

I AM THE MONSTER:
SELF AND THE MONSTROUS FEMININE IN CONTEMPORARY YOUNG
ADULT LITERATURE

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation surveys British, American, Australian, and New Zealand young adult texts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries featuring female protagonists who are fantastic monsters. Addressing such texts as Margaret Mahy's *The Changeover*, Justine Larbalestier's *Liar*, and Diana Wynne Jones's *The Time of the Ghost*, I examine the metaphorical use of monstrosity in literature to address the "problem" of female adolescence, specifically in relation to female physical development, sexuality, and agency. With chapters on witches, werewolves, and ghosts, I investigate the ways in which the characters' understanding of their monstrosity intersects with their emerging gender identity. I interrogate what these representations of monstrous young women reveal about social and cultural perspectives on femininity and the developing female body. As supernatural entities, monsters extend the possibilities of human experience, demonstrating physical and psychic powers that disturb the established order. Framing the female protagonist as a monster, however, indicates a fear of her potential to disturb and destroy. Thus, I argue that while the proliferation of monstrous female protagonists encourages female agency by making the monstrous powerful, familiar, and enticing, the trend simultaneously demonstrates the ways in which these seemingly subversive characters are contained within moral and social frameworks of femininity.

DEDICATION

For my parents and for Steven.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary young adult literature abounds with monsters. From the phenomenal success of the Harry Potter series to the frenzied fan following of the Twilight franchise, monsters not only appeal to teen readers but also expose and, in many cases, subvert aspects of adolescence that society characterizes as disturbing and horrific. As supernatural entities, monsters extend the possibilities of human experience, demonstrating physical and psychic powers that disrupt the established order. For the female monster, in particular, her monstrosity generally is associated with her status as a girl, her gender, sexuality, and pubertal body. This dissertation explores depictions of monstrous femininity¹ in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century young adult (YA) fantasy and horror literature to analyze their commentary on female subjectivity as well as identity and bodily development. In particular, I examine narratives involving monstrous protagonists. Framing the female protagonist as a monster indicates a fear of her potential to disturb and destroy. As witches, werewolves, and ghosts, these heroines, rather than rejecting what would be categorized as “monstrous” about themselves, in many cases explore their monstrosity and come to embrace it. Such narratives of monstrosity function as metaphors for the teen girl’s negotiation of her changing body along with her search for identity and autonomy. At an age when social acceptance becomes a challenge and a priority, the teen’s status as outcast or freak speaks to issues of self-esteem and identity. In a similar yet metaphorical vein, the monstrous aspects of

the protagonists included in this study isolate them from society at large. Embodying what the typical teen outcast may feel, these heroines are different; they are deviants who are socially and physically outside the bounds of normalcy.

The challenges they experience are not solely related to their femininity: age is another factor that leads to their feelings of being outcasts, as are race and class in a number of instances. Fantastical monstrosity in these texts represents not only the abjection that the characters experience but also the difficult and “monstrous” period of adolescence. No longer children and not yet adults, adolescents lack the cuteness and innocence of childhood and the freedom and experience of adulthood. Revolting against or undercutting authority, particularly adult authority, is one of the ways in which these monstrous figures assert their power. Part of their journey involves coming to terms with their differences—whether these be in regard to gender, age, race, or class—and accepting them as sources of their individuality and potential strength. In some cases, the heroine’s monstrosity is an element key to successfully resolving the conflicts in her community; however, in all of the works explored in depth in this project, the heroine’s negotiation of her monstrosity ultimately affects the resolution of her individual conflict. Overall, I argue that, while the proliferation of monstrous female protagonists encourages female agency by making the monstrous powerful, familiar, and enticing, the trend simultaneously reveals anxieties about female power and demonstrates the ways in which these subversive characters are contained within moral and social standards of appropriate femininity.

Historically, the monstrous feminine represents aspects of female power that are especially threatening to patriarchy, particularly the power of reproduction. In the context of teen culture, though, sexuality is not the only aspect of female adolescent identity development to which the monstrous feminine is relevant; like the reproductive capacity itself, it is tied to issues of self-esteem, bodily awareness, social relations, and more. Because of the multitudinous ways that it can be projected on the female body, the monstrous feminine is a common trope in speculative fiction, including fantasy, science fiction, and horror, the last a genre that has exploded within the teen market in the last three decades and that is the primary focus of this study. The success of the YA fantasy and horror genres, most notably Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2005-2010), speaks to the teen reader's connection with the monstrous characters, their strength as well as their vulnerability and uniqueness. Taking into consideration the evolution of the female fantasy tradition, and its influence on teen fiction in particular, the monstrous female depicted in a fantastic world offers fruitful opportunities to speculate on the possibilities of female power and the fears and anxiety that surround it. In recent years the monstrous feminine has become more prominent in female adolescent coming of age fantasies. The monstrous elements, as they are related to "feminine" attributes, underscore issues related to female sexuality, gender, agency, power, and humanity. The ways in which the female protagonists negotiate the monstrous feminine in each of their respective frameworks not only affect the development of their own identity but also reveal the social constructs that inform that development.

Focusing on the witch, the werewolf, and the ghost, this project explores primarily twentieth- and twenty-first-century fiction showing how the female adolescent protagonist negotiates her monstrosity and how this process of negotiation affects her developing identity. As a branch of the coming of age story, fantasy fiction of this type offers unique opportunities to address issues of maturation in new ways. Many of the monstrous elements identified in this project have historically been utilized to depict female power, specifically female sexuality, as dangerous and destructive. According to Judith Halberstam, “Monstrosity always unites monstrous form with monstrous meaning” (11). However, contemporary fantasy texts effectively contradict Halberstam’s assertion by reinscribing these monstrous figures with new meaning, and, in many cases, undermining their historical functions by validating female agency. For example, Vivian in Annette Curtis Klause’s novel *Blood and Chocolate* (1997) considers her ability to transform herself into a werewolf a liberating and beautiful gift rather than a violent curse. Likewise, Laura in Margaret Mahy’s *The Changeover* (1984), though at first hesitant about the prospect of being a witch, uses her power to save her little brother. In texts such as these, the heretofore monstrous figures of the werewolf and the witch are no longer antagonists to be conquered by a hero; rather, these bold young women become heroes in their own right who use their paranormal powers to effect change in their communities.

In consideration of the current research in young adult literature, my project presents an opportunity to consider the ways in which the functions of the monstrous feminine have altered in popular culture during the last thirty years. Focusing on fantasy

fiction, a genre that has been drastically influenced by feminism, this dissertation adds to a growing collection of literature on adolescent gender identity. At a crucial moment in the development of subjectivity, the ways in which gender is represented through dichotomies such as monster/angel and the female body is presented as out of control can influence the adolescent girl's understanding of herself as defined by her awareness of gender and her body.²

Each chapter in this dissertation examines a particular archetypal monstrous figure and explores through a different analytical lens the development of female protagonists and the discourses associated with their stories. I employ historical analyses and postmodern cyborg theory, as well as theories of corporeality; together, these approaches address distinct functions of the metaphorical meaning behind the individual monstrous figures. I begin with a historical analysis of the witch in literature to trace the growing trend of positioning the monster, particularly the female monster, as the protagonist and to assess how the representation of the figure coincides with feminist rhetoric from different historical moments. In exploring the werewolf in the context of Donna Haraway's cyborg theory, I address the hybrid nature of the monster and how this hybridity undermines dualistic thinking in terms of the body and gender. I also address the ways in which sexual drives often are linked to the body and are associated with animality as a repository for untamed and unsocialized behaviors. Moving from categorizing behaviors in connection with the body, I investigate mind-body dualism in relation to a figure without a body of its own—the ghost—using recent theories of corporeality. As an overarching methodology grounding this project, Kristevan

psychoanalysis appears in each of the chapters in reference to the ways abjection functions for the respective character types primarily in relation to menstruation. As both a curse and a boon for the figures in this study, abjection speaks to the psychological underpinnings of the treatment of monstrosity in relation to boundary formation, but contemporary YA fantasy and horror fiction attempts to dissolve such boundaries and binaries in favor of affinity. With this in mind, the goal of this project is to uncover the ways in which the monstrous feminine has potentially moved from abjection towards affinity.

Analyzing the metaphorical monstrous teen through a multivalent lens provides for more diverse commentary on an important period in an individual's physical and emotional development and rejects the inherent limitations in claims for a universal process of development. Each of the approaches addresses, from a particular angle, how bodies become more and more in question. In a way, they highlight the fractured self of these characters, exploring what it means to be animal, teen, female, human, and monster. Since I am claiming that different monstrous types represent different anxieties about gender and adolescence, I have selected theories and perspectives that speak directly to the aspects of these particular monstrous figures that are so disturbing. For example, the werewolf as monster is particularly grotesque for the boundaries it breaches between human and animal. By approaching this figure from the perspective of hybridity, I am able to unravel how certain behaviors are associated with animality and others with humanity, how these associations can be extrapolated to other binary

distinctions, and how the figure's blending of human and animal can potentially lead to alternative possibilities for embodiment.

Throughout the project, I explore how the manipulation of boundaries via the monstrous feminine potentially defines subjectivity for the adolescent female protagonist. In each of the texts, the female protagonist is cast in a traditionally abject role, for example the werewolf, and, as such, she must negotiate her own monstrous status. Many of the heroines in these stories do not need to be protected from the monstrous threat; they are the threat. Furthermore, some of the theoretical frameworks from which I interrogate these figures address the mind-body dualism that can limit the definition of humanity. These heroines are hybrids, human-animals, bodiless spirits; they extend our definitions of what it means to be human, and more specifically, what it means to be woman.

In each chapter, I analyze literary aspects—such as character, metaphor, symbolism, setting, and theme—that frame the monstrous feminine in popular teen literature and uncover the ways in which they tap into the teen's competing desires for individuality and acceptance. The texts discussed in this study have a wide range of national origins, as I am including books produced in the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia. This international array of primary sources demonstrates the widespread influence of monstrous tropes in teen culture.

Contrariwise, I have chosen texts that are accessible and available to an American audience, an audience and market with a pervasive worldwide influence. Most of the primary texts are from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, though I do

discuss some texts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to demonstrate how representations of monstrous women began to change following the advances of the women's movement, a claim that will be addressed in chapter two on the witch.

