *Sleeping Beauty* we see the story from the point of view of the "evil" witch and how her heart, broken by Aurora's father and his ambition, is healed by the beautiful young maiden and her genuine friendship and kinship.

Finally, the twenty-first century has also seen a rise in young adult retellings. From Disney's Twisted Tales series to Marissa Meyer's The Lunar Chronicles, fairy tales have been the chosen inspiration for hundreds of young adult novels and thus been found by a whole new generation of readers.

1.2. Feminism and fairy tales – a history

> [...] the history of feminism is a history of different ideas in wild conflict.
>
> Grady, "The waves of feminism, and why people keep fighting over them, explained", 2018

Regardless of someone considering themselves a feminist or not, most people are acquainted with the concept of feminism. For better or for worse, feminism has been continuously discussed in schools, in the media, by groups of friends having their monthly coffee date. As Gamble (2006) says, "feminism has achieved the dubious distinction of becoming an utterly familiar part of our cultural landscape" (p. vii). The term is in everyone's mouth, but what does it actually mean?

In general terms, feminism can "be categorised as the struggle to increase women's access to equality in a male-dominated culture" (Gamble, 2006: viii). This definition, though accurate, is slightly reductive as it seems to simplify the history of a movement that has been around for more than a century and "has always been a dynamic and multifaceted movement" (Gamble, 2006: viii). Different generations and different groups of women have brought to light different aspects of women's oppression and took different measures to fight it, which led scholars to divide the feminist movement into three waves or time periods, with some scholars seeing the current #MeToo movement as a fourth wave. Even though some people find the wave metaphor problematic as it reduces each wave to a single goal, it is a fundamental

part of how we discuss feminism and a good tool for understanding its history and so I will be using it throughout this chapter.

The first wave, which lasted between 1848 and the 1920s, was defined by the demand of the vote, equal access to education, and equal rights in marriage. The second wave, which lasted between the 1960s and the early 1980s, called for changes both in the public and private spheres, and demanded a more open and honest discussion of women's sexuality. The third wave, which began in the 1990s and lasts until the present – or lasted until the beginning of the 2010s if you recognize the fourth wave, expanded on the discussion of women's sexuality and gender identity. This is an extremely summarized view of the three waves, but it helps to set the groundwork for the rest of this chapter. Since trying to explain the totality of the movement in a simple chapter would be futile, I will focus my analysis on the second and third waves and the specific aspects of each wave that are relevant to development of the feminist fairy tale.

Even though the second wave saw its beginning in the 1960s, one of its key concepts – the idea that femininity is nothing but a social and cultural construct – originated in 1949 with Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* and its iconic quote: "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman". In her groundbreaking work, Beauvoir looks at how women have been treated throughout history and how women have always been seen as "the Other", always defined in comparison to men (cf. *The Feminism Book,* 2019: pp.114-117). Men are the subject, women are the object; men are active, women are passive. Furthermore, she looks at how women have been portrayed in culture and how these representations have imprinted a notion of femininity that has nothing to do with biological differences between the sexes. This concept of women's indoctrination through culture will be extremely important to feminist fairy tale criticism as we will see further on.

As aforementioned, the second wave began in the 1960s, more specifically in 1963. This was the publication year of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique,* a groundbreaking work that would fuel the resurgence of the feminist movement and continues to be a must read to this day. Friedan explored the unhappiness felt by white middle-class women that once again were relegated to the private sphere and coined the expression 'the feminine mystique' to refer to the idealized idea that women achieve happiness and fulfillment through their role as homemakers. She also explored how women's magazines reinforced this ideal image of the homemaker and the idea that the public sphere was meant for men and only men. The solution to this problem was, in her opinion, a restructured education that allowed women to find fulfilling work outside the home. Friedan's book was linked to liberal feminism, one of two sides of second-wave feminism. In fact, second-wave feminism focused both "on women as an oppressed *social* group

and on the female *body* with its need for sexual autonomy as a primary site of that oppression" (Thornham, 2006: 27). This gave rise to two different approaches to women's liberation – liberal feminists, who called for reforms in the public sphere that would allow women better opportunities, and radical feminists, who called for more drastic changes both in the public and private spheres and tried to get to the root of women's oppression, which many radical feminists found to be the sexual objectification and control of women by men. As Tong (2009) mentions, radical feminists believed that "men's control of both women's sexual and reproductive lives and women's self-identity, self-respect, and self-esteem is the most fundamental of all the oppressions human beings visit on each other" (p. 49). Female sexuality and the control over one's body became thus a focal point to second-wave radical feminists and ultimately led to an internal split on account of 'the pornography debate' of the 1970s. On one side stood the anti-porn feminists or "radical-cultural feminists", as Tong (2009) calls them, who believed that

> with rare exception, pornography harms women. First, it encourages men to behave in sexually harmful ways toward women (e.g., sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence). Second, it defames women as persons who have so little regard for themselves they actively seek or passively accept sexual abuse. And third, it leads men not only to think less of women as human beings but also to treat them as second-class citizens unworthy of the same due process and equal treatment men enjoy. (Tong, 2009: 68)

Radical-cultural feminists called then for the abolition of pornography and advocated that women should refrain from any sexual experience that involved men. Sex-positive feminists or "radical-libertarian feminists", on the other hand, "urged women to use pornography to overcome their fears about sex, to arouse sexual desires, and to generate sexual fantasies" (Tong, 2009: 68). These feminists claimed that sexual freedom could be a form of power and encouraged women "to experiment with different kinds of sex and not to confine themselves to a limited range of sexual experiences." (Tong, 2009: 66). The pornography debate had a great impact on feminist fairy tales of the late 1970s and onwards, with different authors siding with each group and receiving heated criticism due to their representations of female sexuality.

Besides this upheaval and struggles within the movement, the 1970s also saw a rise in feminist theoretical writing and the beginning of feminist fairy tale criticism with the publication of Alison Lurie's 'Fairy Tale Liberation' in 1970 (cf. Haase, 2004: 1). In her article, Lurie argued that fairy tales could be a tool for the advancement of women's liberation since "strong female characters could be found not only

among the classic fairy tales but also among the much larger and more representative corpus of lesser-known tales" (Haase, 2004: 1). Lurie wanted to bring to light that fairy tales could be a great tool to teach and prepare young children for women's liberation. As always, not every feminist agreed with this perspective and, in 1972, Marcia R. Lieberman published a rebuttal titled "Some Day My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale". Lieberman disagreed with Lurie since

> [i]t is hard to see how children could be 'prepared' for women's liberation by reading fairy tales; an analysis of those fairy tales that children actually read indicates instead that they serve to acculturate women to traditional social roles. (Lieberman, 1986: 185)

Lieberman analyses a series of popular fairy tales and comments on how all of them portray passive and submissive heroines in contrast to the active and resourceful heroes, and how these portrayals teach young girls that the only worthy characteristics for a woman are passivity, beauty and submission. The Lurie-Lieberman debate gave rise to a wave of feminist fairy tale criticism that sought to study "the genre's representation of females and the effects of these representations on the gender identity and behaviour of children in particular." (Haase, 2004: 2/3). However, by the end of the 1970s, this first moment of feminist fairy tale criticism had given way to a more complex approach. In 1979, Karen E. Rowe published "Feminism and Fairy Tales" where she analyzed "the pressure exerted upon women to emulate fairy tale prototypes" (Rowe, 1986: 210/211) and reinforced the idea that these fairy tales, if rejuvenated, could become a tool for women's liberation. This established feminist fairy tale criticism and its aim to

> raise awareness of how fairytales function to maintain traditional gender constructions and differences and how they might be reutilized to counter the destructive tendencies of patriarchal values. (McCallum, 2000: 20)

With the development of the study of fairy tales in the late 1970s, there was also an increase in the publishing of fairy-tale collections that, according to Jarvis (2000), were organized in three categories:

> (1) anthologies of active heroines to counter the negative impact of passive female stereotypes promulgated by canonical texts on maturing adolescent girls; (2) 'alternative' or 'upside-down' stories with reversed plot lines and/or rearranged motifs; and (3) collections of feminist works or original tales based on well-known motifs. (p. 157)

Here I would like to highlight some of the best-known works belonging to categories 2 and 3 from the second wave, Anne Sexton's *Transformations* (1971), Olga Broumas' *Beginning with O* (1977) and Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979).

The third wave began in the 1990s and there are two events credited with inspiring this new wave. First, in 1991 Anita Hill came under the spotlight when she testified against a Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas, in a case of sexual harassment. Hill's testimony paved the way for many other survivors of sexual harassment and abuse to open up about their struggles and seek justice. Furthermore, Hill's testimony and consequential backlash prompted Rebecca Walker to write an article in 1992 for *Ms.* magazine entitled "Becoming the Third Wave", where she defended Hill and called for other women to do the same. In this article, Walker also boldly asserted "I am not a postfeminism feminist. I am the Third Wave.", thus coining the term for which this new wave would become known. Secondly, the emergence of the *riot grrrl* movement, a feminist punk subculture that sought to develop a medium where women could fully express themselves and whose art addressed topics such as rape, domestic violence, sexuality and female empowerment. Topics which would become the focal point of third-wave feminism and be present in third-wave feminist fairy tales as will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

The third wave continued to see a great interest in fairy tales and more than ever women collected, rewrote and reinterpreted fairy tales. There are several works worth mentioning from the beginning of the third wave. In terms of retellings, we can mention Barbara Walker's *Feminist Fairy Tales* (1996), a collection of feminist reinterpretations of well-known and unknown fairy tales; Jane Yolen's *Briar Rose* (1992), a novel retelling of Sleeping Beauty and Tanisha Lee's *White as Snow* (2000), a novel retelling of Snow White. In terms of fairy tale criticism, we should highlight Marina Warner's *From the Beast to the Blonde* (1994). Marina Warner is a prolific writer of both works of fiction and nonfiction and a prominent figure in the study of mythology and folklore. Her 1994 *From the Beast to the Blonde* became a work of paramount importance in the feminist fairy tale field. In it, Warner argues that fairy tales derive from an age-old tradition of women's storytelling and thus have the power to convey women's lived experiences and to open doors towards liberation. Warner reinforced Lurie's and Rowe's ideas that fairy tales can be a tool for knowledge and women's empowerment – a sign that things can change – especially when analyzed in context:

> uncovering the context of the tales, their relation to society and history, can yield more of a happy resolution than the story itself delivers with its challenge to fate: ‘They lived happily ever after’ consoles us, but gives scant help compared to ‘Listen, this is how it was before, but things could change – and they might,’ (Warner, 1994: xxi)

The second half of the third wave, or the fourth wave as many are calling it, is being marked both by a rise in collections of fairy tales from different cultures that depict strong, independent and fearless women and a continuing wave of retelling, of which the rise in young adult retellings should be highlighted.

