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**Reading the Feral Woman:
Female Werewolves and Liminality in Fantasy Fiction**

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Abstract

Previously representing the threat of infection, invasion and the possibility of an internal Other, the werewolf, traditionally male, has recently been joined by a subgroup of wolf-women in fantasy literature. I intend to examine the female werewolf as a 'new' archetype, tracking her presence in the overlapping genres of Gothic fiction and contemporary paranormal romance. I want to understand how the female werewolf engages with, and dramatizes, the portrayal of gender and binary issues such as nature/culture and male/female. This thesis follows the shift from the familiar 'morality tale' structure, and examines the possibility of wolf-women as marginalised or deviant figures empowered, their liminality drawing attention to the permeable and ultimately arbitrary nature of the boundaries they cross. Chapters begin with a discussion of the literary and cultural history of the werewolf, moving into short stories and novels by Alice Borchardt, Gail Carriger, Angela Carter, Clemence Housman, Aino Kallas, Tanith Lee and Stephenie Meyer. Texts are analysed with insights drawn from feminist theorists of gender and fantasy, including Judith Butler, Barbara Creed, Julia Kristeva and Marina Warner, to consider the wolf-women as deviants both desired and desiring. The female werewolf brings to the forefront contemporary anxieties around body image, the monstrous feminine and gender performance, and draws uncomfortable attention to the problematic binaries presented in both fantasy and reality.

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Introduction

Monsters ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place. They ask us to re-evaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perceptions of difference, our tolerance towards its expression.

They ask us why we have created them (Cohen 12).

Werewolves, as literary figures, have long been portrayed as a mono-gendered species. By traditionally spreading the lycanthropic, or werewolf, condition through biting, werewolves call to mind the fear of infection, of plague, and illness entering the haven of one's body. The transformation from man to beast hints at the fragility of the human/animal border, and the concept of the uncivilised and aggressive beast residing behind the gentleman's eyes. Since the appearance of Lycaon in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the male werewolf has embodied a cursed state – those infected with lycanthropy falling below humanity. Other supernatural and monstrous creatures such as the vampire, traditionally cast as male, have embraced a more balanced gender spectrum within contemporary fantasy fiction. When one considers the werewolf, however, it immediately becomes apparent that females of the species remain particularly scarce.

Throughout literary history the female werewolf goes largely unmentioned until the surge of Gothic fiction in the 19th century. Within the Gothic genre, the female werewolf emerges as a figure of deviance rather than a truly frightening monster, and finds correction in the typical morality tale. Representing the aberrant female, the female werewolf of the

Victorian period embodies all traits and behaviours thought overly masculine or inappropriate for a lady, such as violence and body hair, and is corrected by man or mob within each text. Where the male werewolf threatens the borders of nature and culture, the female werewolf also undermines the binary of male and female by blurring the distinct gender identities and appearances. Moving forward, the female werewolf departs from the Gothic genre, outgrowing the morality tale to appear with increased frequency in the genre of paranormal romance, another sub-genre of the Fantastic.

Despite shifting away from the purely Gothic and growing in frequency, the female werewolf struggles to find a prominent place in contemporary paranormal romance. The werewolf, as a symbol, has been constantly re-interpreted, and now carries a huge history of associations and stereotypes. In shifting across the fantasy sub-genres, the female werewolf is, in a sense, being re-invented as a character. This of course provides authors with a potential frame with which to address several social issues, particularly those concerning body image and gender identity. Fantasy texts offer both author and reader varied opportunities to explore and develop new gender ideas, and to challenge pre-existing expectations. Such depictions provide a useful social commentary and help identify problematic social structures.

As contemporary characters, the female werewolves express difference, and as such provide authors with the opportunity to encourage tolerance of marginalised Others. As they tie in closely with body image and sexuality, I plan to examine the female werewolf as a representation of the imperfect female body

and fluid gender, with consideration given to how they are portrayed and perceived within their respective texts. Existing scholarship examining the female werewolf is limited in scope, namely found in student theses¹. Upon closer examination it becomes apparent that that the focus of these works is either in werewolf short stories, as a representation of feminism, or the female werewolf portrayed through visual media as a figure of deviance and horror. My work, while considering similar themes of gender subversion, attempts to analyse the shift in the literary portrayal of the werewolf, their increased visibility, and whether this change indicates a growing culture of acceptance. To understand exactly how each author has utilised their werewolves, this thesis will address the following questions: how have the earliest werewolf myths provided a foundation for the development of the female werewolf? How does the female werewolf threaten or appropriate certain 'gendered' behaviours? Acknowledging the close ties between female characters and body image, how have the female werewolves been portrayed as figures of desire? How is the female werewolf portrayed alongside the male? And finally, does the modern portrayal of the female werewolf reinforce or challenge social expectations of the female?

I have approached this thesis with the intention of utilising a selection of novels and short stories in which female werewolves are featured. The texts are loosely grouped in two categories: those falling under the label of morality tales, concerning the 'correction' of aberrant figures, and those that attempt to marginalise the female werewolf as an uncomfortable figure without a final correction. While they were not chosen for the fact, it should be noted that each

¹ See *When Women were Wolves: The Representation of Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Werewolf Short Stories* (Roosmarjin D. Biemans), and *"Hairy Thuggish Women" Female Werewolves, Gender, and the Hoped-For Monster* (ElizabethM. Clark).

text concerning female werewolves was written by a female author. What I hope to determine throughout this thesis is whether the shifts within the fantasy superset results in a more positive portrayal of female difference, as represented by the female werewolf. While the number of major female werewolves remains comparatively low, their increasing presence suggests a growing niche for characters embodying deviant or marginalised roles, particularly in the current boom of paranormal romance fiction.

The development of werewolf fiction has seen the species pass from Classical literature into Gothic fiction, before shifting into its current position within the paranormal romance. Fantasy, being a nebulous concept, can be subdivided and linked with genres overlapping in themes and plot structures such as science fiction, urban fantasy and alternative histories. Contemporary werewolf texts tend to fall into one such sub-category of the fantastic – the relatively new genre of the paranormal romance. By continually linking the portrayal of the female werewolf to very real social issues, I hope to demonstrate that the werewolf is an ideal vehicle to represent the restricted social place of the modern female. While the shift from morality tales may imply a sense of female empowerment, this façade hides the subtle oppression of the female werewolf, noticeable in the supernatural romance.

This thesis is divided into four chapters, tracking the path of the female werewolf through literary history. The chapters provide a background to the werewolf concept, and examine the female werewolf as a lens through which to engage with issues of body image and gender identity as represented by deviant female characters. As such, the chapters will be divided around four themes. Chapter one offers the reader a background on the cultural associations of the true

wolf: as a symbol of the wild space, as a fairy-tale antagonist, and, more recently, as a keystone species in threatened environments such as Yellowstone National Park. These enduring associations are linked to the werewolf character, followed by an overview of creation myths, and brief mention of the European werewolf trials. The earliest werewolf characters are identified by examining Classical literature, which I will attempt to categorise based on werewolf creation, behaviour, retention of rationality, and how they are portrayed within each text. My attention will then turn to the werewolf as a literary monster, a hybrid of human and animal. This forms the foundation against which later werewolf characters may be compared. The chapter then proceeds to consider the gender imbalance of the classic werewolf and the species' shift through the fantasy superset.

The second chapter introduces the female werewolf as a representation of the monstrous feminine, and the uncontainable, abject body, as discussed by Barbara Creed and Julia Kristeva. Considering the female body as portrayed in Western society, one finds a sharp division between the sexual icon and the abject or monstrous body – that which must be concealed from society's eye. The development of this 'culture of concealment' naturally leads to the depiction of the aberrant or deviant woman breaching these taboos, and consequently being 'corrected' as monsters within morality tales. By setting the female werewolf as the target in Victorian-style morality tales, this chapter considers each boundary of the feminine form breached by the werewolf, such as permitted body space, strength and violence, body hair, and blood. By cross-examining the female werewolf as both a monster needing correction, and a representation of the

‘incorrect’ female, the early female werewolf emerges as a character of insidious threat.

Chapter three offers the reader a selection of contemporary female werewolves within the realm of the paranormal romance, and examines their transition from deviant figures to figures of desire. As a method through which to judge how the characters are perceived within their respective texts, desirability and the capacity for desire compares the female werewolves to real-world women – a commentary on the consumable nature of the female body in Western society. This chapter explores the role desire plays in the wolf-women finding their place within society, either in becoming removed from desire, or finding desire at the cost of social acceptance. In either case, the morality-style ‘correction’ of the deviant figure is replaced with marginalisation, outwardly presented as a situation of empowerment or escape for the restricted women.

The final chapter considers the findings of chapters one to three, to determine the overall role of the female werewolf in modern fantasy fiction. By identifying the enduring characteristics of the werewolf species, and of the females, this chapter attempts to place minor and major female werewolf characters in roles consistent across texts, such as the vengeful woman and the animal or bestial bride. Chapter four questions the relevance of the female werewolf, when other character types might just as well achieve the same subversion of performative gender identity, and considers her liminal, or threshold, nature – that which allows her to undermine social binaries. The ability to transform is an ideal representation of ‘shedding one’s skin’, and taking up a new body and role. Further, the female werewolf is not necessarily triumphant when confronted with body and gender expectations, a nod to the reality of women’s

experience behind these stories. Chapter four observes the female werewolves as characters designed to draw uncomfortable attention to the arbitrariness of such expectations and, perhaps, their inescapability.

Chapter 1

Of Wolves and Wolf-Men

Were-creatures have haunted human narratives since the earliest recorded figures of myth and legend. They appear as monsters, the danger of the woods at night, with glowing eyes and dripping, bloodied jaws. Within society, the term lycanthropy refers both to a man who “was turned, or could turn at will, into a wolf” (*Brewer’s*), and the medical term concerning the “delusion that one has become or assumed the characteristics of a wolf or other animal” (*American Heritage*). As a literary figure the werewolf has shifted forms over time. Initially a man would become a true wolf, taking on animal form as a punishment or curse. Later, in the boom of werewolf pulp fiction in the 19th and 20th centuries, the werewolf archetype evolved to that of a hybrid monster – a grotesque blend of man and beast. And, for the majority of the werewolves’ history, they were exclusively male. This chapter will introduce the werewolf concept, covering connotations surrounding the true wolf, early myths that established the werewolf model, an examination of the mono-gendered nature of the species, and the literary niche in which the female werewolf formed.

To begin investigating the role of the literary werewolf, it is not sufficient to focus solely on the creature as a complete and cohesive unit. A certain amount of foundational knowledge of the component creature, in this case of the true wolf, will be necessary. The natural wolf is perhaps the most traditionally feared and reviled of all predators found across Europe. Since the emergence of Homer’s *Iliad*, the wolf has been branded as ferocious and destructive; the poem likens groups of soldiers to wolves who “tear flesh raw, in whose hearts the battle fury is

tireless (Homer 355). Routinely given titles as greedy, cunning and ravenous, the wolf has at times been a synonym for hunger. 'To keep the wolf from the door' is to ward off famine; to rush one's food is to 'wolf it down'. Cultures whose livestock were threatened by roaming wolf packs feared and hated the wolf for quite literally stealing the food from their mouths.

Conversely, the wolf has been recorded as a nurturing figure, adopting abandoned children and resulting in the case studies of several 'feral children'. The ancient city of Rome boasts what may be the most widely-known urban creation myth, the Romans believing their city founders Romulus and Remus to have been suckled at the breast of the she-wolf Lupa, thus saving them from starvation as infants. Several Native American tribes consider wolves as closely related to humans, sharing such behaviours as the family dynamic and communal child-rearing. The ideas surrounding the wolf have far outgrown the reality of its presence in our world. The wolf has become an archetypal creature, one full of contradiction as our view of it slowly changes. In *Animality, Humanity, Morality, Society*, Richard Tapper's examination of animals explains the wolf figure as a reflection of our own projected ideals, stating:

animals, or rather cultural constructions of them, are used as metaphors... in two rather different, even contradictory ways. Sometimes certain animals are idealized and used as models of order and morality, in animal stories and myths. By contrast animals are sometimes represented as the Other, the beast, the brute, the model of disorder or the way things should not be done (51).

Humans perceive wolves and dogs in this same contradictory manner. The two species share many behavioural patterns due to a common ancestry, several breeds of dog still bearing a close physical resemblance to the wolf. To us the dog is the epitome of the domesticated animal – over time they have developed from a working animal to a vital part of the average household. Kept within society as companion and worker, the dog's traditional role lies in guarding our livestock from predators such as wolves. Our acceptance of one over the other is partly due to the disparity between wild and domestic behaviours, the wolf's instinct to kill and consume live prey being unwelcome in the home, but also due to our perception of beings straying from their 'appropriate' space.

Consider the model of a farmhouse: the home is the centre of a set of expanding rings, each marking a graduating space. The inner ring is safety, comfort and order. The second ring, encompassing farmlands, is domesticated land, a bridging section towards the outer ring of forest, an unfamiliar wild space. Humans and dogs claim the two inner rings and relegate anything Other to the wilds. The wolf disturbs this order, paying little regard to our boundaries. Crossing between the wilds and domesticated lands, the wolf is an invading force, the Other approaching the contained domestic space, thus threatening its inhabitants. The spatial rings model becomes more exaggerated when shifted in to a modern urban setting. The inner ring begins at the home, expands into the city environment then reaches domesticated farmland. The wild forest area inhabited by large predators is constantly being challenged and pushed further from our borders. The anxiety of the invading Other is shifted to the threat of infection – familiar creatures within the home-space bringing in 'unhomely' and wild behaviours. Stray and feral dogs observed as becoming vicious and more 'wolf-

like', invite feelings of uncanniness, of what was familiar and safe corrupting into an alien and threatening form. The visual closeness of dogs and wolves exacerbates this issue, our minds all too quickly linking the angry dog to the image of the savage wolf. It causes unease and distress as this threat comes not from an external foe but from within the internal space of the home.

More than any other large predator in the Western world, the wolf is most likely to cross paths with, or approach, human dwellings. Whether concerning the fragile boundary between the dog and wolf, or our fears of invasion of the home space, our discomfort and anxiety is rooted in the uncertain nature of these boundaries. Borders are constructed to establish appropriate territory; homes are maintained to provide a haven from the outside world. As a species, we categorise the living world to recognise and understand it, to lessen the fear of the unknown. On a scale of familiarity, beings that do not hold their shape but move fluidly across our perceived order are furthest from our comfort zone. It is for this reason creatures such as ghosts, vampires and werewolves have endured so well as figures of horror. They are uncontainable, and represent fault-lines between binaries such as the living/dead, male/female and nature/culture. They are each an invasive force, entering the home space or invading and infecting the body.

In fairy-tales, the wolf becomes an antagonist, a threat to those who wander at night and essentially a symbol of the enemy in animal form. Well known tales such as Grimm's "The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids" and "Little Red Riding Hood" feature a devious wolf who consumes the tales' protagonists after gaining entry to their homes. From Aesop's "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" we associate repeated calls of distress, made with the intent to deceive, with the phrase 'crying wolf'. In Norse mythology Fenrir, the son of Loki, was a giant

wolf feared for his rapid growth and incredible strength. Fenrir was tricked into allowing the gods to bind him, biting off the god Tyr's arm in revenge. When freed from his bonds, Fenrir will battle and devour Odin. Throughout Norse legend he is a symbol of barely restrained rage, an uncontrollable threat if loosed and an enemy of both gods and humanity.

Deep-seated animosity towards the wolf still lingers in many, particularly rural, parts of the world, placing the traditional wolf into the representation of the Other. However, almost in direct contrast to this is the growing trend in modern Western society to view the wolf as something desirable, a symbol of the romanticised wild. The rise in environmental awareness and concerns over deforestation has placed the wolf as a mascot in the conflict between conservation groups and land developers. The wolves of Yellowstone National Park, already on the decline, had been eradicated by 1926 due to the lingering animosity of nearby farmers, and in response to a bounty per head provided by the government. In 1995, seven decades after they had been hunted out, the grey wolf was reintroduced to the Yellowstone National Park to address the population boom of large herbivores such as elk. The vacuum left by the wolves' absence caused a dramatic shift in the ecology and geography of the land. Over-grazing coupled with repeated droughts retarded the growth of new trees and shrubs, increasing erosion of soils and destabilizing river banks. Variety in birdlife decreased, along with carrion feeders such as foxes, ravens and bears, who had benefitted from wolf kills (Ripple 225-226). At the time of the reintroduction, the grey wolf was classified as endangered, forcing governing bodies to actively attempt to protect and increase the remaining population. From an environmentalist viewpoint, the project was a success, with the ecosystem in the national park recovering in most

areas to a degree of complexity unseen since the wolves' departure. From this and other successful tales of wolf reintroduction, the wolf becomes a positive image, a figure-head of the environmental movement. However, the decision to release wolves into Yellowstone was the result of a 20-year effort, involving over a hundred public hearings and executive directives from six presidents (Wilson 453-454). The project was met with fierce public resistance, particularly from those living in the Greater Yellowstone Area, the controversy lasting well after the wolves' release.

Since the start of the environmental movement – a result of the heavy pollution caused by the large factories and coal burning of the industrial revolution – the natural world, and literature concerning it, has grown more important in the public eye. The wild has taken on a sense of nostalgia, a longing for simpler times. The wolf has been recast as the protagonist figure in a fight for survival. The fluid nature of this animal is emphasised by literature. The wolf-hero/wolf-villain is an important binary to consider in that it describes the polarised perspectives of the same liminal creature.

Werewolves through History

The literary history of the male werewolf is traceable through Greek myth and legends to medieval romance and Gothic fiction, before shifting to the more contemporary genre of urban fantasy.² In each genre, the werewolf gains and loses hitherto accepted characteristics to the point where the term 'werewolf', directed at different chronological periods of literature, becomes the label for subspecies of

² Urban fantasy is a category of the broader fantasy genre, where elements of the fantastical intrude on the familiar, 'real' world. Paranormal romance can also be classed as urban fantasy.

the original concept. The image of the werewolf, its abilities and creation, fluctuate through different periods, reflecting beliefs and anxieties of the time. There is an observable 'return to origins' occurring in the contemporary fantasy werewolf. Regarding outward appearance, the werewolf has cycled from a full, or natural, wolf form, to a hyper-masculinised, monstrous hybrid form, back to the shift to a natural, albeit large, wolf. By noting these changes, and examining the changed male werewolves' role within a text, a close analysis of the new, female werewolf can be carried out.

Perhaps the first werewolf figures to appear in written form were presented in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in the case of Lycaon, turned wolf by the god Jupiter, and the unnamed soldier in the *Satyricon* manuscript of Petronius Arbiter – both texts emerging in the first century. Across several Greek myths, humans are transformed by a higher power, or use of sorcery, into another form, either animal or plant. Reasons can vary: at times the change is out of malice, as in the case of Circe changing men into pigs, or for the mortal's protection, as several human women were changed to hide from lustful gods. The wolf form appears to have been chosen as a punishment, the resulting lycanthropy considered a curse.

Early in the *Metamorphoses*, the narrator, Jupiter, relates descending from the heavens to observe the Arcadian tyrant Lycaon after hearing rumours of the man's misdeeds. Unlike his household, Lycaon refuses pay homage when Jupiter reveals his true form. Instead he plans to kill the god in his sleep as a test of the guest's divinity. Further, and more famously, Lycaon kills a hostage (in some versions his own son), boiling and roasting the man's limbs to serve to the god in a banquet. Jupiter, in his rage, brings the house down, causing Lycaon to flee into

the woods where, as punishment, the god turns him into a wolf, the tale later being considered the source of the term 'lycanthrope'. From this text we can isolate characteristics of the early werewolf. Firstly, the change is an involuntary shift due to divine punishment. Second, the shift is to a complete wolf form, as a permanent state and lastly, the Lycaon-wolf is a creature driven by instinct not reason. Lycaon is introduced to the reader as a tyrant, yet the rumoured atrocities that Jupiter came to investigate are neither the focus of the tale nor what called down his punishment. Rather than numerous misdeeds committed against humans, it is the disrespect shown to a god, and the shameful act of cannibalism that triggered his fall from humanity. Werewolf Lycaon is described as "uttering howling noises," with "his attempts to speak all in vain. His clothes changed into bristling hairs, his arms to legs, and he became a wolf" (Ovid 35). The creature retains something of the man's character, the 'savage nature' of his rabid jaws and the 'madness about his eyes' being attributed to the corrupt and violent human rather than the wolf (35).

