

An Escape to the Forest in Catherine Hardwicke's *Red Riding Hood* (2011)

RED RIDING HOOD: A FEMINIST REVISION OF THE FAIRY TALE?

The 'Red Riding Hood' tale is continually invoked in contemporary girls' visual culture, often to explore the space of transgression and freedom symbolised by straying from the straight path of hegemonic femininity, and the consequences of doing so. Werewolf stories in teen texts such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (The WB 1997–2003), *Teen Wolf* (MTV 2011–), *The Vampire Diaries* (The CW 2009–2017), *The Boy Who Cried Werewolf* (Bross 2010), *When Animals Dream* (Arnby 2014), *Blood and Chocolate* (Garnier 2007), *Cursed* (Craven 2005) and *Ginger Snaps* (Fawcett 2000) demonstrate the enduring appeal of the liminal figure of the wolf in girlhood rite-of-passage narratives. In many instances, the tale is reconfigured with the girl as the wolf. In *Ginger Snaps*, for example, Ginger is bitten by a werewolf while walking through the woods at night and begins a beastly transformation. As she transforms over the weeks following the attack, she becomes violent, ravenous and destructive. While the film makes space for her unruly subversions, the threat she poses is nevertheless contained when her sister, Bridget, kills her. In other texts such as *Teen Wolf* and *The Vampire Diaries*, the girl wolves must regulate and contain their appetites and violent behaviour in order to avoid punishment. In both examples, the powerful girl wolf is to some degree characterised negatively and she must be confined in some way.

However, this is not always the case. For example, in Neil Jordan's 1984 film *The Company of Wolves*, based on Angela Carter's short story of

the same name (1979), heroine Rosaleen undergoes a beastly transformation and, as Carter puts it, concludes her rite-of-passage journey ‘between the paws of the tender wolf’ ([1979] 1996, 220). *When Animals Dream* features a similar outcome, with werewolf Marie escaping persecution at the end of the film. So while we can still see the ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ tale being deployed as a kind of cautionary tale in teen screen texts in the tradition of Perrault and the Grimms, there are some that refuse this function, and open up the tale to more subversive readings of the errant, unruly girl. This space of subversion is where I locate my attention in this chapter, with an analysis of Catherine Hardwicke’s film *Red Riding Hood*.

In addition to revisions that imagine the girl as a wolf, Red Riding Hood is also frequently figured as an avenging hunter or slayer, as in *Hard Candy* (Slade 2005), *Freeway* (Bright 1996), *Hanna* (Wright 2011) and episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* such as ‘Fear Itself’ (4.04) and ‘Helpless’ (3.12). In *Red Riding Hood*, the heroine is both hunter and witch. As Sue Short notes, Hardwicke appears to be influenced by Carter’s ‘Company of Wolves’ and the film of the same name, ‘revealing the extent to which contemporary fairy tale films are increasingly referencing one another’ (2015, 149). While some critics have expressed disappointment about the film’s romantic resolution—indeed, Short refers to it as a ‘de-clawing’ of the heroine (149)—I argue that the film undertakes a feminist revision of the tale by mapping the heroine’s rite of passage as a liminal and flexible journey, and that this cannot be contained by the romance plot.

The film revises the gender relations represented in the Charles Perrault (1607) and Brothers Grimm (1857) versions of the ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ fairy tale through its reconfiguration of the heroine’s journey through the forest as a liminal bid for freedom. This Gothicised fairy tale film maps heroine Valerie’s resistance to patriarchal power and ideology through her escape from her oppressive father’s home, where she has been imprisoned, and her entry into the liminal forest. By pursuing an errant journey into the otherworldly space of the woods, and adopting the alternative identities of the hunter and the witch, Valerie eschews the ‘appropriate’ domestic femininity that conventional culture requires her to adhere to, and constructs an alternative girl identity. Conducting a visual analysis of how this liberating geography is represented through Valerie’s point of view, as well as an analysis of Valerie’s omniscient voice-over narration that accompanies her traversal of this terrain, I theorise how liminality not only carves out a space for the girl’s opposition to her

position as subordinate object within patriarchal culture, but also allows an alternative, authoritative and powerful feminine adolescent subjectivity to emerge on the contemporary teen screen.

Feminist fairy tale revisions work to unsettle dominant patriarchal narratives and attempt to go beyond their confines to produce new representations of femininity in narrative. Cristina Bacchilega (1997) argues that this project is twofold: it firstly works to expose 'the rottenness of a social order that trades [on] (female) bodies' (96) to both the heroine and the reader/spectator, taking 'a gruesome fairy tale often deployed against women' and then transforming it into 'a story of successful, socially meaningful female initiation' (138). Bacchilega further emphasises the affirmative capacity of feminist revisionist fairy tale narratives: they foreground the heroine's 'self-discovery' of her voice and identity, which leads to her 'empowerment' (138). *Red Riding Hood* does just this: it exposes and critiques the sexist structures that hold the heroine's subordination to patriarchal authority in place, and represents the heroine's deployment of oppositional strategies that unsettle and subvert this masculine authority.

Teen fairy tale films often narrativise a liminal process through the depiction of adolescent descent or crossing over into an otherworld, like Little Red Riding Hood's journey into the strange, mysterious forest. Victor Turner (1982) writes that liminal rituals are 'frequently marked by the physical separation of the ritual subjects from the rest of society' (26), elaborating that 'the passage from one social status to another is often accompanied by a parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another...Sometimes this spatial symbolism may be the precursor of a real and permanent change' (25). This departure from conventional society symbolises a break with the status quo, and as Turner suggests, the liminal zone can be transformative. Because a journey into liminality is always a departure from the known, or the established order, it is a space that sometimes promotes a radical break with the structures, definitions and hierarchies associated with the dominant order. As Turner argues, liminal ritual subjects 'are at once dying from or dead to their former status and life, and being born and growing into new ones' (26). In other words, the escape into liminality is twofold: it is a refusal of, or turning one's back on, the structures, rules and definitions of dominant culture, and this refusal activates a 'being born' into a new identity that falls outside the bounds of status quo acceptability.

This oppositional and disruptive form of female heroism is evident in the rite-of-passage narrative in *Red Riding Hood*, mapping feminine adolescent resistance into the teen fairy tale. Valerie's journey into the forest is a defiant act, a moment that represents a refusal or repudiation of the gendered ideologies governing her domestic life. In this domestic space, she is urged to take up idealised feminine positions—wife, caretaker and 'good girl'—and her escape into the forest enacts a refusal of this ideology. By permanently escaping from the domestic, Valerie enacts a protest against dominant ideologies of femininity. Valerie's journey into the forest represents her desire to escape from patriarchal civilisation, and to enter a space of transgression where she can experience independence, autonomy and power as she takes up the alternative identities of a lone hunter, traveller and witch. When Valerie escapes into the forest, she decides to permanently occupy this space and refuses to return to conventional culture. This permanent escape into the liminal zone is what Turner (1969) calls 'ultraliminality', providing a fantasy of 'opting out' of conventional culture and the 'status-bound social order' (112). Like *The Company of Wolves*, *Red Riding Hood* charts a different path for the 'Little Red Riding Hood' heroine where the girl does not meet punishment at the end of her wayward journey but is instead rewarded, subverting the canonical endings prescribed by Perrault and the Grimms. The film draws a new map of the fairy tale forest and the heroine's journey through it; in doing so, the defiant, errant girl's rite of passage takes on new significances, and tells an alternative story of feminine adolescent unruliness.