At the end of the preface to his 1986’s book *Don’t Bet On The Prince*, Zipes says “feminist fairy tales are here to stay” (p. xiv) and I believe it is as true today as it was in 1986.

Chapter 2 – The Red Riding Hood We Remember: how the heroine became a victim

> [...] Perrault transformed a hopeful oral tale about the initiation of a young girl into a tragic one of violence in which the girl is blamed for her own violation.
>
> Zipes, *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood,* 1993

I now ask you to close your eyes and replay this ancient tale in your mind. How does it start? With a little girl being told not to stray from the path and not obeying. What happens next? The punishment, of course, she is gobbled up by the Big Bad Wolf. And then? Perhaps she is saved by the valiant huntsman, perhaps she is not; either way, whatever happens to this little girl, it is all her fault for straying from the path.

This is the Little Red Riding Hood that we have all come to know and love: the lovely little girl in the red cloak who is compelled to be obedient and, once she fails to do so, is attacked by the Wolf. Sometimes the little girl is saved, others she is not; what is constant is her being a victim blamed for her own demise. However, that was not always the case.

Even though the tale is not as old as other popular tales, we can still find its origins in an oral tradition during the late Middle Age, especially in France and Northern Italy. Many of the basic elements of the tale were developed at this time – the little girl who sets off to her grandmother's house, the encounter with the wolf, the death of the grandmother – but there is also a stark difference, this little girl is no victim. In fact, most of the oral tales that predate Perrault's literary tale "present a courageous and resourceful young heroine who tricks the wolf and systematically escapes unharmed, without any male assistance whatsoever." (Beckett, 2008: 48).

Recognizing the existence of an oral tradition, and how widespread the motifs of the tale are, is extremely important to fully understand how much the literary tales analyzed in this chapter altered the essence of the character of Little Red Riding Hood. In Dundes's words:

> In order to understand just how atypical both the Perrault and the Grimm versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" really are [...] one needs to have two important sets of data.

> First, it is critical to have some idea of what the original oral tale was like. Second, one should be aware of the fact that a probable cognate of the tale is widely distributed in China, Japan, and Korea[5]. (1989: 13)

Unfortunately, most of the first scholars to write about Little Red Riding Hood did not possess these two sets of data. One of the few who did, according to Dundes, was Paul Delarue.

Paul Delarue (1889-1956) was a well-known folklorist who "wrote at some length about the oral versions of 'Little Red Riding Hood' in a multi-part essay in a small French folklore periodical in 1951."[6] (Dundes, 1989: 13). In this multi-part essay, Delarue analyzes and comments on the contents of thirty-five French versions. He later summarized his findings in the brief commentary of the tale "The Story of Grandmother" included in his 1956 anthology, The Borzoi Book of French Folk Tales. Perhaps due to Delarue's choice to include it in his anthology, "Conte de la mêre-grand" or "The Story of Grandmother" has become the best-known oral version of the tale.

First collected by Achille Millien in Nièvre, in 1885, this version begins as all others, with Red Riding Hood's mother giving her a basket and telling her to take it to grandma's and thus she sets off on her journey. She then encounters the wolf at a crossroads, who asks her:

> "Where are you going?"
> "I'm taking a hot loaf and a bottle of milk to my grandmother."
> "What road are you taking," said the *bzou*, "the Needles Road or the Pins Road?"
> "The Needles Road," said the little girl.
> "Well, I shall take the Pins Road." (Delarue, 1956: 230)

As Zipes (1993) mentions, "the references to the pins and needles were related to the needlework apprenticeship undergone by young peasant girls, and designated the arrival of puberty and initiation into society [...]" (p. 24). It highlights the quality of 'coming of age story' of the tale. It is also worth mentioning that the little girl chooses her own path, which contrasts with the literary versions. Her choice of the path of needles can be seen as a clear sign of her choosing to enter womanhood and even of her sexual awakening as the needle was known to be a symbol of womanhood and the threading of the needle had

[5] See Wolfram Eberhard's essay "The Story of Grandaunt Tiger" in Alan Dundes's *Little Red Riding Hood: a casebook,* pp.21-63, for further information on the relationship between the Asian and European tales.

[6] See "Les Contes Merveilleux de Perrault et la tradition populaire: I. Le Petit Chaperon Rouge" in *Bulletin folklorique d'Ile-de-France.*

a sexual connotation. The wolf arrives at grandma's house first, tricks her into letting him inside and kills her. He then "put[s] some of her flesh in the pantry and a bottle of her blood on the shelf." (Delarue, 1956: 230) The death of the grandmother can be seen as a generational transference of womanhood, which is then consummated by the ritualistic eating of her meat and blood. This transference of blood between grandmother and granddaughter is highly symbolic of the woman's natural cycle, as the grandmother reaches menopause and stops bleeding, the girl reaches puberty and starts menstruating. As Zipes (1993) mentions, "[u]nlike the literary versions, where the grandmother is reified and reduced to a sex object, her death in the folk tale signifies the continuity and reinvigoration of custom" (p. 24).

The final step in the little girl's transition is the disposing of her innocence and acceptance of her sexual desires, which is achieved with the disposing of her clothing:

> "Undress, my child," said the *bzou*, "and come and sleep beside me."
> "Where should I put my apron?"
> "Throw it in the fire, my child; you don't need it anymore."
> And she asked where to put all the other garments, the bodice, the dress, the skirt, and the hose, and the wolf replied:
> "Throw them in the fire, my child; you will need them no more." (Delarue, 1956: 231)

After this symbolic striptease, the girl climbs into bed with the wolf and the famed conversation takes place – the girl comments on a physical characteristic of the wolf, to which he replies with a seemingly non-threatening remark, until she mentions the mouth:

> "Oh, Grandmother, that big mouth you have!"
> "All the better to eat you with, my child!" (Delarue, 1956: 232)

Here, sensing the dangerous situation she was in, the girl quickly comes up with a ruse to deceive the wolf and try to escape – she tells him she has to relieve herself and after some resistance he lets her go outside, but not before he has tied a woolen string to her foot. Once she finds herself outside, she ties the end of the string to a plum tree and makes her escape; thus returning home an experienced young woman and completing her initiation.

More than a cautionary tale, the oral tale celebrates the heroine's transition from girl to woman, a celebration that is obliterated with Perrault's and the Grimms' literary tales, which will be analyzed in the following sub chapters.

2.1. Perrault's *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*

Born in 1628 to a bourgeois family, Charles Perrault lived through one of the most interesting eras of French history. It was the time of the Parisian salons, where stories were told in a sort of society game, both to entertain and educate; of Louis XIV's luxurious and scandalous court at Versailles, where "[w]ine, gaming and sexual intrigue distracted the nobles from their ennui and kept them from scheming against monarchy" (Orenstein, 2002: 24); and of the *mariage de raison*, where love and affection had little or nothing to do with the matter and female virginity was a requirement. From this paradoxical background – as Orenstein (2002) mentions, "[t]he age of seduction was also an age of institutionalized chastity" (p. 36) – comes Perrault's *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*, a tale filled with sexual innuendos "that warns young ladies to beware of suave and debonair two-legged wolves" (Beckett, 2008: 13).

Once upon a time, the tale began with a lovely little girl wearing a red riding hood which "suited her so well that everywhere she went she was called Little Red Riding-Hood." (Perrault, 2009: 99). If anyone were to be asked to describe the little girl who meets the wolf, they would most certainly first and foremost mention her red cloak. However, this characteristic is not present in the oral versions predating Perrault's tale; it was of his own creation, and it is no coincidence that the color chosen was red. In Orenstein's (2002) words, "Perrault cloaked his heroine in red, the color of harlots, scandal and blood, symbolizing her sin and foreshadowing her fate." (p. 36). The first step in the victimization of the character.

As always, the little girl is sent with a basket of goodies to her grandma's and halfway through her journey finds the wolf who asks where she is going. Little Red Riding Hood, innocent as she is, tells him, and so he says:

> 'Well then,' said the Wolf, 'I'd like to go and see her too. I'll go by this path here, and you go by that one, and we'll see who gets there first.' (Perrault, 2009: 99)

While in ‘The Story of Grandmother’ the girl chooses her own path, here that choice is taken away from her by the Wolf, which at the same time highlights the little girl’s gullibility and the Wolf’s cunningness.

Having taken the shortest path, the Wolf arrives at grandma’s house first and tricks her into letting him in. Once inside, he eats her all up and lies in her bed waiting for Little Red Riding Hood. Not long after, Little Red Riding Hood arrives at grandma’s house and, though she is frightened at first by his gruff voice, enters. The Wolf tells her to get into bed with him, to which she quickly obeys by undressing herself and lying in bed.

There are two changes made by Perrault that are worth analyzing at this point, both the ritualistic eating of grandma’s flesh and blood and the girl’s ‘striptease’ are written off, thus obliterating any signs of the little girl’s transition from girl to woman or of her own desires. It is all about the Wolf’s male desires and control over the little girl.