The reader may assume that the punishment of Jupiter is not limited to the change into a wolf. The violent instincts and lust for killing carried over from the human form, with the physical prowess of the wolf, will drive the creature into confrontations with mankind. It will not be gods but humans who eventually destroy Lycaon for his deeds, and by this, the tale of retribution will end. Early myths lay the foundation for the Victorian period morality tales. The narrative presents an inhuman act, bestial in nature, with the punishment given by divine hands. The wolf form is established as undesirable, a cursed state. Later texts build upon this pattern, with an offending character presented to a crowd who will attempt to 'correct' or expel the sinner. In this manner we see the evolution of the

tale: it falls to society to judge an aberration and the resulting correction validates and reassures that such threats may be overcome.

In the Latin narrative the *Satyricon*, we observe the werewolf character during the section known as “Dinner with Trimalchio”, where the ex-slave Niceros entertains the guests with a fabulous tale of a travelling companion who before his eyes changed into a wolf. The pair had been walking along a moonlit road and paused within a graveyard. Niceros sings and counts gravestones, suggesting a drunken state, before witnessing his companion “strip off and lay all his clothes by the side of the road. “My heart was in my mouth; I stood there [while] he pissed a ring round his clothes and suddenly turned into a wolf!” (Petronius 73). The former man disappears into the trees while Niceros proceeds to their destination only to find a wolf had arrived before him, slaughtering many livestock. Hearing that the beast had been driven off with a spear to the neck, Niceros hastens back to the graveyard to find the clothes gone and, later, his companion at home with a wounded neck. In both texts, the werewolf form can be noted as that of the true wolf, prone to the savage hungers of a predator. Neither character is confronted or corrected within the tale. This suggests either the werewolf being regarded with supernatural fear, with observers striving only to distance themselves from the threat, or, that the werewolf is not yet representative of ‘conquerable’ anxieties.

The *Satyricon* presents another characteristic of the werewolf to be carried through literary history – an anchor to the human form. The importance of the anchor presents itself in medieval tales, where the werewolf may be portrayed as a sympathetic creature. The wearing of clothes is something uniquely human, a way to cover the ‘bestial’ state of nakedness and so clothes are often used to recall the

werewolf's humanity. To shift voluntarily into the form of a wolf, the soldier of the *Satyricon* must first discard this link to his human self. Following this concept, in order to return to human form, the werewolf must return to his clothes and once more take up the mantle, or disguise, of humanity. This voluntary shift is not without risk. With the man's clothes acting as an anchor to his human form, they also become a weakness, a potential source of entrapment for the werewolf.

This scenario takes place in the medieval tale of *Bisclavret* or "The Werewolf", written by Marie de France in the 12th century. This well-known poem tells of a Baron who frequently leaves his wife to become a wolf, living in the forest for three days each week. The woman is suspicious, pestering her husband to reveal where he goes until at last he admits to becoming a bisclavret each week. Once aware of his ability, she pressures him into revealing where he hides his clothes: as he says, "If I lost them by mistake I'd stay a bisclavret forever" (France 3). By stealing her husband's clothes and hiding them, the wife forces the Baron to remain in wolf form indefinitely, allowing her to pursue an affair with another knight. Eventually the Baron is found by a hunting party. Once brought to bay, he seeks refuge at the foot of the king leading the group. His actions, showing reason beyond an animal's, earn him a place at the palace. His usual good temperament is lost when his treacherous wife comes before the king, and he attacks her in a rage. The onlookers reason that there must be some grudge against the woman and, through torturous investigation, the truth of the wolf's form is revealed. The Baron's clothes are returned and the wife is exiled.

The Baron's practice of hiding his clothes is an echo of the actions undertaken by the werewolf character in the *Satyricon*, who protects his link to humanity with some form of magic. The ring of urine he marks around his clothes

turns the contents into stone to await his return. The Baron hides his clothes within a hollow bush, without any supernatural protection. Beyond this, the tales have little similarity. The two characters appear as opposites of the wolf-hero/wolf-villain binary, the Baron is a man in wolf form – conscious and rational – while the soldier acts with abandon, slaughtering indiscriminately as his instincts urge. This begins to form the basis upon which a werewolf may be labelled ‘monstrous’ or not. In both cases the shift appears to be voluntary, rather than god-inflicted, thus their condition is less supernatural, and may be confronted by humanity. The actions of the werewolf determine whether they are a monster in need of, if not receiving, correction.

Werewolves as Monsters

Monsters, under their most basic definition, are creatures with the capability to inspire a feeling of horror, fear, or disquiet in those who perceive them. Monsters are human fears given physical form, with different cultures and time periods having specific monsters to underscore social anxieties of the time. A popular example of this is Mary Shelley’s monster in *Frankenstein*. Frankenstein’s monster is considered a commentary on the anxiety brought about by the great bounds in which science was progressing in the 19th century, and also demonstrates the sad fate of those who do not fit the human mould. The term monster can also be used to describe a human capable of committing monstrous acts, breaching standards of socially acceptable behaviour. In his text concerning Teratology, or the study of monsters, Stephen T. Asma states that people are given the label of monster when they, “by their own horrific actions, abdicate their

humanity (8).” Humans who are deformed from birth or accident have also been traditionally referred to as monsters or monstrous, since their featuring in 19th century freak shows. Their appearance bars them from regular society, as with Frankenstein’s monster: it marks their difference and labels them as something non-human. It seems then that we have created a scale of comparison where the title of normalcy is given only to the respectable (usually white) citizen in the cultured world.

To make use of monsters as warnings or entertainment, society has placed them into a compelling binary system which serves firstly to separate them from humanity. Civilised and savage, nature and culture, good and evil, human and non-human – in each example we draw a line between the Self and the Other. However, in most cases, these very distinctions that separate the human from the monster create a grey area in which the creatures may thrive. Often, too, those monsters that inspire the most discomfort are those who begin to blur or break our boundaries and approach the human sphere, such as the ghost, vampire and werewolf. In approaching our space, monsters threaten the sanctity of our created borders, inciting fear and hatred. Monsters that exist in this liminal space threaten to contaminate the human sphere, and this threat of invasion in turn reinforces the recognition of these creatures as monstrous to the human mind.

It is within this liminal space that we find werewolves. Asma considers liminality an apt state for monsters without fixed shape, stating liminality as a significant category for the un-categorizable (40). Not only do werewolves change their shape, they are a hybrid creature of human and Other. Hybrid creatures without the human element, such as gryphons and chimera, are present throughout myth and legends, and seldom inspire the dread or repulsion that werewolves,

sirens and minotaurs are capable of. The former can be classed as ‘beast hybrids’. They are often intelligent, but exist within texts as obstacles to be overcome. Their threat is in physical danger, rather than an insidious weakening of the divide between human and Other. Even centaurs, human-hybrid creatures traditionally viewed as having the highest capacity for reason and civility, were prone to outbursts of violence and lust – the most notable example of course being the Centauromachy, the battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs at the wedding of King Peirithous. Specific examples appear in history of hybrid creatures such as Chiron³ who, being entirely civilised, is respected, whereas the more typical bloodthirsty or wild hybrids bring about loathing.

At this point, passing mention must be made of the many shape-shifting tales that developed alongside the werewolves. Across the globe, where the wolf may not be so prevalent, other were-creatures emerge from local myths, playing upon similar fears of unstable borders and invasion. Japan sees a bevy of shape-changing creatures, the most prominent being that of the *kistune* (fox spirit) and the snakes who could take the form of either a man or woman. An entire subgenre of Japanese myths involve the interactions, often sexual, and marriages that form between humans and were-creatures known as *shinkontan* or divine marriage tales (Blacker 114). Such tales rest alongside the Western tales of the animal bridegroom and may be read as warnings, of fluid beings capable of entering, and thus corrupting, the home space, the human taken over by the Other. Tales of the were-tiger can be found across China, India and Indonesia. In some cases, the natural tiger has eaten the flesh of man and becomes supernatural; in others, the change from man to beast is the work of a sorcerer wielding black magic, or an

³ The centaur who taught several Greek heroes music, medicine and hunting skills. See ‘centaur’ in “*Oxford*”.

inherited family curse. Such creatures, like the wolf, are considered demonic and dangerous, a threat to be strictly guarded against. However, not all were-creatures are considered malevolent. Selkies or 'seal-folk' appear in the coastal areas of Scotland and Ireland. Spending most of their time in the sea, the selkies can shed their skins to reveal their true form as that of a human, and spend time on land. Greek and Norse myths contain multiple accounts of both men and gods changing into animal form and back, sometimes as punishment, in aid of humans, or to play tricks and seduce women.

Across these tales there is an observable trend toward predator-human hybrids. This bias, if the reading of the were-creature as threatening is engaged, follows the interpretation of the predator representing the dangerous wild space; the predator were-creature blurs the boundary between the wild and domestic, human and Other, and thus inspires more dread than the (harmless) herbivore. The distrust of predators is similar across cultures. They are beings that overlap our sphere of existence, particularly those living in developing countries and in rural areas. Their strength and savagery is both admired and feared, these traits generating tales of conquest of man over beast, or beasts with cunning enough to elude hunters over the course of years. Large felines are admired for their beauty, with certain strains of housecat being selectively bred to better emulate the size and markings of their wild cousins. Secondly, there is the acknowledged human desire to remain at the top of the food chain, to consider oneself at the apex of the natural world. While predators represent wild spaces, through agricultural labour and meat production we have reduced the role of herbivores to beings of mere utility. Their perceived value in society is equal to the use we gain from their existence: wool and meat from sheep, milk and meat

from cows. This process of domestication has lowered their appeal as a potential were-creature; they already exist within the domestic space. The hybridisation of human and predator encourages their interpretation as monstrous. Domesticated species cannot easily support concepts of bloodlust and savagery. Livestock in society are restricted in every possible manner, freedom of movement and expression of strong emotions and beauty are simply not associated with these animals. To share traits with such a being as a were-creature implies a lowering of the average combined value, as we perceive it, compared to merging with a predator.

In medieval texts, wolves were typically seen as treacherous and closely linked to the devil. Links to the eye of Satan, usually associated with goats, have also been drawn from the eyes of the female wolf, said to “glow at night so brightly as to stun human senses” (Alexander 111). Tales of werewolves that emerged in the Middle Ages are sparse, but echo this attitude. Only in tales where the werewolf in question can retain human reasoning, such as in *Bisclavret*, are they portrayed as anything other than ravaging monsters. Beyond these occasional tales, the werewolf did not hold much presence in Western literature before the 14th century in Europe, where the church had declared the belief in the werewolf superstition to be a sin. In their essay “The Social Biology of Werewolves” W.M.S. and Clair Russell state that by the later 16th century, the church had reversed this attitude, making it disreputable *not* to believe in the existence of werewolves. At this point werewolves were persecuted alongside witches as having obtained their abilities through a bargain with the devil.

In preparation for the publication of their paper, W. M. S. and Clair Russell examined data from 21 separate werewolf trials spanning from 1520 to

1610. These trials appeared alongside the more famous outburst of witch trials in the later 16th and 17th centuries. They attribute the intensity of a rising population coupled with particularly poor weather and harvests in the 1590s to the highest density of werewolf trials in this period.⁴ To expand on this, there are several factors that may have contributed to this concentration of werewolf accusations. Werewolf trials, as a cultural phenomenon, developed alongside the more famous witch trials, existing within the same sphere of religious scapegoating and ‘cleansing’. Within the Christian faith the wolf was often used as a symbol of devilry and danger. The preying of wolves upon livestock such as sheep is vividly likened to the representations of the lamb, the shepherd and the flock – those who follow the Christian Bible. Many passages warn of the “false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves” (*Authorised King James*, Matt. 7.15). That a member of a Christian village could be revealed as a murderer or cannibal echoes the idea of the dangerous hidden self, the unconverted or bestial instincts within. Secondly, this period follows a generation of avid wolf-hunting across Europe where the actions of governments and monarchs such as King Edward the First, who gave an extermination mandate on wolves within his lands, led to the eventual extinction of wolves in England by the early 16th century. Other countries in Europe followed this lead, organising semi-annual wolf hunts with various rewards. The wolf was a prime target, and the ingrained animosity towards them lingered in the populace at the time of the trials. Lastly, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, the wolf was a common symbol of famine, their presence a cause of anxiety. At the time of the trials the population was under great strain as poor harvests resulted in lean times. The culmination of

⁴ See Russell, W. M. S. and Claire Russell: “The Social Biology of Werewolves.” *Animals in Folklore*, edited by J. R. Porter and W. M. S. Russell, Rowman and Littlefield, 1978, pp. 143–182.

these factors likely kept the image of the wolf fresh when criminals acted like animals.

Those on trial for lycanthropy in the 16th and 17th centuries were not thought to have physically transformed into werewolves like their literary counterparts, though this accusation was often levelled. Those accused of the werewolf power were invariably linked to the devil, serving as his familiars in animal form. The actions for which they were put to trial typically involved horrific murders, cannibalism or desecration of corpses, all 'inhuman' and bestial acts. A typical example of a werewolf trial is the case of Peter Stubb from 16th century Germany. The confession, extracted by torture claimed Stubb to be responsible for the raping, savaging and murder of several young women while in wolf form (Alexander 111). Tales of cannibalism are among the most common attributed to the werewolves of this time. While the recorded trials concern themselves with atrocities committed by men, the evidence collected by W. M. S. Russell and Claire Russell shows that of the 21 one cases reviewed, seven victims were female. All were convicted as being in league with the devil and were usually burned alive.

On the Genders of Werewolves

As a supernatural species, the werewolf displays an unusual tendency towards a single gender. The term 'Werewolf' translates quite bluntly to 'man-wolf', a name leaving no room for a female counterpart. Traditional tales of werewolves involve women only as far as victims, collateral damage of the werewolf rampage. Tales of shape-shifting women are not uncommon, particularly those associated with

witchcraft, yet seldom is the result of the change a wolf. Females have long since been associated with the more elegant felines, seals and foxes – emphasis being given to their smaller, agile size and ‘feminine’ nature. The true female werewolf, as opposed to victims of the werewolf trials, first gained popularity in Victorian Gothic fiction as an outlet for concerns regarding the feminist movement and female sexuality. Appearing in morality tales, the female werewolf was villainised, labelled deviant and quickly destroyed. Rather than the fear of the male werewolf, attributed to the potential savagery hidden within the gentleman, the female werewolf added a deep unease in hybridising gender and gender roles. Chapter two considers this structure, presented in texts such as Housman’s “The Werewolf”, Kallas’s *The Wolf’s Bride* and Carter’s “The Werewolf”, which examine the female werewolf as deviant.

Modern texts concerning werewolves offer a more balanced gender distribution of the species, and do not necessarily view the werewolf as monstrous. The female werewolf most commonly appears in a pack, or group of werewolves, signalling the end to what was the solitary, monstrous werewolf. The female werewolf will be discussed as representing a breach and inversion of gender, usurping characteristics that are socially determined as masculine. However, it is important to note this same behaviour in the male werewolf. As a monstrous figure, the werewolf warns against the transgression of boundaries, while at once revealing that those boundaries are permeable. In transforming, the werewolf reveals what ‘lies under the skin’, a thing, perhaps, that should remain hidden. Barbara Creed describes horror transformation within *Phallic Panic* as “a regressive process in which the natural animal takes over from the civilised, human domain as man regresses into an uncanny beast, familiar yet unfamiliar”

(xiii). Man became a werewolf as society grew mindful of its own appetite. The male werewolf came to represent not only the animal within the man, but the failures and inconsistencies of the ideal masculine state. The werewolf is unrefined, uncontrollable and without reason. In Creed's words, the wolf-man "signals the failure of civilisation; he reinvigorates the man with animal desire and points to the cannibalism that lies at the heart of so-called civilised society" (Phallic xvi). This regressive, monstrous state was, for a period of literary history, exclusively male. The man-wolf is a hyper-masculinised concept, seeking completion and balance by incorporating feminine elements such as birth and reproduction. Much in the same way the female werewolf is said to overstep gender boundaries, the male wolf took upon himself the birthing role, bringing his wolf skin out from within his own body, and reproducing alone by biting (penetrating) a human victim.

The arrival of the female werewolf and the boom of paranormal romance have seen the werewolf 'defanged'. While the traditional method of reproduction – biting – remains, now too may the condition be passed down genetically. The female werewolf as a character is seldom presented as suitable for either childbirth or child-rearing however, with the early morality tales destroying her for her deviant nature, and more contemporary texts, such as Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series, representing female werewolves as undesirable or barren. This concept, distasteful at first, works to remove the woman's body as a tool for reproduction. The female werewolf, villainised or not, can be seen reclaiming her body and wielding a sexual power, a threat entirely different from that presented by the male. If the werewolf is considered a being positioned across binaries such as culture and nature, then one assumes that the source of the violence and

aggression is sourced from the natural or wolf half. However the natural wolf has no ingrained cultural or moral restraints. Further, to broadly consider the traditional stereotypes of the human species, it is the men in most cultures who practice the art of war. To gain territory, protect towns and fight for one's country, civility becomes a hindrance. The male werewolf, consequently, embodies both animalistic savagery and the deeply-ingrained, yet repressed, violence of human kind. The female, considered the gentler sex, incorporates as a werewolf the natural and the masculine, and may offer a more balanced model of the wolf-human hybrid. While the male too shares this three-way division, the woman is already considered 'closer to nature', and as such draws the male with her in straddling the binaries of nature/culture, masculine and feminine.

Chapter 2

When Women were Wicked Wolves: Werewolf Morality Tales

The dual fascination and repulsion of the monstrous is never more keenly felt than when one considers the monstrous feminine. The female body has held the gaze of humanity since the fall of Adam and Eve, the naked body becoming symbolic and shameful. Aristotle famously refers to the female as a literal monster: a failed and botched male (Battersby 49). As a half-formed being, women were forever inferior, forever incomplete and lacking that which would hold them as fully human – as equal to men. Each culture has an understanding of the monstrous feminine: women as horrifying and alluring, repulsive and desirable. The female form provokes thought of corruption and contamination, both moral and physical, the threat concealed yet conversely offering the image of purity - the sacred mother or virgin. The woman has been seen as an animal without reason, a being in transition between animal and human, and as fully human, but of lesser capacity than males.

The concept of women as beings of change and progression makes the study of female literary monsters especially fascinating. Since the women's movement of the 1960s, Western society's perception of women has slowly shifted. Women are no longer barred from careers in law and medicine, from owning land or marital autonomy, yet the enduring presence of the female monster reveals our continued anxiety over the female body. This chapter will consider the links between standards of the unacceptable female body and the female werewolf, exploring the monstrous feminine and the culture of

concealment to build a foundation with which to analyse the werewolf narrative as a morality tale.

In order to discuss the female form as monstrous or a source of abject material, a brief explanation of these terms is required. The 'monstrous-feminine' is a term attributed to Barbara Creed, who argues that the horror and allure generated by the female body and female monster differs in its source than that of the male monster. The term 'monstrous feminine' emphasizes the importance of gender in the construction of monstrosity, as opposed to 'female monster', which implies the simple reversal of the male monster (3). The monstrous feminine also ties in closely with the concept of abjection. In her essay *Powers of Horror* Julia Kristeva offers three categories of abjection: food (as in vomit), waste (as in severed limbs, excrement), and the feminine (fluid secretion). Abjection, according to Kristeva, refers to that which elicits a subconscious reaction of horror, nausea, and fear when confronted, as it implies a loss of distinction between the self and other, subject and object (3-4). We reject the abject in order to affirm the borders of self, to assert oneself as 'I' and not 'that'. The distinction is not always clear, and abjection can be considered ambiguous. We do not cut ourselves off from the perceived danger and horror, but recognise and fear its proximity. Without the abject the border of self could not be maintained. The feminine falls into our understanding of abjection for several reasons and so places itself in the realm of the monstrous. The female body is one that cannot be contained. In menstruation, lactation and regular discharge, a woman leaks all manner of abject fluids. In pregnancy a new subject forms within her body and is ejected in a similar manner. What was part of the subject becomes other, and the material body becomes the source of abjection.