The film's hybridisation of the fairy tale and girls' Gothic genres produces new outcomes for the 'Little Red Riding Hood' tale on the teen screen. Catherine Driscoll (2002) shows that 'feminine gothic [*sic*] texts are narratives of development that make gothic a genre of some significance to the formation of feminine adolescence' (231). The use of the feminine Gothic mode to revise the 'Little Red Riding Hood' tale allows Hardwicke to make salient the dark and disturbing implications of the Perrault and Grimm fairy tale, particularly in relation to their gendered dynamics. Because the feminine Gothic always 'shows women suffering from institutions they feel to be profoundly alien to them and their concerns' (DeLamotte 1990, 152), it holds the potential to critique those dominant institutions that foster the exploitation of women and girls. A central theme of the girl's Gothic, then, is an interrogation of 'the requirements of patriarchal culture for the young girl to give up active

and agentic desire and accept her status as object of desire,' which are 'experienced by the girl as profoundly strange' (Martin 2013, 137). By Gothicising the fairy tale, Hardwicke exposes and critiques the patriarchal violence embedded in the Perrault and Grimm versions of the tale, through the emphasis on the Gothic themes of the girl's entrapment and imprisonment within a horrifying domestic realm presided over by a masculine authority figure, and narrativising the girl's intense dissatisfaction with her place within the domestic and other patriarchal institutions of power (Driscoll 2002, 231). Hardwicke's deployment of this Gothic trope—the girl's dissatisfaction with and desire to escape from her impending role as wife and mother—is explored in greater detail later in this chapter, with particular emphasis placed on how this contemporary teen screen revision narrativises the girl's pursuit of an escape route into an unruly realm.

This film not only interrogates the demands made of feminine adolescence in patriarchal culture, but to also represent resistance to those demands, showing that the girl's Gothic can provide fantasy narratives of escape from the demands of conventional femininity in patriarchal culture. The horrors that the heroine faces, and eventually conquers, create 'extraordinary experiences of self-revelation' (Driscoll 2002, 324). These narratives represent girls who, through their 'vigilance, resilience, and agency,' face, defeat and escape these domestic horrors (232). In her analysis of the Persephone myth in girl's fantasy and Gothic literature, Holly Virginia Blackford shows that the girl's escape from the dominant order is represented as a moment of disruptive liminality. She writes that 'the myth of Persephone [is] provocative of a girls' gothic, expressive of the dangers and inevitability of impending womanhood' (2012, 9). This Gothic Persephone myth articulates 'a deep ambivalence about growing up female; fantasy space enacts the ambivalence' (5). While this chapter does not focus on the Persephone myth, it nevertheless resonates with the contemporary *Little Red Riding Hood*'s journey into the woods, because as Blackford asserts, 'as a uniquely indeterminate and homeless girl, fated forever to cycle between worlds, [Persephone] inspired paradoxical symbolism of growth and escape' (1). The theme of a fantasy escape into liminal, otherworldly space allows the girls' Gothic text to articulate their dissatisfaction and resistance towards these strictures, as well as offering a fantasy of alternatives to them.

Having established the theoretical background on space and liminality, this chapter goes on to survey feminist responses to the disempowerment

of the girl in the Perrault and Grimm versions of the ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ fairy tale. I explore the shift from these earlier versions to Hardwicke’s female-dominated revisionist production, arguing that the film presents a keen critical insight into the sexism embedded in the Perrault and Grimm texts. The chapter then explores how moments of opposition and rupture make way for alternative gender relations to emerge in the revision of the tale. I map Valerie’s escape into the liminal realm of the forest in great detail. Chronicling her journey from the imprisoning Gothic domestic space and the tyrannical patriarchal figures who preside over it, and into the forbidden territory of the forest, I explore how liminal space offers a fantasy of a girl’s noncompliance and escape from the oppressive demands of the status quo. I argue that this fantasy of escape and liminal transformation creates a powerful representation of teen girl agency for the teen screen, and how this provides an important space for representing an alternative language of girlhood on screen. In the third and final section of this chapter, I analyse the use of Valerie’s authoritative voice-over narration and point-of-view shots from Valerie’s perspective as she navigates this new space, positioning the girl as powerful storyteller who becomes an unruly figure in the liminal zone.

FEMINIST RESPONSES TO ‘LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD’

Feminist analyses of the ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ tale, particularly those versions written by Perrault and the Grimms, have crucially examined the ways in which the figure of the girl is disempowered, violated and punished (Brownmiller 1975; Zipes 1986, 1989; Orenstein 2002). This section explores some of these important deconstructions of the ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ narrative in detail, particularly in relation to its function as a cautionary tale, as well as its representation of a punishing masculine gaze. I then provide close scene analyses of how Hardwicke’s film actively critiques and challenges this patriarchal power as it exposes the extreme violence it engenders against women and girls.

Feminist critics have pointed out the tale’s troubling gender dynamic of male violence and female shame in which the young girl is blamed for the violent encounter with the wolf. Susan Brownmiller famously argued that:

Red Riding Hood is a parable of rape. There are frightening male figures abroad in the woods – we call them wolves, among other names – and

females are helpless before them. Better stick close to the path, better not be adventurous. If you are lucky, a *good, friendly* male may be able to save you from certain disaster. (1975, 310 original emphasis)

Jack Zipes concurred with Brownmiller's scathing assessment of the tale and has convincingly argued that both the Perrault and Grimm versions mobilised a story of 'male governance' (1989, 126) over feminine disobedience, unruliness and curiosity (123–124). Expanding on the discussion of violation and violence, Zipes discusses the dynamic of the gaze in the tale. He writes of the Perrault and Grimm versions:

the girl in the encounter with the wolf gazes but really does not gaze, for she is the image of male desire. She is projected by the authors Perrault and Grimm...as an object without a will of her own. The gaze of the wolf will consume her and is intended to dominate and eliminate her. The gaze of the wolf is a phallic mode of interpreting the world...Her identity will be violated and fully absorbed by male desire either as wolf or gamekeeper. (Zipes 1986, 248)

Zipes correctly points out the impossible position to which Little Red Riding Hood is relegated in the Perrault and Grimm versions of the tale. Because both the Perrault and Grimm versions of 'Little Red Riding Hood' function as cautionary tales that hinge on a transgression/violation binary (Tatar 2004, 1) in which the heroine's violation of transgression subsequently leads to the spectacle of her punishment, the story relies on a sexist dynamic of 'bad' feminine disobedience and unruliness that requires the discipline of masculine surveillance.