Ultimately, this project addresses the ways in which monstrous femininity in YA literature demonstrates society's ideas about what constitutes positive feminine behavior and what the trope suggests about the development and potential of teen identity.

Monstrosity, Abjection, and Femininity

Though I focus on fantastical monsters, my project is grounded on the claim that monstrosity as it relates to femininity is a cultural construct. According to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's monster theory, "The monster is born [. . .] as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place" (4). Similarly, Halberstam writes, "Monstrosity (and the fear it gives rise to) is historically conditional rather than a psychological universal" (6). As Cohen and Halberstam suggest, that which is monstrous is not ahistorical; rather, it is determined by socio-cultural movements. In this dissertation, I examine ways in which culture has reciprocally influenced and been influenced by depictions of teen monstrosity as it has been linked to gender within the last thirty years. One of the most significant changes to the representations of monsters is the shift from stories portraying noble heroes conquering monstrous antagonists to tales of monstrous protagonists pursuing their own personal battles, in other words, a shift from a monstrous Other to a monstrous I. This shift reflects a wider reclaiming of the dark and horrific as a powerful creative outlet for the personal experience.

Furthermore, within the literature, this shift allows readers to identify and sympathize with the main character, making the abjection of monstrosity a more complicated task. These texts explore the process by which the protagonists either embrace their monstrosity or attempt to reject it in order to construct and defend a coherent sense of self.

The monsters included in this study break down boundaries between body and mind, natural and supernatural, human and animal, and male and female. Within the texts, monstrosity is associated with abnormal or deviant behavior and/or bodies; however, the depictions of monstrosity undermine accepted social conventions surrounding the female experience by presenting alternatives to normative femininity. The ambiguity of the characters, which is associated with their classification as monsters, initially positions them on the fringes of society. Elizabeth Grosz's definition of freaks functions as a useful definition of monstrosity in terms of ambiguity:

the freak is an object of simultaneous horror and fascination because, in addition to whatever infirmities and abilities he or she exhibits, he or she is an *ambiguous being*, a being whose existence imperils categories and oppositions dominant in social life. Freaks are those human beings who exist outside the structure of binary oppositions which govern our basic concepts and modes of self-definition. They occupied the impossible middle ground between binary pairs. [. . .] They imperil the very definitions we rely on to classify humans, identities, sexes – our most fundamental categories of self-definition. (“Freaks” 25)

As freaks, the monstrous protagonists occupy such middle ground, which enables them to explore alternative possibilities for female experience. For example, they can be powerful, violent, influential, invisible, and sexual. In other words, categories and limitations on what it means to be human, specifically to be a young woman, potentially collapse.

In her groundbreaking essay *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva explains that “there looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated” (1). The abject embodies a place “where meaning collapses” (2). According to Kristeva, experiencing the abject and understanding the distinction between the subject and the object is crucial for identity development. In relation to the teen reader, this distinction is fascinating and potentially constructive. Writing specifically on adolescent identity, Kristeva considers that “[l]ike a child, the adolescent is one of those mythic figures that the imaginary, and of course, the theoretical imaginary, gives us in order to distance us from certain of our faults – cleavages, denials, or simply desires? – by reifying them in the form of someone who has not yet grown up” (“Adolescent” 8). Therefore, adolescence, as Kristeva suggests, is a liminal position, situated between childhood and adulthood. By assigning certain faults to this period of development to distinguish it from adulthood, adolescence can subsequently be defined as abject, and within the literature of the last few decades, this abjection is metaphorically represented in fantasy literature through the monster.

As would be expected, scholars have addressed the abject in young adult literature in a variety of ways. For instance, Annette Wannamaker's *Boys in Children's Literature and Popular Culture: Masculinity, Abjection, and the Fictional Child* examines how imagery of the abject in literature and film for children (de)constructs masculinity. She analyzes popular texts that tend to include "exaggerated versions of masculinity," which present opportunities "to make dominant masculinity most visible as a social construct" (24). Wannamaker ultimately argues that "[h]ighlighting the ways abjection functions in narratives for and about boys is one way to mark those spaces where borders are formed, a way to make visible the gaps, contradictions, and paradoxes that work to smooth over the unanswered questions and anxieties about shifting gender roles that trouble both child and adult reader" (150). The abject, therefore, functions to highlight proper masculinity through comparison with an often grotesque other, which, as Wannamaker claims, demonstrates that the rigid boundaries of gender are vulnerable and unstable. While Wannamaker's analysis is insightful in terms of delineating the dominant gender (masculinity) in comparison to an abject other, a study of femininity would involve confronting the fact that the feminine is often framed as the abject, as the other. My dissertation, therefore, explores the other side of the equation to that examined by Wannamaker, focusing on the (de)construction of femininity and its connection to monstrosity to underscore the ways in which gender is defined in relation to images of the monstrous other and how more recent texts have utilized the abject to reinscribe the feminine with agency and power.

Leading the way in explorations of the female monster and the abject body, Barbara Creed, building on Kristeva's discussion of the abject in literature, introduces the term "monstrous feminine" as an idea present in all human societies "of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject" (1). Her research addresses the visual representation of the woman as monster in horror films, such as *Alien*, *Carrie*, and *The Exorcist*. Creed claims that the female monster "is defined by her sexuality. The phrase 'monstrous-feminine' emphasizes the importance of gender in the construction of her monstrosity" (3). Much of Creed's analysis associates the monstrous images of women with man's ambivalence toward maternal figures. Ultimately, she argues that female monsters

provide us with a means of understanding the dark side of the patriarchal unconscious, particularly the deep-seated attitude of extreme ambivalence to the mother who nurtures but who, through a series of physical and psychic castrations associated with her body and the processes of infant socialization, also helps to bring about the most painful of all separations, necessary for the child's entry into the symbolic order. (166)

Inherent in Creed's study is a focus on woman as dangerous and grotesque, thus revealing man's anxiety about female power. By the end of the twentieth century, however, representations of monstrous girls in teen literature began to shift. While terrifying models of feminine monstrosity remain, alternative treatments of this trope reconfigure the female monster as a hero rather than as an object that the male hero must conquer.

Creed's study explores in detail the primal mother, demon possession, the vampire, and the witch, but she only offhandedly mentions the werewolf in connection with the vampire. I suggest that the werewolf, which is a figure of study in this dissertation, be explored as a subject different from the vampire. To be sure, both monsters trigger fears of consumption and evoke images of menstruation. The werewolf, however, is "monstrous" not only for its unstable body, but also for its associations with masculinity and the wild savagery of the animal kingdom, whereas the vampire is associated with femininity, homoeroticism, and the deathly corpse. Considering the female werewolf as distinct from the female vampire proposes both that the gendered connotations of these characters inform their monstrosity and that their respective statuses as animal and corpse speak to hierarchical valences of human and animal forms.

In relation to abjection and the female body, Jane M. Ussher's *Managing the Monstrous Feminine: Regulating the Reproductive Body* addresses the question: "Why is the fecund body positioned as site of danger and disease, and as a consequence, woman positioned as monstrous feminine?" (6). She responds by articulating that the female body is not necessarily abject, but rather has "been positioned as such" because women's fecundity is perceived as dangerous (7). This fear of female fecundity is "at the heart of the splitting of woman into Madonna or whore, monster or angel" (7). These dichotomies, especially that of the monster/angel, are crucial when addressing female identity, for the figures of the whore and the monster clearly constitute what women should *not* be. My project, therefore, is concerned with the ways in which the adolescent

girl is marked as abject, whether this is marked on a monstrous body or as an outlying subject position. For example, in John Fawcett's horror film *Ginger Snaps* (2000), Ginger's gruesome transformation into a werewolf marks her newfound power and sexuality as dangerous. Ginger may enjoy her new strength and confidence, but she is horrified to discover that along with this power come extra tufts of hair and an inconvenient tail. The changes in her identity are simultaneously marked on her body.

For adolescent readers, horror literature not only allows them to vicariously experience their deepest wishes and fears but also provides an opportunity for catharsis. Just as young Max purges his fears and frustrations by cavorting with monsters in *Where the Wild Things Are*, the maturing adolescent reader can work through the anxieties and frustrations that surface during this transitional period of development. To elaborate, Kimberley Reynolds explains,

As has long been recognized, the image of monsters, aliens, or other kinds of supernaturally powerful beings who take over the body of an ordinary person (a frequent motif in conventional horror and one which is used regularly in contemporary forms of frightening fiction) provides the perfect metaphor for this stage in a young person's development.

Through it 'the beast' many teenagers suspect they harbor within themselves can be externalized, encountered and finally overcome. (6)

In the texts to which Reynolds refers, the monster is generally positioned as other, as the source of tension and threat that must be conquered. Yet when the monster is positioned as the protagonist, this equation is complicated, for the reader is led to identify and

sympathize with the hero. In these cases, destroying the monstrous would require destroying the self. By depicting the adolescent protagonist's journey to selfhood, a journey which includes either an acceptance or rejection of her inherent monstrosity, recent writers of horror fiction for teens have explored the monstrosity in us all.

When positioning the monster as a protagonist, writers often attempt to establish some elements of humanity in the character to secure the reader's sympathy and interest. Most of the characters in the representative texts addressed in this dissertation are to some degree sympathetic. Those who are not tend to be the more unapologetically violent or dishonest characters, such as Kelsey in Suzy McKee Charnas's "Boobs" (1989), who enjoys eating small dogs and her high school bully, and Micah in Justine Larbalestier's *Liar* (2009), who lies to other characters within the novel as well as to the reader. When Bella Swan finally becomes a vampire in the fourth book of the Twilight series, *Breaking Dawn*, her humanity has been established in the preceding books, and even her experience as a "monster" is atypical in Meyer's vampire world because, as a newborn vampire, she strangely is not consumed by blind thirst for blood. In fact, it is difficult to see her as a monster even though she and the other vampires refer to themselves as such. However, in writing the novella *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner*, set during the events that take place during the third Twilight novel, *Eclipse*, Meyer explores the perspective of the newborn vampire, the most monstrous and dangerous of the species. As an illustration of the way an author makes the monstrous relatable and sympathetic, we might contemplate Meyer's novella. Of writing from the perspective of the monster, Meyer says,

Writing Bree was the first time I'd stepped into the shoes of a narrator who was a 'real' vampire—a hunter, a monster. I got to look through her red eyes at us humans; suddenly we were pathetic and weak, easy prey, of no importance whatsoever except as a tasty snack. I felt what it was like to be alone while surrounded by enemies, always on guard, never sure of anything except that her life was always in danger. (“Introduction,” *Short*)

The vampire's perspective on humans is key to Meyer's concept of the monster. There is no affinity here between Bree and her human prey; Bree sees humans as “stupid,” “oblivious,” and “clueless” (13). She is the youngest in her group, in terms of the age when she was changed into a vampire, which makes her seem small and vulnerable, but at first in the novella, she revels in the potential of her new power: “I was a god now. Stronger, faster, *better*” (emphasis in original 8). She is depicted feeding on a human at the beginning of the novella. Furthermore, she does not like to think about or discuss “human stuff”—what her life was like as a human—and, evidently, she is not alone: “Nobody talked about that. Nobody wanted to think about it” (28). Now that she sees humans as food, she disassociates her new identity as a vampire from her former identity as a human.