Society's awareness of the female's abject nature has prompted a pervasive culture wherein the feminine ideal is separate from the biological reality. Representations of the female body in contemporary Western society fall into two general categories. The female nude is an icon of feminine ideals and sexuality. Appearing in art, film and literature, this representation of the female body is not only praise or glorification but also, as Jane M. Ussher would say, a purification of the polluting female form, a reflection of male desire to 'conceal his dread' of the monstrous feminine (Ussher 2-3). The pure image superimposed over the modern female removes her from her base body by concealing, or containing, any imperfections. Gone are her pubic hair, genitals, secretions and any blemishes that would question her existence as a clean, contained body. The culture of concealment only serves to reinforce our awareness that there is something we must not speak of. Beneath the photo-shopping, beneath modest clothes, there is an imperfect body that swells, leaks and bleeds. This second form of the female is forbidden. We hide her from visual presentation, do not speak of her fecund body and of boundaries constantly breached. Throughout the stages in a woman's life, through puberty, pregnancy and menopause, her body secretes abject fluids. Blood, discharge and breast milk are signs of the fertile body, and signifiers of the uncontrolled and the uncontained. "This apparently uncontained fecund body...signifies association with the animal world, reminding us of our mortality and fragility, and stands as the antithesis of clean, contained, proper body", that epitomised by men (Ussher 7). By classifying natural processes as unclean or abject, the female body is reduced and objectified to a static image of social ideals, with the abject and dirt carefully concealed behind the façade of feminine beauty.

By defining women's bodies as a source of corruption, pollution and disease, Western culture now displays a tendency for concealment and self-management over acceptance. Our perception of self is closely governed by a desire to appear within the expected parameters of society. Alexandra Howson describes this self-management as key to maintaining our sense of self-worth, as the meanings attached to physical appearance and bodily performances become internalised to the point where they influence one's own perception of worth and moral value (Howson 21). Women, young and old, must rigorously control their body image through diet and clothing choices, act in a preconceived 'feminine manner' or risk judgement from both men and their female peers. For adolescents this is particularly important as they often are possessed by conflicting desires for acceptance and individuality. As a girl leaves childhood, the expectations of a grown woman are thrust upon her, and accompany her for much of her adult life. Women should not take up space, nor be loud and violent. Women should not have excess body hair, excess muscles or admit to natural monthly cycles. In short, women should neither act in a masculine fashion nor show evidence of their abject bodies; by doing so they become deviant in the eyes of society, potentially monstrous in their embodiment of the abject.

Such behaviours form the basis of the literary female monster, and the female werewolf who embodies all that women should not reveal or be. Early tales involving female werewolves as opposed to other monsters are well placed to serve as warnings of such behaviours and bodies. Texts concerning female werewolves across the 19th and early 20th centuries such as Clemence Housman's "The Werewolf" and Aino Kallas's *The Wolf's Bride* follow the Gothic model of the aberrant figure being punished or destroyed. In her article considering

women's horror, Gina Wisker describes this formula of the Gothic genre. The Gothic, she states:

has always enabled a recognition of the balance of opposites, the ways in which male and female, good and evil are flip sides of the same whole. But in conventional Gothic, once the fissures have been opened and revealed a terrifying instability of order, cataclysm and catharsis follow, and the status quo is restored. Gothic exposes and dramatizes contradictions in order, ultimately, to reconcile them (Wisker 2).

While this is not always the case within the Gothic genre it is an observable tendency, and one that has been utilized in early female werewolf texts. In the texts by Housman and Kallas, we observe female protagonists deviating from the expectations of their peers, embracing both masculine and bestial traits. Once the source of their deviancy is revealed, and their werewolf form made public, they are swiftly hunted and killed by the correcting man or mob. The modern fairy-tale "The Werewolf" by Angela Carter presents a similar tale in a reworking of Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood" and echoes Kallas's undertones of cynicism and frustration to question the restrictive nature of werewolf narratives. Both authors present a challenge in my attempt to categorise the female werewolf texts. Each, awkwardly enough, refuses to fit comfortably with the texts emerging from the same periods. While Kallas's text sits in the period of the morality tale, the reader is not aligned with the correcting mob against the deviant woman. Instead the character Aalo becomes a vehicle for feminist discourse regarding the woman's autonomy, sexual and otherwise, in a male dominated society. While the woman is ultimately destroyed, the reader is left with an uncomfortable sense of complicity in her fate. Likewise, Carter's text emerged in the contemporary period

as a revision of the morality tale, intentionally making the actions and motives of her werewolf ambiguous. Without a clear picture of events, the subsequent ‘correction’ of the grandmother seems unfounded, the moral high ground difficult to find. These two texts should be considered a class above the more common werewolf fiction, their complexity and nuanced writing well worth study in their own right.

While the female werewolf of each morality tale faces discovery and ‘correction’ to restore order to their communities, she may be viewed as villain, victim or merely a means to an end. In each case, we can draw links between the common bodily practices and expectations of the contemporary female to the female werewolf. These factors are utilised to set the deviant woman apart from the feminine ideal, the ‘correct’ feminine model.

The Feminine Space

Of the above-mentioned ways in which a woman may be considered deviant or abject, I shall firstly consider the matter of space and the female body – how much she claims, the area around her body and the need to establish firm borders. All societies to some extent establish what is considered normal and natural for members of social categories. In contemporary Western context, “slenderness is the cultural norm for the female (and increasingly male) body, supported by medically produced standards of healthy weights” (Howson 21). Women can be shamed for taking up space in many contexts, firstly in bodyweight. With the accepted slim standard for female bodies, an overweight woman will incur judgement on her lack of self-management and discipline. She will be seen as less

attractive and less happy with herself than a woman who is slim. Clothing choices become limited, with the more attractive styles catering only for slim figures. In fact, many popular chain-stores will simply not stock anything her size. Decently covering her body will become a chore in a society that subtly punishes her weight. Secondly, in public spaces and particularly public transport, women are expected to minimize their presence and take up no more space than required. This contrasts to the common social phenomenon of ‘manspreading’. This colloquial term, now accepted as common-use but informal English, is defined by the *Oxford Dictionary of English* as a sitting posture, typically adopted by a male and most often on public transport, with widespread legs so as to encroach on neighbouring seats and discourage others from using them. The social space that women in public are considered entitled to is often less than males. While this is due in part to ongoing gender equality issues, it is more likely the result of the restrictive etiquette forced on females from early childhood. It is considered impolite for girls to sit with spread legs, owing to the traditionally feminine outfits of skirts and dresses. For a girl to sit with spread legs risks exposing the crotch and undergarments, which is seen as impolite in children and crude in grown women. This closed and compressed posture is hardly recent, and, as Emma A. Jane comments in her analysis of the manspreading debate, stems from the societal imperative for girls to avoid the act of ‘straddling’ or other sexually implicit postures (462). She goes on to note research showing the sitting postures of both genders and their close link to power and dominance. Expansive, open postures, as opposed to those where the subject holds their limbs close, are the wont of dominant personalities exhibiting their power and ‘right’ to control the space around their bodies. Such posturing comes more easily to those with larger

frames, a physical characteristic far more common in males. The area claimed by a body tends to be fixed, as, with the exception of weight loss/gain and adolescence, the human body remains stable. Despite this, there remain arguments that the male body is more fixed or permanent than the female.

More so than men's bodies, the bodies of women are changeable. Through a man's life he will enter puberty, becoming taller, broader and often displaying increased body hair. Through his increased stature a man will take up more space, with the area of his body clearly defined. The borders of the woman's body are far more difficult to determine. From puberty a girl's hips and breasts begin to swell, pregnancy expands and then contracts the body, and each month a woman's menstruation will cause her body to leak. With the exception of weight gain or loss, the body of a man remains more or less fixed once he emerges from the intense growth period of puberty.

The ambiguous nature of the female form is perhaps the closest link the literary werewolf shares with the human woman. Women who become wolves are expressions of the uncontained female body taken to the extreme. Not only do they challenge the border between human and animal, man and woman, the female werewolf is a creature of expansion and fluid space. In becoming a monster, the woman becomes *visible* and demands the space of and around her body be noted and respected. Werewolves are large and imposing regardless whether they are portrayed in full wolf or hybrid form. They imply ready aggression, power and intense activity. There is often a physical expansion associated with the change, for example, Housman's female character White Fell is described as a wolf of almost unnatural proportions. Her tracks, first seen by Christian as he travels home by night are "the largest he had ever seen" (Housman

7). Few texts respect the laws of physics when considering supernatural transformation. The wolf pushes through the physical borders of the woman's body, dragging them outwards to accommodate a new form. This enlarged female becomes a threat to the further reaching, masculine space, claiming more space than the female would usually be 'allowed'. In addition to the fluid nature of their own bodies, the female werewolves in *The "Were-wolf"*, *The Wolf's Bride* and "The Werewolf" affect the rigidity of physical boundaries within their texts, becoming an unwelcome bridge between the wild spaces and the home.

Each text relies on settings with stark boundaries between the home and the wild. Set in ambiguous 'story time' that recalls 17th century Europe, the tales unfold in a rural setting: a small village for Kallas; isolated farmhouses for Housman and Carter. As per the model outlined in the previous chapter, the wolf, along with all wild creatures, is relegated to the wild, the outermost area of those inhabited by humans. Wolves already cross borders to approach human dwellings but are stopped at the final border. This can only be opened by humans – the door to the home. Indeed, in "The Were-wolf" White Fell cannot open the farmhouse door to request shelter. On a winter's night, the farmhouse setting is haunted by knocks at the door and a voice calling "open, open; let me in!" (Housman 3). No one stands at the threshold, yet the voice calls again, first as a child, then as an aged person (genderless). The third voice is a man's, accompanied by a knock that shakes the door. Each time the family within open the door, they see an empty yard and fresh snow without tracks. The last call comes in a clear, mellow voice, easily recognised as feminine, at which point White Fell appears in white furs. She is invited over the threshold. The implied need for an invitation recalls the myths surrounding vampires, and reinforces the concept of the home as the heart

of humanity – the safest place. White Fell returns to the house freely after this first visit, welcomed by the household save for Christian, who recognises her as a monster. From his perspective the werewolf is painted as an invasive force made welcome, her human beauty a perversion with which to charm her prey. As a result of her presence Christian's own place within the home becomes unstable. His knowledge sets him apart from his family, causing aggression and mistrust at the hearth. The elder brother, Sweyn, is particularly resistant to accepting the threat, assuming Christian to be confused by the cold and acting out of a womanly superstition. Sweyn remarks that "women are so easily scared, and are ready to believe any folly without shadow of proof. Be a man, Christian, and fight this notion of a were-wolf by yourself" (Housman 10). Rather than acknowledging the danger, Sweyn chooses to believe in effectiveness of the boundary lines keeping the wild from his door.

In Housman's text the threat is not, or at least not solely, of the deviant woman. Rather, the tale warns against allowing contamination or corruption of the centre. White Fell becomes a threat only after she is welcomed into the home. As a werewolf, White Fell carries the wild into the home, an invasion of nature into the cultured space. As a woman, she affects semi-masculine garb and mannerisms. The deaths she causes can be read as a warning over acceptance of such deviance. While the home and hearth have traditionally been considered a feminine space, the author reminds readers of the importance of the 'right' type of feminine behaviour. White Fell is not immediately corrected for her garments, behaviour or speech, and as punishment for overlooking this deviance, lives are lost. The wolf-woman is portrayed as an arrogant monster, the reader aligned with Christian in noticing her bloodlust amidst the family. Those targeted by the werewolf showed

the most infatuation and approval of her presence in their home. When finally Christian challenges her and drives her from the home, the long chase and death are across tundra land, neither the home nor the wild but some sinister border realm inhabited by the dark brood of demon-like creature that follow the chase. The werewolf is bested in this liminal space by a man, who purges the threat of the monster and, in doing so, claims the space as his own.

The house or home has traditional connotations as a feminine space, a place of shelter and safety. The setting dictates the confinement of women to the domestic sphere of home and hearth, the wilds restricted to woodsmen and hunters. In *The Wolf's Bride* we see most clearly the struggle of Aalo, an embodiment of the caring, fertile wife tempted to sin by the wild spaces and the wolves that dwell there. While Housman's tale focused on the threat of corruption by the deviant female, Kallas blurs the morality tale by persuading the reader to sympathise with Aalo, while at once recognising the futility of escaping constructed gender roles. Aalo is marked from the start as a liminal creature. Her appearance hints at transgression, with the 'mark of Satan' on her body: the 'witch mole' and red hair setting her apart from the ideal domestic wife (Kallas 20-21). The narrative works within the collective knowledge and superstitions of an isolated society. Of *course* certain body features may be devil marks, and of *course* the devil may run through the marsh in wolf form. The reader is invited to share in this 'common knowledge' that makes up the context of village life, yet must also question its validity. The collective belief casts Aalo in a villainous light: she is a suspicious woman bearing the devil's mark while living amongst them.

Aalo stands at the threshold of the home space. The mark of Satan (a single mole), could see her on the witch's pyre; her position in society is tenuous. Her fate becomes sealed when the devil, in wolf's form, calls to her at the annual wolf hunt – "Aalo – Aalo, my maiden – wilt thou keep company with a wolf in the marshes?" – a daemon entered into her and she was bewitched (Kallas 31). Aalo becomes a woman drawn across the border of the home and wild. At first she clings to the stability and order of the home, asking her husband to "make new and strong shutters for the cattlefold" to keep away the wolves (34). She herself acquires a savage watchdog and takes care not to cross the fences of the home space. The text hinges on her inevitable fall from grace, the temptation of the wild space overcoming her resistance as she "wavered long between fear and lust" (34).

Once Aalo abandons the home to become a wolf of the marshes, she experiences with her new form a "new-born strength and hardihood...no distance was too great for her" (46). With the wolf's form comes the freedom for the woman to roam far beyond the home and village. In embracing the monstrous the woman finds almost complete freedom in the wild space; her blood "bubbled with such a golden exultation and such blissful freedom as she ran, a werewolf, across the marsh" (48). The novel sees the woman revelling in her freedom, dismissing the judgement of the church and villages as Aalo runs where "the crowing of cocks, the barking of watchdogs and the sound of church bells cannot be heard" (39-40). Removed as she is from the cultured space of the village, there is no condemnation aimed at Aalo. The wolf form becomes a vehicle through which to realise behaviours and independence previously denied to the woman.

Rather than the more typical forest setting, Kallas is noted for using marshland to define her wild spaces. The ground here is literally unstable, of both

earth and water, making it a prime location for such a tale that disrupts what were, at the time of publication, the typical gender roles of society. Aalo further destabilizes the feminine space when she returns to her husband one night in human form. Capable now of bringing the wolf within the home, Aalo returns to the space she was once confined to, revealing the disturbing weakness of society's borders. Entirely confident within the feminine space of the home, she approaches her husband. Some force paralyses him and she makes passionate love, their roles reversed as she is supremely active before his passive state. Once more, and to a far greater degree, the woman is in control of the home space. This is however, temporary. Her dual nature is no secret to the villagers. While the text notes the presence of other werewolves, it is Aalo who is recognised by the villagers, Aalo who invades the domestic sphere as a wolf and overpowers her husband. It is Aalo painted as a deviant who the morality tale 'corrects'.

As a morality tale *The Wolf's Bride* offers a resistant model of correction. Rather than condemning the woman for resisting her traditional place in society, it endorses her actions as natural and inevitable. It was quite beyond her power as a human to resist the call of the marshes. What we are left with after her death is an awareness of the *futility* in defying social boundaries. The villagers become monstrous in turn, refusing to see either Aalo or her child as human. Whether by choice or by coercion, Aalo removed herself from the sphere of humanity. At that moment, she was cast out of society. She is branded traitor, Wolf's Whore, Wolf's Harlot and is hunted through the wild spaces. Any human rights are forfeit. Even names are stripped from the woman.

Female werewolves, at least those inhabiting morality tales, are often made nameless to further distance them from human society. Aalo becomes the

Wolf's Bride or simply the Werewolf. Carter's grandmother figure is reduced to "the old woman", and Housman's White Fell is unnamed, the title referring to her outfit – heavy white furs. She is referred to by Christian as the Thing or simply "Fell". Fell has several meanings; the most applicable to this tale being firstly that of an animal hide or pelt, thus 'white fell' referring both to her garments and her other form of a white wolf. The second meaning one could infer from Housman's character is 'fell' as an adjective of a cruel, fierce or savage subject, perhaps meant to hint at her true nature. While the woman admits to having a real name, it is never revealed, being "uncouth to your ears and tongue" (Housman 6). To be named is to hold some part in society. By stripping werewolf figures of their names, authors create a distance between the woman and her peers and reduces the werewolf to a figure at best living on the borders of society, or at worst a wild animal.

Rather than allowing a nameless human-animal to exist in the wild space, Kallas's villagers become a correcting force to destroy the deviant now threatening the civilised space. The eventual death of the werewolf is due to her own traitorous body – the body of a female. Pregnant with her husband's child Aalo is forced back to the human sphere. Labour pains rack her swollen body, one eventually painted with birth blood. As a werewolf, as a woman, Aalo is at once the sacred mother of the home, and the abject embodied, the Other crawling back to civilisation. Just as the monstrous feminine body inspires both desire and revulsion, that same dread of the uncontrolled is evident in Aalo's condition. Her body is beyond her control, something within her is fighting for release and the pain drags her from her freedom back to the human sphere. There, she is not viewed as a human mother but as a monster that, being laid low, is the target for

the mockery and aggression of those not deviating from acceptable social structures. As an outside force, Aalo is invading the human space, bringing with her contamination from the wild. As her husband refuses to accept the child as his, the new life is considered the spawn of the swamp, a monster from a monstrous mother. Having the werewolf at bay, the villagers swiftly enact the ‘correcting’ of the classic morality tale. However, it is not the men who destroy the deviant female, but the women of the village. After mocking Aalo for her condition, for needing the aid of the humans she spurned, they set fire to the sauna where the birthing took place, consigning both werewolf and “wolf’s changeling” to the flames (Kallas 96). This method of erasure recalls the witch and werewolf trials, and follows well the religious overtones constantly pushed by the narrator. Burning bodies is an act of purification, often used to prevent the spread of contamination by plague.

The tale, rather than placing a monster in the midst of a society to challenge order, returns a woman, changed by her absence, to a monstrous reception. While first rewarding her for breaking from her gendered role, the tale punishes Aalo for being a liminal being: her visits to the home sphere were seen as invasive – she was already Other, a monster who contracted with the devil. It can be read that liminality itself is an inherent threat to the order of the village. Aalo does not conform to the roles and expectations of a village woman, and, arguably, finds more happiness than those who do. Answering this is the bitterness of the village women, who take the role of the correcting mob. In a similar manner, Angela Carter’s modern fairy tale “The Werewolf” swiftly brings punishment down upon the grandmother figure once she is revealed as a werewolf, despite the woman’s monstrosity being questionable at best. The morality in this

tale aligns with that of *The Wolf's Bride*, with the grandchild and human mob falling into the monstrous category.

Carter sets her story in the brief journey between two domestic spaces, through a snowbound forest. The tale hinges on two fears: the young displacing the old, and that of the aging crone. The villagers of this tale are isolated, harsh and cold. Their superstitions, particularly those of witches and devilry, lay the foundation for a society that utterly rejects the burden of age:

When they discover a witch – some old woman whose cheese ripens when her neighbours' do not, another old woman whose black cat, oh sinister! *follows her about all the time*, they strip the crone, search her for marks. They soon find it. Then they stone her to death (emphasis in original; Carter 126).