In Perrault's version of the 'Little Red Riding Hood' tale, there are two main gazes cast upon the young heroine: the predatory gaze of the wolf, and the gaze of surveillance and disapproval of the omniscient male narrator. The Grimms also added, in their later version of the tale, the gaze of the huntsman, the figure of 'law and order' (Zipes 1993, 78); and his surveying masculine gaze saves the day. As Catherine Orenstein (2002) has dryly commented on this development, Little Red Riding Hood, the naïve girl 'still foolish and prone to err, now...needed a man to save her', thus giving her 'a second chance to walk the straight path through life' (46). These two sets of masculine gazes work to control Little Red Riding Hood, creating a tale of 'male governance' over feminine unruliness (Zipes 1993, 81). The Perrault and Grimm versions of

‘Little Red Riding Hood’, then, work to police the borders of ‘appropriate’ femininity and to condemn expressions of femininity that fall beyond that border. While the heroine certainly exercises agency by straying from the path in this tale, the canonical versions of the tale narrativise this moment of agency only to punish her for this transgression at the conclusion of the story. The masculine gazes of the wolf, hunter and omniscient male narrator work as disciplinary forces in these versions of the tale, conspiring to contain the threat of feminine unruliness represented by Red Riding Hood’s desire to ‘stray from the straight path’. Indeed, children’s literature scholar Elizabeth Marshall (2004) has shown how the ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ tale, particularly in its Perrault and Grimm versions, is framed by the ‘often contradictory discourses of femininity that attempt to school the girl into a (hetero)sexual body... [and these versions of the tale] map a subtle, yet no less coercive attempt to contain and regulate the feminine body’ (262).

The lesson that the tale is intended to instil in young readers and listeners is clear when the Grimms’ Little Red Cap tells herself: ‘never again will you stray from the path by yourself and go into the forest when your mother has forbidden it’ ([1857] 2001, 750). In Perrault’s moral that concludes the tale, he writes:

One sees here that young children,
Especially pretty girls,
Polite, well-taught, and pure as pearls,
Should stay on guard against all sorts of men.
For if one fails to stay alert, it won’t be strange
To see one eaten by a wolf enraged. ([1607] 2001, 747)

Both Perrault and the Grimms create a very specific idealised image of youthful femininity: to always obey, to be pure, polite and to resist that which is ‘forbidden’. While these narratives certainly provide representations of an agentic young girl pursuing a forbidden path, they contain that agency through punishment—the threat of death in the Grimm version and an actual death in Perrault’s. The tale therefore creates a space for a girl’s transgressive journey but ultimately cannot allow the girl to continue on her unruly path; she has been taught her ‘lesson’ by the tale’s authoritative male figures.

Hardwicke's *Red Riding Hood* actively critiques this punishing masculine gaze by clearly exposing how it is bound up in the exploitation of women, and then documenting Valerie's opposition and resistance to it, particularly in the second half of the film. Mulvey's ([1975] 1989) seminal work on the male gaze in classical narrative cinema interrogated the ways in which male protagonists in film have traditionally 'articulate[d] the look and create[d] the action', a role that entails power and omnipotence, while female characters occupy the passive space of spectacle, or to-be-looked-at-ness (19–20). She argued that this gendered imbalance in film representations 'reflects, reveals, and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking, and spectacle' (14). Furthermore, 'the female form displayed for [male] enjoyment' fulfils and sustains 'male fantasy' and the continued classification of woman as an object for male pleasure (21). The male character who comes to 'possess' the female character in the narrative is identified with by the male spectator who, by extension, also comes to possess the looked-at woman (21). The structure of the gaze is conceived of as a patriarchal visual language of control, domination and ownership of women, bound up in the culture's subordination and oppression of women. Woman connotes lack within the psychoanalytic framework deployed by Mulvey, the 'bearer of the bleeding wound; she can only exist in relation to castration and cannot transcend it' (14), representative of 'a threat of castration and hence unpleasure' (21). The male gaze can alleviate the fear evoked by this threat either through investigating the woman with sadistic voyeurism or turning her into a beautiful, eroticised object through fetishistic scopophilia, which conceals and disavows her lack (22). Within this formulation, the woman onscreen can either be 'subjugat[ed]...through punishment or forgiveness' (22), or fetishised into 'a perfect product' by the male protagonist (22). Either way, she is subjected to a gaze that possesses and controls her.

In the wake of Mulvey's hugely influential essay, feminist screen scholars began to suggest that while this theorisation of the male gaze provided an important structure for identifying how patriarchal visual culture often frames woman as image, it was so totalising and monolithic that it was difficult to formulate responses to alternative narratives. Challenges to Mulvey's theoretical paradigm particularly emerged in the work of feminists who

sought to conceptualise a female or feminine spectatorial position or gaze (see Kuhn 1984; Williams 1984; Cowie 1990; Stacey 1994), and to identify instances in which female characters subverted sexist visual and narrative economies (see Rich and Williams 1981; Modleski 1988). For example, Teresa de Lauretis began looking for ‘resistance or contradiction’ to ‘the language of the masters’ (1984, 3). Furthermore, she argued that the psychoanalytic methodology was limiting because it ‘depend[ed] on ... positing woman as the functional opposite of subject (man), which logically excludes the possibility ... of women ever being subjects and producers of culture’ (20). Instead of relying on the grand narrative provided by psychoanalysis, de Lauretis suggested that ‘reading between the signs’ or ‘rereading a text against the grain’ (6) could reveal ‘positionalities of identification available [to women] in narrative cinema’ (107). In an article co-authored with Michelle Citron, Julia Lesage, Judith Mayne and Anna Marie Taylor, B. Ruby Rich similarly argued that while Mulvey’s work allows for the analysis ‘of the status quo, which is patriarchal’, feminist theory worked to now ‘go *beyond* [the status quo] rather than just analysing it’ (1978, 87 original emphasis). Furthermore, a psychoanalytic account of cinema’s gendered relations, which can only conceive of woman as lack and as other to the male, is inadequate if we are to analyse female subjectivity on screen.

So while Mulvey’s paradigm provides a compelling foundation for deconstructing gendered relations on screen, it is only part of the story. For example, Hardwicke’s film appears to be keenly aware of the dominant male gaze, and renders its mechanisms so explicitly and excessively that its violence becomes painfully obvious. *Red Riding Hood* does not simply reproduce the male gaze; it ruptures its normalisation. This visual representation of male characters attempting to violently control and possess Valerie serves a critical function in the film. The narrative chronicles the heroine’s resistance and protest against these acts of masculine violence, and her final oppositional act of noncompliance when she escapes to the forest. The first half of the film chronicles a range of men who have their ‘eyes on’ Valerie, revealing the male gaze as control over the female as object. At the beginning of the film, Valerie is betrothed to a wealthy man named Henry. A townspeople remarks to Valerie: ‘Henry’s always had his eye on you. You’re the pretty one.’ Valerie recoils from this statement, which places her in the position of a mere pretty object; indeed Valerie explicitly describes her betrothal as ‘being sold’, drawing attention to the way in which she has been cast as object. In one scene set in the front garden of Valerie’s home, her father—who



Fig. 2.1 Valerie's image captured in the gaze of the father/wolf

is also the wolf—attacks the heroine. As illustrated in Fig. 2.1, Valerie's image is reflected in an extreme close-up of one of the wolf's enormous eyes. Transfixed and unable to move, she is quite literally captured and controlled by his gaze. Creating an image that quite literally depicts the dynamics of the gaze—the wolf/male as possessor, the female figure as captured object—Hardwicke explicitly brings Perrault and the Grimms' male gaze to the surface of the film.