Significantly, however, even Bree seems to be unique among the newborn vampires in her group, as she wants “to hold on to the ability to think” during a feeding frenzy. Her two kills and the way she views her human prey as merely food are horrific, but as the novella progresses, Meyer develops Bree's personality and shows her

establishing friendships and sharing affection with another newborn, Diego, as she tries to survive in her violent new world. She is a pitiable character whose inevitable death at the end of the tale is tragic, as she tried to make peace with the Cullen family, whom she was created to destroy. Her life as a girl and as a vampire is seamless in the sense that both parts have been filled with pain. Anne Morey explains, “Abused by her father, Bree is a runaway vampirized by Victoria for her attack on Bella and the Cullens in *Eclipse*; Bree thus sees the world both before and after her change as one in which pain is omnipresent” (24). Her pain as a vampire—having her arm ripped off and reattached, her insatiable thirst, her fear—is horrific, yet her burgeoning romance with and loyalty to Diego, as well as her will to live at the end of the book, makes her a sympathetic character and even humanizes her, though by the very definition laid out by Meyer, Bree is not human, she is a vampire and a monster. Towards the end of the novella, Bree’s coven kills everyone on a ferry, and Bree participates. While Bree is not sure how many people she killed, Meyer does not provide any details about Bree’s feeding in this moment (119). Doing so might risk losing the reader’s connection with Bree. She is defined as a monster at the beginning of the story, but she becomes a person as the story progresses.

In *Eclipse*, Bree functions as a foil for Bella. When Bella sees Bree, she wonders if she will be like her when she changes into a vampire: “I stared at her, mesmerized, wondering if I were looking into a mirror of my future” (571). Bree represents the possible horror that awaits Bella, specifically the horrific pain of thirsting for human blood. In *Eclipse*, which follows the perspective of Bella, who at that point is a human

protagonist, Bree is a pitiable and frightening monster; however, in *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner*, Bree is a multi-dimensional character who tells her own story. She may have a monstrous body, one that cripples her ability to think when it pushes her to feed, but her body is also powerful, allowing her to explore the world in new ways. In exploring the perspective of the monster, Meyer inescapably humanizes her, as the reader is drawn into Bree's burning thirst, her fear of pain and death, her affection for Diego, and her friendship with Fred. The reader experiences with Bree what it is like to feel powerful and powerless, to resist "malignant authority" (Morey 24), to make a friend, and to fall in love. The Cullens agree to spare her life if she can control her thirst for human blood, the most monstrous part of herself. If she can follow their rules for appropriate behavior she can live, but the Volturi kill her before she has a chance to join the Cullens. Bree is independently minded, but to have a chance to survive, she must conform to a particular community's standards of behavior. For readers of *Eclipse*, Bree is an abject other, but when reading the novella, readers become more intimately aware of the dimensions of her character and perhaps even feel some affinity with her. Texts with monstrous protagonists not only invite readers to empathize and identify with the character, even aspects of the character that are monstrous, but also call into question the parameters that define one as being either human or monster.

Outline of Chapters

In exploring the boundaries between monstrosity and humanity, I have divided the dissertation into chapters focusing on a specific monstrous figure. Chapter two

involves a historical analysis of the archetypal witch to demonstrate the change in fictional representations of the monstrous heroine in the wake of the 1970s feminist movement. It also begins my discussion of the monster's shift from Other to I. Incorporating George MacDonald's "The Day Boy and the Night Girl" (1879) and *The Wise Woman: A Parable* (1875), L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), Stephen King's *Carrie* (1974), and Mahy's *The Changeover* as my primary texts, I trace the transition of the witch from the feared, demonized figure of earlier fairy tales and horror stories into the modern feminist representation of a strong, supernatural heroine. The contemporary witch, though less horrific than her fairy tale predecessors, is threatening because of her supernatural power, but she also has become a noble heroine. This chapter also explores what these "reclaimed" versions of the witch suggest about socially appropriate female power. More often than not, modern "good" witches use their power for the common good, for their communities or families, rather than for their own personal gain. This endorsement of proper modes for using power potentially indicates gendered dimensions of behavioral control.

I begin my analysis of the witch with literary fairy tales by MacDonald and Baum and reference their connections to prominent figures in the late nineteenth-century women's movement. The witches in the three stories are adult women, but I have included them to show how the changing perspectives on women during the time period influenced the characterization of witches and powerful women in literature for children. In the second half of the chapter, I examine two novels, *Carrie* and *The Changeover*, written during the 1970s and 1980s, two decades of heightened feminist activity. In both

novels, the witch is the protagonist who is an adolescent experiencing burgeoning sexuality and a changing body while developing “magical” powers. Sexuality and maternity have been associated with the witch in fairy tales of old and even in legends of Lilith, the apocryphal first wife of Adam. In contemporary efforts to recuperate the witch in teen literature, when the witch is the protagonist, her powers develop during the onset of puberty, and I suggest that in such texts destructive maternity is contained to promote responsible female behavior.

The werewolves of chapter three blur the line between human and animal. Addressing Haraway’s cyborg theory, which points us toward an examination of the boundary between human and animal and what this boundary suggests about how the animal functions in defining a nonhuman other, this section of the dissertation explores the social and physical dimensions of the human-animal presented in relation to sexuality and the monstrous female body in Charnas’s “Boobs,” Klause’s *Blood and Chocolate*, and Larbalestier’s *Liar*. The characters in these novels straddle the divide between human and animal and comment on the socializing structures that diminish and tame the animality of the human. Furthermore, these three characters have unstable bodies. Their bodily transformations, which are often uncontrolled and spontaneous, literally break down their human forms. Kelsey, from “Boobs,” Vivian, from *Blood and Chocolate*, and Micah, from *Liar*, move between physical states and social communities. They struggle to blend in with the human population, while coming to terms with their status as hybrids, for Micah a status that parallels her biracial heritage. Part of their development encompasses finding a common ground between their animal and human

natures and finding their place within society. By examining what might be considered “animalistic” tendencies, specifically sexual desire, I interrogate how these characters challenge not only human gender, but also dualistic thinking which associates sex with the body and the body with the animal. This chapter investigates how the particular states of the characters’ bodies influence their sense of self, how these different physical states inform their gender identity, and what their physical transformations imply about definitions of humanity and community.

Drawing on Haraway’s cyborg theory and Ussher’s work on the monstrous-feminine body, this chapter focuses on the ways in which social disorder ensues from the emergence of deviant femininity and destructive sexuality expressed through the werewolf’s hybridity. In the texts, being a werewolf entails exploring differing identities and confronting issues of gender, menstruation, sexuality, body, race, family, and community. An important focus of the chapter is the conflation of the curse of lycanthropy with the curse of menstruation. The association of monstrosity with menstruation is made explicit in such texts and, for some of the characters, transforming into a werewolf becomes an alternative metaphor for experiencing menses. In this chapter, I propose that the literary teen female werewolf’s hybridity disturbs human-animal, human-monster, and masculine-feminine dualisms, but the texts featuring this monster either attempt to diffuse the tensions inherent in the character’s hybridity through the socializing practices that define socially appropriate female behavior or leave the character a dangerous outcast.

With no bodies of their own, the ghosts of chapter four continue the discussion about body initiated in chapter three, progressing into the dualistic mind-body debate. Addressing recent theories of corporeality by Elizabeth Grosz and Moira Gatens, whose work examines the corporeal experience of women and the lived experience of the body, as well as Judith Butler's work on materiality and performance, this chapter further examines issues of self in relation to body. For the ghostly characters discussed in this section, namely Diana Wynne Jones's *The Time of the Ghost* (1981), Laura Whitcomb's *A Certain Slant of Light* (2005), and Tonya Hurley's *ghostgirl* (2008), the self they know is ripped from the physical body, and while some are frustrated by the impotence of disembodiment, others try to understand *who* they were in the context of *what* they are *not* in their current state. They may have been average teen girls, but now they are formless, bodiless spirits, no longer alive but still conscious. Trapped in a suspended state of girlhood, they will never reach full maturity. As such, they experience a continued abjection in relation to age. At some point in most of these texts, the ghostly heroines reincorporate their formless spirits into other people's bodies, thereby physically possessing them. Such a transition prompts the following question: if the bodies they possess are not their own, how do the ghosts construct a coherent identity? It would seem that their disembodiment metaphorically suggests a fractured sense of self. They question who they were and who they can/will become, struggling to define and understand their identity in the absence of their body. Furthermore, because of their lack of corporeal shells, these characters struggle with resolving conflict and managing their desire to be seen, to have bodies that matter. This chapter addresses the ways in

which body, or lack thereof, as represented in literature, interacts with the mind to create a sense of identity. I posit that the representation of the female ghost expresses anxiety about female physical development and participation in society and demonstrates the frustrations of young women who desire recognition and agency.