Finding herself in bed with the Wolf, “she was very surprised to see what her grandmother looked like without any clothes on” (Perrault, 2009: 101) and expressed such surprise by commenting about the arms, the legs, the ears, the eyes and – poor child – the teeth:

> ‘Oh grandmama, what great big teeth you have!’
> ‘And they are all the better to EAT YOU WITH!’
> (Perrault, 2009: 103)

As the Wolf says these words, he throws himself at the girl and eats her up, no chance of salvation or redemption. Perrault’s “‘contaminated’ upper-class version of the ‘pure’ lower-class version makes the little girl totally helpless” (Zipes, 1993: 26), it transforms her into a victim whose sole purpose is to warn young girls of what will happen to them if they stray away from the path and give in to the attention of charming men. This warning is then reinforced by the moral in verse present at the end of the tale, which is unique to Perrault’s tale:

> Young children, as this tale will show,
> And mainly pretty girls with charm,
> Do wrong and often come to harm
> In letting those they do not know
> Stay talking to them when they meet.
> And if they don’t do as they ought,

It’s no surprise that some are caught
By wolves who take them off to eat.

I call them wolves, but you will find
That some are not the savage kind,
Not howling, ravening or raging;
Their manners seem, instead, engaging,
They’re softly-spoken and discreet.
Young ladies whom they talk to on the street
They follow to their homes and through the hall,
And upstairs to their rooms; when they’re there
They’re not as friendly as they might appear:
These are the most dangerous wolves of all.
(Perrault, 2009: 103)

This moral, not only reinforces the warning, but also brings to light a culture of ‘victim blaming’[7] – “And if they don’t do as they ought,/ It’s no surprise that some are caught” (Perrault, 2009: 103) – that lasted beyond Perrault’s lifetime and became ingrained into most cultures, affecting the lives of innumerable women.

2.2. The Brothers Grimm’s *Rotkäppchen (Little Red Cap)*

Born in the second half of the eighteenth century – Jacob was born in 1785 and Wilhelm in 1786, the Grimms had the privilege of witnessing one of the most significant moments in European history, the Industrial Revolution, which had a huge technological impact and brought with it incredible demographic shifts. The most significant being the emergence of the concept of childhood, which was now seen “as a distinct period of life with its own particular characteristics and needs – play, education and particularly moral instruction.” (Orenstein, 2002: 50). Besides the Industrial Revolution, the Grimms

[7] “Victim blaming can be defined as someone saying, implying, or treating a person who has experienced harmful or abusive behaviour (eg: a survivor of sexual violence) like it was a result of something they did or said, instead of placing the responsibility where it belongs: on the person who harmed them.” Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE) <https://www.sace.ca/learn/victim-blaming>

also witnessed their nation fall under French control and then regain its independence with the defeating of Napoleon at Leipzig in 1813, which brought forth a stronger sense of national pride and a German cultural revival. Both the new concept of child and the rising national pride, would have a great impact in the Grimm Brothers' numerous works, including their tales and among them "Little Red Cap".

In 1812, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm publish the first edition of volume I of the *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*), a collection of tales that would become a mark in the history of fairy tales. It is in this first volume of the Grimms' tales that we find their rendition of Little Red Riding Hood, entitled "Little Red Cap" (*Rotkäppchen* in the original). Collected from a friend of theirs called Marie Hassenpflug, a young woman from a French Huguenot family, "Little Red Cap" has many of the elements present in Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood". However, there are also stark differences – the elimination of the sexual innuendos and the addition of a happy ending. This is part of the sanitization process the Grimms applied to most of their tales, since "[t]hey felt it necessary to clean it up for the bourgeois socialization process of the 19th century and adapted it to comply with the [...] Victorian imagine of little girls and proper behavior." (Zipes, 1993: 32). Young girls were expected to be prim and proper, not straying away from the path set out for them by the patriarchal law.

Like Perrault's, the tale begins with a little girl wearing "a little cap of red velvet, which suited her so well that she would never wear anything else; so she was always called 'Little Red-Cap.'" (Grimm, 2014: 117). Instead of a riding hood, we now have a cap, but the color red prevails and so does the foreshadowing of her fate.

Nevertheless, we do find a difference in the beginning of the tale – the cautionary scene. As the girl's mother, "who represents the patriarchal law of the straight and narrow" (Beckett, 2008: 15), hands her the basket, she tells her:

> 'Set out before it gets hot, and when you are going, walk nicely and quietly and do not run off the path, or you may fall and break the bottle, and then your grandmother will get nothing; and when you go into her room, don't forget to say, 'Good morning', and don't peep into every corner before you do it.' (Grimm, 2014: 117)

This scene emphasizes the educational purpose of the Grimms' tales, they were meant to teach young girls to follow the patriarchal law by warning them of the terrible consequences their disobedience could bring upon them – the fall from the grace of God they would face. Little Red-Cap's mother warns her that she "may fall and break the bottle" (Grimm, 2014: 117), which alludes to the Fallen Woman, a popular

Victorian image that warned young women against the consequences of losing their virginity outside of marriage.

Having been warned about the dangers that lie outside the straight path, Little Red-Cap sets out on her journey and, as it always happens, meets the wolf. Our Red-Cap, being an innocent, naïve little girl, "did not know what a wicked creature he was, and was not at all afraid of him" (Grimm, 2014: 117) and so stops to talk to him. The wolf quickly decides that he wants to catch both the little girl and her grandmother, and comes up with a ruse to distract Red-Cap and lure her away from the path:

> 'See, Little Red-Cap, how pretty the flowers are about here – why do you not look round? I believe, too, that you do not hear how sweetly the little birds are singing; you walk gravely along as if you were going to school, while everything else out here in the wood is merry.' (Grimm, 2014: 118)

Little Red-Cap does indeed look around and seeing many beautiful flowers decides to pick a few to take to her grandmother, thus straying farther and farther away from the path. Meanwhile, the wolf continued on his way to grandma's house, arrived there rather quickly and "without saying a word he went straight to the grandmother's bed and devoured her" (Grimm, 2014: 119).

We all know what happens next, the wolf puts grandma's clothes on and lies in bed, the little girl arrives and, finding her grandma's appearance slightly strange, questions her on her ears, eyes, hands and mouth:

> 'Oh! but, grandmother, what a terrible big mouth you have!'
> 'The better to eat you with!'
> And scarcely had the wolf said this, than with one bound he was out of bed and swallowed up Red-Cap. (Grimm, 2014: 119)

Where Perrault erased the 'striptease' and made the girl immediately lie in bed with the wolf, the Grimms had the wolf jump from the bed to attack Red-Cap, thus erasing any and all sexual innuendos. However, there is still a lot of violence, especially against women. According to Orenstein (2002), the Brothers Grimm kept the violence "to clarify their lessons, teach morality to children, and promote their German middle-class values [...]: discipline, piety, primacy of the father in the household and, above all, obedience." (p. 55)

This primacy of the father figure is further emphasized by the addition of the character of the huntsman. Once the wolf's belly was satisfied, he lay down on the bed and fell asleep, not long after a huntsman walks by the house and hearing such loud snoring decides to check in on the old lady. The huntsman enters the house and sees the wolf sleeping on the bed, deciding that the old lady might still be saved, he takes a pair of scissors and slices the wolf's belly open and out come Little Red-Cap and her grandma. The little girl is thus put in the role of damsel in distress that can only be saved by the righteous and valiant patriarchal figure, further emphasizing her victimhood.

This time our little girl finds her happy ending, but it does not come without her share of shame and self-blame:

> Red-Cap thought to herself: 'As long as I live, I will never by myself leave the path, to run into the wood, when my mother has forbidden me to do so.' (Grimm, 2014: 120)

Little Red-Cap recognizes that this terrible attack was caused by her disobedience, by her straying away from the righteous path and thus it is all her fault. As Beckett (2008) mentions, "[a]lthough the Brothers Grimm would dramatically alter the image of the little girl in red, they, too, hold her responsible for her own fate" (p. 15).

Similarly to Perrault's, the Grimms' tale is supposed to warn young girls of the male figures who roam the world and to teach them that only by obeying the rules can they be saved, and anything that happens to them should they disobey is their own fault.

The Grimms' version became the most popular version of Little Red Riding Hood, it was read and reread by thousands of people, it became the only version of the little girl in red in the majority of minds and so it completed the obliteration of Little Red Riding Hood as a heroine and her transformation into a helpless victim.

Chapter 3 – Not so little anymore: Red Riding Hood and the second-wave

[...] since her fear did her no good, she ceased to be afraid.

Carter, "The Company of Wolves", 1979

As mentioned before, the second-wave feminism movement brought about a renewed interest in fairy tales. This gave rise to not only many theoretical writings on the history of fairy tales and on how these tales had developed into tools for the teaching of patriarchal values, but also a number of collections of pre-existing tales and a wave of retellings.

Perhaps the most appealing fairy tale to authors, certainly one of the most retold, is "Little Red Riding Hood". Seen as the epitome of cautionary tales and portraying one of the most victimized female characters in fairy tales, "Little Red Riding Hood" quickly became a source of inspiration for feminist authors who sought to free our heroine from the shackles of patriarchy and make her once again into the self-reliant, strong girl she had once been.

According to Zipes (1993), from 1950 onwards there seems to be three major currents in the "Little Red Riding Hood" retellings:

> First, many narratives portray Little Red Riding Hood coming into her own, developing a sense of independence without help from males. Second, certain tales and poems seek to rehabilitate the wolf. Third, there are stories which are unusual aesthetic experiments, debunking traditional narrative forms and seeking to free readers and listeners so that they can question the conventional cultural patterns. (p. 59)

Feminist retellings come from the first and third currents. Red Riding Hood "[...] is no longer innocent, helpless, and disobedient. Rather, she is fearless, intelligent, and confident." (Zipes, 1993: 61). Many of the tales portray Red Riding Hood as a young woman perfectly capable of defending herself against the wolves of the world. In Anne Sharpe's 1985 "Not So Little Red Riding Hood" – the inspiration for this chapter's title – Scarlet, that is, Red Riding Hood, defends herself against a would-be rapist by using her karate skills.