The Gothicised domestic, ruled by the tyrannical father/wolf, is a space of confinement, imprisonment and claustrophobia for heroine Valerie. Hardwicke's use of the Gothic mode allows her to present the horrors that underlie the domestic, and the subjugated, diminished position that women have often occupied within the patriarchal construction of this space. The patriarchs of the film enforce girlhood as a diminished position that requires absolute compliance to the male figure and the performance of 'good girl' femininity. Juliann E. Fleenor comments that this structure of horror in the home is typical of the female Gothic, writing that 'the Gothic world is one of nightmare, and that nightmare is created by the individual in conflict with the values of her society and her prescribed role' (1983, 10). Thus, the 'heroines...flight from male tyrants across fantastical landscapes' have been interpreted as 'politically subversive...articulating women's dissatisfactions with patriarchal structures and offering a coded expression of their fears of entrapment within the domestic and the female body' (Wallace and Smith 2009, 2). The home as horror comes to represent, in amplified form, the difficulties of

complying with the demands of patriarchal culture. Hardwicke's explicit representation of patriarchal oppression and the male gaze in the first half of the film serves a political function: Valerie opposes this oppressive patriarchal rule, and the narrative chronicles her liberation from its confines. The narrative therefore presents a fantasy of female victory in the face of masculine abuses of power.

The film's exposure of the mechanisms of violence and oppression that support patriarchal power is an essential aspect of how this female-dominated production launches its critique against the sexism embedded in the Perrault and Grimm versions of the tale. Natalie Hayton argues that the film produces a powerful critique of patriarchal power through this exposure of the tale's sexist dynamics: Valerie must make a choice 'between tradition and conformity... [and] making her own decisions instead of fulfilling a prescribed narrative destiny' (2011, 126–127). Valerie discovers that the wolf is her tyrannical father, exposing the true monstrosity of this Gothic patriarch, and she slays him in an act of bravery and strength. Once this patriarchal abuse of power is exposed in the first half of the film, Hardwicke unsettles the canonised tale's gender dynamics.

AN ESCAPE TO THE WOODS: STRAYING FROM THE STRAIGHT PATH

Feminist analyses of the female role in myths and fairy tales have theorised the possibility of the heroine as an agentic and active subject. While many previous studies of the mythical rite-of-passage journey had been preoccupied with charting a male or masculine journey, as in the important work on the 'monomyth' by Joseph Campbell (1949),¹ feminist analyses set out to theorise a feminine equivalent that can represent the female protagonist's rite of passage in myth and fairy tale. De Lauretis powerfully comments that traditionally,

the hero, the mythical subject, is constructed as human being and as male; he is the active principle of culture, the establisher of distinction, the creator of differences. Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter. (1984, 119)

The female or the feminine in the tale, therefore, often acts as an object or space to be either conquered and vanquished, or staked out and claimed. As de Lauretis elaborates, ‘the end of the girl’s journey, if successful will bring her to the place where the boy will find her, like Sleeping Beauty, awaiting him, Prince Charming. For the boy has been promised...that he will find woman waiting at the end of *his* journey’ (133 original emphasis). For de Lauretis, then, the project for feminism is ‘to make a place for woman in myth—to imagine woman as subject in culture, to understand female subjectivity...to tell *her* story, the story of femininity’ (125 original emphasis). Zipes argues that the project of the feminist fairy tale was ‘created out of dissatisfaction with the dominant male discourse of traditional fairy tales and with those social values and institutions which have provided the framework for sexist prescriptions’, working to not only expose these ‘illusions’ but to also present ‘a different view of the world and spea[k] in a voice that has been customarily silenced’ (1986, xi). The project of feminist fairy tale writing and criticism has therefore been to expand the position of the feminine in narrative.

De Lauretis’ work asserts the importance of not only analysing how women and girls have been rendered as passive objects within narrative, but to also go beyond these limits to look for instances in which feminine subjectivity is centred in stories of female quests, journeys and rites of passage. This allows us to perceive the potential for fairy tale rewritings and variants to trouble the smooth patriarchal ideological surface of the canonised literary fairy tale texts by Perrault, the Grimms and Andersen. Indeed, they can rupture this surface, opening the fairy tale up to feminist appropriation and new, powerful stories about female journeys. These journeys often elide the patriarchal logic of closure through heterosexual romance, marriage and motherhood, creating new narrative structures for the fairy tale heroine to occupy. The screen texts analysed in this book participate in this form of rewriting the fairy tale, providing space for the fairy tale heroine to invade domains of male power and privilege, to resist the status quo of the heterosexual romantic rite of passage, and to seize alternative opportunities for fulfilment, agency and power.

Like de Lauretis, who worked to identify mythical narratives that could include powerful feminine identities and voices, Barbara Creed offers a feminine alternative to Campbell’s ‘monomyth’ with a theorisation of a ‘neomyth’ or new myth capable of ‘describ[ing] the structure of the heroine’s journey’ (2007, 19). The difference between the two forms of heroism are striking, for Creed argues that:

while male heroism is defined in relation to preservation of the male symbolic order, female heroism is...oppositional. In many contexts, the male hero signifies fixity, the female fluidity. Unlike the classic male hero, she rejects the phallogentric, fixed nature of the world, preferring instead to question the meaning of patriarchal civilisation and its values. (23)

Creed provides a wide variety of examples of this female hero in film, such as the women of *Thelma and Louise* (Scott 1991) and Joan from *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (Dreyer 1928). Creed's formulation of the female quest not only identifies how women can be figured as central authoritative drivers of narrative; it also points out that the female heroic narrative frequently involves the disruption of the 'male symbolic order', and an opposition to its foundational structures.

In *Red Riding Hood*, the heroine straying from the path is represented as an important assertion of resistance to the straight path and all that it represents. Bacchilega notes that contemporary feminist revisions of 'Little Red Riding Hood' reformulate the tale to emphasise the heroine's errant journey as positive, for 'straying from the path is necessary to acquire knowledge but what that leads to cannot already be known' (1997, 68). This emphasis on errant escapes from the 'known', the expected or the conventional opens up a fantasy space for the heroine to challenge and unsettle the boundaries of hegemonic femininity in patriarchal culture. This section of the chapter provides a visual analysis that contrasts the Gothic domestic space, presided over by Valerie's controlling father, and the geography of the forest, which represents a liminal and flexible zone. Valerie's escape from conventional culture is a gesture of noncompliance, and the liminal space acts as an otherworldly field of possibilities upon which Valerie can map an alternative version of doing girlhood.

In the first half of the film, Valerie is imprisoned in a dark and claustrophobic jail cell, chained and handcuffed, while in the second half of the film, she finds a way to escape this domestic horror. Valerie is expected to remain in the domestic sphere and marry Henry, thus being initiated into a traditional and idealised category of adult heterosexual femininity—becoming a housewife and mother. When Valerie first attempts to escape this fate, she is punished by being literally imprisoned within the domestic realm, trapped behind the bars of a wooden cage and shrouded in oppressive darkness. The ultra-tight framing around