In a harsh environment the aged become burdens. Unable to properly provide for themselves, they require assistance and protection, all the while taking space and food from the younger generation. By labelling their elders as 'sinister' or belonging to the devil, the villagers justify their actions as self-defence or righteous cleansing. As a woman ages her body transforms, losing its ability to incite desire or reproduce, becoming stooped, wrinkled and blemished. Without virginity or the ability to bear children the crone cannot function as a sexual commodity and so is feared as a wise but genderless figure. Parasitic in their tendency to rely on the youth for support and resources, they further inhibit the growth of the young by denying them space for expansion.

The threat and fear of the young displacing the old is portrayed in the struggle between the Red Riding Hood figure and her grandmother. Travelling

between her parents' home and that of her grandmother's, the young girl is attacked by a "huge wolf with red eyes and running, grizzled chops" (Carter 127). The wolf is revealed as the werewolf grandmother when the paw lopped off by the child's knife becomes the aged hand of the old woman. As both victim and predator, the old woman is depicted as monstrous by her lycanthropy – the representation of the transformation of the crone into something Other. Once identified by the granddaughter, the aberrant is rejected utterly. The child is the impatient youth, villainising her grandmother who 'unfairly' denies the child her inheritance by continuing to exist. The crone is made into a figure of fear by the girl, inciting the mob to drive the old woman out to her death. While the villagers destroy the woman for supposed lycanthropy, the sympathies of the reader never lie with the child. The neighbours and child "drove the old woman out into the snow with stick, beating her old carcass as far as the edge of the forest, and pelted her with stones until she fell down dead" (Carter 128). The young girl usurps the territory of the grandmother, moving into her home and 'prospering'. Cyclic in nature, the girl too will age and become the target of society but in supplanting the aged she gains temporary status and stability. One reading offers the young girl as predator, as she profits from the demise of the werewolf. The other sees the grandmother not as a matronly figure but a marginalised crone spurred by fear and rage over the entitlement of the youth, of her eventual displacement, attempting to remove the threat of the child, and failing. In each case, the struggle lies between two women. Not only does this tale eventually reinforce the position of the female as belonging to the domestic sphere, it highlights their willingness to embrace violence and monstrosity to gain and maintain power over this feminine space.

Violence and Sexuality

Female violence is almost a non-concept in western society. Women who commit violent acts to such an extent that we cannot overlook them are treated as utter deviants. In a corresponding manner, men often find it difficult to have any instance in which they were abused by a female be recognized and seriously considered. On one level it is considered shameful, a weakness or lack of 'manliness' that brings about the situation, but it is also society turning a continual blind eye to the notion that women can act in an aggressive manner. Traditional gender stereotypes place men in the position of dominance and power. Further, any organized large-scale violence such as international warfare were exclusively male until recent years. The presence of women in warfare was restricted to medical care, sewing uniforms or acting in aid positions. While women are now being actively recruited to career paths in active combat or front-line police work, the number remains skewed in favour of males.

On a smaller scale, fights and acts of minor violence are viewed with a double standard. Consider a brawl that breaks out at a neighbourly barbeque. Punches are thrown, perhaps wrestling on the ground. Some in the crowd disapprove, and some will shout encouragement. The brawl never crosses the line to become 'too serious' and the combatants eventually cease. How we perceive the violence relies heavily on two factors. First the gender/s of those fighting: male to male, female to female, or male to female, and second, the gender/s of the audience: all male, all female, or mixed. It is easy to laugh off a fight between two men in a social context, when no one is hurt. Certainly it is ill-mannered but 'boys will be boys', or perhaps they had let their beers get to them. Change the couple to two females and you invite calls of 'cat fights' and remarks of over-emotional

women. It is a spectacle; it is shocking and entertaining in its irregularity. Lastly, consider the couple as a man and a woman. No matter the physical build of the pair we are hit with the phrase “men should not hit women”, closely followed by “men should not hit anyone”. The victor of this fight will greatly alter how an audience will perceive it. A male victor will be judged far more severely than a female. Further, should the female combatant seem stronger, the male may be ridiculed for his weakness. Cases of domestic violence instigated by women are increasingly coming under the public eye yet there remains the double standard of excusable violence. If we cannot accept the reality of violent women as a social problem, they can never be judged in the manner of violent men. That said, violence, in all forms, from all sources, is particularly discouraged in Western society. There are careers trained in the art of violence for defence and maintaining order, and while those who work within them are permitted by law to use violence, their actions are watched with intense scrutiny as to how they use this privilege.

Female sexuality, when compared to female violence, is constantly in the public’s eye. The female body is a commodity selling everything from sex to automobiles. A great deal of time is dedicated to editing, polishing, and perfecting the female form for the masses, the result an entirely fictional and unattainable standard of female beauty. Not to say that the body of the average woman becomes insignificant. Rather, her body is punished for its flaws, covered for decency or uncovered for the male gaze. As werewolves, females are released from the social mould of passiveness and body surveillance. Female werewolves can, and often do, exhibit violence equal to that of male werewolves, though the degree and target of their aggression varies greatly between texts. When

considering the female werewolf and her disposition towards aggression, there emerges evidence that the werewolf is merely a vessel for the fears of the female gone wild, the animalistic urges and unreasonable nature of the female pushed to their extreme. The female werewolf, as hybrid between animal and woman, offers a new form of monstrosity, reaching beyond the straightforward violence and aggression offered by male monsters. The female werewolf retains something of the allure, the desire inspired by women, and the fascination with the monstrous. Housman's *White Fell*, for example, appears in the form of a tall, slender, beautiful young woman. To the last moment before her death, this form stays the correcting hand of the pursuing male, who could not "strike a woman" (21). Her human form, "alluring and treacherous" was a "shield against a man's hand" (Housman 23, 21). The female hybrid monster is well noted through mythology for luring victims through use of the feminine form. In Helen King's study of hybrid creatures, she points out the traditional interpretation of the female hybrid, noted within Elaine Graham's work: *Representations of the Post-Human*.

Monsters that were hybrids of women and animals embody sexual voracity and danger, and their presence in the *polis* signified chaos and disruption. Similarly, sea-monsters such as sirens and mermaids have traditionally symbolized the equation of women with watery elements, but have always retained a clear distinction between their proper province and that of the ship. Thus monsters marked the fault line between appropriate social spheres as well as those between separate species (Graham 47-8)."

The classification of the female monster as one of voracious sexual appetites is echoed across many myths. In some cases, such as with sirens of Greek myth, the hunger is for the flesh of men rather than sexual pleasure. They

lure sailors to be consumed by giving the illusion of beautiful women, singing the sailors into either a stupor or a frenzy of lust. Mermaids overlap the siren myth, appearing within the waves rather than upon the shore and dragging sailors to the depths. Werewolves expand on this threat, as their nature allows them to disregard physical and social boundaries. They do not stay in their 'province' of the wilds, as King would say; there is no safety for men within the home. The violence of the female werewolf is most often concealed, unwritten and conducted 'off the page' until such point as their identity is revealed, for the art of the female werewolf is in her appearance of innocence while she seduces her prey. There are of course, exceptions. To seduce human prey the wolf must first possess a form capable of inspiring desire. The grandmother figure in Carter's "The Werewolf" has an aged human body. There is no mention of seduction, nor would it be believable should it have been included. Without this capacity to incite desire, the grandmother in wolf form purportedly acts in the manner of the male, directly attacking the young girl without an attempt to put her at ease. To appropriate King's phrase, werewolves embody the concept of a fault line between binaries. Rather than simply blurring the two, a characteristic of the typical literary monster, the werewolf weakens the distinction between two elements, becoming the point of inevitable collapse.

Aalo displays her ability to disarm men with her appearance when she returns from the marsh to seduce her husband. The sight of her naked body, the moonlight "covering her breasts and shoulders so that her youthful body seemed to be wrought of pure and smooth silver", bewitches the man (Kallas 88-9). "Her lips smiled and were parted like the shell of an oyster, as though they had never touched blood.... Priidik felt as though he had been bound with chains to his bed

or stricken with paralysis, he could neither move nor speak” (Kallas 87). Aalo shows what will become the typical *modus operandi* of the female werewolf, and indeed the female monster in general: to first seduce the male before devouring him. In the case of Aalo, the ‘devouring’ is in the form of sexual intercourse, where she makes love to the spellbound man. The violence and seduction of Aalo are separated in this text, reinforcing the concept of the threshold character drifting between two worlds. In the home she is a beautiful woman, wrought of silver – polished, perfect and distantly cool. In the company of wolves she possessed “all the passions and lusts of the wolf, the thirst for blood and the lust to tear and mangle, for even her blood had turned into the blood of a wolf, and she was of their number” (Kallas 43). As a werewolf, a creature of two halves, Aalo weakens the distinction between the roles of male and female sexuality, emasculating her husband in taking her pleasure while he lies paralysed.

Housman’s *White Fell* epitomises the female hybrid as a sexual monster. Described as a maiden, “tall and very fair, with a bold spirit, a firm and capable frame over which white skin was moulded most smoothly, the werewolf veiled herself with beauty” (Housman 5, 14). She charms the household, is made welcome and incites a blind devotion and desire from the elder of the two male twins. As a threat concealed by sexuality, *White Fell* embodies the concept of the ‘*vagina dentata*’, the vagina with teeth. Such imagery has been used to evoke the fear of castration, the carnivorous womb and the devouring mother – monstrous femininity under the thinnest disguise (Ussher 1-2). It is the fear of losing one’s manhood, the anxiety of female sexuality as something that must be repressed and guarded against. By inciting the sexual beast in men, women can strip them of their reason, lowering them to a state similar to animals, ruled temporarily by

desire. White Fell is presented as a femme fatale, an alluring combination of masculine and feminine. Her garments are described as “half masculine, yet not unwomanly. A fine fur tunic, reaching but little below the knee was all the skirt she wore; below were the cross bound shoes and leggings that a hunter wears,” along with an “ivory studded girdle where an axe gleamed” (Housman 5). Having entered the farmhouse, she charms the occupants, marking with a kiss three victims who later vanish, supposedly devoured by a wild beast. Her attraction serves as a shield; the only man above desire is Christian, who learns her identity. The knowledge and horror of the concealed monstrosity serve to sever any desire that might have formed.

Following the formula of the Gothic morality tale, it is not only the subverting of gender that causes a woman to be labelled deviant and deserving of punishment. The correcting model is also brought down upon those women who fail to restrain their sexuality and, by that failure, move to take control over sexual desire from men. Any woman or creature capable of rendering a man powerless must be violently expelled from a text. A woman embracing her sexuality, particularly as a weapon, is taboo.

Bloody, Hairy Women

My focus will now shift to the biological female body deemed undesirable by society. This section will consider women’s body hair and menstrual cycles; both are natural yet both are considered undesirable and unattractive in Western culture. Body hair, rather than a transgression of social norms, is an unwelcome blurring of the line that divides masculine from feminine. Facial hair especially is a ready

identifier of masculinity, inviting confusion and rejection when appearing on a woman. A current discourse among feminists attempts to identify why body hair on women is such a gross breach of social etiquette – it is after all entirely natural. Karin Lesnik-Oberstein points out that, as a gender issue, “women’s body hair plays a different role than say, bodyweight. A ‘fat’ woman, while portrayed as unattractive or undesirable is still female. Hairy women however are monstrous” (3). By restricting the acceptance of naturally-occurring body hair to men, women are forced to regulate their bodies, pandering to the social need to feel accepted. Hair under the arms and around the groin is seen as unclean. Hair appearing on a woman’s face such as beards and moustaches are particularly “monstrous”, having been assigned to the masculine gender. In a similar manner, breasts appearing on men are equally criticised due to the socially enforced nature of gender constructs. Ussher notes Judith Butler’s comments on gender as a performance. Those who fail to ‘do’ gender correctly are punished by society, which expects a rigid distinction between masculine and feminine (Ussher 3-4). The female subject must constantly self-regulate her body so as to not breach these gender categories. The gaze of society becomes ingrained in an individual, internalized to the point where they begin overseeing themselves without question. In regards to women’s body hair this may involve removing everything below eye level to appear as ‘normal’ and feminine.

The female werewolf, by her nature, is hairy. The hybrid form, seldom seen in females, is that of a huge, shaggy monster. The more common, natural, wolf form bears a heavy pelt. Hair or fur reaches all places and demands notice. In an animalistic state, the hair is not an element of judgement. Lesnik-Oberstein articulates the social perception that women with body hair, aside from being less

sexually attractive, are more active, stronger and more aggressive. These traits, viewed positively in a masculine context, become signs of deviancy in the feminine (3-4). Of course, the werewolf may be considered the active, hairy woman taken to a literary extreme, but there remains a stark contrast between the body hair on the wolf and on human bodies. In order for the female werewolf to be an object of sexual desire, authors past and present continue to form her human body along social standards of beauty, including, or rather excluding, all excess body hair.

White Fell is considered physically superior in strength and speed to all males in Housman's tale, yet her human body remains that of a pale beauty. While she is never presented to the reader unclothed, it is hard to reconcile the picture of desire with 'masculine' feature of body hair. While we can say the wolf form stands in for this aspect, it fails to overcome the stigma by transferring a positive hair representation onto the human body. The werewolf is considered a monstrous form, yet there remains an insistence to remove or conceal body hair when the werewolf is in human form. Rather than the monstrosity being immediately apparent, it is concealed until the moment of transformation when, in animal form, such things as body hair are passed over as simply a matter of course. Unlike the other masculine or monstrous traits presented by the female werewolf, the stigma of body hair is not challenged. Female werewolves, despite claims of simply being 'hairy monstrous women', do not challenge the notion of women's body hair as monstrous but reinforce this concept by only showing excess hair while the woman is in animal or hybrid form.

The stigma of women and blood manifests differently when the woman is presented in monstrous form. The beginning of a girl's menstrual cycle marks the

end of her innocence, her initiation into the world as an object of desire and as an object of fear and loathing. The physical changes associated with puberty, “breasts, pubic hair, curving hips and thighs, sweat, oily skin, and most significantly, menstrual blood – stand as signifiers of feminine excess, of the body as out of control” (Ussher 19). The young woman may come to see her own changing body as monstrous, a view reinforced by the unmentionable nature of these changes. From this point the young woman must carefully manage her body to maintain the appearance of control. The danger of her sexuality, that which affects the reason of men, must be guarded against, concealed and contained.

While most cultures take measures to conceal or condemn the evidence of menstruation and body hair on women, Western society has developed a booming industry related to both the removal of women’s body hair, and the concealment of their menses. Since the 1920s, advertisements for feminine hygiene products have identified the monthly cycle as a ‘hygiene crisis’ rather than a biological event. In her paper “Adolescence, Advertising, and the Ideology of Menstruation”, Debra Merskin notes the messages in original advertisements from the 1920s onwards use the fear and mystery of early menstrual cycles to promote their products, lowering the self-confidence of young girls by labelling menstrual blood as dirty (Merskin 942). Myths about a woman’s cycles exist across cultures, who each respond to a girl’s coming-of-age in different manners. Some enforce separation from men during this period; others involve additional or increased restrictions on the new woman. Traditional stigmas surrounding menstruation caused belief that a woman during her cycle could “blast the fruits of the field, sour wine, cloud mirrors, rust iron and blunt the edges of knives” (Walker 643). What remains globally consistent is the goal to “contain and protect [society] from

the threat of contamination from pollution, signified by menstrual blood” (Ussher 20). This would seem contradictory to our perception of the mother as a safe figure and sacred object.

Without menses a woman’s body is barren. Menstruation identifies the female subject as sexual, is an indication of their reproductive capacity. By objectifying this process as shameful, women are encouraged to distance themselves from this source of specifically female power. Modern advertisements for ‘feminine hygiene’ products now feature more positive messages of concealment. Brand names such as *Stayfree* and *Carefree*, models that focus on being ‘invisible’, all push that a woman can both hide evidence of menstrual blood while maintaining a regular ‘free’ life. Despite increasingly bright and ‘positive’ advertisements concerning hygiene products, the monthly cycle in mature women is still a time of shame and concealment, affecting her behaviours and particularly her sense of personal sexuality. Society requires the women to hide all signs of her ‘abject’ body. It is common practice to refrain from intercourse during this period to maintain the appearance of cleanliness and to distance oneself from the reality of a leaking body. Those who break this unspoken rule are considered deviant, as revelling in the filth and abject that should by right remain unseen and rejected.

It is impossible to consider female werewolves without noting the blatant link to lunar cycles and the modern association of werewolves and ‘moon-madness’. However, the majority of texts up to the 20th century did not feature the moon as a relevant aspect to the werewolf, beyond the creature’s tendency to be nocturnal. Contemporary social media is quick to draw the link between aggressive females, their ‘time of the month’ and the lunar cycle of the

Hollywood werewolf, linking their bad temper to a monthly 'switch' from their usual self. Male werewolves who fall under the 'changed-by-moon' category can, and have been considered as having feminine qualities; their monthly 'bender' and craving of blood a definite mirroring of the unstable feminine period. Another interesting comparison to be made is in the intense rejection and fascination with blood displayed by the human and werewolf respectively. Such is the case with Housman's White Fell, so excited by the sight and smell of a bloody wound as to let slip her human façade:

at the sight of it, and the blood-stained linen, she drew in her breath suddenly, clasping Rol to her – hard, hard – till he began to struggle. Her face was hidden, so that none could see its expression. It had lighted up with a most awful glee (7).

White Fell seeks the blood and flesh to sate her appetite and the sight of the boy's wound almost undoes her harmless facade. Ironically, or perhaps in warning, it is blood that destroys the werewolf. In place of holy water, the lifeblood of a true follower of the Christian faith serves to destroy White Fell.

The hunger for blood can be thought of as the source of the werewolves' aggression, a logical cause for their need to turn upon and slaughter other living things. The woman rejects blood as abject, her menstrual blood as both abject and monstrous while the wolf craves it, driving her to seek it out and revel in the violence necessary to satisfy her lust. The werewolf becomes a creature of contradiction, each side of her nature pulling in opposite directions over the matter of blood. The woman who, by societal mandate, seeks to contain her leaking body, is threatened by the wolf who demands excess and cannot, by

nature, be contained. These contradictions form a monstrous creature as, in early werewolf narratives: the woman inevitably loses to the wolf's instincts. For losing control and falling to monstrous, masculine behaviour, the werewolf becomes the target of morality tales, reinforcing the 'correct' order of society.

Chapter 3

Desiring Bodies and the Bestial Bride

Alan Bleakley states that if one's inner animality were let loose, "if the animal were to be freed from the trap, by Freud's law of the repressed it would necessarily act in a distorted fashion. However, what if we invite the animal back into our lives, a brazen return through the front rather than side door? Then we may find that the animal brings a gift of both the beautiful and the sublime" (35). Bleakley's view can be applied to the female werewolf, whose distorted and deviant behaviours express their initially restricted lives. Perhaps then too, might it apply to the more modern tales, where the female werewolf appears to welcome her wolf, coming into her own as a more visible character of the paranormal romance.

Contemporary writers of fantasy, and the developing paranormal romance sub-genre, have begun reworking the female werewolf's role from that of social scourge to merely another character in the cast of fantastical beings.

Contemporary werewolf texts are shifting away from the Gothic mentality of the werewolf-as-monster, or instigator of monstrous behaviour, to a coming-of-age structure. While at first glance the shift into the modern paranormal romance genre offers expression of growth and positive sexuality, there remains a subtle punishment or marginalisation of the woman/wolf hybrid.