The aspects of the monstrous feminine in the texts examined in this dissertation specifically explore the negotiation of monstrosity by female protagonists. Focusing on the development of identity through different theoretical frameworks allows for debate about the perspectives on the monstrous female body and discourses that inform and shape such perspectives. The heroines in these novels all do not respond to their monstrosity in the same way, nor are they monstrous in the same way. Some have hairy, shifting bodies that speak to anxieties about resistance to the socializing aspects of growing up. Some have invisible bodies; they enjoy anonymity but eventually desire to be seen. Some embrace their monstrosity, while others reluctantly resign themselves to it. Their fluid, leaky, and unstable bodies resist control and containment, thus making them seem monstrous to those who uphold the rigid boundaries of gender difference by classifying the feminine as other and abject. Overall, though, the heroine's monstrosity comments on the aspects of the feminine that fascinate and threaten, illuminating the power and potential that can disturb our notions of femininity and, ultimately, humanity. By positioning the monster as the protagonist of the story, recent fantasy fiction has encouraged an affinity with the monstrous rather than relegating it to the abject other. In doing so, such texts encourage readers to question how we define difference.

Notes

1. I am using Barbara Creed's concept of the "monstrous-feminine"—referring to that which is frightening, horrific, or abject about woman—to address various forms of monstrous femininity portrayed in YA literature. Creed uses the term in her book *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993) in reference to the horror film.

2. June Pulliam, in her dissertation on female monsters in YA horror, also examines the ghost, the werewolf, and the witch in terms of monstrosity and femininity. And though our projects cover two of the same texts—*A Certain Slant of Light* and *Blood and Chocolate*—we take different theoretical approaches to the three monstrous figures.² Our projects indicate a continued and growing interest in the power of the monstrous female protagonist. Pulliam's study of the ghost is focused on the girl who is haunted, rather than the ghost who haunts, which is the focus on my fourth chapter, and addresses such issues as discipline, repression, and Freud's concept of the uncanny, whereas my study examines the ghost in relation to corporeality. Though we both address hybridity in relation to the werewolf, Pulliam connects the figure to issues of beauty, anger, and sexual pleasure, and I approach the figure from the perspective of the cyborg via Haraway's cyborg theory as well as discourses surrounding menstruation. Our studies of the witch also are notably different. Where Pulliam is interested in girlfighting and constructivism in relation to the witch, I pursue a historical analysis of the literary figure in relation to the women's movement.

CHAPTER II
MAGICAL BODIES:
THE TEEN WITCH, MATERNITY, AND SEXUALITY

In the 1939 film adaptation of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, asks Dorothy in one of the film's most memorable lines, "Are you a good witch or a bad witch?" Of course our young heroine appropriately replies, "I'm not a witch at all. Witches are old and ugly." Dorothy's response reflects the stereotypical perspective of the witch as the crone, the old woman of the European fairy tale tradition whose forbidden knowledge and association with the occult made her a figure of terror and a repository for evil. While the film adaptation of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* presents a good, beautiful witch, it simultaneously removes the benevolent crone depicted in Baum's story, conflating the nameless Good Witch of the North with Glinda, the Good Witch of the South. Glinda, in the film, evokes Hollywood glamour with her red-tinted hair and sparkling ball gown as she wafts through Munchkinland like a pink cloud, when not travelling through the Land of Oz in her large iridescent bubble. In the novel, however, it is the Good Witch of the North, a sweet, wrinkled little old woman with white hair and a stiff walk, who first greets Dorothy, honoring her with the respect of a fellow witch: "You are welcome, most noble Sorceress, to the land of the Munchkins" (36). Dorothy, "an innocent, harmless little girl" (36), may not consider herself a witch, but her adventures in the Land of Oz present a daring revision to the history of the witch in fairy tales.

In his attempt to create an American fairy tale, Baum fashioned a world in which women—good, evil, mysterious, and humorous—are powerful. Michael Patrick Hearn contends that “*The Wizard of Oz* is almost universally acknowledged to be the earliest truly feminist American children’s book, because of spunky and tenacious Dorothy” (Baum 13). While Hearn’s claim is debatable, I would add that Baum’s acknowledgement of the potential for good witches, young and old, is indicative of social and political debates taking place during the early phase of the women’s movement and informed by his suffragist mother-in-law Matilda Joslyn Gage’s radical stance on recuperating the historical witch. Baum’s witches may be confined to a dualistic categorization of good or evil, but they demonstrate an important step in representing the possibilities of female power in children’s literature, for these women are not identified as “good fairies,” “godmothers,” or “wise women.” By assigning the title of “witch” to these “good” characters, Baum undermines the category by suggesting that neither the woman nor her power is inherently evil. “Witch” remains a gendered term, but its signification of feminine evil is reconstituted in Baum’s story as an indicator of feminine magical power and agency.

The ubiquitous literary witch is a disturbing figure, one who disrupts order and whose voice has power. From the Grimm Brothers’ wicked crones to Baum’s ladies of the North, South, East, and West, the literary witch has continued to evolve and transform in children’s and adolescent literature throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This chapter will explore the literary development and deployment of the witch in children’s and young adult literature, tracing the ways in which the

powerful “good” witch surfaces at moments of heightened feminism from the late nineteenth century forward, leading up to the many late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century teen literary witches. While the witch remains a fearful figure in the sense of her power’s potential for destruction, in contemporary teen fantasy she is also a noble, curious heroine, most popularly embodied in the character of Hermione from the Harry Potter series. With Lilith and Circe as her literary grandmothers, the contemporary teen witch exhibits the potential for seemingly unlimited power, creativity, and wisdom; however, with this validation of female potential come lessons in control and responsibility, for “good” witches must use their powers responsibly, for the betterment of all. This chapter will also interrogate what these recuperated versions of the witch suggest about female power, in particular, socially appropriate female power as it relates to maternity and sexuality. From the horrific destruction perpetrated by Carrie White—not necessarily a “good” witch, but perhaps an innocent witch—to the protective magic of a New Zealand schoolgirl, the teen witch of the late twentieth century demonstrates a fear of and hope for the productive capacity of the female body. Carrie White, from Stephen King’s 1974 novel *Carrie*, and Laura Chant, from Margaret Mahy’s 1984 novel *The Changeover*, are on the brink of womanhood, and their development of magical powers coincides with the development of their bodies, thus aligning power and danger with their emerging reproductive potential. I argue that the framing of the literary adolescent witch demonstrates a move to contain destructive maternity at the point at which reproductive and maternal processes begin to emerge, namely the period of adolescence, thereby promoting a trajectory for responsible female behavior.

In texts featuring young witches, there is an effort to control the uncontrollable—the female body. Despite, or perhaps because of, their magical power, the witches are often selfless and self-sacrificing. The endorsement of proper uses of power indicates gendered dimensions of behavioral control. Novels about teen witches offer “fantasies of empowerment,”¹ yet the witch’s power is contained by directing it towards preserving and protecting her community. She (or sometimes he) can be gifted with magical powers, but these must be channeled in a productive or protective, rather than destructive, manner. Despite the emphasis on control that undergirds such narratives, through her power the witch becomes an agent of change, and the rise in popularity of the teen witch as protagonist and hero suggests that her presence in contemporary young adult fiction is an appeal to the “girl power” rhetoric of the mid- to late-1990s and early 2000s, with her magical power metaphorically representing the ability in all young women to be agents of change in their communities as well.²

In order to address the mass appeal of the witch in literature for young people, this chapter will focus primarily on popular British, American, and New Zealand texts published during moments of heightened feminism in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. To explore the political context of the moment in which each work of fiction was written, I pair particular fantasy writers with specific feminists, particularly those who address the figure of the witch. The feminists I discuss are not meant to represent the feminist movement as a whole; rather I attempt to address the ways in which fantasy fiction for children and young adults reflects some of the feminist rhetoric being produced during the same time period. The aim of this study is to analyze

the ways in which the witch was deployed as figure of influence and power during times when women's rights were being actively and vociferously pursued, namely the historical first and second waves of the women's movement. The first section of this chapter investigates the figure of the adult witch in relation to sexuality and maternity in George MacDonald's "The Day Boy and the Night Girl," published in 1879, and *The Wise Woman: A Parable*, published in 1875, and L. Frank Baum's 1900 novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Both writers were tangentially connected to the women's suffrage movements in England and the United States, and their writing demonstrates a reconsideration of the witch archetype through their presentations of witches as instructive, nurturing, and beautiful. While their stories do not focus on adolescent witches per se, they are nonetheless important to the study of the recuperation of the witch in literature for young people as their literary fairy tales influenced the fantasy tradition in the twentieth century and the representation of the witch therein.

The second section of the chapter examines the rhetoric of innocence and fear in King's first horror novel, *Carrie*. As I will discuss below, King has commented that *Carrie*, a canonical horror story, speaks to male anxieties about the fervor of the women's rights movement during the late 1960s and early 1970s, with Carrie demonstrating the devastating possibilities of female power (*Danse Macabre* 170). Of interest to this study are the ways in which Carrie, the protagonist, and her mother reflect paranoia and fear of the uncontrollable female body. Carrie's innocence mitigates the destruction she unleashes on the community that has been complicit in her abuse. The third section explores the adolescent girl as protective witch and pseudo-mother in New

Zealand writer Mahy's young adult novel *The Changeover*. The novel was widely read in Australia, New Zealand, Britain, and the United States, and won the coveted Carnegie Medal.³ The novel reflects the growing concern with adolescent female development, emerging in the 1970s and 1980s. Laura Chant's transition from fourteen-year-old schoolgirl to powerful witch coincides with her sexual and maternal explorations as a young woman. In the conclusion to this chapter, I look ahead to the treatment of the witch in terms of the girl power movement and feminist spirituality in the 1990s and 2000s. In all of the texts discussed in this chapter, the witch, whether an adult woman or an adolescent girl, is associated with maternal practices and sexual processes.

Witches Want Their Say: MacDonald, Baum, and the Suffragists

The contemporary teen witch may often be fundamental to the protection of her community, but the fairy tale witch of old is represented as a dangerous outsider and is a figure of terror. She is the cannibalistic crone who ensnares Hansel and Gretel, she is Snow White's jealous stepmother, she is Rapunzel's jailer, she is the godless Frau Trude, and she is the terrifying Baba Yaga. In nearly all cases, she is an adult woman, with her knowledge of witchcraft an indicator of age and secret wisdom. In fairy tales, myths, and legends throughout Europe, the witch is a figure of fear. As the antithesis of maternity, she consumes children and persecutes young women. Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim has noted that the figure of "the devouring witch," as identified by Rudolf Ekstein and Judith Wallerstein in 1956, is the destructive mother, "a creation of the child's imagination" that is based in reality, representing "the destructive intents of the

mothering person” (*Empty Fortress* 71). In his psychoanalytic interpretations of fairy tales, Bettelheim explains that the witch represents the cruel, punishing mother split off from the good, dead mother or good fairy: “the good qualities of Mother are as exaggerated as the bad ones were in the witch. But this is how the young child experiences the world: either as entirely blissful or as an unmitigated hell” (*Uses* 69). For the child reader of fairy tales, therefore, the witch, as Bettelheim would claim, represents the dark side of the mother.