Valerie's figure when she is enclosed in this domestic prison, and the static placement of the camera, similarly reflect this oppressive constriction. Valerie's subjugated position within the home could not be made clearer in this scene's representation of constricted and imprisoning spaces, the prison bar motif in the *mise en scène*, extreme low light and tight framing around the heroine's figure. Furthermore, Valerie's position within the home/prison allows the film's patriarchs to keep her under constant surveillance in the first half of the film, creating a space governed by a panoptic gaze—Valerie is unable to see her captors but they are able to monitor her closely. Michel Foucault describes this disciplinary apparatus through the example of Jeremy Bentham's 1791 architectural design for a Panopticon prison, which is designed so that the prisoner 'is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject of communication' ([1975] 1995, 200). Because the prisoners cannot see the guard, they can never know whether or not they are being watched and are therefore conditioned to internalise the prison's disciplinary power, 'even if it is discontinuous in its action; [so] that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary' (201). Foucault does not consider this structure of surveillance and discipline as unique to the prison; indeed, he argues that any time 'a task or particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used' (205). In other words, Foucault argues that panopticism has become 'a generalised function' of the social body (207). However, Foucault also acknowledges the capacity for this disciplinary mechanism of the panoptic gaze to be contested or transgressed. He analyses the subject's capacity to move between power's threads (1980, 98), and how moving between these threads can create a space of opposition in which the subject discovers a 'narrow zone' in which transgression can occur (1977, 33), outside the time and space of 'mastery' ([1975] 1995, 159). I am particularly interested in exploring how the heroine contests the power of the adult, masculine gaze that surveils her for her 'correct' development into hegemonic adult femininity. The contestation of this power in narrative could be significant because if ruptures and contestations do arise in response to the politics of the male panoptic gaze, then an alternative optic could arise in the space of that rupture, one that offers a different paradigm of image-making and spectatorship.



Fig. 2.2 Panoramic framing and mobile camera movement in *Red Riding Hood*

Valerie's imprisonment at the hands of patriarchal authority figures shows the heroine caught in the disciplinary mechanism of the panoptic gaze. But Valerie is able to 'resist the grip' of this power (Foucault [1975] 1995, 27) by discovering the narrow zone of opposition between power's threads that Foucault theorises, and this zone is the liminal landscape of the fairy tale forest. The forest, located at the edge of the village, is a marginal space that exceeds the boundaries of the dominant order. When Valerie escapes to the forest in the second half of the film, the cinematography, *mise en scène* and lighting all shift dramatically. The forest scenes are represented in extreme contrast to the *mise en scène*, lighting, framing and static camera deployed in the domestic scenes, which evoke oppressive claustrophobia. In the forest, the fantasy realm of freedom and independence, bright light is highlighted through sunshine and brilliant white snow. The cinematographic framing is wide, giving an impression of Valerie's figure freely and fluidly moving in the frame. The camera movement is always mobile, moving across the landscape with fluent ease. The flexibility and fluidity of the figure's movement through the liminal landscape is further emphasised by the billowing undulations of Valerie's red cloak, as shown in Fig. 2.2.

The construction of free-flowing movement through the *mise en scène*, bright lighting, wide panoramic framing and itinerant camerawork create a forest geography defined by a sense of independence, freedom and mobility. Valerie's fluid, free-flowing movement within the liminal zone is a clearly oppositional move—she wilfully pursues an errant path

that exceeds the limits imposed upon her within conventional culture. Walker's wide, panoramic framing emphasises the long, billowing, floating fabric of Valerie's cloak, and the heroine's confident strides across a vast expanse of open space, contributing to Hardwicke's feminist revision of the tale, in which the heroine is liberated from the masculine surveillance and discipline represented by the wolf and the disapproving male narrator. Hardwicke reconfigures the geography of the forest from a space of the girl's confinement and discipline to a landscape that represents possibilities for the heroine's unruliness: through this new lens, the forest becomes the location where the heroine is able to enact an opposition to the dominant order.

When Valerie enters the forest, she arms herself with a dagger and hunts down the wolf, her father, who has terrorised her. This liminal landscape is therefore coded as a space where Valerie can articulate her opposition to patriarchal authority. Turner writes that when the ritual subject enters the liminal otherworld, 'signs of their preliminal status are destroyed', and this leads to 'a special kind of freedom' that allows them to move 'beyond the normative social structure...[and] liberates them from structural obligations' (1982, 26–27). The film creates a fantasy world in which she can resist the dominant order and clearly articulate her opposition to the way in which she has been subjugated—she slays the wolf, and adopts the castigated identities of lone hunter and witch. Entry into a liminal otherworld stands for a fantasy of rebellion against the patriarchal culture from which Valerie flees. The escape to the otherworld represents a resistant practice against unsatisfactory gendered demands and strictures of the dominant culture. The theme of errant flight is cultivated not only as an expression of dissatisfaction with or ambivalence about the feminine role that the heroine is required to take up; it also allows for iterations of a girl's autonomy, independence and resistance to those cultural structures.

Through this enactment of unruliness, Valerie is able to discover and adopt an alternative and complex feminine adolescent identity. When the townspeople accuse her of being a witch, she does not struggle against this outsider identity; rather, she uses it to her advantage as a measure of resistance to the conventional feminine role she has been urged to adopt. Short, in her analysis of fairy tales and teen horror cinema, writes that the genre is preoccupied with 'the transgression of existing laws and boundaries' (2006, viii). She notes that the castigated outsider identities of wolf and witch are often adopted by teen horror heroines 'as an

alternative to existing norms, adopting them as a measure of dissatisfaction and refusal' (105) and as a way to access and express 'forbidden emotions such as power, lust, and rage' (36–37). Embracing the outsider identities of the witch and hunter allows Valerie to confront the limits of the hegemonic femininity that she was compelled to internalise and perform in her preliminal life. The 'special kind of freedom' that Turner identifies within liminality allows Valerie to adopt an alternative identity that does not conform to hegemonic girlhood. She enacts aggression, opposition, lust and anger, traits ordinarily not deemed 'acceptable' for teen girls to express. These moments of disobedience represent a variety of challenging and resistant girlhoods, allowing us to contemplate girl identities that go beyond the limits of the status quo. Furthermore, because feminine adolescent unruliness is represented as a necessary and positive trait—after all, Valerie's actions allow her to emerge triumphant and happy at the end of the rite of passage—the film encourages a positive revaluation of modes of doing girlhood that are most often represented negatively in mainstream media. In the context of a girls' media culture in which the fairy tale heroine is predominantly valued for her beauty and her experiences of romance (Haines 2014, 177), revisionist teen texts such as *Red Riding Hood* provide an alternative vision for the possibilities of girlhood through the fairy tale narrative.

Because the forest is an experimental space for the heroine in this film, it gives her the opportunity to design new ways of doing girlhood. Valerie finds ways to express forbidden emotions and actions such as anger and aggression in the space of the forest. Valerie also chooses to incorporate her love interest Peter, who is transformed into a 'good' wolf at the end of the film, into this space. Hayton expresses disappointment at this development, calling it a 'conventional romance...which overshadows and blurs the feminist discourse' of the film as a whole (2011, 127), but the film complicates conventional heteronormative romantic resolution in ways that Hayton does not acknowledge. In fact, Valerie and Peter enter the forest together knowing that they will live apart, coming together at times when the moon does not affect Peter too strongly. Valerie insists upon her independence as she lives alone in the heart of the forest, because she has fought hard to gain this separation from conventional culture. Towards the end of the film Valerie declares in her voice-over narration that 'I could no longer live [in the town]. I felt more freedom in the shadows of the forest. To live apart carries its own dangers, but of those I am less afraid.' Valerie is engaging in a

romance script, but in an alternative way: she is living independently, yet enjoying her relationship with Peter when it suits them both. This subverts the heterosexual romantic discourse of giving oneself over completely to the male lover, and the obliteration of female independence that such a coupling implies. Valerie creatively constructs and negotiates a romantic union in the forest that allows her to retain her freedom. This subversion of the norm of the romantic script, and Valerie's retention of her independence, signals the heroine's capacity to do girlhood differently through resistance practices.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD'S OMNISCIENCE: THE POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT AND THE VOICE-OVER