This chapter will consider a selection of modern texts to examine the new treatment of the female werewolf, to track any changes in self-concept and social body standards regarding lycanthropy. While the label of deviance has been removed, the modern werewolf has been placed in a mediating position within the

binary of male/female, one in which the woman may accept her changing form while the author works to create distinction between her two halves. The female body remains under scrutiny in fear of masculine characteristics, and the freedom of the woman's libido, of her werewolf counterpart, is often restrained. While the contemporary female werewolf often escapes correction, her strength, size, hair and sexuality are permitted only insofar as they reinforce her difference. The model most often followed by authors is to pair a young, beautiful woman with a wolf, thus retaining the monstrous connotations, but simultaneously separating the undesirable elements from the woman – pushing them onto the wolfish-half. The modern texts concerning female werewolves loosely follow two paths of character development, both considered a *bildungsroman* or coming of age tale. One structure observes the female werewolf's acceptance of her nature amidst the rejection of the society around her, as she becomes isolated from humanity but gains satisfaction with her lot. The second observes the female accepting her state by removing the desiring and rejecting gaze, namely those of males, who may be threatened by the powerful woman. By considering in each case the capacity of the woman for desiring, and being desired by others, the wolf can be interpreted as a representation of the woman's sexuality, the woman's position as a major or minor character determining how others perceive her. The wolf-women who embrace their nature are perceived as threats and relegated to the fringe while those that remain are reduced as desirable feminine figures.

The typical *bildungsroman* narrative features an untried protagonist facing a series of challenges that cause them to mature or gain new strengths, resulting in a triumphant victory and return home. Often the protagonist's journey earns them greater acceptance throughout their homeland, and new companions and comrades

who aid their growth. The victory of the female werewolves offers a bitter commentary in that the women's period of growth is concluded by their acceptance of social rejection. Contemporary werewolves tend group together in pack systems, a segregation that reinforces the separation of the Other from 'regular' or 'safe' humans. The acceptance they find in each other's company, the sense of freedom they gain, is the compensation for complete marginalisation by society.

Modern werewolf texts, such works as Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series and Alice Borchardt's *The Wolf Chronicles* follow this structure of isolation. Note that Meyer asserts that the Quileute pack within her series are shapeshifters, rather than the separate werewolf species known as the "children of the moon" (BD 654). The distinction between werewolves and shapeshifters is valid, though observations made of female characters show similar structures of isolation and, as such, will be discussed alongside other werewolves in this thesis. While the female werewolves gain allies, their relationships with humans are fleeting, and constantly marred by their dual nature. The isolation experienced by female werewolves is invariably caused by the human half, the woman, as a being of desire. Werewolves Leah Clearwater (*Twilight*) and Regeane (*Wolf Chronicles*) face this isolation in that neither are considered desirable. Regeane is initially desired by men and women, taking sexual pleasure with the latter, but is rejected by both with the revelation of her nature. Her husband-to-be is finally revealed as a werewolf, leaving Regeane free to engage in reciprocal desire. Leah is rejected primarily by the males of the werewolf pack. Her nature makes her unable to court human males, due to the secrecy required of the pack, and she is cast as a shrew within the werewolf circle, her presence a burden to the others. This out-casting,

while a kinder fate than the ‘correction’ of earlier morality tales, shows that the wolf-women have failed to completely separate their image from that of a monster. The correcting process remains, though it is not death but marginalisation that the werewolves endure.

The second narrative structure, in which the desiring and rejecting gaze is removed to allow the werewolf’s growth, can be observed in Gail Carriger’s *Parasol Protectorate* series and in Tanith Lee’s “Wolfland”. In the first, Sidheag is *not* cast as an attractive young woman, but rather as a greying battle-axe of middle age. As an alpha, her pack views her with respect rather than desire, and her late werewolf partner has no position in the plot beyond his absence. “Wolfland” sees young Anna rejecting the male gaze and taking up lycanthropy both as an escape and a means to destroy her husband, along with the image of herself as a desirable figure, resulting in a matriarchal household where the servants are stock characters, making little impact and offering no masculine presence. In order to examine these two narrative structures emerging from werewolf fiction, the women must be considered as both desiring and desirable bodies, with their respective texts collectively falling into the genre of the paranormal romance.

Academically, the Gothic has been interpreted as the literature of terror, its themes relying heavily on horror, perversion, excess, violence and hints of the supernatural. Its close links with the genre of romance, and indeed the sub-genre of Gothic romance, paved the way for paranormal romance, the booming popularity of this recent niche in the literary world suggesting a resurgence of fascination with the Gothic. Joseph Crawford, writing on the history of the genre, notes how 1970s and 1980s revisionist horror fiction and erotic romance, with

authors such as Anne Rice and Kathleen E. Woodiwiss, paved the way for later fictions in which the monster archetype could be presented as a credible romantic lead (Crawford 6, 46-7). This backwards projection of the genre follows Crawford's theory of genre evolution occurring in stages, and being identified retrospectively.

As a genre, paranormal romance has steadily gained popularity, first attracting mass global attention with Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2000-2008), which has since acted as the primary template for subsequent fictions. Playing on the attraction with the unobtainable, the tales stereotypically depict an unequal romance between the 'ordinary' female protagonist and a tall, dark vampire, werewolf, or other semi-human creature. While the paranormal romance genre includes a variety of awkwardly-written fiction based on a checklist of cliché characters, situations and romance, Crawford asserts that "even a genre in which the writing is almost universally 'bad' by the standards of high literature might still be able to communicate something of importance to the readers" (2). In much the same way as many early Gothic tales were popular despite their 'clunky' or rough nature, paranormal romance is capable of commenting on the desires and anxieties of its readers. One of these is of course the Gothic stock character - the Other. Paranormal romance takes the Other, that which is not like us in looks, behaviour or limitations, and offers it a place in the social order through a romantic relationship. The traditional Other in Gothic was a literary representation of an anxiety specific to the time of writing, presented to the reader as a surmountable threat, with the correcting actions of the hero or mob overcoming the danger and restoring order. The Other as seen in paranormal romance is cast as a sympathetic figure. Existing on the fringe of society, they seldom draw the

attention of the correcting mob. This Other becomes the focus of the romance text. Their difference is alluring rather than threatening, and is reinforced with a character design typically boasting supernatural good-looks, wealth and a refined nature recalling the gentleman of centuries past. Such romances are often triangular in nature. A rival is regularly presented, often in the form of another supernatural character who must be overcome, and whose presence may serve as a trigger to the primary suitor's dangerous nature, thus causing the protagonist to waver between the two.

With its explosive popularity reaching into visual media, a reader new to the genre is confronted with a reverse-harem of supernaturally attractive teenage bachelors. With an audience consisting largely of young women, the eligible supernatural bachelorette remains a rare species indeed. By coupling the regular girl with the supernatural creature, the genre opens the reader to fantasies of sexual deviance, of sexual domination of the woman, of ageless partners and a sense of abandoning social rules to embrace a sexual nature. Such tales can often be read as a representation of adolescent anxieties. The isolation and inadequacy of the female character, particularly when she is not depicted as conforming to social standards of beauty, catches the eye of the unobtainable figure of desire. What the female protagonist seeks is vindication of her own desirability, by seducing or being seduced by something more than human. The supernatural male becomes a projection of the female ideal: beautiful, strong and never aging, a more perfect version of the sexual body, he is oblivious to the supposed flaws of her female form.

Having established the model structure of the paranormal romance, attention can now turn to those novels that deviate or challenge the genre's norms.

The female werewolf, despite engaging in romantic endeavours, seldom fits the mould of the desirable Other. The human male needs little vindication of his desirability, nor is the physical form of the werewolf a projection of his desires. Furthermore, the difference of the werewolf nature is never used as an alluring element, but repels human males once revealed. The wolf within the woman provides an inversion of the male as a sexual beast, offering the active role to the female.

Beauty or Beast? The Desired Body

The Other cast within the paranormal romance is a source of both fascination and fear to reader and protagonist alike. Sought for their very difference, out of pity or a longing to share their perceived freedom, the male supernatural within the genre is the Other on the fringe of society, but often tame: lacking the danger and violence that have been associated with the Gothic Other. The supernatural bachelor cast in the role of the outsider or Other is invariably attractive, usually cultured, and often presents the female protagonist with the task of returning his humanity or joining him in social isolation. Such texts are often subtly transgressive, as the supernatural male tempts the woman into a state of excess. In pursuing and being pursued by a supernatural figure, the woman cannot help but take an active role in the relationship, sexual or not. Particularly in tales ending with a return of the male to his human state, a common fairy tale trope – Consider “Beauty and the Beast”, or “The Frog Prince”, – his dependence on the female places her in a position of power over him. In cases where the female becomes

supernatural in turn, she breaks the boundaries of the female form, becoming physically stronger and often more active as a sexual figure.

Traditional constructs of the paranormal romance follow the supernatural male who embodies both beauty and beast. His difference and strength, as well as the threat his masculinity poses to the female protagonist, cast him in the role of the beast, while his supernatural beauty compels the female to approach regardless. The female reflects these two roles to a lesser degree. The supernatural male, in following the romantic plot, falls for the human woman, his regard elevating her and confirming her attractiveness and worth. In a similar manner the woman begins to take on the beast role, commonly depicted by joining the male in supernatural state, as is the case with the protagonist of the *Twilight* series (and many other vampire oriented texts, fiction and film), and becoming more daring and active with her body and her sexuality. The validation of the woman's sexual appeal by the supernatural male offers two insights: firstly that the human woman *requires* this recognition before entering the relationship, and secondly that the male is validated in turn, his attentions towards her gaining him a place in the social order. The two create a micro-chain of dependence, where, having gained the recognition of the other, the pair may withdraw from social norms and expectations. Such is the case with Borchardt's character Regeane, whose marriage to the male werewolf Maeniel leads to the pair's return to his remote mountain keep. Having found recognition in each other, an acceptance of their differences, neither bother to maintain a façade of 'correct behaviour' – observable when Regeane's family challenge the pair after the wedding. Having finally escaped her abusive relatives and cast off the burden of social expectations, the wolf-woman becomes a wolf before an audience, "for one horrible moment

tangled in her dress, then she was free” (457), and leaps to murder her uncle. The minor werewolf characters of her new pack join the fray. In leaving the social sphere, women have a far greater potential to cross lines deemed ‘taboo’, particularly in their conduct – for example, non-normative desire, hybrid children, human predation. The pack illustrates this loose morality by deciding to dump the bodies rather than consume them, stating at the time they were “not that hungry” (460). It is a curious balancing act, the women drawing the supernatural closer to the social order while at once embracing a life on its fringe due to their association with supernatural elements. This is most successfully accomplished with creatures, like the werewolf, who can initially pass as human.

The most common supernatural elements from which authors draw their male characters to achieve this co-existence are, of course, the vampire and the werewolf, the genre establishing a rivalry between the two. A supernatural male tends to be one of these two races, with each side rejecting the other. In older narratives, “vampirism works mostly as a supernatural cloak for female sexual awakening and for homosexual desire; the vampire represents the repressed that temporarily resurfaces, only to be inevitably conquered by the dominating Order” (Agata Łuksza 439). Werewolves, as has previously been noted, represented the threat of the wild and unknown, the shape that is unfixed. They overlap with the vampires, who also represent the threat of invasion and infection, appearing as an excess of masculinity or the deviant feminine. In paranormal romance, vampires are increasingly attributed with cultured, refined personalities and lifestyles, such as Lestat de Lioncourt in the popular *Vampire Chronicles* (Anne Rice), those vampires who rampage being considered lower-class or feral. Werewolves, while maintaining their association with wild spaces, aggression and moon-madness

have become a pack species and lurk at the fringe of society. Rougher than the vampires, werewolves in paranormal romance have evolved from the ravaging beast to the beast-like lover.

While the male werewolf is often cast as a love rival in vampire-dominated paranormal romance texts, the female is appearing with hitherto unseen frequency, more often relegated to the background as ‘part of the pack’⁵. Previously appearing as a solitary monster, or the source of a spreading infection, the modern werewolf is changing to better fit the narrative trend of the supernatural existing unseen alongside the human sphere. The more ‘monstrous’ aspects of the werewolf have been rewritten, the most significant being the physical appearance of the wolf form, and the method of reproduction. The wolf form taken by both male and female werewolves seldom resembles the hybrid monsters of the Gothic genre. Instead, the modern werewolf is returning to the original werewolf form of a natural wolf, playing on the current view of wild places as alluring and beautiful rather than threatening, and becoming far more eligible as a figure of desire. Biting as a means of reproduction is now considered the standard, or at least traditional, manner of werewolf reproduction – the bite being representative of the threat of infection and plague, while also compensating for the previous lack of females. Through biting, the werewolf takes on both gender roles, impregnating the receptive ‘female’ figure, who then graduates to the masculine werewolf. The emergence of the female werewolf, and texts with multiple supernatural creatures, paved the way for a new method of reproduction. The female body offers a more ‘natural’ method: werewolves can now be born rather than bitten into change. Such is the case with Borchardt’s *The Wolf*

⁵ Such is the case with Leah Clearwater (*Twilight*) or Matrona (*The Wolf Chronicles*). The female, while present in several texts is seldom the protagonist.

Chronicles where there is a direct genetic link to the werewolf condition, Regeane's being passed on from her father. Other texts recognise a dormant werewolf gene passed through families that awakens with the ingestion of a sacred plant, as in "Wolfland" or triggered by the presence of vampires as in the *Twilight* series.

As the werewolf moves into a pack dynamic, the presence of the female is unquestioned, complimenting the male and reinforcing the viability of alternative reproduction and the transition from monster to supernatural. Despite the growth in number, it remains uncommon for a female werewolf to hold the protagonist position in paranormal romance. Far more common is the male werewolf as a prominent supernatural figure. The male supernatural is a device in paranormal romance to further confirm the desirability of the 'normal' female protagonist. His presence validates the protagonist's own desirability, reassuring the female reader who identifies with the protagonist. The boom in supernatural romance may be, in part, due to the number of 'ordinary' female protagonists suddenly finding themselves desired by an attractive, unearthly man, offering escapism to the reader and acknowledging their similar desire for recognition. As a desirable figure, the female werewolf has no such security. Contrasting with the human female, the female werewolf advances through a text as an ambiguous presence, her wolf form tainting the desirability of the woman.

The previous chapter outlined the various aspects on which a woman may be criticised, such as her size, body hair and potential for violence, with the werewolf embodying each element. The result of the female usurping male characteristics becomes the focus of werewolf morality tales, with the women punished and order restored. Paranormal romance maintains this attitude towards

the female werewolf, but chooses to push these ‘undesirable’ elements onto the wolfish half. Without the option of correction, these narratives instead work to isolate the female werewolf, most often by making her an undesirable figure. This can be observed consistently over several texts. In Tanith Lee’s “Wolfland”, Anna is described as tall and imposing. “She appeared to be little over fifty”, though was in fact in her 81st year, with unlined skin and hair still blonde (109). At this stage, while not unattractive, Anna lives in the aftermath of social isolation, the tale taking place years after her werewolf nature is revealed. Beyond her age and powerful position as matriarch, there are no potential suitors in the text: the male servants, although present, are not counted as men. There is both a physical sense of isolation, heightened by the manor’s position in a snowbound forest – a setting echoing the classic “Little Red Riding Hood” tale, and a class isolation, wherein Anna lacks the company of those of similar social standing. Tanith Lee further reinforces this sense of isolation by limiting the significant characters to the grandmother Anna, the visiting granddaughter and the dwarf manservant.

While the grandmother lives in relative isolation, this alone would not negate her desirability as a woman to the appropriate male gaze. Lee goes further by removing the presence of any and all eligible males, reducing the servants to positions more similar to furniture than characters. There is little romance present beyond accounts of the abusive relationship between the grandmother and her late husband. The man is described as beast-like, his voice a “roar”, with features hidden behind a “black beard,” and “black hair.” His hands were “paws” that struck her and his voice a snarl or growl. (Lee 124). Lee incorporates wolfish characteristics into the man, marking his abusive behaviour as being less than human. In embracing the wolf nature herself, Anna emulates the man’s violence,

stalking her husband before ripping out his throat, thus removing herself from the ‘chain’ of her marriage vow, and any further power exchange with male figures. The tale replaces the male from this point with the female werewolf, in enacting violence and reproduction. This works to render the male unnecessary and further isolates the female in a bubble of self-sufficiency. As Marina Warner observes, the beast-like or animal bridegroom “no longer stands outside [the wife], but holds up a mirror to the force of nature within her, which she is invited to accept and allow to grow” (Warner 1995, 307). The wolf form is clearly one of escape, and initial empowerment, allowing the woman autonomy over her life and wealth, the position elevating her above the male servants and relations, the woman embodying both the beast and the bride. Such texts seem to enable the female-as-beast, encouraging these masculine traits while at once denying them to the male. The beast-bride/groom archetype may be intentionally seeking a blend of the female and male, by taming the man and freeing the woman.

Lee’s werewolf condition recalls the earliest myths concerning werewolf creation, with the grandmother Anna contracting with a goddess to obtain wolf form, and becoming bound to the land. The god-endowed wolf form has long been considered a curse, and Tanith Lee’s work does little to change this interpretation. As a woman, Anna was desired by her husband, and became a vessel for that desire in bearing his child. In embracing lycanthropy she moves to destroy the desiring gaze, claiming her body for herself, but sacrifices a place in society and acknowledges the payment due at her death – a curse to wander the earth as a wraith spirit.

Anna’s seclusion is lifted only with the arrival of her granddaughter, to whom she passes on the werewolf condition. The price demanded by the goddess

“must be paid for at the hour of death – unless another will take up the gift” (Lee 130). The interpretation of lycanthropy as a ‘gift’ seems to contradict the traditional interpretation of lycanthropy as a cursed state. However, in passing the state onto an unwilling victim, the condition can still be considered a curse, something unwanted that will negatively impact on the recipient. Anna forcibly awakens Lisel to her wolf form, escaping the goddess before the payment must be made and chaining Lisel to the land in her place. It becomes a trade, made willingly or not, by the female line. In order to rise above the dominating, and desiring male, the women of the Wolfland estate leave common society, and enter a state of voluntary isolation. For Lisel there is an accelerated period of character growth throughout the story, her outlook shifting from discomfort, disbelief, terror and anger at the change made to her body to end with an almost hypnotic acceptance of the situation. The forest is suddenly a “white ballroom opened before her” the wolf howls “filling her veins with lights” (Lee 131). The eager acceptance of the werewolf is overshadowed with the price to be paid, however. Despite the freedom and autonomy gained, the condition remains a curse. To escape the contract Lisel must bear a man’s child, a daughter who may take up lycanthropy to free the mother. This condition, of course, requiring a desiring man, limits the sense of female power and inevitably returns the women to a dependence on masculinity.

Gail Carriger’s female werewolf follows a similar path of social isolation, and attainment of status over masculine characters, but differs in the treatment of Sidheag as a desirable figure. Where the male and female werewolf exist together on the page in a male-led supernatural romance, the female werewolf is invariably reduced as a figure of desire. Her potential as a source of desire may threaten to

displace the female protagonist; her strength may challenge the lead male's self-control, thus her desirability must, in some way, be limited. The desirable female werewolf cannot help but become the enemy of man, for she is something which he desires but cannot obtain. He may fear her difference, her power, and naturally seek to destroy what he cannot control. The female werewolf who avoids this persecution does so due to her physical form and conduct. Women lacking the young, smooth and docile body will not tempt the male gaze and so their power can be shrugged off as being 'like that of a man'. Such is the case in Carriger's texts, where the female werewolf is not a participant in the primary romantic relationship.

The alpha female Sidheag is the lone female in a pack of male wolves, existing in a male-dominated race. Similar to the vampires also present in Carriger's novels, the werewolves are almost exclusively male. Unlike the vampires however, the reproduction of werewolves is not reliant on a female supernatural, but any werewolf who is a 'true' alpha – one capable of Anubis form.⁶ The human female is acknowledged as far less likely to survive metamorphosis into a supernatural creature, the suggestion being that her weaker constitution cannot survive the change. Assuming the female survives the change into a werewolf her chances of reproduction are again halved, as only alphas may reproduce. The supernatural body is one frozen in time, the only changes occurring as wounds heal. Their bodies do not age, or carry through natural female cycles and as such, the female supernatural cannot fall pregnant except by

⁶ Anubis form refers to the alpha werewolf capable of shifting only his head to wolf form, recalling the Egyptian god.

copulation with a preternatural.⁷ Seeing as such couplings have been successful only twice in the history of Carriger's universe, the possibility is sufficiently slim as to be disregarded. Only those of the alpha disposition (rare even among the werewolves) can perform the metamorphic bite. Carriger places her female werewolf alphas as equal in bodily strength to her males. The concept of the female body as a vessel for childbirth is removed and both genders produce new werewolves in the same manner. This aspect of Carriger's world-building serves to mark existing female werewolves as oddities rather than as an essential part of their race. With reproduction handled by either gender, the female body loses its purpose. This is again an indication of the unnecessary nature of the female supernatural in the paranormal romance. The genre has a consistent focus on romance between the human female and supernatural male, attributed to the female reader demographic. The supernatural female placed into such texts threatens this primary romance and must be side-lined and made less desirable.