In a genre that relies on binaries, the fairy tale witch’s evil and ugliness are used to highlight the female protagonist’s goodness and beauty. Furthermore, the wicked women of many fairy tales are powerful and active, while the female victims tend to be weak and passive. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, the fairy tale witch began to evolve from wicked to wise woman and to protector rather than consumer of children. During a historical moment when women were beginning to denounce the rigid binaries within their own societies, the witch, a former gatekeeper for such division, began to collapse these distinctions. And in this revision to the character, the debates surrounding adult femininity and womanhood were projected onto the literature for children. The witches in these stories engage notions about mature womanhood rather than girlhood, but they establish a reconsideration of the figure that would continue to evolve over the next century alongside the issues addressed by the subsequent women’s movements.

MacDonald’s literary fairy tales demonstrate such changes to the figure of the witch through his presentation of wise protectors and mentors, such as Grandmother

Irene in the *Princess and Curdie* books, as well as powerful witches, such as Watho, the witch in “The Day Boy and Night Girl.” Although seemingly consistent with the archetype of the evil fairy tale witch, MacDonald’s depiction of Watho complicates such conventions by explaining that she is not inherently wicked. Watho is “a witch who desired to know everything” (“Day” 177). While she is not “naturally cruel,” her desire for knowledge is described as “a wolf in her mind,” and it is this wolf that “made her cruel” (177). To be sure, Watho is a frightening and powerful figure, whose compulsion to know everything overrides all compassion, turning her into a monster.⁴ And yet, MacDonald’s reference to the wolf inside her separates Watho the witch from Watho the wolf, a distinction that potentially mitigates her evil. According to the story, she is “ill,” and cruelty is part of her sickness (198). Edith Honig argues for the implicit maternal desires that ground Watho’s experiment: “If she did not have maternal longings, her experiment would never have taken the form of raising children. She nurtures them carefully and comes to love them” (115). Despite Honig’s contention that Watho at some point loves the children, “mothering” Nycteris and Photogen, her kidnapped wards, is merely training, not nurturing. They are components in an experiment, and their childhoods are spent in environments completely controlled by Watho.

And yet her “training” at times echoes aspects of mothering. For instance, in her effort to establish strict parameters for her experiment, Watho takes a hands-on approach to raising the two children:

And now the witch’s care was that the child should not know darkness. [. . .] In the hottest of every day, she stripped him and laid him in it, that he

might ripen like a peach; and the boy rejoiced in it, and would resist being dressed again. She brought all her knowledge to bear on making his muscles strong and elastic and swiftly responsive – that his soul, she said laughingly, might sit in every fibre, be all in every part, and awake the moment of call. (179)

While Watho trains the girl-child, Nycteris, in much the same way she trains and monitors Photogen's development, she also teaches the girl music, which is a skill that keeps her company in the darkness that surrounds her in the womb-like cave that is her prison. Objectivity, a crucial aspect of any experiment, becomes difficult for Watho because "In the hearts of witches, love and hate lie close together, and often tumble over each other" (199). The language of the quotation implies that Watho could, perhaps even does, love the children, but her anger inevitably stimulates her hatred. It would seem that tender emotions do not factor into Watho's study. In fact, she is angry when Photogen becomes ill for she believes that she has given him enough food and care to keep him healthy. She views his illness as *her* failure, but this failure is not a mother's failure; rather, it is the failure of a scientist. Her absence of maternal emotions is highlighted when she uses her telescope to watch the death of Nycteris. Her telescope symbolizes the myopia of her experiment and the way in which she distances herself even more from her children, as well as from her own humanity. In focusing so much on the science rather than on the human element of her wards' childhoods, and on eagerly planning their deaths, Watho destroys herself and betrays the opportunity to be a maternal mentor.

Alluring and beautiful, Watho is described as “tall and graceful, with a white skin, red hair, and black eyes, which had a red fire in them” (177), yet underneath her elegant exterior lies the chaos of a wild beast. In a sensual and supernatural act, Watho transforms herself into a wolf to mete out justice on Nycteris and Photogen for their disobedience: “She anointed herself from top to toe with a certain ointment; shook down her long red hair, and tied it around her waist; then began to dance, whirling around and around faster and faster, growing angrier and angrier, until she was foaming at the mouth with fury” (205). Described in terms of a sexual frenzy, Watho’s anger overtakes her humanity and turns her into a raving monster. She becomes the consuming werewolf, a literary figure whose appetite is often sexually symbolic and who will be discussed in more detail in chapter three of this dissertation. Sexuality, in this instance, overshadows maternity, with the desire to consume and destroy obliterating the desire to nurture and protect. Watho’s wolf—her illness—devours any semblance of humanity and maternity. Honig explains that “Watho seems to prefigure the many positive magical women that MacDonald creates in that she is a figure of magical power, a wise figure, a beauty, and a woman who is associated with the nurturing of children” (115).⁵ As Honig suggests, the positive possibilities of female power are the subject of several of MacDonald’s fairy tales.

Whereas Watho is a beautiful, intelligent caregiver, though one infected with evil, the wise woman in MacDonald’s *The Wise Woman: A Parable* is a mysterious figure who attempts to rehabilitate spoiled and angry Rosamond into a kind and thoughtful young lady. Characters in the text refer to her as an old witch and a hag, but

MacDonald's narrator dismisses such labels: "In some countries she would have been called a witch, but that would have been a mistake, for she never did anything wicked, and had more power than any witch could have" (12-13). She is a powerful and stern character, but her intentions and efforts are directed towards reforming the sinful nature of the young woman, and as the narrator suggests, she is more powerful than Watho. As a sometimes seemingly cruel spiritual healer, the wise woman blends aspects of the witch and the goddess; in Maria Nikolajeva's phrase, she is like the wise Grandmother Irene from *The Princess and the Goblin*, a "monster who is at the same time the mentor" ("Voice" 98). Rosamond in a fit of rage calls the wise woman "an ugly old witch, and an ogress" (56). The wise woman, therefore, demonstrates a collapsing of the binary construction of witch/goddess that regulates female behavior.

It would seem that emotions color the way the wise woman is viewed because later in the story, after Rosamond has begun to repent her wicked ways, she momentarily sees the wise woman transform from a lovely child into a "woman perfectly beautiful, neither old nor young; for hers was the old age of everlasting youth" (195). The wise woman also appears beautiful as part of her lessons with the children. During a test of Rosamond's anger, she appears as a "lovely lady" looking for her son who has drowned in the lake at Rosamond's hands (178-79). Her beauty, however, is at times frightening in its power. When she appears before Rosamond's parents to scold them for rebuffing their daughter, she is described as a goddess: "The radiance that flashed from her robe of snowy whiteness, from her face of awful beauty, and from her eyes that shone like pools of sunlight, smote them blind" (218). To underscore the insufficiency of their superficial

sight, the wise woman blinds the King and Queen as part of her greater lesson. Unlike the myopic Watho, the wise woman's nurturing of Rosamond is part of a greater scheme. She teaches for the betterment of all, not to satisfy her own curiosity. Furthermore, in an attack similar to the one Photogen and Nycteris face, Rosamond is protected from a furious wolf by the wise woman. She protects and curbs appetites, even those of wolves and little girls.

The wise woman embodies the crone as well as the goddess, and unlike Watho, she instructs and nurtures the children because of her love for them. Yet her lessons are often painful, and her mentoring can seem monstrous. For example, during her second trial to overcome her anger, Rosamond befriends a boy, and the two play together on a boat and try to catch a white flower floating in the lake. The two fight over the flower and destroy it. In sadness and anger, the boy strikes Rosamond across the face with the slimy stem. While this act does not physically hurt her, it enrages her, and she pushes him from the boat. Falling out of the boat, the boy hits his head and sinks to the bottom of the lake, motionless "with white face and open eyes" (178). Rosamond is horrified and dismayed by the consequences of her actions. The wise woman's lesson is violent and painful, but Rosamond eventually learns patience, forgiveness, and love. In addition to teaching with pain and suffering, the wise woman also nurtures with tenderness and affection. After the devastating second trial, the wise woman leaves Rosamond alone to confront her emotions, but she returns in the evening and holds Rosamond while she offers her guidance. Several times throughout the story, she carries the girl or holds her in her arms. The severity of her lessons is tempered by the sincerity of her affection.

Ultimately, she is a spiritual mother to all, educating the parents as well as the children. She is beautiful without being sexual, and her maternal motivations are directed towards the spiritual child in all humanity. It would seem that in MacDonald's fairy tales weak mothers are replaced with strong wise women and sexual monsters are slain.

Despite Judith Gero John's claim that "it would be a mistake to call MacDonald a feminist; the magnificent and powerful female characters he created cannot escape their Victorian heritage" (27), MacDonald's deployment of the witch as compassionless scholar in *Watho*, and his uniting of the witch and the goddess in the wise woman, demonstrate a reconsideration of feminine power indicative of the developing women's movement in Britain and the United States. MacDonald's wise women, as Honig has suggested, "break the angelic image" of the seemingly divine Victorian Angel in the House, or as its detractors referred to it, the Cult of True Womanhood. Piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity, as defined by Barbara Welter, were the qualities of feminine perfection to which Victorian women were expected to aspire (152). Above all else, the ideal woman was submissive and self-sacrificing.