Besides being strong, independent and capable of self-defense, "[m]odern Riding Hoods are often unconcerned with society's conventions and taboos. Many are portrayed as sensual beings who are sexually attracted to the wolf." (Beckett, 2008: 159). Accompanying the changing views of women's

sexuality, Little Red Riding Hood is once again a young woman awakening to her physical changes and budding sexuality. Perhaps the best example of this is Carter's "The Company of Wolves", which will be analyzed below.

3.1. Angela Carter's *The Company of Wolves*

Born in London in 1940, Angela Carter lived through and was a prominent figure of the second-wave feminist movement. Even though her work received mixed reviews from feminist critics,

> she perceived herself as a socialist feminist and strongly argued for rejecting the identification of women with innocent victims, focusing instead on an effort to transform psychosexual politics by exploring the wide-ranging desires and strategies of women. (Bacchilega, 2000: 89).

Women's sexuality and how it can be the path towards liberation became a prevalent topic in Carter's work and the major source of criticism from feminists and non-feminists alike. Despite her untimely death at the age of 51, she had a prolific writing career having published nine novels, four collections of short stories and three works of non-fiction. She also edited three collections of fairy tales – namely *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women: An Anthology of Subversive Stories* (1986), *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1990) and *The Second Virago Books of Fairy Tales* (1992), wrote five children's books, two screenplays, a number of radio plays and countless magazine articles on topics ranging from literature and films to fashion and recipes.

From among her vast body of work, the most interesting to feminist fairy tale critics is without a doubt her short story collection *The Bloody Chamber,* in which she retells a number of traditional fairy tales. Published originally in 1979,

> *The Bloody Chamber* is like a multi-faceted glittering diamond reflecting and refracting a variety of portraits of desire and sexuality – heterosexual female sexuality – which, unusually for the time, 1979, are told from a heterosexual female viewpoint. (Simpson, 2006: viii)

The collection includes ten tales, the last three – "The Werewolf", "The Company of Wolves" and "Wolf-Alice" – being reworkings of our beloved "Little Red Riding Hood". These three tales "work and rework the story of Red Riding Hood, borrowing variants from different centuries, compulsively circling the figures of the werewolf, the old woman and the young girl." (Simpson, 2006: xvii), forcing the reader to reanalyze and reassess their knowledge of the little girl in red and those around her.

"The Werewolf", the shortest and perhaps the most brutal of the three, changes our perception of both Red Riding Hood and the wolf. When first meeting the wolf, the girl cuts its paw and takes it with her. Arriving to her grandmother's house, she discovers that the wolf was actually her grandmother and, branding her as a witch, helps the villagers to stone the old woman to death. Riding Hood then lives and prospers in grandma's house.

"Wolf-Alice", the last of the three tales, turns our little girl in red into a feral child, a child who was raised by wolves. After her surrogate wolf-mother is shot, Alice is taken to the Duke, a reclusive werewolf. As she grows up and begins her menstrual cycle, she regains her humanity and brings to light that of the Duke.

"The Company of Wolves", "longer, less bleak, and far more luxuriant in style" (Simpson, 2006: xvii), is at once closer to the literary tales and resonant of the oral tradition.

Contrary to what happens with most of the Little Red Riding Hood folktales and traditional fairy tales, Carter begins her tale by mentioning the wolf – the opening line being: "One beast and only one howls in the woods by night." (Carter, 2006: 129) – and not the little girl. In fact, our little girl appears for the first time three pages in. These first three pages are dedicated to the description of the harsh environment that breeds hardened and self-reliant children and the ferocious wolf that must be feared for the animal we see and for the man it might be hiding: "Fear and flee the wolf; for worst of all, the wolf may be more than he seems." (Carter, 2006: 130). Not only does Carter describe the ferociousness of the animal, as she also mentions three instances where the wolf was actually a man: a hunter who, after killing the wolf, finds the body of a dead man; a witch who decides to turn several people at a wedding into wolves; and, finally, a bride whose groom disappears on their wedding night and returns years later having been transformed into a werewolf.

As Bacchilega (1997) mentions "[...] this short story begins with popular beliefs, proscriptions and exhortations [...]" (p. 62) which are meant to warn the reader of the dangers the forest and wolves – both four-legged and two-legged ones – posit. It resonates with the warning tone of Perrault's tale and it resembles the cautionary scene of the Grimms' tale since the narrator warns the reader to "[...] step

between the gateposts of the forest with the greatest trepidation and infinite precautions, for if you stray from the path for one instant, the wolves will eat you." (Carter, 2006: 130).

As aforementioned, about a third of the way after the beginning, our girl appears:

> [...] this one, so pretty and the youngest of her family, a little late-comer, had been indulged by her mother and the grandmother who'd knitted her the red shawl that, today, has the ominous if brilliant look of blood on snow. Her breasts have just begun to swell; her hair is like lint, so fair it hardly makes a shadow on her pale forehead; 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, 2006: 133)

The way Carter describes the girl is extremely interesting. Like Perrault's, this girl has been spoiled by her mother and grandmother, is young and beautiful, and wears the ominous color red. However, when we deepen our analysis of this girl we see she is nothing like the spoiled, passive, gullible and helpless little girl in Perrault's tale. Carter's girl is a "strong-minded child" (Carter, 2006: 132) who "has her knife and [...] is afraid of nothing." (Carter, 2006: 133). She is not told to go to grandmother's house, she herself decides to face the forest and take some gifts to her grandma, which already shows how self-reliant and independent she is. Carter has encoded the traditional fairy tale within the new tale in such a way that at once she refers back to and critiques the traditional tale. The reader is thus able to read both texts and become aware of the imbedded patriarchal teachings of the traditional tale.

As always, the girl sets out on her journey and meets the wolf, but this time the wolf is no ferocious animal or naked man but "[...] a fully clothed one, a very handsome young one, in the green coat and wideawake hat of a hunter [...]" (Carter, 2006: 134). By combining the figure of the hunter with that of the wolf, Carter is once again making the reader question their perception of the traditional tales; the hunter figure who was the savior in the Grimms' tale and the representation of the patriarchal tradition becomes the very same thing young girls are supposed to run from. They continue their way together, laughing like old friends and at some point he shows her his compass, which could guide him through the forest with certainty as it always pointed north. He goes as far as to guarantee that he could arrive at grandma's house before she could by going through the forest. She does not believe him and so a bet takes place:

> Is it a bet? he asked her. Shall we make a game of it? What will you give me if I get to your grandmother's house before you?
> What would you you like? she asked disingenuously.
> A kiss.
> Commonplaces of a rustic seduction, she lowered her eyes and blushed. (Carter, 2006: 134/135)

The hunter goes through the undergrowth, taking her basket with him, and the girl continues on the path but this time she takes her time as "[...] she wanted to dawdle on her way to make sure the handsome gentleman would win his wager." (Carter, 2006: 135). This girl is fully aware of the transition she is going through, the physical changes her body is going through, and is awakening to her own sexuality. She consciously makes the decision to let herself be led by her desires, exactly what a 'proper woman' is not supposed to do.

Once again, the wolf/hunter arrives at grandma's house first and, mimicking the girl's voice, asks to come in. Once inside, the hunter puts down his catch and the girl's basket on the table, strips down and attacks grandma:

> The last thing the old lady saw in all this world was a young man, eyes like cinders, naked as a stone, approaching her bed.
> The wolf is carnivore incarnate. (Carter, 2006: 136)

While in Perrault's tale the death of the grandmother represented nothing more than the ferocious sexual desires of the wolf, in Carter's tale the death of the grandmother is more symbolic as it can be seen as the death of the oppressive values imposed on women which, like the grandmother, were "[...] almost ready to give in entirely." (Carter, 2006: 135). After he had finished with the grandmother, "[...] he licked his chops and quickly dressed himself again, until he was just as he had been when he came through the door." (Carter, 2006: 136). He then cleared away any signs of what had happened and "sat patiently, deceitfully beside the bed in granny's nightcap" (Carter, 2006: 136), waiting for the girl. She arrives at grandma's house, knocks on the door, enters and appears to be

> a little disappointed to see only her grandmother sitting beside the fire. But then he flung off the blanket and sprang to the door, pressing his back against it so that she could not get out again. (Carter, 2006: 136/137)

A centuries-old scene, the menacing wolf looming over the innocent girl, plays in front of our eyes, but is it really the same scene? Once again, Carter's portrayal of the girl in red at once brings to mind the traditional literary Red Riding Hood, the oral tradition and presents a completely new girl. After the wolf reveals himself to her and she starts looking carefully at the room around her, she feels afraid. Shortly after, wolves started approaching the house and howling at the moon. This should have made her feel even more afraid but she seems to pity the wolves: "It is very cold, poor things, she said; no wonder they howl." (Carter, 2006: 137). She eventually closes the window on the wolves' melody, takes off her red shawl and "[...] since her fear did her no good, she ceased to be afraid." (Carter, 2006: 138). Carter brings back the striptease scene present in Delarue's "The Story of Grandmother":

> What shall I do with my shawl?
>
> Throw it on the fire, dear one. You won't need it again.
>
> [...]
>
> What shall I do with my blouse?
>
> Into the fire with it, too, my pet.
>
> The thin muslin went flaring up the chimney like a magic bird and now off came her skirt, her woollen stockings, her shoes, and on to the fire they went, [...] now she was clothed only in her untouched integument of flesh. (Carter, 2006: 138)

By bringing back the striptease scene, Carter is reinforcing the girl's coming of age and her sexual awakening which is further reinforced by the change Carter introduces. In both "The Story of the Grandmother" and Perrault's tale, the wolf calls the girl to bed, but here she willingly "[...] went directly to the man [...]; she stood up on tiptoe and unbuttoned the collar of his shirt." and "[...] freely gave the kiss she owed him." (Carter, 2006: 138). She refuses to be a victim, to give control of the situation to the wolf and instead takes matters into her own hands. So much so that, when she mentioned how big his teeth were and he answered that they were meant to eat her, she "[...] burst out laughing; she knew she was nobody's meat." (Carter, 2006: 138).