In this field of possibilities, Valerie opposes her position as subordinate object within the adult, masculine-dominated domain of her hometown. As she steps into the position of powerful subject within the forest space, she gains great narrative authority as storyteller and author of her own journey of empowerment. This is particularly evident in the film's representation of the heroine's point-of-view gaze and authoritative voice-over. The film carves out a representational space for a 'girl's gaze' (Kearney 2006) as a revisionary force, rupturing the dominance of adult masculine narrative authority. This revision of the gendered dynamics of image, gaze and voice in film narrative presents an opportunity to unsettle conventional representations of feminine adolescence, and to represent a girl's subjective position. *Red Riding Hood* becomes the storyteller and the authoritative point of view in the film. She uses her voice to articulate her resistance to what she calls the 'good girl' identity she is required to adopt, speaking back to and challenging this discourse. Pairing the teen heroine's authoritative voice-over with point-of-view shots provides a representation of Valerie's omniscience, authorial control and power over her rite-of-passage narrative. This shifts the authority from the disapproving gaze of the Perrault and Grimm narrators, revealing a significant transformation in the structures of power as the tale shifts from the early literary texts to the contemporary teen screen.

Mary Ann Doane's work on the female Gothic genre in classical Hollywood cinema analysed these two cinematic devices, the female voice-over and point-of-view shot, but was sceptical about the potential for the genre to offer its heroines sustained access to the agency of an

authoritative point of view (1987, 150–151). Commenting on the structure of the gaze within the genre, Doane shows that it fruitfully offers a ‘sustained investigation of the woman’s relation to the gaze’ (125). The genre attempts to present a female gaze by ‘obsessively centring and recentring a female protagonist, placing her in a position of agency. It thus offers some resistances to an analysis which stresses the “to-be-looked-at-ness” of the woman, her objectification as spectacle according to the masculine structure of the gaze’ (129). According to Doane, the genre also offers the potential for a female perspective to be expressed through voice-over narration. However,

when the [female] voice over is introduced in the beginning of a film as the possession of the female protagonist who purportedly controls the narration of her own past, it is rarely sustained...Instead, voices-over are more frequently detached from the female protagonist and mobilised as moments of aggression or attack exercised against her. (150)

The disappearance of the heroine’s authoritative gaze and narration as the film progresses undermines her access to agency. Furthermore, Doane points out that both the authoritative gaze and voice-over narration are not only taken from the heroine, they are taken over and replaced by a male character (151). For Doane, then, the female Gothic is a genre which offers a small measure of feminine agency through a short-lived access to an authoritative gaze, only to take it away. Doane’s formal analysis of the female gaze and voice-over informs my own examination of these formal elements in *Red Riding Hood*. In particular, Doane’s analysis suggests that the representation of woman as subject is possible, and that this representation provides an image of female agency on screen. This is a particularly important foundation for my analysis of instances where girls are represented as subjects and agents. However, I also expand upon Doane’s theorisation by analysing how the heroines can maintain this agency, power and subjectivity on the contemporary teen screen.

Karen Hollinger elaborates on Doane’s assertion that the heroine’s perspective is obliterated in the female Gothic film:

the female narrator’s story can be finished, interpreted, or interrupted by a male character, exposed as a lie, or revealed as a misinterpretation of events...[Therefore] female narrational power is shut down in some way by a final decisive male intervention that implicates the spectator strongly in this masculine point of view. (1992, 35)

According to both Doane and Hollinger, this restoration of narrational power and agency to the masculine point of view undermines the potential for feminine agency to emerge as a significant force in the text. While Doane and Hollinger's analyses are a useful starting point for considering female point of view through the gaze and voice-over narration in the female Gothic, they lack a method for considering a text such as *Red Riding Hood* that *does* consistently sustain the heroine's perspective through voice-over narration and point-of-view shots. This is a contemporary Gothic fairy tale text that reinstates the heroine's agency as definitive and authoritative, and therefore a new way of considering the Gothic's narrational devices is required in the context of this chapter.

Hardwicke provides an important revision: Little Red Riding Hood is the omniscient storyteller and authoritative overseer of the narrative. Through this revision, Hardwicke subverts the all-too-familiar Perrault and Grimm narration that cautions girls about the perils of straying from the straight path. Instead, the story is told from the girl's perspective. Her voice-over narration is presented as retrospective as she looks back on her rite-of-passage journey. Valerie narrates the entire tale from her position in the ultraliminal forest, a space in which she feels powerful. This is important to note because, as I have elaborated, the first half of the film chronicles the heroine's terrible abuse at the hands of patriarchal power figures, including imprisonment and handcuffing. These images are presented along with Valerie's retrospective voice-over which describes how she escaped the grip of this oppression and became victorious in her independent journey into the fringe of the forest. Therefore, while the voice-over is presented in some scenes that depict Valerie's disempowerment early in the narrative, the retrospective, victorious nature of her telling of the tale suggests that she has reclaimed her voice. The activation of the girl's gaze and voice-over as central and authoritative in *Red Riding Hood* undermines the sexist structures that work to suppress and marginalise Valerie's power and point of view. With her agency restored, the Red Riding Hood heroine is shown to not only speak back to the male authorities in her world, but also articulate her demands beyond their strictures.

The film's deployment of a 'girl's gaze' and voice-over is central to its construction of feminine agency, power and resistance. Scholars such as Mary Celeste Kearney and Barbara Jane Brickman (2007) have theorised the possibility of an oppositional teen girl perspective and position in the cinema. Brickman asserts that the presentation of a teen girl point

of view through point-of-view shots and voice-over narration may contain ‘revisionary powers’ (26). Because the teen girl point of view is traditionally a marginalised perspective, its privileging necessarily presents a challenge to the adult, straight male gaze that has dominated the cinema. Brickman writes that placing the marginalised female adolescent ‘view-point and...consciousness’ (26) at the centre of a film text has this capacity to be oppositional and challenging—a point of destabilisation and revision in the dynamic of the look and the voice. Kearney similarly calls for the critical development of the concept of the ‘girl’s gaze’, which she suggests may counter the persistent ‘privileging [of] male content, male spectators, and male directors’ (2006, 196). While her work focuses predominantly on the need for girls to create their own film texts, it also provides a framework for considering how the girl’s gaze might be theorised in relation to diegetic representations of teen girls, and for teen spectatorial positions. Kearney argues that a girl’s gaze has the capacity to mobilise a ‘relocating and reconfiguring’ of familiar cinematic elements ‘in order to tell [a girl’s] own story’ (190). For Kearney, this has the potential to undermine sexist paradigms ‘related not only to the gendered practice of looking, but also to the broader gendering of action and productivity as male-specific qualities’ (200). Because girls have frequently been framed by a focus on ‘feminine appearance’ and ‘the goal of attracting heterosexual male attention’ (215), this shift from object to subject of the gaze and active point of view has significant implications for destabilising dominant image-making and spectatorial practices. This unsettling of patriarchal visual culture carves out a space for multiple girls’ stories to be included in the field of cinematic representation, therefore providing an opportunity to expand the boundaries of girlhood on screen in its capacity of including expressions of agency, resistance and empowerment.