The stifling strict code of conduct that emerged in the late eighteenth century, and which Mary Wollstonecraft addresses in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in 1792, stimulated a backlash in the form of the first wave of the women's movement. Issues such as women's education and voting rights came to the forefront of public attention and were priorities of the MacDonald household. It is commonly known that MacDonald was a practicing supporter of women's higher education, and Louisa MacDonald signed the petition for women's suffrage circulating in 1866 (Crawford

575). The MacDonalds also had many friends who were actively involved in social reform, including women's education, health, and rights, for example Dorothea Beale. Beale, an avid supporter of women's educational reform, the principal of Cheltenham's Ladies College, and a suffragist, argues in *Reports Issued by the Schools' Inquiry Commission on the Education of Girls, 1869* that "[t]he old rubbish about masculine and feminine studies is beginning to be treated as it deserves. It cannot be seriously maintained that these studies which tend to make a man nobler or better have the opposite effect on a woman" (qtd. in Kamm 91). Greville MacDonald, George MacDonald's son, notes that

The first social axiom I was taught to express in words was 'Ladies first!' My parents' intimacy with such protagonists of the feminist movement as the beautiful and devoted Josephine Butler, Madam Bodichon of Girton renown, Mrs. Reid, Principal of Bedford College [. . .] Anna Sidgwick, Miss Buss and Miss Beale, no doubt made deep, if forgotten impression upon me. [. . .] I distinctly remember wondering how it could be that my adored mother had ever married my father who, in spite of his splendour, was only a man! (*Reminiscences* 29)

And in his sentimental biography of his father, Greville comments on his parents' social circle and the prominent women who made an impression on him as a boy:

Madame Bodichon gave them touch or intimacy with Mrs. Reid, the founder of Bedford College, Dr. Elizabeth Garrett, Mrs. Josephine Butler, whom they loved and deeply honoured, and other advanced thinkers. [. . .]

.] Indeed, for a time, thanks to the frequent talk of women's rights, adopted even by my three elder little sisters in their white stockings, crinolines and Sunday, straw-poke bonnets with pink bows and curtains, I am still crushed at times by the conviction—originating, I believe, when I was five or six, in the obligation to be polite to *ladies* (whom I heartily hated as an objectionable tribe)—that I, as a male, am still a worm.

(George MacDonald and His Wife 300)

From the concerns for women's health voiced by the incomparable Josephine Butler, to the tireless work for the improvement of the conditions of poor women by Octavia Hill, George MacDonald was surrounded by powerful, vociferously motivated women who were working for the betterment of society, in general, and women, in particular. It is perhaps, then, not surprising that William Raeper, MacDonald's more recent biographer, claims that MacDonald could be considered "liberal, even feminist" (259).

While many scholars have commented on MacDonald's wise women as reflecting his spiritual beliefs in the harmony between the masculine and feminine attributes of the divine, I would argue that the wise woman is indicative of the influence and potential witnessed by MacDonald in his female students, his friends and acquaintances, and his wife and daughters. By uniting the monstrous—and these qualities are monstrous because they are associated with the feminine—and the maternal in the figure of the wise woman, MacDonald presents a powerful woman outside the sphere of angelic femininity who uses education as a means to empower the individual. His contribution to the evolution of the witch is akin to Matilda Joselyn Gage's efforts to

recuperate the historical figure, a process that was underway not long after MacDonald's publication of "The Day Boy and the Night Girl."

While MacDonald indirectly participated in the women's movement in Britain, in the United States, Baum was introduced to the suffrage movement through his mother-in-law, Matilda Gage. Voting rights became a priority in Britain as well as in the United States by the late nineteenth century. Many who opposed women's suffrage were concerned that if women possessed the right to vote, then it would logically follow that they would soon be seeking elected positions. In the United States, the feminist movement developed alongside the movement to end slavery. Female activists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, felt politically limited as women in their efforts to support the eradication of slavery. In 1848, Stanton, along with Lucretia Mott, organized the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, NY, where Stanton delivered her *Declaration of Sentiments*, a petition modeled after the Declaration of Independence that called for the enfranchisement of the female population of the United States. The convention pushed the women's movement beyond the issues of property, education, and welfare, bringing the galvanizing issue of suffrage to the forefront. Though she missed the Seneca Falls Convention, Gage, a powerful leader in the first wave of the American women's movement, was a founding member of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). Along with Susan B. Anthony and Stanton, she was a leader in the organization and remained active in the NWSA for more than twenty years ("Women's Rights Room"). Alison Lurie notes that "like other radical feminists in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Matilda Gage believed that if women held

political power the world would be a better place” (29). In many ways Gage’s political stance on women’s rights was more radical than that of Stanton and Anthony, particularly her stance on religion and her critique of the Church and its part in the suppression of women. In 1890, she shifted her efforts into establishing the Woman’s National Liberal Union (WNLU), which largely targeted religion as spreading the concept of women’s inferiority to men.

Furthermore, Gage perceived the figure of the witch as a symbol of women’s oppression by the Christian Church. An advocate for the clear separation of church and state for the protection of women, Gage cast the witch as representative of the ways in which women were and continued to be victimized by and subjugated to the tyranny of men. In her landmark study *Women, Church, and State* (1895), Gage attempts to recuperate the historical witch as a model of female persecution and power while maintaining that the witch hunts during the Early Modern period were an important moment in women’s history. Challenging the conventional definition of the term, Gage claims, “in reality the original meaning of ‘witch’ was a wise woman” (239), a definition that closely resembles MacDonald’s revisions to the figure. She concludes her lambasting of the church and defense of the witch by maintaining that “when for ‘witches’ we read ‘women,’ we gain fuller comprehension of the cruelties inflicted by the church upon this portion of humanity” (291). Gage not only challenged the status of the witch, but she also encouraged her son-in-law to publish the magical tales that he told to his children. It can be inferred, therefore, that her visions for social reform and her appreciation for the witch informed Baum’s ethical and political construction of Oz

and his influential representation of witches. A version of Gage's matriarchal utopia is realized in Oz, a land where women hold real power.

In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the true wielders of magic are the witches—the Good Witch of the North; Glinda, the Good Witch of the South; and the Wicked Witch of the West—though the Wizard of Oz is recognized as the most powerful and knowledgeable person in the land; however, the irony of this quasi-political framework is that the wizard, in fact, does not possess any powers. He is a humbug. He is a fraud. He is a politician. The witches, in contrast, can provide a kiss of protection, as the Good Witch of the North does; they can show a little girl how to return to another world, as Glinda does; or they can enslave a race of people, as the Wicked Witches of the East and West have done. The capacity to do good or evil is not limited to gender in Oz, but evil is aligned with aberrant femininity. The Wicked Witch of the West is a grotesque figure with a violent temper, one eye, and a body that does not bleed. She is a dried-up shell of a woman who is power hungry and cruel to children. Her lack of maternity and sexuality mark her as monstrous and inhuman, and more significantly, unfeminine. As with Watho, her telescopic eye indicates her myopic desire for power at all human costs. She is also childish and controlling in her behavior, stamping her feet during a temper tantrum and assaulting Toto with her umbrella. Her goal is to enslave the Land of Oz, including young Dorothy. Her enslavement of the Winkies, as well as the winged monkeys through the Golden Cap, demonstrates the kind of oppression against which the women's movement worked. The Wicked Witch of the West is a parody of the worst fears of opponents of women's suffrage. She is no longer feminine, innocent, or docile;

instead she is raving mad, bloodless, sexless, and power hungry. She is not desirable or sexual like Watho, but her goal to use Dorothy for her own purposes echoes Watho's philosophy on child rearing. Reflecting a humorous version of the fairy tale witches, the Witch of the West is the antithesis of the maternity exhibited by the good witches of Oz.⁶ She is neither tender nor affectionate, only prickly and angry, and the humorous portrayal of temper tantrums diminishes her power to threaten.

The Good Witch of the North, alternatively, is described as a "little old woman" with "a sweet voice" (36). Though she is old like the fairy tale crone, she is benevolent, tender, and affectionate with Dorothy, and bestows upon her a loving kiss to keep her from harm: "'I will give you my kiss, and no one will dare injure a person who has been kissed by the witch of the North.' She came close to Dorothy and kissed her gently on the forehead. Where her lips touched the girl they left a round, shining mark" (50). The witch's kiss not only protects Dorothy, but it also demonstrates the maternal dimensions of her power. The kiss is a blessing and a symbol of love, and her concern for Dorothy echoes her concern for the welfare of the Munchkins. She is like a grandmother and "friend" to the small people of Munchkinland, and they love her for her goodness (40).

Similarly, Glinda, the Witch of the South, affectionately kisses Dorothy twice, and refers to her as "my child" (348). Treating Dorothy with maternal care, Glinda is a beautiful and seemingly youthful witch with blue eyes and red hair that falls in ringlets. Her rich red hair suggests a passion and sexuality not associated with the Witch of the North.⁷ She is both alluring and nurturing. Cloaked in a white gown, Glinda seems to allude to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's image of Lilith in his 1868 painting "Lady Lilith."

Glinda's mysterious ability to remain young suggests a vanity much like the one on display in Rossetti's painting, as each of the red-haired ladies "sits, young while the earth is old" (Rossetti 216). But whereas Rossetti's Lilith is a femme fatale, Baum's Glinda is a mysterious but benevolent ruler whose wisdom and power protect the Land of Oz. The eternity of her youth recalls the supernatural beauty of MacDonald's wise woman, a quality that underscores the continued importance of their presence in the world. As the wise woman will continue to educate the spiritual children in the world, so too will Glinda continue to be an influential mentor and guide in Oz. Both figures educate the girls to find their own paths to salvation: Rosamond chooses to mend her ways, and Dorothy learns how to use the silver slippers to return home. As for the Witch of the North, she guides Dorothy, showing her the right path, rather than trying to enslave and control her as the Witch of the West does. Both stories obliquely provide a commentary on parenting, specifically mothering, through Baum's and MacDonald's treatments of the witch. Whereas Watho and the Wicked Witch of the West aim to control and dictate all aspects of their children's and subjects' lives, the wise woman, Glinda, and the Good Witch of the North guide, educate, and nurture their charges so that they might be empowered to choose their own paths.

Common to the three fairy tales discussed so far is the fact that none of the witch figures is in fact a biological mother. They are powerful stand-ins for the absent mothers, who are either dead or weak. Curiously, the fact that they are not biological mothers indicates their lack of sexuality, as children are the products of sexual relationships. As such, the mother-witches maintain a level of purity while distancing

themselves from the control of men, since the maternal relationship is often predicated on the products of a heterosexual union. These powerful maternal figures demonstrate the potential influence that the women of the day were seeking in the social and political arenas, but they are ideals rather than practical examples of female power. It would seem that the community is their family, of which they are the maternal and primary influence. In MacDonald's fairy tale landscapes, the mysterious witches and wise women are powerful mentors. In Baum's utopia, men may be the figureheads—as the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman become the rulers of Oz and of the Winkies, respectively—but the women maintain true power.