This line is very telling, especially considering that one of the main criticisms pointed at Carter was that by using sex for survival her heroine embodied the traditional submissive role of wife and that the tale ultimately reinforced the objectification of women. However, many other critics tend to disagree with this view of the tale. As Bacchilega (1997) mentions, "by acting out her desires – sexual, not just for life – the girl offers herself as flesh, not meat." (p. 63). By recognizing and taking control of her own sexuality, she is able to tame the wolf and save her life.

The tale – which ends with the heroine sleeping soundly "in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf." (Carter, 2006: 139) – liberates Red Riding Hood by making her into a sexually defiant young woman who challenges the traditional roles maintained by patriarchy.

Writing at the end of 1990s, Bristow and Broughton (1997) believed that

> [t]he triumph of [Carter's] work is to show how Western culture has shaped limiting concepts of gender and sexuality which it is the business of feminism to transform; yet in many ways, feminist thought is only now catching up with her insights (p. 14)

and one has to agree with them. Her view of feminism and sexuality has influenced authors since her death and can be found throughout many current works, including *Red Hood*, Arnold's novel that will be analyzed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 – The heroine's choices: Red Riding Hood and the third-wave

> Her mother told her
> She could grow up to be
> anything she wanted to be,
>
> so she grew up to become
> the strongest of the strong,
> the strangest of the strange,
> the wildest of the wild [...].
>
> Gill, *The Red Wolf ,* 2018

Some tales appear and vanish within a generation, never to leave a record, others take hold of people's memory and begin to be told and retold from generation to generation until its original version is almost inaccessible and all we have "are versions of versions, narratives spun and respun for hundreds of years." (Harris, 2003: 4). Fairy tales have a tendency to belong to the latter, surviving for centuries in one way or another. "Little Red Riding Hood" is definitely an example of the latter – it saw its birth in the oral tradition of the Middle Age, became popular with its literary versions of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and it has since been told and retold hundreds of times and "hybridized with almost every other literary genre as well as all the new media technologies." (Beckett, 2008: 6).

In fact, the little girl in red is more alive than ever and can now be found everywhere – in innumerable short stories, novels, comic books, films, and even in music and advertising. But why is she so popular? Her popularity is due both to her crossover appeal (cf. Beckett, 2008) – not only has the tale been retold for audiences of all ages, but it has also been retold in ways that appeal to younger and older audiences at the same time – and to "her ability to adapt to the times" (Orenstein, 2003: 6). These characteristics coupled with the fact that "Little Red Riding Hood" "has been used quite effectively to address the topic of violence and violation in contemporary society" (Beckett, 2008: 22), have made the tale especially popular among third-wave feminists.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the third wave has been marked by its fight against the issues of rape and domestic violence, and its fight for female sexual freedom and empowerment. It makes perfect sense, therefore, that a tale which has been seen as a parable for rape since its beginning has been used to make society reassess how they deal with the crimes of rape and domestic violence. For

years now, we have seen the little girl in red defend herself and others against would-be rapists, defend women's honor and place the blame where it should always lie, in the rapist.

The tale has also been used to educate and inspire a whole new generation of young women, which has been possible in part to its adaptation to new genres and mediums. As Williams (2018) say

> [t]he early twenty-first century has been an exciting time for lovers of fairy tales. Fairy tales have permeated practically every popular textual medium in production. They are everywhere, including in novels.

The adaptation of fairy tales into full length novels has pulled a number of young readers that had lost interest in short stories back into the fairy tales' fold.

4.1. Nikita Gill's *The Red Wolf*

Nikita Gill was born on 20th June, 1987 in Belfast, Northern Ireland to Indian parents. When Gill was still very young, the family moved back to New Delhi, where she grew up. When she was 12, she published her first poem and she has been writing ever since and, after many rejections from publishers, she published her first volume of poetry, entitled *Your Soul Is A River*, in 2016. So far she has published seven volumes of poetry, including *Fierce Fairytales & Other Stories to Stir Your Soul* (2018), a collection of 91 beautifully written poems and short stories that reimagine the classic fairy tales.

In this powerful volume of poetry/short stories, Gill reimagines the classic fairy tales and skillfully combines their story lines with the subjects of feminism, female empowerment, independence, love, abuse, and mental illness. No longer are the damsels in distress nor the villains who we thought them to be. A good example of this is the story "The Red Wolf", a reimagining of our beloved "Little Red Riding Hood".

Falling back on Zipe's argument that there are three currents in the "Little Red Riding Hood" retellings, I would include this story in the third current as it is an aesthetic experiment that stands apart from traditional narrative forms (cf. Zipes, 1993: 59). One of twenty short stories in the collection, "The Red Wolf" eludes a strict categorization by being an hybridization between the traditional poem and the traditional narrative short story. The story starts and ends as a poem, but in between is told as a narrative short story. Being first and foremost a poet, Gill is known to incorporate poetic characteristics in her short

stories thus creating beautiful lyrical hybridizations. This particular form of writing makes this retelling all the more inspirational as it makes the reader connect more strongly with Little Red Riding Hood.

The story begins with a three-verse stanza that immediately awakens the reader to what fairy tale is being retold:

> *Children go missing all the time.*
> *Sometimes it is faeries who steal them.*
> *Other times, they trust a wolf.* (Gill, 2018: 26)

There cannot be any doubt, who has ever trusted a wolf but our innocent Little Red Riding Hood. The opening stanza leads the reader, not only to realize this is a rewriting of the classic Little Red Riding Hood, but also to believe they already know what is coming since it alludes to the wolf's culpability. However, nothing is what it seems in this tale.

The first striking difference between the classic tale and Gill's story, and the first sign there is more to this story than first meets the eye, is the description of our little girl. Where Perrault's and the Grimms' girl was so loved by her grandmother that she gave her the ominous red riding hood/cap, Gill's girl is "[...] so beloved by her mother that she always told her she could be *anything* she wanted to be" (Gill, 2018: 26). This is a young girl who is being raised to believe in herself and not to be confined by the social restrictions typically linked to her gender. Right from the beginning we know this is not the little girl we know from the traditional tales, and neither is the tale. Furthermore, not only does Gill's tale tells us about the events after the little girl's journey into the forest and her unfortunate disappearance, but it is also told from the perspective of the mother, who "never ever left the place where she had grown up, hoping against hope that the trees, the woods, would one day return her child." (Gill, 2018: 26).

After Little Red Riding Hood's disappearance, her mother would walk every day to the edge of the woods hoping to find a sign of her little girl, until one day she sees two eyes in the dark and meets a wolf.

> So when she saw the two lamp-like eyes in the dark one day, she was not afraid. Instead she asked, 'Brother wolf, are you the one who has stolen my child from my arms and taken her away?' (Gill, 2018: 26)

The meeting between the mother and the wolf is quite interesting. One would expect the mother to either feel afraid, after all this is a creature of the night known for its ferocity, or angry at the wolf for there is a

good chance this is the creature that stole her child, but she is neither. She calmly refers to the wolf as "Brother wolf" and asks him if he took her child away, to which he calmly replies "No". There is no cunningness from either part, no violence and no power struggle, there is simply a meeting between two creatures that seems to forebode a bond.

Every day since this first meeting, the mother would walk to the woods, stepping further and further into the woods, meet a different wolf and ask the same question in a different way. One day she reached the heart of the forest, "[a] lair where a thousand lamp-like eyes watched her from the fog and the dark" (Gill, 2018: 28). Once the fog cleared away, the mother saw that "[o]n a throne amongst wolves of all sorts and sizes, a young girl sat. She wore a red wolf's skin on her body and two swords sheathed behind her back." (Gill, 2018: 28). The little girl recognized her mother and ran to her arms, and after hugging her she told her why she had never returned home:

> 'The evil woodcutter and his friends were trying to destroy this forest world. When I came through the woods, I happened to hear all of their plans. They saw me listening, followed me to grandmother's, killed her and tried to burn her house down with me in it [...]' (Gill, 2018: 28/29)

The wolves came and saved her and so she decided to stay with them and protect them and the forest from any harm, thus becoming their protector and their alpha. Respecting her daughter's decision, the mother swore secrecy and eventually came to live with Little Red Riding Hood and the wolves, aiding them in their fight against the woodcutter.

As Orenstein (2002) mentions, "Little Red Riding Hood's" main characters are "far from simple [and] their roles and meanings subtly shift over time, and even dramatically flip-flop" (p. 5), especially when we are dealing with feminist retellings and Gill's story is the perfect example of it. The wolf no longer represents evil, but is now Little Red Riding Hood's savior. The woodcutter no longer represents the patriarchal hero saving the little girl from the wolves of life, he is instead the villain of the story, murdering the grandmother and trying to kill Little Red Riding Hood – the very Evil Little Red Riding Hood has to fight. The mother no longer represents the warning passed down from mother to daughter, but is now a motivator, the wind behind her daughter's wings, raising her to be strong and independent. Little Red Riding Hood is no longer a naïve little girl but the strong protector of the forest and leader of the wolves, making her own choices and living on her own terms.