Observing Sidheag, this is made apparent by way of her appearance and demeanour, which are described mockingly by the narrator. "The woman – for upon closer inspection, the personage did appear to be, to some slight degree, of the female persuasion... appeared to be of middling years, handsome but not pretty, with strong features and coarse thick hair, tending towards gray. She boasted the general battle-ax demeanour of an especially strict governess" (165). Sidheag is cast as a male in a female body, lacking the redeeming feminine manner that would hold her as desirable, at least to members of the werewolf race. Her past lover, now deceased, was a supernatural male who sought her human

⁷ Preternaturals exist as a separate group to both humans and supernaturals, identified by their lack of soul, and the ability to negate the supernatural state – rendering a vampire or werewolf temporarily human.

form. His death, her abrasive manner and her eventual shift into a full alpha werewolf only set her further apart from the image of a desirable woman.

Further distancing her from the image of the desirable woman is the power her alpha position affords her over the male werewolves. The authoritative command places Sidheag in a position above the males, inducing respect while leaving no place for desire. Acting as the head of a pack of males, Sidheag is forced to demonstrate male behaviour to maintain her position in a hierarchy determined by power. This reduction of her desirability serves to keep her in the background of the primary relationship couple; as a masculine woman she will not draw the eye of the desiring dominant male.

The female werewolf as an oddity is echoed in other popular texts, occurring where their presence is complimentary to the story without taking a leading role. Stephanie Meyer's female wolf Leah Clearwater surpasses Sidheag in being a singularity rather than a minority. The wolves of the Quileute tribe are descended from a single chief along the male line, the genetic ability awakening in reaction to the proximity of vampires. In the history of the Quileute, Leah is the unique case of a female descendant gaining wolf form. Already an outcast within the pack, Leah's desirability is further reduced by Meyer, who casts her as a shrew. Leah hates her dual nature and lashes out at those around her, particularly the pack males with whom she is mentally linked. Similar to the case of Sidheag, Leah had previously been in a relationship with a supernatural male, the first alpha, Sam. As the werewolf condition is passed genetically, Meyer creates an imprinting mechanism within the male werewolves, causing each to be irresistibly attracted to the female best able to pass on the werewolf gene. Sam, in leaving a relationship with Leah to bond with her cousin, indicates Leah as unsuitable to

pass on the gene before, and possibly after, her change. Despite losing Sam's desire, Leah is forced to serve his will as a member of the pack, and in resentment forces the mind-linked pack to review painful memories and implied scandals. The males associate her with distasteful experiences, and as a coping mechanism towards the shrew in their midst, treat her as another male or mentally cringe away, not wanting to deal with the female's distress and displeasure.

The changes caused by the awakened lycanthropy freeze the natural functions of Leah's body, which, as a female, now serves no purpose. She herself identifies as a 'genetic dead end', "I don't have the ability to pass on the gene... so I became a freak – the girlie-wolf – good for nothing else. No one's imprinting on *me*...I'm twenty years old and I'm menopausal" (Meyer 291-292). Meyer's text follows Leah's character growth in her gradual acceptance of her wolf form, and the sense of separation and rejection that it prompts. By abandoning Sam's pack to follow Jacob, Leah removes herself from a situation where she is constantly reminded of her inferiority as a female. The reinforcement of secondary character werewolves as creatures of reduced desirability seems constantly accompanied with the werewolf in question 'maturing' by accepting their role as an undesired woman, who must exist on the fringe of society.

There arises a difference when the female werewolf occupies a place in the primary relationship of the paranormal romance. An entirely different set of rules apply to how her form, both wolf and human, must be perceived by the human male. Alice Borchardt's *The Silver Wolf* provides a relatively uncommon example of a female werewolf as both protagonist and participant in the text's primary romance. Regeane's tale adheres to the 'isolation' structure, gradually depriving her of human desire and contact as her wolf grows stronger. The text also displays

a surprisingly conservative tendency in its attempts to defend the standard heteronormative relationship. Regeane begins a relationship with the female courtesan Lucilla. The two reciprocate desire, the relationship the first positive bond Regeane gains throughout her life. However, upon discovering Regeane's nature as a werewolf, Lucilla "draws back, her face stiff with terror...God, what are you?" (169, 142). Lucilla remains an ally but from that moment there is no desire: Regeane is tainted by her wolfish half. Similar is the case with Lucilla's son Antonius, whose leprosy was cured by Regeane. Upon learning her truth he admits he could "never look on you as a lover – you're not human" (357). Human males are initially attracted to Regeane, her features being of great beauty, yet once her truth is revealed or her feminine bounds overstepped, she is, at best, held at arm's length, at worst driven away as a witch.

Borchardt preserves the initial desirability of Regeane by following the trend set in earlier morality tales: drawing a distinction between woman and wolf and thereby retaining the woman's desirability. By separating the wolf from the woman, human males will continue to desire her – on the condition that her other form remains hidden. The reader observes Regeane through several male gazes before and after her lycanthropy is revealed. In the early stages of the texts she is kept under close confinement by her brutish uncle and cousin. Their view of her is marred by knowledge of the wolf, fear destroying any temptation her form offers to the point where, as Hugo states "she makes my skin crawl" (Borchardt 4). Despite this they cannot help but notice attractive features, and the way her body is becomingly more womanly but most of all those that speak of her dual nature:

Her eyes were truly beautiful, large, warm and dark – until they caught the light. Then they flared into gold. Her hair was long and dark, almost black

at her scalp and neck, shading towards silver and, finally, white at the tips. It never tangled. [Gundabald] had himself seen it rise and fall back into position when the wind blew it too far out of place... [her] nails were dense, narrowing to blunt points at the tips (Borchardt SW 17).

Borchardt takes pains to incorporate the animal into the woman, mimicking the reflective eyes of the predator and the colouration of the wolf's pelt in the woman's hair. Unlike many werewolf texts, Borchardt presents the wolf and the woman as two separate entities sharing a body, the wolf having desires and opinions of her own but falling under the woman in control of the shared form. The supernatural beauty of the woman incites desire, the knowledge of her condition enraging and terrifying men in equal measure. Through the text, the humans who encounter Regeane perceive one of two forms – the warrior or the sensual woman. Engaging the guards at the thieves' market, the warrior Regeane displays strength and speed beyond the human state, bringing "stunned disbelief... and the furious shout: after her, I'll have the bitch's blood" (63). Lent strength by the wolf, Regeane rises over humans in physical ability, challenging men with her power and inciting them to destroy those who would usurp their position. Without regard for her desirability such men will reject her as a woman, seeing only an aberrant creature to be corrected.

To the shepherd boy met on the plains she is a goddess of the night, "clad only in a magnificent nakedness and a necklace of silver and pearls" (166); to Antonius, Regeane is the Roman goddess Lupa – the she-wolf. Those who meet Regeane as the sensual figure are awed by her beauty, seeking to account for her form by acknowledging it as inhuman. By elevating her to godhood they excuse her overwhelming appeal, treating her as something beyond the reach of their

desire. The two forms, the warrior and sensuous woman are kept distinct through the text as Regeane is maturing, merging at last on the marriage bed where Regeane seizes the arm of an assassin posed over her husband, breaking his wrist as no human woman would be capable of.

The Desiring Female

The notions of female sexuality and female desire have, in recent years, been so closely associated with feminism that any attempt to delve into the matter is inevitably channelled through the enduring concept of ‘gender-wars’ and issues surrounding gender subversion. It becomes impossible, it seems, to consider one without the other, as the active and potentially ‘perverse’ female desire encroaches on the active male/passive female binary, bringing to the fore the second binary of virgin/whore. It recalls a system of objectification of the female body, a scale of value dependant on restraining a woman’s sexuality. The very notion of female sexuality, that a woman may be a force of active desire rather than the object thereof, is fraught with social taboos, lending it a sense of the unapproachable. What the virgin/whore binary offers is so limited as to be of little practical use beyond observing the view of the woman as one or the other, the passive, desired body as opposed to the active, driving desire of the ‘whore’. The double standard of men and women’s sexual drive must be considered in conjunction with the paranormal romance, as the genre further overlaps with the Gothic by granting the female protagonist the sexual upper hand to balance out the beast-like excess of the supernatural male. The human female becomes a stabilizing point for the supernatural male, taming the beast and “casting women

as the civilizers in the tabooed terrain of sexuality, turning predatory men into moderate consorts” (Warner 294). Appearing in excess, male desire must be restrained by the woman, yet the man is seldom demonised for the excess of desire, only viewed as beast-like in his urges.

This double standard emerges in the teenage years and continues to a lesser degree in the years after. Males gain admiration and praise for their sexual exploits whereas the young woman who rejects the role of the shy virgin or discreet partner is degraded as a ‘whore’. As Deborah Tolman comments in her work on adolescent sexuality, when young girls’ bodies “take on women’s contours, [they] begin to be seen as sexual, and sexuality becomes an aspect of adolescent girls’ lives; yet ‘nice’ girls and ‘good’ women are not supposed to be sexual outside of heterosexual, monogamous marriage” (Tolman 324). A wide variety of words, almost exclusively feminine, and typically derogatory, describe the actively sexual woman. Slut, tramp, hooker and whore – each derogatory title denounces the woman who embraces her own sexuality.

Paranormal romance, as a sub-genre of romance, cannot help but explore the realm of sexuality and desire, but seldom criticises the female subject for her emotions. Romance fiction is typically escapist, idealist, comforting and heteronormative. The paranormal romance broadens this by ‘mixing in’ the element of the supernatural, namely the male protagonist, but overall does not stray too far from the conventional romance novel. Where the paranormal romance perhaps breaks away from the pure romance is in its explorations of desire, enabled by the beast-like excess of the male (or female) supernatural lover. Desire, when viewed in isolation, is a formless concept. Freud tends to see desire as “being determined by socialization, by the way in which the [desiring subject]

is brought up” (Bennett and Royle 250-251). Following this attitude, acceptable desire becomes a vehicle through which to carry practices and norms, enforcing a model of ‘correct’ desire which, by its existence, denounces desire that deviates from typically monogamous, heterosexual models as deviant. Women, when following these guidelines of desire, begin to “look at, rather than experience, themselves, to know themselves from the perspective of men, thereby losing touch with their own bodily feelings and desires” (Tolman 325).

Borchardt’s female protagonist Regeane exemplifies this notion, not recognising her body as being attractive to another, and fearing the desire of an unknown fiancé. Her uncle furthers the distance between the woman and her self-confidence, berating her for being a “bitch creature, whey faced and flat-chested without even a hint of beauty” (40-41). Far more than simply stunting the development of Regeane as a desiring figure, the relatives have kept her in isolation, their control reliant on threats to reveal her secret before the church. The wolf within Regeane marks her character growth throughout the text, appearing first as the caged beast, cowed by the abuse the woman suffers. As an interpretation of Regeane’s sexual nature, the wolf recalls tales of the ‘animal bridegroom’, the beast-like excess of the wolf raising the woman’s sexuality and desire to a far greater capacity. The animal bridegroom refers to the fairy tale structure wherein a male cursed to animal or beast form is paired with a human female who helps reclaim his humanity. The heroine is tasked with taming the ‘wild beast’, recognising the cultured man within, drawing him to the surface by first accepting his bestial nature. Always, the female prevails by *acting* feminine, by accepting the beast in order to live with the man. The threat of his sexuality and power is balanced by his dependence on her. In tales of female werewolves,

we see the order reversed. The female becomes the beast and, in most cases, she is not offered the release of her condition by male acceptance. The wolf-women are not punished for their condition, they are simply isolated, cut off from their peers and any relationship with a 'regular' human. This marginalisation is a subtler form of correction, and shows the lingering effect of the older morality tales. Such punishment by isolation is mitigated in part by authors who offer the female werewolf a chance to connect with others of her own breed, i.e., the male werewolf.

Of the examined texts, only Carriger's Sidheag had previously entered reciprocal desire with a male werewolf; however, being human at the time this better falls under the category of 'mainstream' paranormal romance. Her metamorphosis into a werewolf in turn does not afford Sidheag another male to pursue, nor does she seek the prospect, accepting the role of distant alpha over personal desire. Leah is similarly removed as a figure of desire, reflecting her position as a minor pack character. Each text follows the female werewolf as she gradually comes to terms with her condition and thus gains some sense of peace, but consistently prevents her return to the sphere of regular human society and relations. The result is two possible outcomes, the first is that the female becomes isolated, surrounded by ineligible males or secondly, desire is found and shared only with another werewolf. In both cases the female is marginalised. Such is the case within Alice Borchardt's *The Silver Wolf*, perhaps the most apt of the considered texts in displaying the plight of the female werewolf: to be a desirable figure who is undesired by any deemed 'normal' by society.

The wolf within the woman can easily be interpreted as a representation of her sexuality, a measurement of her own power. Most often the wolf is used to

record the growth of the characters as their story progresses. Regeane is an interesting case, as her wolfish half seems to mature sexually at a different rate to the woman. The wolf initially rejects the woman's fascination with sex, showing "disapproval and downright disgust. The night creature believed humans were oversexed" (Borchardt 22). This can be read as a division between the woman, the curiosity she feels towards sexual engagement and the deeply instilled sense of shame that accompanies those desires in a young woman. Only once the two are loosed from their imprisonment, Regeane from the cell and the wolf from Regeane's sense of restraint, does Regeane begin to grow as a desiring woman. She experiences sexual pleasure at the hands of another female and acknowledges a curiosity in engaging with a male. The wolf within her records this growth, her own sexual maturity developing over the course of the book until both woman and wolf wish for a partner. At times the two are in conflict. At times, Regeane the woman is not yet comfortable with the idea of herself as a sexual creature. The silver wolf within her channels the new emotions into an observable form, one the woman cannot always abide. When the silver wolf is drawn to a wolf partner, Regeane "wanted to be disgusted with herself, wanted to be angry – and was afraid. If only there hadn't been that almost anguished delight mingled with the fear" (280).

The wolf in turn rejects lust on the part of the woman. When "desire raged through the woman's mind" the wolf is noted as being yet unready (323). The nature of women's desire is often as foreign to the woman as to the male, so has it remained repressed and unacknowledged. Borchardt presents the wolf within Regeane as an intimate stranger, in whom the woman can observe emotions as disconnected from herself and thus not a threat to the order in which her life has

previously been lived. The coming-of-age experienced by Regeane occurs when the two halves are finally in accord on all matters, though greater focus is given to those of a sexual nature.

As the two finally mature, the prospect of the marriage bed causes the wolf to stir within the woman's body, a metaphoric quickening of desire. "The wolf, deep in her brain started up from sleep and eyed her with a knowing expression. This might be fun. Regeane leapt to her feet, palms against her burning cheeks. 'We've been longing to try it'" (385). Lucilla, acting as both a maternal figure and mentor, admonishes the statement, pressing that "virgin brides aren't supposed to be eager. You must be diffident, timid, a little afraid" (385). As with the self-regulation of body image in society, there is an expectation for young women to deny their sexuality until the very last moment, as to show anticipation, or actively seek sexual pleasure, is a mark of the whore. By remaining hesitant virgin brides relinquish their sexual power to their husbands. It is he who gives the bride permission to feel sexual pleasure. The women themselves perpetuate this practice, encouraging young brides to 'act afraid' or pretend it hurts, to reinforce the power of the male. He is the active lover and she the passive receiver.

While the supernatural romance acknowledges this pattern, it also posits heroines capable of breaking this imbalanced exchange. Regeane is eager upon the marriage bed while Maeniel is cautious of her inexperience. Regeane is the bestial bride, with a bestial groom. The usual trend of animal bridegroom tales casts the female heroine in the role of beast tamer. She calms the male's sexual aggression and possessiveness. Borchardt overturns this order in having both bride and groom be bestial in nature, his presence inspiring the tabooed sexual

nature of the female. Warner's interpretation again comes into play. "He no longer stands outside her, the threat of male sexuality in bodily form . . . but he holds up a mirror to the force of nature within her, which she is invited to accept and allow to grow" (Warner 307). The female werewolf is presented as a force equal to the male, acknowledging that the 'beast' of sexuality exists in the woman as well, regardless of society's views of the active woman. As Marina Warner observes, in such tales we can "perceive cross-identifications", where the female protagonist is set up to be the male's equal due to her "equal capacity for wildness" (Warner 294). The wildness, present in both the female and male werewolf is only tolerated within the males. Regeane, once revealed to Rome as a werewolf, is tested at the stake. Her husband is to fight for her life, an unusual play by the author if we accept the silver wolf as a representative of Regeane's independence and sexuality – the woman's freedom being defended by the male figure. That the crowd spares Regeane is not due to a new tolerance for the active female or the Otherness that she embodies, but rather due to the victory of her champion. As a male, Maeniel shoulders the responsibility for the errant female – as her husband, society grants him complete power over her. This semblance of order calms the mob and reinforces the notion of the woman's eccentricities allowed only at the whim of the more dominant male.

The period of growth each female werewolf must experience indicates a reluctance to change the order of their lives, however unpleasant. There is security in staying within the borders of society, and the fear of the unknown can be crippling. The coming-of-age or maturation of the female werewolves is noted when they move past this fear; this moment is the trigger for their acceptance of their own changeable nature. In accepting the werewolf, the women also accept a

distancing from society. The apprehension of change within *The Silver Wolf* is overcome when Regeane resolves to kill her uncle, who has been the indomitable and oppressive force within her life. The threat of change in life and sexuality is unable to endure in a tale of constant metamorphosis. Like Regeane, Anna also chooses to embrace change, by turning to lycanthropy and destroying her abusive husband. The werewolf inevitably embraces the change or rejects it utterly and is destroyed still in conflict over their nature. Regeane learns to rely more upon the wolf, embracing the nature as her birth right, as something that offers freedom beyond that of the typical Roman woman. Anna embraces lycanthropy to better her position in life, taking revenge against a beast-like man. By accepting the wolf and maturing as women, Regeane and Anna come into their own, the wolf and woman painted as the most attractive amongst their respective peers.

While at first glance the supernatural female may appear to be one released from social bonds, such release is not without sacrifice. Far from being an example of an empowered woman, the werewolf form is far more likely to see a woman damned by society, ejected for her difference and reduced as a figure of desire. Even in such cases where the female werewolf leads a supernatural romance narrative, the 'happy end' is a shallow façade covering the subtle but constant removal of the female from regular society. Packs form exclusive 'bubble' societies that shield females from the regular world, offering a place of acceptance and co-dependence. This martyring of the women, their gaining contentment through human rejection, serves only to reinforce their difference as something 'unclean' or distasteful. They are not enough of a threat to warrant correction but neither are they tolerated in society. As a figure of desire the women will only draw a male gaze if her aberrance is sufficiently concealed, or

the male meets her in her supernatural state, implying a division almost racial in nature, where one monster may only find acceptance in the eyes of another.

Chapter 4

Transformations and Liminal Spaces: The Role of the Female Werewolf

“Am I wolf or woman? Neither wolf nor woman, but something more than either one, or less, different and so, perhaps, damned” (Borchardt 102).