While surprisingly little in-depth work has been done on the significance of female point-of-view narration and point-of-view shots in teen screen media,² Brickman provides a particularly insightful starting point. In her work on voice-over narration and female adolescent point of view shots in the teen film *Badlands* (Malick 1973), she asserts that the omniscient female adolescent in teen cinema can ‘contradict the traditional use of male, authoritative voice-over in Hollywood film and speak from both diegetic and extradiegetic positions’ (27). Brickman therefore contends that the agency of ‘omniscient voice-over and controlling vision...

show[s] that female authority and authorship are possible' in the teen genre (49). When the teen girl narrator presides over the spectator's access to information, events and even other characters' interiority, these elements are made 'available to us through her agency' (35). Brickman's work provides a starting point for considering how the presentation of the teen girl's point of view gaze and authoritative voice-over functions not only as an expression of feminine agency within the text, but also as a challenge to the traditional authority of the masculine gaze and voice-over in screen media. By 'speaking back to how [girls] have been spoken into existence' (Pomerantz 2007, 383), *Red Riding Hood*'s Valerie challenges the way in which 'official' and institutionalised norms have constructed and regulated the boundaries of her adolescent girlhood.

The film establishes Valerie's point of view and gaze as authoritative from the opening shots. During the film's opening credits, Valerie's omniscient voice-over narrates the story of her journey into the forest. Her narration includes descriptions of the private thoughts and feelings of other characters, as well as events at which she was not present, confirming her point of view as omniscient, with the capacity to access privileged information. Hardwicke couples this voice-over narration with sweeping bird's-eye aerial views of the forest space, linking Valerie's voice with a sense of liberation, agency and power. Valerie is represented as in control of the narrative in her access to privileged information in her voice-over, and in the image track, which presents her point-of-view gaze as seemingly limitless in scope and powerfully mobile. The presentation of a girl's gaze challenges the visual tradition in which girls are objectified, scrutinised and denied a position of control or authority over the image, and the presentation of the girl's voice-over interjects into mainstream media's exclusion of girl's voices and stories. Therefore, the mobility of Valerie's perspective as she travels through this space represents more than just physical mobility; it represents the agency embedded in such movement and the capacity for that perspective to challenge the strictures of girlhood. Furthermore, this weaves the girl's voice into the imagery of the fairy tale landscape, mapping her story and journey into this liminal space. This provides a significant challenge to the domineering paternalistic gazes of the patriarchal authority figures who seek to control her and undermine her access to the gaze, and also challenges the authority of the disapproving, punishing male narrator that dominates the Perrault and Grimm versions of the 'Little Red Riding Hood' tale.

The focus on Valerie's perspective through her gaze and voice-over narration allows the film to challenge and revise one of the major themes of Perrault and the Grimms' tales: the paternal surveillance and coercion of the girl into a position of acquiescence and obedience. As Brickman suggests, the authoritative teen girl voice-over can provide a critique of 'the patriarchal order that keeps trying to silence her' (2007, 52). Valerie's point-of-view voice-over narration repeatedly critiques and repudiates the idealised 'good girl' discourse that she is required to take up. Valerie's identification of this discourse, and her ability to challenge and oppose it, is central to her capacity for agency. Jessica Ringrose suggests that girlhood agency lies in girls' critical awareness of (2013, 111) and capacity to 'manoeuvre [the] discourses' that seek to define, socially position, and discipline them (57). Throughout her voice-over narration, Valerie reiterates at several points (I count five) in the film her inability, or even her lack of desire to, conform to this identity of the 'good girl.' In her opening voice-over remarks at the beginning of the film, Valerie articulates her rebellion against the tale's stricture, 'don't stray from the path', stating that she could not and would not adhere to it: 'I tried to be a good girl. But I could not do it any longer.' Girlhood scholar Marnina Gonick writes that 'to be good within normative discourses of femininity usually means that a girl's desire is left unspoken or spoken only in whispers', silencing 'what has traditionally been socially and culturally forbidden to girls: anger, desire for power, and control over one's life' (2003, 64 and 65). Valerie Hey similarly writes that in order to belong and be accepted within dominant culture, girls must perform 'appropriate forms of femininity' (1997, 130). Hey asserts that feminine 'positions [are] coordinated through dominant gender narratives', creating a 'powerful coalition between dominant gender "scripts" and girls' own desire to be "normal"' (131). These idealised forms of good girl femininity include 'practicing caretaking and nurturing roles' and avoiding 'conflict and expressions of direct aggression' (Currie and Kelly 2006, 157). The removal of the male narrator's disapproving and punishing interdictions against Little Red Riding Hood straying from the path, and the addition of the heroine's authoritative perspective and voice-over which actively refutes the original message of the Perrault and Grimm warnings against female rebellion, creates a significant space in which discourses of idealised 'good girl' femininity can be contested and revised. This contestation allows Valerie to challenge the aspect of the 'good girl' discourse that forbids the expression of desire, and this opens up space for the introduction of the heroine's desiring gaze.

The second manifestation of Valerie's gaze as agency occurs in desiring point-of-view shots in the liminal forest. In the forest, beyond the restrictions of everyday culture, she finds a subjective desiring position. Kimberley McMahon-Coleman and Roslyn Weaver write that *Red Riding Hood* works to 'subvert the original message' of the Perrault and Grimm tales by celebrating Valerie's 'assertive sexuality', thereby undermining 'the original meaning of the tale and its warnings against young girls acting foolishly around men who might compromise their reputation and chastity' (2012, 60). This shift in point of view revises the dynamic between the wolf and the girl, so that the girl is no longer a simple victim of the predatory creature but instead actively engaged with it. This desiring gaze is displayed throughout the film, in shot–reverse shot sequences. In the first shot, Valerie's eyes are focused on in close-up and in the reverse shot, Peter, the 'good' wolf, is revealed as the object of her gaze. During this reverse shot, the camera, aligned with Valerie's gaze, zooms in slowly on Peter's figure. This zoom further emphasises the assertiveness and authority of Valerie's gaze, framing it as a gaze of considerable power and intensity. Valerie's desiring gaze always initiates this shot–reverse shot sequence, which is repeated throughout the film. This repeated cinematographic structure emphasises the forcefulness of the girl's desiring look, disrupting dominant ideals about feminine display for a heterosexual male gaze.

This is another point of commonality between Hardwicke's film and *The Company of Wolves*. As Marina Warner writes, Carter's text 'lifts the covers from the body of carnal knowledge usually more modestly draped in fairy tales...to conjure young girls' sexual hunger' (1995, 309). While Perrault warns young girls against seduction, providing a cautionary message in his final moral of the tale, Carter and Jordan, and in turn Hardwicke, do away with this message, instead foregrounding the girl's wayward gaze at the wolf, her object of desire. Many girlhood theorists such as Driscoll, Ringrose and Gonick have pointed out that contemporary Western culture requires the silencing of the girl's active desire and the initiation into the status of object of desire—the girl's desiring point of view and gaze are marginalised. Deborah Martin succinctly describes this structure of desire: 'the requirements of patriarchal culture for the young girl to give up active and agentic desire and accept her status as object of desire' (2013, 137). However, as with any gendered power structure, there is always the potential for a challenge, rupture and difference to be articulated. *Red Riding Hood's* shot–reverse shot sequences that allow teen girl desire to be articulated attest to this space

of difference. This challenge is significant because it contests the rigid boundaries that hold conventional gendered structures of looking in place and opening up a space for new and perhaps unexpected representations of the gaze in teen cinema.