As I mentioned earlier, these figures also demonstrate the gender debate about adult femininity. While girlhood was an issue being addressed by authors such as Louisa May Alcott in the United States and Charlotte Yonge in England, the adult witch controls or guides the young heroines, who represent the future generation. In this way the witch shapes and influences the girls who will follow in her path, a practice that mirrors the influence of the waves of the women's movement. The first wave of the women's movement secured the right to vote and addressed other political inequalities, such as education and property rights, but social inequalities, particularly issues related to reproductive rights, sexuality, work, and family, remained concerns that reached a pitch at the beginning of the second wave in the 1960s and '70s. The witch during this period reflects the "threat" of the uncontrollable female body and is a figure of resistance, power, and terror. And as it will become apparent, the influence of the first

wave's witchy, monstrous mentors, such as Gage, would be recognized by the new generation of feminist activists in the second wave.

Radical Witches: King and the Destructive Witch

By the 1970s, the feminist community was once again defending the infamous witch. The loudest voice in this hag-centered revolution was that of Mary Daly, whose vivid description of the "Burning Times" in her 1978 book *Gyn/Ecology* presents the witch as both powerful woman and martyr of patriarchal oppression. The witch's suffering, according to Daly and other feminist critics such as Andrea Dworkin, is indicative of a pattern of oppression that continues in modern society: "Our foresisters were the Great Hags whom the institutionally powerful but privately impotent patriarchs found too threatening for coexistence, and whom historians erase" (14). Daly's depiction of the atrocities perpetrated against women during the Early Modern period provokes revulsion as well as fear and anger, while simultaneously functioning as an object lesson in patriarchy's punishment of "defiant deviants," which is why witches became heroes in the 1970s (240). Acknowledging the contributions of Gage, "a great Hag herself," Daly expresses her outrage that her work has been overlooked by decades of historians: "It is infuriating to discover that this foresister, and others like her, had already gathered and analyzed materials which feminist scholars are just beginning to unearth again" (217, 216). In declaring that "Many women have understood this identity of the Witch within, the Self who is the target of the father's attack and the center of original movement," Daly argues that the attack on the witch was and is an attack on all

women (221). While Daly continues Gage's defense of the witch, her argument about the continued oppression of women relates to concerns about the regulation of the female body and female sexuality by radical feminists, including Kate Millett, Dworkin, Susan Brownmiller, and Shulamith Firestone. Justyna Sempruch argues in her feminist study of the witch that the figure "represents [...] a dimension of radical (feminist) identity that inserts the history of her oppression into contemporary ideological and political spaces. Conveying the tension between past and present, the witch becomes a central signifier of women's cultural un/belonging" (172). If, as Daly and Sempruch suggest, the deployment of the witch is a signifier of women's oppression, the presentation of the teen witch has a double signification of social and cultural un/belonging, as "teen witch" signifies both gender and age.

The adolescent witch began to emerge in multiple genres in the 1970s as growing interest in representations of female power and gender equality coincided with developing consideration of adolescence and the rise of the adolescent novel.⁸ S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, published in 1967, is considered by many scholars to be one of the earliest books written by, about, and for adolescents, signaling the growing demands of adolescent consumers for books addressing the adolescent experience. Not surprisingly, the problem novel, the prominent form of adolescent literature in the late 1960s and 1970s, sought to address the challenges of adolescence, with texts such as *Go Ask Alice*, published in 1971, setting the tone for many of the concerns about the experiences of adolescence. From drug use, sexual abuse, pregnancy, and gang violence, to a host of other topics, the problem novel depicted the teen years as a period

when young people would likely face life-altering trials. To be sure, not all writers sought to depict the melancholia, violence, and tragedy of adolescence. For example, Judy Blume, in her landmark novel *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.*, published in 1970, candidly attempts to depict the realities of female menstruation. Written for young teens and preteens, the novel aims to demystify the potentially frightening and taboo topic of menstruation. Blume presents a group of girlfriends who meet to discuss the mysteries of growing up into young women. In doing so, Blume invites her readers into Margaret's circle of friends to learn about the characters' various menstrual experiences. Menstruation is presented as natural and exciting in Blume's novel, something to be celebrated not feared.

In *Carrie*, however, menstruation is not only a fearful process but is also horrific. For King, a young male high school English teacher in Maine, female adolescence became the fruitful landscape to explore the horrors of puberty and the threat of female power through the adolescent witch, Carrie White. King's *Carrie* focuses on the painful experiences of social misfit Carrie White, whose oppressive mother and cruel peers torment her to the point of personal and communal annihilation. Puberty for Carrie is traumatic. The horror she feels during menarche is amplified and redistributed throughout the community of Chamberlain, Maine, as she uses her telekinetic powers to mete out destruction. The fear of the feminine that pervades the novel is a response to the events of the women's movement that informed King's presentation of the female coming of age. According to King,

Carrie is largely about how women find their own channels of power, and what men fear about women and women's sexuality . . . which is only to say that, writing the book in 1973 and only out of college three years, I was fully aware of what Women's Liberation implied for me and others of my sex. The book is, in its more adult implications, an uneasy masculine shrinking from a future of female equality. For me, Carrie White is a sadly misused teenager, an example of the sort of person whose spirit is so often broken for good in that pit of man- and woman-eaters that is your normal suburban high school. But she's also Woman, feeling her powers for the first time and, like Samson, pulling down the temple on everyone in sight at the end of the book. (*Danse Macabre* 170)

King's commentary focuses primarily on the novel as a response to women's issues—equality and empowerment—but does not comment on the trauma and fear of menstruation as a female rite of passage and as a signifier of sexual development and reproductive potential. While King may be reflecting male anxiety, his treatment of the witch indicates the hostility and resentment brewing in the early 1970s' social and political debates about women's equality. Douglas Keesey proposes, "Whereas a part of King clearly identifies with Carrie and understands her power as the vengeful return of natural female energy that patriarchy is responsible for having repressed, another part of King shares patriarchy's horror at women" (38). *Carrie* clearly addresses the feminist fervor brewing in the 1970s, representing the fear of the blowback from centuries of patriarchal repression of the female experience. Carol Clover writes that feminism "has

given a language to [Carrie's] victimization and a new force to the anger that subsidizes her own act of horrific revenge" (4). And yet Clover argues against a feminist agenda in the book, suggesting that the novel appeals to the powerlessness that boys feel, not girls (4). The novel projects a fear of and repulsion at menstruation that extends to a fear and anxiety about the uncontrollable female body and the female within the body politic. Carrie's growing refusal to be controlled by her mother, Margaret White, coupled with her telekinetic ability to control objects in her environment, metaphorically addresses the power struggle inherent in the period of adolescence and the threat of the female teen who cannot be contained and controlled.

Like the other texts in this study, *Carrie* is a fractured fairy tale, and many critics have commented on the novel's fairy tale qualities. For instance, Linda Badley calls the novel "a dark modernization of 'Cinderella,' with a bad mother, cruel siblings (peers), a prince (Tommy Ross), a godmother (Sue), a ball, and a theme in which a persecuted victim recovers her female power" (24). In Badley's framework, it would seem that Margaret White fills the role of the witch through her positioning as the bad mother. She certainly exhibits wicked behavior through her cruel treatment of her daughter, and her Black Forest cuckoo clock associates her with the fairy tale witch's liminal location in the dark woods. And like the watchful eye of the Wicked Witch of the West, Margaret White's eyes, magnified behind rimless bifocals until they look "like poached eggs" seem constantly trained on her daughter, judging her (53). As with the gaze of Medusa, the mythical witch of Greek lore, a look from Margaret White can lead to punishment and pain for Carrie.⁹ Her mother's gaze, more importantly, grotesquely parallels the

glowing eyes on the crucifix that dominates the White house. While Christ's eyes are "turned up in a medieval expression of slanted agony," Margaret White's eyes "glitter" with the agony she inflicts upon her daughter (39, 56). They are "twin shadows," Christ and Margaret White (52).

Carrie, in contrast, possesses the magical powers in the family. While her mother may exhibit the cruel behavior associated with the anti-maternity of the fairy tale crone, Carrie demonstrates seemingly mystical powers that the scientific language throughout portions of the text, language that Keesey refers to as "misogynistic officialese," tries to explain as telekinesis (38). Framing Carrie's powers as telekinetic is an attempt to explain rationally the irrational through science as a way to contain and control it, but the multiple perspectives and broken thoughts and sentences disrupt such attempts to contain Carrie's story within a scientific and cohesive rubric. Carrie's mother frames Carrie's powers as Satanic, using the patriarchal rhetoric of the Bible to castigate her daughter: "'Devil's child, Satan spawn. . . Witch,' Momma whispered. 'It says in the Lord's Book: 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.' Your father did the Lord's work—'" (97). Carrie's powers are outside the Judeo-Christian order and disrupt the patriarchal hierarchy in her home. As with her mother, Carrie's father had eyes "so intense they actually seemed to glow" (27). It would seem that Margaret White's appropriation of the patriarchal role, as emphasized through the synecdoche of the glowing and glittering eyes in the White household, is as much of an abomination as is her daughter's alleged demonic powers.

Witch, therefore, becomes a regulatory term, a word Margaret White invokes to compartmentalize Carrie's "unnatural" behavior and unruly body into a religious and highly misogynistic paradigm. Carrie, however, fantasizes about the fairy tale connotations of her supernatural abilities: "She thought of imps and familiars and witches (am I a witch momma the devil's whore) riding through the night, souring milk, overturning butter churns, blighting the crops while They huddled inside their houses with hex signs scrawled on Their doors" (79).¹⁰ Carrie envisions the witch as more of a trickster than a threat to the immortal soul. She emphasizes the difference between the witch and the citizen through the capitalization of "They" and "Their," highlighting the separation she feels from her peers. Though her perspective on the witch may be more folkloric than religious, she, like her mother, still perceives the figure, as well as herself, as an outsider. Edward Ingebretsen argues that Carrie as a witch "symbolizes the social order's need to repudiate at all costs that which it can neither understand nor manage, its fears of radical instability and boundarylessness" (23). As a witch, Carrie exists beyond the boundaries of rational understandings of human potential. As a young woman, her public first menstruation violates taboos that such processes are to be kept secret and hidden.