In shifting away from morality tales, the contemporary female werewolf undertakes new roles, determined largely by the way she is positioned within a text. Previously an aberrant figure, the contemporary wolf-woman remains relegated to the fringe of society, avoiding correction and often emerging as the source of futile desire. The liminal characteristics of the female werewolf are easily identifiable, and it is to these we must turn to determine the role this character plays within contemporary fantasy. Within the genre, a character's role is usually defined by the character's archetype. Brian Attebery's *Strategies of Fantasy* examines characters as merely internal phenomena, archetypal figures that do little more than drive the plot. While they may be “essential elements of the plot itself” a fantasy character *is* what he *does* (Attebery 71-2). A fantasy character is recognised through their actions, falling into a cycle of self-identification. A thief is so labelled because he steals, and, within his text, he steals because he is a thief. The female werewolf cannot be classified under the traditionally male werewolf archetype. Her role in a text cannot be projected as she is not archetypal: as a character she remains in a state of development; new traits and identities are being constantly assigned. However, by examining several contemporary female werewolves, consistent roles can be retrospectively identified and linked across texts.

As we currently understand the female werewolf, we recognise a liminal creature embodying a fault-line between several binaries – animal/human, active/passive, male/female and nature/culture. As a liminal or fluid being, the werewolf stands at the border of each category, embodying both and, perhaps inadvertently, underscoring the arbitrariness of such distinctions. The role of the female werewolf is discernible if we bear in mind her liminal nature. In *being* a liminal creature, by undermining the distinction between categories, the werewolf is able to fulfil her narrative role, which I identify as being a character placed to generate discomfort. The female werewolf characters are invariably uncomfortable figures, challenging established beliefs regarding binary systems. Contemporary wolf-women remain transgressive in nature, yet changing gender politics and growing calls for social acceptance have lifted them out of the traditional morality tales. Without being forcefully corrected, the female werewolves hover on the fringes of society, reminding the reader of social issues and placing just enough pressure on binary norms as to generate discomfort.

Of course, the most obvious and effective means by which these wolf-women succeed in this narrative role is their interaction with binary expectations, most specifically those of nature/culture and male/female, which will be considered in this chapter. The liminal state of the characters alters the reader's perceptions of these binaries, as the constant state of flux prevents the reader from concluding the initial process of character identification and classification. As such, the character is continually being reassessed. This chapter will examine contemporary female werewolves, considering their position as major or minor figures regarding these binaries. Specific attention will be paid to how their lycanthropy acts as an enabler in fulfilling their roles.

Civilised Wolves and Wild Women

The division between nature and culture has been of endless fascination to me, sparking the illogical argument put forth as a child that “I am a natural thing, and humans make things from natural resources so how can anything, ever, be considered unnatural?” The terms ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ as binary opposites are slippery at best, and have become the subject of much debate in recent discourse concerning environmental welfare. If humanity is ‘natural’ but their creations are unnatural, and humanity feels the need to distance itself from natural associations, where is the line drawn? Nature itself, as a distinct category of that which is not cultured, exists only as a construct with which to distance humans from that which we label as Other. There are few cases where such a division is disregarded, the most common being the alignment of women with nature. Such is the case noted in Ursula Le Guin’s essay “Woman / Wilderness”, where the women separate themselves from the men by purposefully aligning themselves with the natural half of the binary.

In her essay Le Guin calls attention to the words of Linda Hogan of the Chickasaw people. “The women are speaking...those who identified with Nature, which listens, as against Man, who speaks... and what [the women] say is: We are sacred” (Le Guin 162). The emphasis here is on the words “we are sacred” as opposed to nature being sacred. Le Guin continues that to separate nature, even for the point of veneration, implies nature as “not including humanity, Nature as what is not human, that Nature is a construct made by Man, not a real thing” (162). This division of nature as that which is not human, nor of human creation, has

become the standard distinction between the two. Yet while the two are accepted opposites, there exists between them a spectrum. Between nature and culture lies a path of phenomena progressively moving toward or away from either nature or culture. Le Guin's example of the women identifying with nature, against men, is an example of how women are considered closer to the border of the binary, closer to the natural state than the culture man. Culture is similarly hard to define, with a corresponding definition of that which is related to humans or human creation. Daniel G. Bates offers a more detailed breakdown of the word: culture is the "system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours and material objects that the members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another" (5). From this we can gather that culture is more concerned with how humans live, the patterns of thought and behaviours that allow groups to live and flourish. By implying a distinct sense of elevation, Bates's definition reinforces the social perception of the binary by consequently implying the natural order as lower or inferior.

In literature the differences between the two are brought to an extreme, with fantasy literature in particular polarising nature and culture into places of danger and safety. To venture beyond the castle/village/home into the forest or wild invites attack from both natural and supernatural enemies. The wild becomes the extreme edge of nature, that furthest from the civilised cultural sphere. The division of human from animal is a similar case, with men standing at the extreme edge of the divide, relegating women closer to the border. The association of women and animals, or women and nature, has persisted throughout history, appearing as goddesses of bounty or earth, or in early philosophy where women were long considered as little more than animals that happened to possess speech.

Ursula Le Guin voices this notion, quoting “Civilised Man says: I am Self, I am Master, all the rest is Other – outside, below, underneath, subservient. I am that I am, and the rest is women and the wilderness” (161). A surface examination reveals Man, as human, rejecting what is outside and uncultured, what is below or underneath his elevated position, and those which do not rise and dominate – a signifier of masculinity. Women become the other half of this process of self-identification. A man identifies as such because he is not what is (at least traditionally) woman. Women and wilderness then become associated in sharing elements rejected by the male.

The notion of nature and wilderness as being dangerous and unrestrained (when considered in opposition of culture and society) ignores the potential for freedom and adventure. Any quest-based fantasy cannot truly begin until the hero leaves the safety of the village and ventures into the forest. In isolation, nature and wild places offer far more than comparative danger to the safety of the cultured sphere. Within fantasy, the wild is a place of danger, but also of adventure, refuge and bounty. Three major werewolf characters, Borchardt’s Regeane, Lee’s Anna, and Carter’s Grandmother, challenge the binary of nature/culture as places of danger and safety. Each act as a transgressive figure who embraces and flees to the wild space to escape the danger and oppression of their societies. By directly reversing the binary expectations of nature and culture, the werewolves in question become the focus of a sense of disgust, distrust and social rejection. Note that this reaction is a consequence of each woman choosing to embrace the wilderness; they do not flee due to this pressure. Regeane and Anna find themselves trapped in abusive family relationships. It is the danger in the

domestic space that causes their attraction to the wild, which in turn transforms them into transgressive and uncomfortable women.

Now, Regeane and Anna are presented in entirely different ways, connected by an identical choice – the wild space over the domestic, that is, nature over culture. These women connect the wild space to the domestic, having close links to both. Being situated closer to the border of nature/culture, the woman is an ideal vehicle through which to carry elements across the binary. Their presence as wolf-women hint that the wild and domestic space may not be entirely dissimilar and invite a collapse of the border between the two. Anna's backstory provides a glimpse into her life before lycanthropy. Her marriage was to a man of extremes, who, in her words "believed it was a man's pleasure to beat his wife. He brought me peaches on our wedding night, all the way from the hothouses of the city. Then he showed me the whip he had been hiding under the fruit" (Lee 112-3). The tale follows Anna's attempts, as a woman, to evade the abuse, locking her door at his footsteps, then learning not to as he broke what stood in his way. The husband is a symbol of culture inverted, his brutish manner contaminating the traditionally safe place of the home. As a man, he also extends control outside the woman's domestic sphere – into the wild space. His gift of fruit comes from a distant city rather than a nearby farm – he naturally moves through the outside world while at once invading the feminine space of the home. As a husband, his position is as the head of the household, the protector and food bringer. He owns a large estate, walled off from the surrounding wilderness. He fears no wolves, the 'brutes' for which he organises hunts, or shoots for "bloody trophies", and rips yellow flowers – a sign of the outer-world from his wife's head when she wears them within his walls (127-8,). In every way the husband represents a masculine

force keeping the wilderness at bay while travelling freely across his self-imposed border. In spite of this, Lee overturns the associations we hold with nature and culture. The husband is a beast, a roaring mass of hair with paws that strike his wife, beating her bloody. The violence and lack of restraint cause the walled manor, the supposed feminine space, to become an inescapable place of danger for the woman.

To this end, the natural space, the forest, becomes an escape and place of refuge to the abused woman. The previously male-dominated space is usurped, and Anna-as-wolf destroys the man to establish her new territory. Anna seeks out her lycanthropy to escape the oppressive structure of marriage, mentioned as an unbreakable chain. As a woman, she has no power over her husband, nor any means to leave his household. By obtaining her wolf form, 'natural' and masculine elements are added to her character, effecting a complete reversal of power roles. As a wolf Anna kills her husband. As a symbol of the oppressive 'culture' which she rejects, her husband's death marks the choice of nature over culture – culture offering no safe-haven against the wildness of her husband. The "Wolfland" text takes place many years after the incident. Anna, having made her choice, is every inch a transgressive figure. Her independent wealth and possession of property, her treatment of the household males and her forceful character display a rejection of gentle feminine manners. To the characters around her, she is a figure that must be appeased, her status and behaviour causing discomfort, alleviated only by the distance of her manor from proper society. To the reader, her obvious dismissal of the boundary between nature and culture forces attention towards how very thin lycanthropy stretches the line between the two.

The manor house exists in the liminal space between the wild and the home. The gates are cast wide, and snow covers the ground, erasing any distinguishing features between inside, and out. As a werewolf, Anna enters both the forest and her home in wolf form, disregarding the threshold as a place of change and instead carrying nature to the hearth. Lisel is set in the text as a conservative figure. Through her the reader observes exaggerated outrage at Anna's behaviour. The first instance where Lisel recognises a wolf (note, Anna) leaving the manor incites terror of the invasion, then fury with the woman who allowed it: "How dare the old woman be so mad as all this and expect her civilised granddaughter to endure it? Brought to the wilds, told improper tales, made unwilling party to the entertainment of savage beasts. Lisel saw her only course abruptly, and it was escape" (115). As a 'normal' or 'civilised' figure, Lisel shows that the correct attitude to take towards the transgressive woman is to reject her company and flee back to civilisation. There is not a move towards correction, as would have occurred in a morality style text. As a powerful, transgressive figure Anna presents an overwhelming force to Lisel: the girl is unable to defend the distinction between nature and culture and is forced to ignore it and attempt to create distance from the savoury situation.

While "Wolfland" underscores the overwhelming pressure of the wild space *The Silver Wolf* is set in Rome, perhaps in homage to early myths of the she-wolf who suckled the founders Romulus and Remus. Once considered a stronghold of civilisation, the Rome presented by Borchardt is in a state of decay, crumbling and bleeding out into the surrounding country. In his consideration of fantastical maps and settings, Stefan Ekman points out that cities, imaginary or otherwise, provide a border between the natural and civilised world (120). As one

approaches or leaves a city, one moves through a hinterland of ‘domesticated nature’ before encountering the truly natural or wild; the city is separated by a gradual domestication of the wild space. As such, I would hold the city as lying behind the ‘gate’ of the border space – the domesticated farms. The strength of separation can be displayed in the imposing nature of individual cities – modern metropolises offering further removal from the wilds than a dark-age village. Considering this, the placement of Regeane within a city’s limits offers a sharp contrast from both Anna and Carter’s werewolf grandmother, both of whom are placed on the edge of the woods. The setting in each case is a deliberate statement as to which side of the nature/culture binary holds dominance in a text. For example, “Wolfland” is set in the forest manor as the tale takes place after Anna rejects culture for nature, blurring the divide and bringing the wilderness to the doorstep.

Borchardt’s Rome is crumbling, the decay and ruin working to suggest a weakening of the boundary between city and wilderness. The city is permeable, much like the “Wolfland” manor house. Regeane’s position within the city walls is both an invasion of nature, and an undermining presence to the division. As a liminal figure, both animal and human, Regeane is also exposed to the boundary between the living and dead, observing spectres and often reliving their final moments. The constant shift of attentions between the apparent and hidden worlds further emphasises her liminal nature, as each witnessed encounter marks her as something different, unclean and Other. The first human character to witness Regeane confronting a spectre immediately rouses a mob with accusations of witchcraft and devilry. “Witch! Demoness! Kill her!” (Borchardt 37). Despite Regeane’s action having been in the woman’s defence, when confronted with the

fragile nature of the border separating the living from the dead, the handmaid Silve is reduced to lashing out at the perceived harbinger of this breach – Regeane. Similar are the cases when first a ghostly mirror appears to Regeane in Lucilla’s manor, an object remembered by Lucilla as being buried with a hated acquaintance, and the moment Regeane greets a long-dead woman in a convent. In each instance the characters around Regeane react with fear and fury at the threat to the boundary between living and dead, and express discomfort in the company of the woman who brought their notice to it. Whether the ability to act as a conduit for the dead is due to Regeane’s werewolf nature is unclear. However, the ability to see spectres becomes a secondary factor in driving Regeane to her werewolf self, for protection from both the living and dead. This ability is an instance of the constant reimagining of the female werewolf, not having been noted in previous examples. Borchardt ties the wolf and woman closer perhaps than other authors, with elements of the wolf bleeding through into Regeane’s appearance and behaviour.

Regeane’s lycanthropy is a genetic condition, one that awoke with puberty. Her werewolf nature is at once the method through which the woman may escape a situation of entrapment and abuse, and the very reason for her imprisonment. As a woman, with no living mother or father, Regeane was left in the custody of an uncle and cousin. Knowledge of the wolf within her allows Gundabald to torture the young woman in ways that would kill or disfigure a regular human. As was the case with Lee’s Anna, the male figures in Regeane’s life act as distorted representations of culture, their roles as protectors and providers reversed. The abused woman turns to her wild nature for both survival and escape, the shift to wolf physically healing her battered body. While tales of abused women gaining

revenge upon their tormentors are not uncommon, the werewolf element allows for a masculine response from the woman against the men. Further, the ability to quite literally transform her body allows the werewolf woman to ‘shed’ the victim role and embrace an autonomous identity. With each instance of her liminal nature being revealed, Regeane is pushed further from the centre of the social sphere. Her wolf nature resists attempts to conform as a Roman woman, rejects the notion of an arranged marriage and drives the woman beyond the city limits with increased frequency. The wolf does not overpower the woman, but allows her to experience both sides of the nature/culture binary. As with “Wolfland”, the cultured society is portrayed as an oppressive space, the stone walls of Regeane’s cell the most obvious example. Within the home, the woman does not have a bedchamber, but a cell in which she is often locked or chained to the wall. By comparison, the wilds offer freedom to the wolf, and temporary escape for the woman. The choice of nature over culture is not necessarily one of setting, though this is indeed the easiest way in which authors might express the choice. For Anna, and more especially for Regeane, accepting their lycanthropy secures their roles as destabilizers.

By separating the wolf from the woman, maintaining a distinction between the two forms, authors constantly reinforce the nature/culture binary. One is either woman or wolf. Borchardt furthers this by giving the wolf within Regeane a limited but independent consciousness. The development of Regeane as a character lies in learning to respect this opposing force, her role as an uncomfortable, transgressive woman fulfilled in the complete acceptance of, and control over, her dual nature. Rather than a wolf and woman, the book concludes with the two working seamlessly together, a blend of nature and culture

represented by the woman who shifts at will regardless of the moon. Regeane, like Anna, becomes a woman straddling the division between the binary opposites, marginalised as characters but with enough influence in their plots to illustrate the arbitrary nature of such divisions. The women are of both extremes yet are functional whilst embodying conflicting forces. Angela Carter's grandmother werewolf differs slightly in being a representation of the wild space already on the fringe of society rather than becoming marginalised through choice of nature over culture. As an aged character in a harsh environment, the woman is pushed to the edge of society and left in a vulnerable position – on the border. The village, as a fantasy culture setting, is the haven against the natural or wild space and the dangers therein. If the granddaughter is to be considered the embodiment of culture, in being the next generation at the heart of society, then one may read her encounter with the werewolf as either culture attempting to cleanse the liminal space, or the wild space (embodied by the Grandmother) attacking the intruder in the forest. To examine the first: the grandmother as a liminal figure threatens the border between the wild and civilised space, and is framed as a monster who must be destroyed to protect society's order. The elderly inevitably blur the binary line, losing control of their 'civilised' and functioning bodies. This reading casts culture as the antagonist, the child attempting to overcome the grandmother, burning any bridge between nature and culture. The second reading offers the grandmother as an embodiment of the wild space. Readers of Carter's tale are forced to make a choice, to choose a side between the child and the grandmother. Regardless of whether the grandmother is read as villain or victim, she is successful in causing discomfort within her text and to the reader. That the old woman retains the werewolf condition indicates an acceptance of liminality, of the

wild space as empowering rather than threatening. This element provides the link to the characters Anna and Regeane. While the three werewolves share little in background or motive, their choice to embody the wild space within civilisation marks a breach in the binary system.

Transforming Gender Roles: Performative Gender

I will now move to examine the second major binary with which the female werewolf interacts: that of masculine/feminine. The development of the action heroine has constructed a narrative frame through which every manner of active female is judged as over-compensating for their inherently feminine body. The notion of culturally-prescribed gender roles has been constantly challenged, undermined, or reinforced through heroines of fantasy fiction, yet the continual occurrence of these themes only displays the enduring nature of the addressed issues. Familiar now to the reader is the weapon-wielding warrior princess, or kick-ass, ‘ordinary’ girls thrust into fantastical adventures to prove themselves as equal to, or superior than, their male counterparts. The ranks of active female protagonists are swelling, each new edition revisiting the ‘appropriate’ behaviours as divided by gender. As Maria Coppola reminds us, “literature is seen as an interpretation of reality, and consequently, it is always political”; It is never *more* political than when “the politics are out of sight, familiar, and therefore overlooked or excused” (129). By continually writing female characters deviating from these gender models, the authors are in fact constantly reinforcing the established order of ‘regular’ gendered behaviour. Their tales rely on the reader recognising the familiar social and political structures and contexts in order to

understand the significance of a character breaching these boundaries. The patriarchal order becomes the familiar foundation from which authors deviate, forming, as Coppola identifies, part of the reader's pre-existing frame of reference which includes one's "socio-cultural systems, expectations, preconceptions, or attitudes towards the world and literature, and his/her gender" (Coppola 129).

The notion of assigned gendered behaviour continues to play an integral role in the fantasy genre and others beyond. Concepts of appropriate gendered behaviours and appearances, the traits that separate man from animal, are each tested and undermined by the contemporary female werewolf. Utilizing the ability of the wolf-women to generate discomfort, contemporary authors now use the female werewolf to draw attention to the arbitrary nature of those same structures. When the female werewolf challenges gender roles while maintaining a feminine appearance, i.e., *not* appearing as a hardbody, the binary of female/male comes under threat, thus forming the werewolves into uncomfortable women. By considering the gendered portrayal of the wolf-women and their interaction with the masculine/feminine binary, I may then discuss the effectiveness of the werewolf character as the ideal blend of the active/passive woman.

"The natural attitude towards gender and sex in the West assumes that people belong to one of two possible distinct categories based on given biological and anatomical characteristics (that is, either male *or* female, either masculine *or* feminine)" (Howson 41-2). For all its simplicity, this binary is fragile at best. It implies an impregnable boundary between the two categories: if one is anatomically female, then all of one's characteristics must be feminine, and vice versa. Such narrow categories disregard the existence of humans born with intersex conditions, which may develop into either male or female, or those who

born with true hermaphroditism, possessing both ovarian and testicular tissue. Having proven the limited use of such basic divisions, it logically follows to question the development of gender identity of individuals existing on a spectrum of masculinity and femininity.