The shot–reverse shot sequence that closes the film reveals Peter in his new wolf form. Valerie sees the wolf before her in the woods. His bright, yellow eyes and sharp teeth do not frighten her. In fact, she gazes intensely at Peter in his wolf form, and smiles with confidence and assurance. This privileging of her desire and desiring point of view through both the narrative and the shot–reverse shot sequences revises the dynamic of fear, violence and violation between girl and wolf. Instead, Hardwicke’s *Little Red Riding Hood* heroine meets the wolf in the forest of her own design, and on her own terms. This claiming of an authoritative and central point of view undermines the dominating masculine gazes embedded in Perrault and the Grimms’ literary versions of the tale, particularly those of the disapproving narrator, the brave huntsman and the predatory wolf. The heroine’s perspective is restored to a central position, allowing her to rupture the ‘good girl’ discourse imposed upon her by the paternalistic figures in the film, as well as allowing her a desiring gaze that is often denied teen girls. Such a challenge and rupture to the cinematic system presents a revaluation of a feminine adolescent perspective. By deciding to permanently map herself into the ultraliminal landscape, and articulating her oppositional and challenging point of view, Valerie creates a space in which she can redraw the map of girlhood.

CONCLUSIONS: REPRESENTING AGENCY AND RESISTANCE IN TEEN GIRL MEDIA

Red Riding Hood provides us with a fairy tale heroine who is neither in need of rescue nor reprimand. While a number of contemporary teen ‘Red Riding Hood’ screen texts conclude with the girl’s rescue or punishment, Hardwicke’s text follows in the footsteps of feminist revisions such as Carter’s ‘Company of Wolves’, allowing the heroine to determine her own fate. This allows the text to go beyond the limiting stereotypes of the helpless damsel who must be saved and the abject monster that must be destroyed. Both agency and resistance can be expressed through the teen–fairy tale hybrid text, including through formal elements such as the structure of the cinematic gaze and its visual representation of

liminal spaces and mobilities. Representations of agency and resistance in the teen genre are important, because they offer an opportunity to engage with a version of feminine adolescence that is active, agentic, rebellious and innovative. In this chapter, I have explored how the teen heroine of *Red Riding Hood* navigates the significant constraints, prescriptions and limitations placed upon feminine adolescence, looking for the moments in which she is able to enact noncompliance in the face of those limiting structures.

While the text certainly ends with the romantic coupling, which Short complains enacts a ‘de-clawing’ of the heroine (2015, 149), I suggest that this does not necessarily undermine Valerie’s earlier rebellions against the patriarchal status quo. Indeed, she independently negotiates a place for herself within the liminal space of the forest, and harnesses the power of the outsider identities of hunter, traveller and witch. While dominant iterations of the fairy tale romance often foreground the girls’ ‘dependency and helplessness’, and reliance on male characters for help and care (Haines 2014, 161), *Red Riding Hood* provides a much more complex image of desire and agency. The girl actively initiates and pursues her relationship with the wolf and negotiates it on her own terms. So while the romance is present in the text, Hardwicke eschews dominant fairy tale conventions in favour of an alternative representation of feminine adolescent appetite and desire. These revisions and additions of what has been ‘left unexploited’ (Bacchilega 1997, 50) in the tale significantly alter the gendered dynamic of the Perrault and Grimm tellings of ‘Little Red Riding Hood’, and revalue the girl’s waywardness as a positive trait.

In the first half of the film, Hardwicke presents the constraints, prescriptions and limitations of hegemonic femininity, demonstrating an acute awareness of the ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ tale’s sexist dynamics, particularly in the Perrault and Grimm tellings, that render the girl powerless, both a victim and a temptress who ‘deserves’ the punishment of the wolf’s violence and violation. The film shows how Valerie is subjected to the rule of the tyrannical patriarchs of her hometown, and it is here that she is subjected to such horrifying discipline as handcuffing, chaining and imprisonment. These punishments for her so-called transgressions prevent her access to a clear viewing position and freedom of movement, enforcing a masculine, panoptic gaze that places the girl under extreme surveillance. The film sets about exposing these violations as violent and oppressive, rather than necessary and even desirable, as the Perrault and Grimm tales would have it. Once the film exposes and

unsettles these sexist narrative and representational structures, it then actively engages in a feminist revision of them, seeing Valerie reclaim her power from the men who seek to control her. She escapes into the other-worldly space of the forest and refuses to return to conventional society.

By entering the liminal margin of the forest, Valerie is able to enact a measure of resistance to the conventional femininity she is required to take up. This resistance is expressed through her move from the oppressive realm of the Gothic domestic, a space she is being urged to occupy as wife to a stranger. I have read Valerie's permanent or 'ultraliminal' escape into the forest as a key gesture of defiance against and dissatisfaction with a culture that demands limiting ways of doing girlhood and femininity. The representation of this highly flexible and mobile geography offers a new optic through which to view girlhood. In this zone of non-compliance, Valerie constructs an alternative feminine identity by occupying the subject positions of traveller, hunter and witch, eschewing the 'good girl' identity of obedience to paternal authority.

I have argued that *Red Riding Hood's* formal elements of the girl's voice-over and the presentation of the girl's gaze are central to an exploration of feminine agency in the text. This revision occurs not only at the level of the 'Little Red Riding Hood' narrative, and the oppressive male gazes embedded in its Perrault and Grimm literary tradition; it also ruptures the cinematic codes that fix the feminine figure in the position of passive object and the privileging of the straight white male gaze and voice, making room for new iterations of girlhood on the screen. My reading of liminal space in *Red Riding Hood* as a margin where the heroine could escape from the strictures of dominant culture argued for the potential for empowerment that this escape holds for the heroine. In the next chapter, I analyse another Hardwicke film, *Twilight* (2008), turning my attention from liminal space to liminal time. I explore the feminine rite of passage in more detail, and consider whether liminality can create a rupture that allows the girl's articulations of opposition to seep into and impact the postliminal world that she reintegrates into. I am particularly interested in exploring Bella's 'Sleeping Beauty' fantasy and dream sequences as liminal moments in time that temporarily suspend and disrupt her progression towards feminine acculturation, and her induction into adult womanhood. Furthermore, I consider how these disruptions impact upon her passage into the postliminal, and how they may, to some extent, create change in Bella's return to the status quo.

NOTES

1. Campbell's writing on the 'monomyth' focused on ancient heroic myths and primarily male hero figures (though he did include a small number of female heroes in his analysis). In his analysis of these myths, he identified an archetypal journey comprised of three stages: departure, initiation and return (1949).
2. One notable exception is Michelle Byers's (2007) essay on Angela Chase's voice-over narration in the teen television series *My So-Called Life* (ABC 1994–1995). Byers is extremely sceptical about the potential for agency to emerge from an authoritative teen point of view because the essay's theorisation of voice and the gaze is rooted in a discourse of girls-at-risk and media-effects methodology. She argues that Angela is grounded in the text as a passive feminine body to-be-looked-at, which undermines any sense of resistant voice-over (16). As a result, the essay does not consider the teen figure or the teen voice beyond a place of lack, powerlessness and objectification.

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