It is not only the characters' roles that shift, but the overall meaning of the story. Gill transforms a cautionary tale into an inspirational one. No longer are we warned to follow the rules set on us by patriarchal society lest we fall prey to the wolves of the world, we are now inspired to be whoever we choose to be, to be strong and fight for what we believe is right. Much like Perrault's cautionary tone is reinforced by the closing moral in verse, so is Gill's inspirational tone reinforced by the closing stanza:

> *Her mother told her*
> *She could grow up to be*
> *anything she wanted to be,*
> *so she grew up to become*
> *the strongest of the strong,*
> *the strangest of the strange,*
> *the wildest of the wild,*
> *the wolf leading the wolves.* (Gill, 2018: 29)

Gill's "The Red Wolf" perfectly exemplifies Little Red Riding Hood's liberation as it highlights her choice and strength to defend herself and others from the oppression of the patriarchal society. It is also worth mentioning that by focusing on Riding Hood's decision to protect the wolves and the forest from the woodcutter, the story not only represents the third wave's general concept of female choice and empowerment, but it also represents a particular school of thought of feminism – ecofeminism. The term *ecofeminism* first appeared during the second wave, specifically in 1974 in Françoise d'Eaubonne's *Le Féminisme ou la mort,* and it has become more prominent during the third wave as ecological issues have gained importance. The key concept of ecofeminism is that "women are culturally tied to nature [and so] there are conceptual, symbolic, and linguistic connections between feminist and ecological issues." (Tong, 2009: 237). In a sense, women's oppression and nature's oppression are connected, so their liberation must also be:

> Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological aims within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic

socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this [modern industrial] society. (Rosemary Radford Ruether *in* Tong, 2009: 238)

Little Red Riding Hood's oppression is connected to that of the wolves, the oppressor is the same – the woodcutter, and it is when she decides to defend the wolves that she herself finds her strength and is liberated.

4.2. Elana K. Arnold's *Red Hood*

As mentioned by Williams (2018), "[t]he early twenty-first century has been an exciting time for lovers of fairy tales. [...] They are everywhere, including in novels", especially in young adult novels. In fact, the past few years have seen a booming rise, not only in young adult novels, but especially in fairy-tale themed young adult novels. A great number of authors have looked towards fairy tales as a source for inspiration and a medium to present to children and young adults more mature themes such as violence, especially violence towards women.

A great example of this is Elana K. Arnold's work. Elana Kuczynski Arnold, an American author and teacher, has written a number of children's and young adult books, including two fairy-tale inspired novels – *Damsel* and *Red Hood. Damsel* tells the story of Ama, a young woman who was supposedly saved from a terrible dragon by Prince Emory. As Ama's first night at Emory's castle falls she starts to see that not everything is as it seems and that she may be more in danger than she realized. *"Damsel* explores rape culture, gaslighting, the male gaze, misogyny, and patriarchy in a world of damsels, dragons, princes, gowns, and glass eyes." (Arnold, 2018), it combines a number of fairy-tale elements and settings to discuss very real and current issues. *Red Hood* is a modern retelling of our beloved Little Red Riding Hood and it also explores rape culture, misogyny and patriarchy.

As aforementioned, *Red Hood* is a modern retelling, meaning it brings our beloved fairy tale to a modern setting. Little Red Riding Hood is no longer a seventeenth-century girl living in a village near the woods, but a twenty-first-century high school student living in a town in the United States. Though the medium and setting are different, there is no question on what fairy tale is behind the story, from the title of the novel – *Red Hood* – to the titles of the chapters and the characters, Arnold made sure the reader would immediately identify the novel as a Little Red Riding Hood retelling.

As it would be expected since this is a novel, there is a greater number of characters but the main ones remain the same. The main character is Bisou, a sixteen-year-old girl who is trying to navigate her life as a high schooler and her new-found powers and responsibilities. Bisou lives with Mémé, her grandmother, whom together with Bisou's friends Maggie and Keisha, becomes her security net, her support. There is also the Wolf, more than one actually – Tucker, Phillip and Bisou's father. These characters interact with each other in a way that is at the same time reminiscent of the oral and literary tales, and completely new and fresh, as will be better explained further on.

There is another aspect of the fairy-tale inspiration that I find interesting to look at at this point and that is the narrative structure of the novel which is reminiscent of the *conteuses'* tales. As mentioned before in this dissertation, the seventeenth-century French production of fairy tales was – at least in the eyes of scholars – led by men but, in truth, there is a great number of tales written by women, the famous *conteuses* of the French salons. Their tales were typically more complex and longer than those written by men and they were often set within a longer narrative. It was also very common for the *conteuses* to include other embedded stories in their tales, where a character in the central tale would then tell another story (cf. Harris, 2003: pp.106/107). This is the case of *Red Hood*. The novel is divided into three parts or sections, namely: I. First blood, II. What Sybil says and III. Over and through. Parts one and three deal with the main story line and are narrated by a second person narrator, part two deals with Mémé's story and is told by Mémé herself through a first person narrator. Besides this, there are in the main story a number of flashbacks to Bisou's childhood and poems written by her mother that gives the reader glimpses of Bisou's mother's story. The narrative structure of the novel is extremely effective in turning the novel into a memorable piece of work, not only does it link the novel back to an important moment in the history of women as authors, but it also makes the reader connect very strongly with Bisou and her story since the second person narrator makes us feel like we ourselves are Bisou.

The first chapter, aptly called 'The better to eat you', starts with the following sentence: "Once upon a time, just hours ago, the doorbell rang" (Arnold, 2020: 3). Arnold begins her story with the age-old expression *once upon a time,* which typically situates the story in an unknown past, but then immediately brings the reader to the present with "just hours ago", further reinforcing that this is not the tale we are used to. At the door is James, Bisou's boyfriend, ready to take her to prom. You follow Bisou as she makes her way to the prom, meets with James's friends and teammates, slowly dances with James and is interrupted by Tucker who tries to forcefully dance with her. You continue to follow Bisou as she and James leave the prom, drive to the edge of the woods, and gives herself to pleasure until she sees blood on James's face, her blood.

> At sixteen, you have waited long enough to start your period that you had all but given up on it ever coming – "Mine was late, too, don't worry," your grandmother has said – but here it is, this blood. You fumble with the door handle, ripping back a nail as you struggle, and then the door flies open with that familiar squeak, and you tumble out of the wagon and onto the pins and needles of the forest floor. (Arnold, 2020: 11/12)

Similarly to Carter, Arnold makes it obvious that this is a maturing young woman; not only is she starting to experiment with her sexuality, but she has also just started her period. Once again, Little Red Riding Hood is linked to the menstrual cycle and all it entails for women, including the undeserved embarrassment. Bisou bolts out of the wagon and starts running through the forest with its floor of pins and needles, which is reminiscent of the path of pins and the path of needles of the oral tale and the choice Little Red Riding Hood had to make.

Bisou is running through the forest and there is a flashback of Bisou and her mother running away from home in the middle of the night, then it is back to Bisou running. Her perception of her surroundings heightens and she realizes she is being pursued, as she runs she picks up a branch and then a wolf is upon her:

> There is nothing but the wolf's enormous mouth full of teeth – the better to eat you with – and your own self, and the awareness of another hot pulse of blood emerging from your center, dripping down your thigh, and landing, like a premonition of more blood to come, on the pins and needles of the forest floor. (Arnold, 2020: 17/18)

Once again we have a young girl face to face with a wolf and a choice to make – give up or survive. Bisou chooses to survive and fights ferociously; first she swings her branch and hits him in his jaw, then, while he is still unstable, jabs him in the eye. He is injured but that is not enough to make him stop. Bisou knows he will go for her throat as wolves do, but decides she will not flee but instead step towards him for she is not his prey. He moves and

> [y]our hands shoot out, empty but not powerless, and as his jaw snaps at you, so close you feel the skim of his teeth on your flesh, the slice of his claw at your breast, you find his neck, your fingers plunge deep into his lush fur and you lunge past him, using his

> power to propel him, head first, into the enormous trunk of the tree behind you. (Arnold, 2020: 20)

The wolf's neck snaps and he lies dead on the forest floor of pins and needles. Bisou goes home, showers and goes to bed. Unlike the oral tale and the literary tales where the first meeting with the wolf is a somewhat peaceful one filled with the girl's curiosity and the wolf's alluringness, this first meeting is filled with violence as a way to reinforce the wolf's ferocity and Bisou's strength.

The following day, she goes to school. She is in her chemistry lesson when everyone's phones start to vibrate and they find out that Tucker Jackson is dead. The school principal calls a general assembly at the gymnasium, the news has spread fast and everyone now knows that Tucker was found naked with a broken neck in the woods. Bisou thinks back to the night before, to the wolf she killed, and decides to skip class and go to the woods, to find the wolf's body and prove to herself that is all she killed

> [e]xcept that when you make your way to the forest, to the place you faced the wolf, you are not alone. And there is no wolf. Yellow caution tape winds around tree trunks to form a rough rectangle. (Arnold, 2020: 54)

A realization daunts on Bisou, she has killed a person. A couple of days pass and Bisou is in the kitchen with Mémé who asks about the dead boy. Bisou tells her only what everyone knows, but Mémé seems to sense there is more to it. At some point she tells Bisou she has something for her and takes out a necklace, a chain with "a large, rather heavy sickle-shaped moon in lapis blue" (Arnold, 2020: 81). Bisou pulls on it

> [a]nd it pulls apart, the lapis-blue moon revealing itself to be sheathing something – a needle-sharp claw of burnished metal, a half-inch thick at its center, tapering to a deadly point. (Arnold, 2020: 81/82)

This scene with its interaction between grandmother and granddaughter is of great interest. The character of the grandmother has always had a particular meaning in the tale. In the oral version, it is the consumption of the grandmother's blood that completes Little Red Riding Hood's maturing process and it also represents the continuity of custom. In Perrault's tale the death of the grandmother was a symbol of the wolf's ferocious desires and in Carter's retelling it represented the death of the oppressive

patriarchal values passed on from generation to generation. In Arnold's novel, the grandmother has again a particular meaning. Even though it is not clear at this point in the novel, Mémé seems to have more knowledge about what is happening to Bisou than she lets on. The offering of the necklace, which is in fact a weapon, can be seen as a symbol for the transmission of knowledge and responsibility from grandmother to granddaughter, much like the oral tale.