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”, so quotes Judith Butler in her analysis of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex* (Butler, Sex 35). The concept, recognised amongst feminist debate, supports Butler’s theory of gender as a set of socially-mandated characteristics rather than inherent biological instincts. It separates gender identity, the naturalised behaviour of an individual from their sex, an entirely biological/anatomical consequence. Gender, then, can be read as a surface value observed of an individual, sustained by “acts, gestures and enactments, generally construed as *performative*” (Butler, Gender 136). Similar to the process of socially-driven self-monitoring, gender becomes a social construct wherein an individual is exposed to various examples of ‘correct’ gendered behaviour and ‘incorrect’ or deviant models. The basis for ‘correct’ or ‘natural’ gender roles points to an underlying drive to cultivate gender identities along “the culturally intelligible grids of an idealized and compulsory heterosexuality” (Butler, Gender 135). Further, by accepting this distinction between sex and gender, we are then forced to accept Butler’s dismissal of gender and gender roles as natural as, by definition, gender is in itself unnatural. Deviance from standardised gender roles becomes merely a deviance from a system that supports a typically patriarchal, heterosexual society, with the existence of bisexual, gay and lesbian individuals proving that “gender does not necessarily follow from sex”, nor is desire inherently connected with one’s anatomical state (Butler, Gender 135).

Such discussions surface in frequent correlation to women, who, in either literature or film, deviate from their prescribed gender roles, as observed with the action heroine. The impressive growth of the action heroine or strong female protagonist is frequently met with accusations of characters being overly masculine, breaking an unspoken but closely policed binary of gendered roles, which promote the passive woman – active man. The action heroine inhabits a position traditionally attributed to males, often usurping the typically male signifiers: muscles, guns, and high levels of combat competence. In many cases, the heroine is merely a male in a female body, the character doing little more than impersonating gender. Jeffrey A. Brown, in study of action heroines and popular culture, quotes Jeanine Basinger, the chair of film studies at Wesleyan University, with the opinion that placing a woman in “traditional male action roles, without changing their psychology, is just cinematic cross-dressing” (Brown 23).

The notion of psychology, the way in which gender roles are performed, is vital when considering gender as a destabilizing tool. Butler claims “parody as the most effective means for undermining the current binary frame of gender”, with subversions of any norm necessarily coming from within the system to be undermined (Brown 24). Butler’s best-known example of this is drag. Drag is considered a form of gender parody, its basis in humour and its success reliant on the audience’s recognition of the ‘true’ gender underneath the façade. Brown draws attention to this reliance by commenting that the gender of those participating in drag is never negated. In fact, drag points to the performative nature of all gender, and displays a tendency towards reinscribing essentialism by “revealing gender transgression as ultimately humorous or tragic” (Brown 25).

The overly masculine heroine can be read as another example of gender cross-dressing, the underlying masculinity hidden by a feminine performance. The portrayal of the masculinised heroine is not inherently humorous, and instead begins to underscore the arbitrariness of prescribed gender roles as she “usurps masculine roles and signifiers to fulfil her narrative function” (Brown 29). We can, and perhaps should, question the interpretation of action heroines as masculinized. By applying this label to female protagonists reaching beyond their traditional gender roles and classing active behaviour as masculine, we in fact begin systematically reducing the female’s capacity for anything beyond passive behaviour and reinforce a dysfunctional binary code. Where the heroine or protagonist begins having a far greater impact as a destabilizing unit, is when the masculine behaviour emerges from an individual who does not maintain a masculine performance. As Brown explains, “the audience’s gender beliefs are more directly destabilized because the image of a small, petite, pretty woman in a dress kicking ass denies the narrative logic that allows viewers to deride the heroine as a butch or a woman trying to be a man” (32). In this sense the woman capable of active behaviour while maintaining a feminine gender identity becomes empowered, not a male impersonator but a woman pursuing a legitimate role in their text.

As the werewolf is an overwhelmingly masculine species, this adherence to feminine qualities is precisely what singles the female werewolves out as oddities. The wolf within the woman may certainly lead to a sense of empowerment or strength in that she is imbued with qualities that have previously been the sole province of males – such as freedom of movement, personal and sexual autonomy and political power. The transgressive nature of the werewolf

allows the woman to be transgressive herself, an allowance made, I believe, due to the blending woman and Other. The degree to which lycanthropy affects a female character's gender roles or narrative purpose differs in regard to their position within a text, as either a major or minor character.

Of the contemporary female werewolves considered throughout this thesis, only one is consistently portrayed as assuming a masculine identity. Sidheag, as a minor character, is not required to present a desirable feminine identity; indeed, Sidheag is portrayed as a male within a female body. For a minor female werewolf to retain a feminine identity within a male pack results in isolation, a tragic or comic woman caught in the 'male territory'. To maintain control over her pack Sidheag all but renounces a feminine identity in favour of a stronger, masculine one. As pack alpha she must lead by example, proving her strength by maintaining order and defeating challengers. To this end she is successful, the battle between her and two males of the London pack showing her strength and savagery as unmatched by any individual, non-alpha wolf. "The female alpha was vicious in battle. She gave no quarter and had no mercy. She was almost taunting them, never going in for a kill strike...she wanted to torture, like a cat with mice" (Carriger, *Timeless* 144). The behaviour of the wolf-woman reflects a sense of abandon. Rather than blurring gender roles, the woman's actions defy any link to the 'gentle sex' and instead blend animalistic savagery with the human notion of revenge.

In Carriger's universe the female werewolf is a rarity, with Sidheag mentioned as the first in living (immortal) memory. Her ability to generate discomfort reinforces Brown's concept of disparity between outward appearances and assumed identity or behaviour. Set in Victorian London, the manners

expected of female characters, particularly those of gentle breeding, are strictly observed. While Sidheag is not presented as an attractive or desirable figure, she remains a biological woman and such behaviours as turning up upon her relatives' doorstep, barefoot and wearing only an old cloak, do little to maintain a 'correct' feminine manner. However, in choosing a masculine identity she does not challenge gender expectations so much as reinforce them. Adopting masculinity to be accepted and respected as a pack leader suggests an inadequacy of the feminine alpha. The minor female werewolf becomes a comparative device with which to reinforce the 'correct' and ideal nature of the male.

Stephenie Meyer's minor female werewolf also demonstrates this concept. Leah is a young, single woman in a previously mono-gendered pack and species (Leah is the first female wolf of her tribe). Rather than challenging the males in terms of dominance or strength, as Sidheag does, Leah is described as noticeably smaller and lighter than the rest of the pack. Younger males or 'pups' still experiencing the rapid maturation of initial lycanthropy, while described as 'gangly', tower over the female. Again, rather than her presence being representative of a challenge to the male dominated species, it seems more likely the female is placed alongside the male to compliment him by comparison. The paranormal romance, focusing on the desirability of the male supernatural, will utilise the female supernatural to reinforce the correct and 'ideal' state of the eligible male. Throughout the series Leah strictly maintains a feminine identity, being fastidious about eating raw meat and demanding privacy before changing forms. Differing from Sidheag in this aspect, Leah can be read as a tragic figure existing as an inferior model within her pack.

The reinforcement of the male werewolves at the expense of the females is only the case with the minor characters – those existing within a pack. Cases of major female werewolves reverse this concept, establishing themselves as equal to their male counterparts and embracing a fluid gender identity. Regeane and Anna follow similar paths in the development of their gender identities. Both begin as virgin brides, entirely feminine, who suffer domestic abuse before embracing lycanthropy to exact revenge on their tormentors. Both advance their positions of personal and political power, Anna as a young widowed matriarch, the lady of a large estate, and Regeane as a friend of the Pope, happily married to a wealthy werewolf lord. Their changing gender identities find balance through each narrative, to differing degrees but resulting in the self-actualisation of each woman. Anna, for example, affects a feminine identity before and during her period of abuse. Her actions are defensive, passive, and do little to improve her situation. “Every night I would hear him come stumbling to my door. At first I locked it, but I learned not to” (124). Once lycanthropy is gained, she takes on a far more active and confident identity, seen in her abrupt speech and callous treatment of both staff and family. The change left her hard, outwardly feminine but with an almost inhuman coldness about her character. Her apparel and physical appearance remain feminine, generating a disturbing gap between her looks and behaviour. This discrepancy sees her pressing against the border of the male/female binary, ill-fitted to reside comfortably on either side yet managing to embody both as a functional character.

Regeane is more unusual as her werewolf nature, so far considered masculine, enhances her feminine features and thus her appeal. Overlapping into the human form, the wolf can be observed in Regeane’s tapered nails, silver-

tipped hair and eyes that reflect the light. It is a mix of animalistic elements wrought into the feminine form that create a more alluring, yet dangerous, woman. Borchardt's character claims the most balanced identity, the masculine strength and impulses of the wolf accepted and directed by the feminine woman. As women are considered by some to be closer to the 'natural' state, the female werewolf makes no great leap in bridging the two categories of nature and culture. In truth, she may also draw the man closer to this edge by incorporating signifiers of masculinity, traits that are 'animal-like' or uncultured. Previously touched upon is the notion that women offer a more balanced hybrid between human and wolf – the aggressive or wild nature of the werewolf due in part to the excess of masculinity. Women as the 'gentle' and 'passive' sex bring balance to the mix. This can be taken still further: the female werewolf is not simply a more rational beast. The woman who takes wolf form invariably assumes male characteristics and/or tendencies, thus bring male, female, natural and cultured elements together into a functional creature. This forced blend of opposing elements cannot but help destabilizing and challenging social structures.

The female werewolf interacts with the majority of socially-constructed and maintained binaries. Across genres, the threat of the female werewolf can consistently be traced to the threatening, or breaching, of these boundaries. It is this nature, the liminality that places werewolves in the grey space that defines their role within the wider fantasy genre. It is not for every author to directly attack social structures. However, the female werewolf is a developing character type who allows the reader's attention to be directed at potentially problematic systems. Her value is in that she does *not* regularly 'succeed' or receive a happy ending. The female werewolf is an uncomfortable figure, and engages the reader

with a sense of complicity in her fate. In recognising our discomfort, and by tracing it to its source, we as readers validate the role of the wolf-woman. To drive a monster from our 'safe' space, we must first acknowledge its limits.

Conclusion

Within the broad genre of fantasy, and those with which it overlaps, the monster is an enduring phenomenon created to define and represent specific cultural anxieties, and show such terrors being overcome by a correct and normalised regime. As a species, the werewolf has previously been viewed as an incarnation of uncontrollable violence and potential infection. In recent years the werewolf species has formed a subgroup of the female gender: a subgroup, because females cannot be comfortably grouped with the archetypal male werewolf. Presenting different behavioural patterns, and inferring new anxieties generated by the shift in gender, the female werewolf is not archetypal. As a new character type, her role cannot be projected after identification, as Attebery suggests of typical fantasy characters, and so this thesis has attempted to retrospectively catalogue the characteristics of the female werewolf to establish what they contribute to the genre. While the casting of female werewolves as protagonists remains an uncommon occurrence in fantasy literature, those currently in circulation present an opportunity to examine the blend of masculine and feminine, of women-wolves blending appealing and appalling bodies.

Such mixes are often attempted in film media, in the form of the action heroine. The action heroine is a muscled, tough and violent woman simultaneously portrayed as sexual and masculinised. There is a “conflicting nature, identifying as both heroic subjects and sexual objects” (Brown 12). The divided nature of the action heroine model is presented within female werewolves in a subtly different manner. Rather than having two opposing genders appearing at once on a surface level, a werewolf’s feminine and masculine natures are

separated: the masculine behaviours thrust upon the wolfish half to preserve the femininity of the woman. This distancing of the two halves does not necessarily infer a distaste of the masculine traits within the woman, but more likely appeals to the socially ingrained need to keep the two genders distinct. The allure of the female werewolf is further reinforced by the incongruity of the beautiful, feminine woman capable of unrestrained savagery. The female werewolf, while similar to the action heroine in many aspects, is unusual in that she is female at all. Carving a space in a previously mono-gendered species, the female werewolf is a breed apart from her male counterpart. I do not believe the female werewolf can be accused of 'impersonating a male', or trying to be like a man by overstepping the female boundary. Instead she occupies the space between the two genders: the fault-line of the binary in which aspects of both male and female merge into a functioning body.

The literary history of the female werewolf presents the beautiful woman/wild beast coupling as the most common character form, with a few notable cases of the woman as an aged crone, as with Carter's grandmother, or heavily masculinised as with Carriger's Sidheag. Rather than using gender transgression to allude to or conceal a 'true' gender, the werewolves are never portrayed as anything other than female. While they are not necessarily feminine, very rarely could they be accused of being symbolic male. What separates the female werewolf from other masculinised female characters is her ability to adopt a gender identity for an unspecified length of time. The ability to transform is quite literally a chance to change skins, to swap one set of gendered expectations for another, the ability challenging the belief that gender roles are indisputable and fixed. I believe it is this transformative ability, the incorporation of the wild

into the woman that creates enough objective distance from societal expectations to dramatize opportunities of agency that go beyond the familiar labels of comic, perverse or tragic.

The acknowledgement and reception of the wolfish-half separates female werewolf literature into texts following a morality tale structure, and those wherein the women experience self-acceptance and subtle ostracization without a final correction. Texts following the style of the Victorian morality tales demonise the wolfish-half, and seek to purge it by destroying the tainted woman. This resistance to the female werewolf revolves around her encroachment upon the masculine sphere and disregard of acceptable feminine behaviours. The female's body is described as "alluring and treacherous" (Housman 23), a tool to tempt the man whilst hiding the 'contaminated' wolf half. The female werewolf as a monstrous figure is not only representative of the anxiety of the uncontrollable, uncontainable female, but is a figure designed to cause discomfort. In morality tales, this discomfort is recognised and expelled. In the more contemporary tales, where the female is marginalised rather than corrected, the discomfort is aimed at the reader. The female werewolf is a liminal creature, and her interaction with the categories of our world reduces them to arbitrary labels. She rides the gap between the two genders, a transgressional figure ill-fitting into either side of the binary yet managing to embody both as a functional character. She brings the wild into the cultured space, and often reveals the façade of culture and hearth as places of safety.

Where the wolf and woman are symbolically separated, and the gendered traits of one blur into the other, distancing is achieved by portraying the women as beautiful, harmless and well mannered. In morality-style texts, this is approached

with the woman as the ‘wolf in sheep’s clothing’, the concealed threat that must be guarded against and expelled. The tales, particularly that of Kallas and Carter, voice the unspoken anger of the wolf-women and the village mob. There is an undertone of discontent in both tales, directed at the threatening figure disrupting the safe and contained world, and, from the werewolves, at the inevitability of their punishment – the consequence of monstrous difference.

Only in the case of Housman’s character White Fell would the label of ‘monster’ be entirely appropriate – the werewolf crossing the threshold of the farmhouse to sate her bloodlust. The expelling of the monster in this text carries heavy Christian overtones, to the point of exaggeration; the act is portrayed as necessary and righteous beyond dispute. Awkwardly enough for texts emulating a morality style, Housman’s case is unusual in this explicit morality. Far more common is the text where the wolf-woman is condemned for her nature regardless of her actions. As a perceived threat the woman is destroyed, though the author often aligns the reader’s sympathies with the doomed woman rather than the correcting mob. The reader is drawn to the plight of the woman, and in recognising that her correction is more often due to her nature than her actions, will feel the intended discomfort at the parallel this draws with reality.

In each of the morality tale texts, the female werewolf occupies a prominent position within the narrative. Later texts, those following the genre shift to the paranormal romance, increasingly utilise the female werewolf as a background character, most often as a pack member. The shift in gender is accompanied by a change in the solitary nature of the traditional werewolf. As a monstrous figure, the male werewolf was feared as a source of infection, reproducing through bite wounds inflicted on the victim. The modern werewolf is

now considered a supernatural figure rather than a monster, capable of inciting fear but presented more often as a rational, human-like being. The pack nature supports a closer link to the natural wolf, and acknowledges the allure of both the wild and the supernatural – the modern supernatural caste is far more inclusive than their solitary predecessors. While female werewolf protagonists/antagonists are targeted for correction, or portrayed as marginalised figures of destabilisation, the textual role of the minor female werewolf is to showcase her inadequacy when compared to the male. The validity of these characters as complete women is questionable, with their autonomy and desirability deliberately downplayed, so as not to rival the human female for the attention of the supernatural male. Further, the appearance of female werewolves alongside the male inevitably sees the female adopting a more permanent male identity to hold her place in the hierarchy, as we observed with Sidheag. Her character is a male within a female body, a construct that does not challenge expected gender norms so much as reinforce them.

Sidheag adopts masculine tendencies to be successful as a pack member. This suggests the female as insufficient, of lesser worth than the male werewolf, to the point where the minor female character's only purpose is to reinforce the correctness of masculine werewolves. The reader, rather than sympathising with these minor females, is more likely to view them as pitiable, a woman out of place and deemed undesirable by the males around her. A pairing made between two supernatural figures acts as an exception: the female werewolf may establish herself in a manner where her nature compliments and is supported in turn by the male. The texts examined over the course of this thesis suggest that desirability, in the sense of validating a female werewolf's femininity, is only achieved when the

counterpart is also in some way inhuman. This is an unusual occurrence, and consequently the enforced isolation or rejection of the female further reinforces her position as a threshold creature, no longer expelled but consistently relegated to the fringe of society.

The female werewolf, not being equal to the males, suggests an enduring sense of inferiority – the female werewolf who grows closer to this ‘ideal’ of the species does so at the cost of losing her femininity, and appears as a pale imitation, a tragic figure. Such a fate may only be avoided when the female werewolf appears alongside the male as a main character or protagonist in her own right. It was my belief at the outset of this thesis that the shift from morality tales would bring the female werewolves a greater autonomy and freedom, a sense of empowerment previously denied. While the selection of texts consequently limited my survey, it quickly became apparent that this empowerment was not necessarily the case, and may in fact not present itself in the majority of werewolf texts. The initial impression of empowerment is quickly subdued by authors consistently placing the women in difficult, often abusive, situations. Their actions are motivated by a need to escape their place within society, a subtle move that sees these characters fleeing to the wilds. The women are martyr figures. The departure from society, while offering the façade of freedom, is in fact a consistent device to remove the uncomfortable women from society. Their difference is acknowledged, but not tolerated amongst the ‘regular’ folk. While this may be read as conservative rather than challenging, the female werewolves indirectly challenge our systems by pointing out their fragility.

The female werewolf, as a relatively new character, is no longer archetypal. She has been constantly re-imagined and reinvented to model the transgressive

female and take advantage of the changing views towards acceptance in modern Western society. Authors of modern female werewolf texts bring the unfamiliar character into a very recognisable world, utilising our preconceived notions to point out the fractures in our ordered society, fault lines that harbour monsters and allude to the fragile nature of the lines we draw. The female continues to threaten the border between established binaries, and continually pushes towards the taboo aspects of the feminine. The werewolf, by its nature, is a creature of change, an unstable force residing within the shell of a human body. It is pervasive, uncontainable, and thus causes great discomfort to the beholder. As a society, humans depend upon categories and order. Binaries are kept in place to defend against the liminal, or fluid, entities perceived as threats. What is monstrous is labelled such so we may recognise threats to the order, defend against, and expel that which is Other. Werewolf texts take up this view by either punishing characters for their lack of distinction, or utilising them to point out the limitations of our conventional system of categorisation.

While the werewolf is swiftly recognised within this thesis as a liminal figure, in their dual nature and blurring of several prominent binaries, these are characteristics of the species rather than a purpose or role. An examination of what these characteristics enable the female werewolf to achieve within any given text, regardless of plot course, resulted in transgressive characters placed to cause friction. Female werewolves occupy positions within texts that are not unique or original, prompting the question of why the authors chose to incorporate them into a previously mono-gendered species. The situations the women find themselves in do not necessarily reject traditional binary codes or social expectations. By casting a transgressive figure into a familiar setting, as binary codes and expectations

form the foundations of familiar plots, authors encourage the reader to consider these familiar constructs, and their arbitrary nature.

As a creature of transformation, the werewolf will continue to be re-imagined, addressing overlooked issues of an evolving society by drawing the reader's eye to the uncomfortable limits we place around our world. While binary inversion or transgression is not unique to the werewolf, it is the transformative ability provided by lycanthropy that allows the women to cross borders and showcase the fragile nature of our chosen categories. The evolving female werewolf offers us a character both animal and human, wild and civilised, male and female, embodying elements of each to reconfigure preconceived binaries by proving they are not mutually exclusive.

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