Time moves forward, the police investigation on Tucker's death continues and so does Keisha's – Bisou's classmate and the school paper's main journalist, this one unearthing unsettling facts about Tucker and his relationship with Maggie. It seems that Tucker was a wolf in sheep's clothing and had lied about being a virgin to convince Maggie to lose her virginity to him. Bisou goes through a maturing moment herself, she loses her virginity to James. The author uses this moment as a contrast between Tucker and James, while Tucker has no respect for women, James has nothing but respect for Bisou. It is Bisou that takes control of the situation, doing everything on her own time. It is at once a warning against disrespectful men and a glimmer of hope that there can be a society where men are nothing but respectful towards women. Later that day, at the dinner table Bisou tells Mémé about it and she takes the news respectfully and unsurprisingly, simply asking her if she has been careful and giving her advice: "having sex in the past does not oblige you to have sex in the future." (Arnold, 2020: 110), to which Bisou replies that James is nothing like that. And here Mémé says "That's good, [...] but sometimes boys become wolves, you know." (Arnold, 2020: 110). Once again there is a telling interaction between grandmother and granddaughter. Not only does Mémé insinuate that she knows more than Bisou thinks, but she also acknowledges Bisou's maturity and respects the decisions she is making. Furthermore, there is a strong piece of advice for young girls embedded in this scene, consent is yours to give and just because you have given it once, it does not mean that you must give it again.

There is a small time jump in the story, it is now Halloween, four weeks after Tucker's death which means Bisou's period comes once again. James's friends are having a costume party at one of the boys' house. She puts together a lumberjack costume and James shows up to her house wearing a wolf's costume, which makes them laugh – all they are missing is Little Red Riding Hood. They arrive at the party and Bisou sees Keisha talking to Phillip Tang, one of Tucker's closest friends, "Phillip may think he's flirting, but what is actually happening is an interview." (Arnold, 2020: 136). As Bisou looks on, she thinks back to the rumours about Phillip, the girl he dated freshman year who suddenly changed schools, the girl at his brother's university who had accused Phillip of abusing her. The party moves on, Bisou dances with James and Keisha has moved her interview tactics to another of Tucker's friends, which makes Phillip jealous and prompts him to make a scene in front of everyone and leave angrily.

Eventually the party comes to an end, Bisou takes James's wagon while he stays at the friend's house, she is driving home when she notices "pulled to the side of the road in the shadows of the arboretum's entrance, Keisha's purple Bug." (Arnold, 2020: 145). Bisou pulls over, Keisha is nowhere near the car. She starts calling Keisha but to no avail and then Bisou smells a scent, a scent she now realizes she has smelled twice before – the night she killed the wolf and the night her mother died. It is a wolf's scent. She starts searching for Keisha and finds the remains of Phillip's costume. Bisou runs, hears Keisha screaming and then sees it, the wolf cornering Keisha. The wolf senses Bisou and it turns around to attack her.

> The animal confronting you is both a wolf and not a wolf. And you – you are both a girl and not a girl. You are a hunter, and this wolf, though he thinks he is the predator, is your prey. (Arnold, 2020: 151)

Once again there is a choice to be made, and once again Bisou chooses to fight. She is stronger and faster this time, and has Mémé's necklace, which she uses to kill the wolf. Both Keisha and Bisou look down at the wolf's dead body and, as they watch, the wolf transforms into Phillip. They go back to their cars and both drive to Bisou's house.

When Mémé sees them both in the garage, Bisou covered in blood and Keisha with a gash in her leg, she simply asks if anyone has seen them and then goes on to do everything she can to get rid of any evidence of what had happened. While Mémé takes care of the bloodied clothes and the car, Bisou helps Keisha take a shower, bandages her leg and puts her to bed. When all is done, Bisou sits with Mémé at the kitchen table, it is then that Mémé decides to tell her everything. It is here that the embedded story begins, with Mémé – Sybil – telling her story.

She starts by talking about going to university in Seattle in 1976, how everything seemed perfect up until a month into the school year when a female student was found dead in the woods near the campus.

> Before she was even in the ground, there were whispers about how she wasn't a very good girl – not that she deserved what happened to her, of course, no one was saying that, but that if she hadn't been out so late, way past curfew, and if she hadn't been known to be so free and loose with boys, with men, then she would have been perfectly safe in her own bed that night. (Arnold, 2020: 177)

This scene is worth analyzing. We now know that Sybil was a young woman in the 1970s and would therefore have lived through the second-wave feminist movement, a time during which women conquered a lot but also suffered an immense backlash, and victim blaming took root. While society was becoming more aware of the violence perpetrated against women, especially rape, it also became more critical of the victims going as far as blaming them for whatever happened, as it is clear through Sybil's story.

She goes on to talk about her best friend and roommate Laura, how she helped her when she got her period for the first time, quite late like Bisou. One night, Mémé woke up to find Laura's bed empty and she knew something was wrong, it was as if she "could *smell* the trouble" (Arnold, 2020: 179). With heightened senses much like Bisou's, she went to the woods and there she saw them, Laura and a wolf feasting on her. She chased the wolf but he was too fast and she could not catch him, so she went back to Laura's body and took her back to the dorm, which was quickly filled with first responders and policemen. Mémé recalls how the policemen questioned her, how rumors about Laura started to spread and how

> [...] before the next full moon, that story had become Laura's legacy – she was a girl who didn't keep her knees closed, who played too fast, too hard. A morality tale for the rest of us. A warning. (Arnold, 2020: 184)

Yet again we have a female victim being blamed for her terrible ending, just like Perrault's and the Grimms' Red Riding Hood was blamed for hers. Laura, just like Red Riding Hood, just like every other woman who has been attacked by the wolves of the world, became a "morality tale for the rest of us." (Arnold, 2020: 184).

Time moves forward, another full moon comes and with it Mémé's period. On a run to the grocery's she meets Dennis, another student at the university, who invites her on a date. That night they go out together to a movie, once the movie ends they get into his car, but he does not drive her back to the dorm, instead he takes them to an empty parking lot where he tries to rape her. She manages to get out of the car and starts running with Dennis chasing her. Mémé soon realized that it was no longer a man who followed her but a white wolf, the same wolf that had killed Laura. They fight and Mémé ends up killing the wolf – her first kill. After a few moments, the wolf changes and it is Dennis who lies naked and dead on the floor of the woods. Another young person dead, but a completely different reaction from society.

> This time, no one tsked about how Dennis shouldn't have been alone in the woods, no one reported having seen him drunk and disorderly in the days and weeks before his death. Everyone mourned. (Arnold, 2020: 192/193)

Mémé continues telling her story, how she met Bisou's grandfather, how she continued to secretly hunt wolves, the birth of Bisou's mother, how she terminated her second pregnancy so she would not lose the opportunity to hunt wolves which made Garland take their daughter and leave her. She ends her story by telling Bisou about how much she regrets the fact that she was not able to save her daughter's life all those nights ago. With the end of Mémé's story comes the end of part II and we move back to Bisou's story.

It is the morning after the Halloween party, Mémé, Bisou and Keisha sit at the kitchen table. Both Bisou and Mémé tell Keisha everything. Time moves forward and though the shadow of a wolf is ever present, Bisou's life seems to have set back into a normal rhythm.

Here I would like to pause and take a closer look at chapter five of Part III, entitled 'Keep the wolf from the door'. Bisou's character takes a step back as Maggie and Keisha come into the limelight. Maggie, who had been dating Tucker at the time of his death, has been the victim of harassment since the prom – from someone putting a used-condom in her backpack to getting a threatening letter on her mailbox. Both Bisou and Keisha believe the culprit to be Graham since he has been badgering Maggie to go out with him. They urge her to report it to the police, which she does, but the only reply she gets is that there is nothing they can do. Keisha decides to take matters into her own hands and uses the school paper as a tool. The following day, Keisha publishes a special edition of the school paper entitled "Incel-ence: An Unacceptable Idea That Deserves to Die" where she discusses the concept of incels[8] and tells Maggie's story. She closes her article with a rallying cry:

> If you stand with Maggie, if you stand with girls and women, then let's stand up together. Incel thinking is a virus, but we don't have to let it spread.

[8] According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, an incel is "a person (usually a man) who regards himself or herself as being involuntarily celibate and typically expresses extreme resentment and hostility towards those who are sexually active" <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/incel>

> Tomorrow, let's show the toxic minority how many of us stand against them. If you stand with Maggie, paint your nails BLACK. Let's show them our claws. And from this moment on – today, tomorrow, forever – let's be loud. Together. (Arnold, 2020: 303)

The next day, there are black nails everywhere, even James and his basketball teammates have joined the movement. The movement grows and girls, "[i]n whispered circles, in shared glances, and on the wall in the bathroom, in black ink" (Arnold, 2020: 307), begin to share their stories:

> Graham texted me for six months last year and only stopped when my brother threatened to beat him up.
> I never told but Tucker cornered me at a party once and showed me his dick.
> When I was a kid, my gymnastics coach kept touching my chest. I finally quit the team. (Arnold, 2020: 307)

The way this movement took over the school and united the girls is reminiscent of the current #MeToo movement. In 2006, Tarana Burke, who was working at the time as a camp counselor, listened attentively as a young girl told her she had been sexually abused. Burke, herself a survivor of sexual abuse, could only utter the words 'me too' to comfort the girl and so the light of the #MeToo movement was sparked. Ten years later, in the aftermath of the Harvey Weinstein scandal, these two words would become the most popular hashtag on social media as more and more women told their stories. (cf. Vogelstein, 2021: 1-12). In Burke's own words, the movement's core "was empowerment through empathy" (2021: xi) – as more and more women came forward with their own stories of sexual harassment and abuse, a sense of community was built and women were no longer afraid of telling their stories, by knowing that they were not alone, they felt empowered. Keisha's article initiates a wave of empathy towards Maggie's story and consequently empowers other girls to come forward, tell their stories and thus begin healing. Arnold's novel can itself be a tool for woman's empowerment as reading about characters sharing their stories might encourage young women to open up.

Another day passes and, after leaving in the early morning to go to James's house, Bisou comes home to find Mémé gone and a note from her. Bisou calls both Maggie and Keisha and together they find out where Mémé has gone – Quebec, to Bisou and her mother's old farm – and decide to go after her. After a long car trip and a short walk they reach the house and there they see Mémé holding an ax and a man – Bisou's father. For the first time in the story the girls witness the opposing change, from

man to wolf, he jumps at Mémé and without thinking twice, Bisou attacks him. As she attacks him, Bisou has a flashback to the last night in her parents' house, how her dad beat her mother and they ran away. To protect herself and the other three women in the house, Bisou kills the wolf, her father. The chapter ends with the four women in the house, preparing to dispose of the body.

The book ends with a final chapter entitled "We are", a letter that was most likely written by Bisou and describes how the four women disposed of the father's body. How they wrapped his body in a sheet, carried him to the pond, stuffed him with stones and let him sink to the bottom of the pond:

> *We are the ones who fold back the sheet to expose his belly to the moon, and we are the ones who use the sickle to slice him open.*
> *We are the ones who fill his belly full of stones, each of us choosing and placing one, the heaviest we can fit, all of us working to wrap the sheet tight when we are done, tying it fast to secure the stones in place.*
> *[...] We are the ones who swing the ax, stained with wolf blood, to break the pond's thin ice. [...]*
> *We are the ones who release him [...]* (Arnold, 2020: 352)

One could say that *Red Hood* is simply a story about a girl who discovers that during her menstruation she has heightened senses and is able to hunt and kill the wolves that prey on women, but it is so much more. It is a tale about a young woman coming into her own, about the strength that resides in her and all women, about the need to fight for what is right, about the need to place blame where blame is due.

Contrasting with the traditional tales and most of the retellings, there are three wolves present in this story – Tucker, Phillip and Bisou's father, all a representation of the misogynistic man, but each representing a type of violence towards women. Tucker, the first wolf to die, represents the disrespectfulness towards and control of women. He constantly disrespected his female colleagues, going as far as sexually harass them and sought to control them, bending them to their will. Phillip represents sexual abuse, seen as a stellar student, he sexually abused two girls and got away with it. Bisou's father was a wife-beater and thus represents domestic violence. For years the survivors of these types of violence have either suffered in silence or been blamed for their pain, and their attackers gone unpunished, but in Arnold's story these men finally face their punishment. Some readers, as attested by multiple reviews on the *Goodreads* website, believe the killing of the wolves to be an unnecessary

show of violence and that it seems to send the message that the only way to deal with attackers is to assume a vigilante mentality and bring justice by their own hands. I believe these readers have missed the author's point. The deaths of the wolves are to be seen as metaphors for the death of the patriarchal society and the current rape culture that allow these crimes against women to go unpunished, it is a rallying cry for society to actually act on the existing laws and create new ones that better protect women and all people from sexual assault, and to change society's mentality.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of *Red Hood* 's main themes is rape culture. In sum, rape culture is "an environment in which rape is prevalent and in which sexual violence is normalized and excused in the media and popular culture" (Inside Southern, 2022) and it can be perpetuated through actions such as victim blaming, trivializing and tolerating sexual harassment and even teaching women how to avoid being raped, all of which occur during the story. During Mémé's story two women die before she starts hunting – a colleague and her roommate Laura – and both are blamed for their deaths, if they "hadn't been known to be so free and loose with boys" (Arnold, 2020: 177), they wouldn't have been out at night so they would be safe. When Graham's father went to the principal after Maggie's story had been published in the school paper, he did not understand why they were all making such a big deal of what in his mind were just silly pranks. In Keisha's article Maggie recalls all of the things she was told to do to avoid being harmed by men, all women have been told the same – do not wear provocative clothing, do not go out alone, do not say anything if a man catcalls. Maggie then says "But are people telling guys how to not harm girls? It's one thing to tell a girl how not to get raped or harassed – is anyone telling the guys not to rape us or harass us." (Arnold, 2020: 302) and this is one of the main messages of this novel, we should not have to teach our young women how to protect themselves from men, we should educate young men and change society so that there is no reason for them not to be safe. Another very important message is that empathy leads to empowerment. Women themselves have become so caught up in this rape culture that they too participate in victim blaming. As mentioned by Inside Southern (2022), "[o]ne reason people blame a victim is to distance themselves from an unpleasant occurrence and thereby confirm their own invulnerability to the risk" – I am not like her so it will not happen to me. This attitude not only further harms the survivors of attacks but it contributes to creating an unsafe environment for everyone as the perpetrators go unpunished and will continue to harm others. Only through empathy towards one anotherr can we all become stronger.

Let us all be more like Bisou, Mémé and Maggie – "*We are the ones. We are one*." (Arnold, 2020: 352).

Conclusion

> [...] she will continue to inspire new retellings that appeal to adults, adolescents, and children, in all the literary genres, mediums, and new technologies.
>
> Beckett, *Red Riding Hood for All Ages,* 2008

This dissertation was born from my lifelong love of fairy tales, my deep interest in their representation of women and a particular interest in the little girl in red who centuries after her first appearance continues to appeal to both children and adults alike. In the epilogue to her 2002's *Red Riding Hood Uncloaked,* Orenstein says that "[i]deas about who and what we are shift over time and indeed [...] inversions are also part of human nature." (p. 242), and this could not be truer than when talking about Little Red Riding Hood. Her character has gone through an incredible transformation from heroine to victim to heroine once again, and has become a representation of how society has changed in its view of women.

The main goal of this dissertation was to analyze the evolution of the character of Little Red Riding Hood and how she has become a medium for feminist issues and a source of inspiration for young girls and women everywhere. This was done by drawing on some examples of both the traditional tale (Charles Perrault's and the Brothers Grimm's tales) and by looking at three rewritings of traditional tales throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A goal that I hope has been achieved.

As explained in the second chapter of this dissertation, in the early appearance of the tale, in its oral form, Red Riding Hood was the representation of the maturing process every woman goes through with the appearance of their period. It was supposed to be a celebration of women and a representation of their strength. However, centuries later this hopeful and inspiring tale was turned by Perrault into a warning for women, awful things will happen to you if you do not follow the rules patriarchal society has set upon you. This warning was then reinforced two hundred years later by the Grimm Brothers and Little Red Riding Hood became the tool to teach young girls how to behave, follow the path set for you or you will deserve whatever evil comes your way.

Time moved forward and women felt a need for change, with the first-wave feminist movement we gained the right to vote and gained more rights within marriage and motherhood. Nevertheless, women were still restricted by patriarchal rules and values and so the need for change arose once again.

In the 1970s, the second-wave feminist movement brought about more changes, especially on how women perceived themselves and their strength. Female authors felt the need to create stories that represented this new-found inner strength and the new woman and so our little girl in red started her path towards liberation. Much like the new independent and courageous woman, Little Red Riding Hood does not need anyone to save her and refuses to let her body or desires be controlled by another. She is now defending herself against the wolves of the world, sometimes using her new found sexuality to protect herself. This is quite clear in the analysis of Carter's tale in chapter three.

Though she is able to defend herself, she is still not completely free to choose her own path. As Arnold's character Mémé says "[m]uch has changed, my darling, though too much has stayed the same." (Arnold, 2020: 186). There are still power struggles in the world. Women are still abused, both physically and mentally and so a new wave comes. The third wave brings to light how men use their power, sex and victim blaming to subjugate us. Sexual assault and harassment cases start coming to light with its peak in the #MeToo movement. The need for women's choice increases and so does the need to both prepare young girls to deal with this and empower them, and so Little Red Riding Hood grows into a fighter who makes her own choices and defends herself and others. Both Gill's and Arnold's Red Riding Hoods choose their own path, a path of strength and of fighting for what is right.

This dissertation is but a droplet in the ocean that is the research on Little Red Riding Hood but I hope it has shed some light on new corners of this ever-changing and ever-growing world that is Little Red Riding Hood. There are innumerable retellings worth reading and analyzing, but I would like to highlight a few that I find particularly interesting. In the world of young adult literature, Christina Henry's *The Girl in Red* (2019) and Rachel Vincent's *Red Wolf* (2021) are definitely worth looking into. *The Girl in Red* brings our Red Riding Hood to a post-apocalyptic world where Red needs to defend herself against the men that seek to hunt her. *Red Wolf* echoes the concept of ecofeminism as Adele, this story's Red Riding Hood, belongs to a long line of women tasked with defending the forest. Women who are shapeshifters and, when the forest calls, turn into wolves. I would also like to mention Hannah Whitten's *For the Wolf* (2021); even though it is a looser adaptation of "Little Red Riding Hood", I believe it is a valuable addition to the world of fairy tale research for its blending of two fairy tales – "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Beauty and the Beast". The first volume in the *Wilderwood* series, *For the Wolf* tells the story of Red, a girl who is destined to be sacrificed to the Wolf, only this wolf is no beast, but a man. I also find interesting how pop culture has embraced our little girl in red, particularly the world of comic book and graphic novels. Here it is worth mentioning Bill Willingham's *Fables* (2002-2015), a series of 150 issues

that bring all our favorite fairy-tale characters into modern-day New York, including our beloved Red Riding Hood.

Beckett said that the tale of Red Riding Hood, "[...] which has its origins in the oral tradition, possesses an amazing capacity to adapt to new social and cultural contexts. It can be transposed to any time and place." (2008: 212), and with new aspects of feminism arising every year, new retellings and reinterpretations of the little girl in red are bound to emerge. There is still much to be discovered about Little Red Riding Hood and the doors of research are open to anyone who dares enter, including myself.

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