Margaret White represents the internalization of patriarchal fears of the female body and sexuality.¹¹ Carrie's experience of menarche at the age of sixteen, which the text acknowledges as surprisingly late, reveals that Margaret White's attempts to suppress Carrie's sexual development have failed. Her daughter's reproductive functions have matured, signaling her fertility and the threat of her sexuality. While

Carrie's telekinetic powers have manifested sporadically throughout her childhood, with the onset of menses, she begins to hone them. That which Margaret White has attempted to suppress and which society has oppressed blows back, as Carrie's developing body and romantic interests ultimately lead to destruction and chaos. During the prom night devastation, patriarchy's fears about the unruly female body are realized and amplified through Carrie's unmitigated fury and violence.

The violence that Carrie perpetrates on the community of Chamberlain reciprocates the violence that she experiences during puberty. Adolescence for Carrie White is traumatic, and her trauma becomes her community's, as well as the reader's, horror. Her mother's efforts to keep her ignorant about the processes of her body, specifically her sexual and reproductive development, have led to a fearful and horrific experience with menarche after gym class, when she is showering in the girls' locker room. Carrie is crippled by the fear that she is bleeding to death, not realizing that this is a natural process that the rest of her female peers have already experienced (11). She is dumbfounded, only able to howl in terror as her female classmates hurl tampons and sanitary napkins at her naked, bleeding body (8-9). The horror in this scene is twofold. First, in an emotionally violent and vile rejection of their peer, the girls in the locker room cruelly ridicule Carrie, alienating her from her community as well as from her body. Second, and perhaps more significant, Carrie reveals a complete unawareness of one of the central factors of puberty, menstruation. While I will continue to discuss the issue of menstruation in chapter three, I will mention here that Carrie's association with blood, menstrual as well as the pig's blood that will later cover her at the prom, is a

signifier of her abject status in Chamberlain. As Kristeva explains, menstrual blood is a threat from within, a marker of the unclean, a taboo, which must be sanitized:

“Menstrual blood [...] stands for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual)” (71). The onset of Carrie’s menstruation inevitably leads to chaos, and her peers’ attempts to socially destroy her, she who is unclean, backfire when Carrie physically destroys them. Using Kristeva’s terminology, Clare Hanson considers *Carrie* “a ‘defilement ritual’ on a massive scale” (47). Carrie’s experience with the metaphorical “curse” becomes a curse unto the community of Chamberlain.

Carrie’s menstrual defilement, as well as her mother’s maternal corruption, leads to the cataclysmic destruction of Chamberlain through her telekinetic powers. Barbara Creed, one of only a few critics to consider Carrie as a witch, explains,

What is perhaps most significant about Carrie’s telekinetic powers is that she acquires them at the same time as her blood flows, the time of her menarche. Woman’s blood is thus linked to the possession of supernatural powers, powers which historically and mythologically have been associated with the representation of woman as witch. (79)¹²

Through the impurity of her menstrual blood, Carrie’s association with the demonic (that which is impure in the Judeo-Christian sense) becomes concrete in Margaret White’s ever watchful eyes. Her murderous response to Carrie’s defiance and sexual interests is an effort to control and contain her unruly daughter. Reflecting the Church’s centuries of persecution of women as discussed by Gage and Daly, Margaret White, ironically and frustratingly a woman, becomes an extension of Judeo-Christian authority. Her

patriarchal affiliation with the Church corrupts her maternal relationship with her daughter, leading her to attempt infanticide, which is an act that is the antithesis of maternity. Margaret White is a monstrous mother, a witch who consumes the life of her child in an effort to arrest her sexual development.

Carrie's physical development is correlated to her romantic interpersonal development. Whereas Margaret White's, Chris Hargensen's, and Sue Snell's sexual knowledge and experiences are detailed in the novel, Carrie is innocent of such behavior. The graphic details of the other women's sexual interludes run counter to Carrie's chaste date with Tommy. In a stand against her mother's cruel rejection of her as the "devil's spawn," Carrie screams, "'*You SUCK!*' [. . .] '*You FUCK!*'" (56, 57). If "*SUCK*" and "*FUCK*" are read as verbs, then Carrie seems to be accusing her mother of the lascivious behavior for which Margaret White has reproached her. Carrie understands that her pious and imperious mother had to have had sex in order to produce her: "(there there o there it's out how else do you think she got you o god o god)" (57). The connection between sexuality, menstruation, and reproduction is made explicit in this emotional confrontation with her mother, an exchange that occurs after Carrie returns home after the locker room abuse. Later, after Carrie has once again returned home, but this time after wreaking havoc in the streets of Chamberlain, Margaret White manically confesses her lust: "'It wasn't until he came in that I smelled the whiskey on his breath. And he took me. *Took me!* With the stink of filthy roadhouse whiskey still on him . . . *and I liked it!*' She screamed out the last words at the ceiling. '*I liked it o all that dirty fucking and his hands on me ALL OVER ME!*'" (209). Margaret White's description of the

interlude is impassioned and vulgar, a stark contrast to the innocence of her daughter's seemingly fairy tale date with Tommy Ross, at least until the pig's blood taints the evening.

With such a distorted view of sex, even sex that is sanctioned by the Church through marriage, Margaret White's perspective on mothering is perhaps not so surprising. She is neither tender nor affectionate with her daughter, only mercilessly judging and rigorously regulating her daughter's every action. In contrast, Sue Snell in the second half of the novel, in an effort to atone for her cruelty to Carrie in the locker room ordeal, begins to act much like a fairy godmother to Carrie, as Badley suggests (24). She persuades the luminous Tommy Ross to squire Carrie to the prom and treat her like a princess for the evening. Even at the beginning of the novel, during the locker room scene, Sue is the only person to try to direct Carrie with any information, albeit delivered in an impatient manner: "For God's sake, Carrie, you got your period! [. . .] 'Clean yourself up!'" (7). Sue eventually realizes that "this must be the first time she ever [got her period]," a realization that eventually triggers her sympathy for a character who is so grotesque that she incites revulsion rather than compassion. Alex Alexander compares Margaret White and Sue Snell as mother-figures for the developing Carrie: "If Carrie's natural mother, like the fairy tale stepmother, tries to repress the girl's budding sexuality, Susan Snell, assuming the role of a fairy tale natural parent, gives Carrie Tommy Ross and at the Prom, significantly called the Spring Prom, Carrie White blossoms in her womanly beauty" (285). As Alexander suggests, Sue fosters Carrie's sexual development, whereas Margaret White vociferously and ferociously attempts to

suppress it. As such, Margaret White's maternal perspective is a bastardization of the patriarchal initiative to control the female body.

Ironically, that which Margaret White fears most in Carrie, her "demonic" powers, is passed through the maternal bloodline. Margaret White's grandmother relishes her ability to light fires and play tricks, such as making the sugar bowl spin wildly at the table. Margaret White remembers the old woman's eyes glowing with "a kind of witch's light" (147). When her own infant daughter reveals her supernatural gifts, Margaret White's instinct is to kill her. She is intolerant of her daughter's powers, as well as of any signs of her femininity. Despite her mother's harsh practices, and even though she stabs her with a knife, Carrie goes to her death crying for her "momma" (231-32). However, it is Sue Snell who is with her in her final moments. Sue shares Carrie's descent into the abyss of death, sharing her thoughts and feelings: "(she's dying o my god i'm feeling her die)" (232).

Through Carrie's death, the death of the witch, the chaos ends in Chamberlain. The community has been cleansed through her death, but the damage seems too great, and what is left is little more than a ghost town. With markers left saying "CARRIE WHITE IS BURNING FOR HER SINS / JESUS NEVER FAILS" (242), the community has turned Carrie into a scapegoat. She is the cause of their loss, yet no sense of the community's culpability in its own destruction is expressed, except perhaps through Sue Snell's memoir of the event. The novel, however, presents Carrie as a sympathetic figure. She is a grotesque adolescent, with pimply skin and a soft, lumpy body, who is socially awkward, yet through her powers, she gains some confidence, though this

confidence manifests into destructive euphoria. As an adolescent witch, she must negotiate her changing body and learn how to manage her telekinetic abilities. Her ignorance and innocence mitigate her monstrosity, whereas her mother's cruelty and intolerance are unrepentantly monstrous. Maternity and sexuality collide in *Carrie* with the novel's distorted ethic of mothering and Margaret White's attempts to keep Carrie in an ignorant state of perpetual girlhood. Carrie does not have the opportunity to fully mature. Though she looks like a crone at the end of the novel, her final words are reminiscent of childlike fear. She is caught in between, her development arrested and eventually terminated. Adolescence in the novel is horrific. When the teen prematurely appropriates adult power, adult anxieties about adolescence heighten. And in Carrie's case, the world seems to end.

Maternal Witches: Mahy and the Protective Witch

While King presents the horrific possibilities of the feminist rage brewing in the 1970s, the feminist fantasy writers of the 1980s depict the triumphant potential for powerful young women. Feminist writers of adolescent fiction in the 1980s began to deploy the witch not as an abused victim but as an adolescent hero and a tough young woman. Writers such as Robin McKinley, in her novels *The Blue Sword* and *The Hero and the Crown*, and Tamora Pierce, in her *Song of the Lioness* quartet,¹³ present warrior witches who are physically, mentally, and magically powerful. They are tough girls who foreshadow the girl power movement that would develop early in the next decade. In feminist fantasy writers' revisions to the archetypal hero's quest, the figure of the witch

shifts from villain or magical helper to hero (or “shero,” as Pierce calls the strong young women in her novels).¹⁴ While McKinley and Pierce write within the tradition of high fantasy, Mahy, writing a modern fairy tale, employs in *The Changeover* a similar revisionist agenda to transform the monstrous witch into a noble hero. In the novel, a fourteen-year-old adolescent girl named Laura living in contemporary New Zealand turns herself into a witch to save her little brother’s life. While Laura does not exhibit the physical capacity of the warrior witches created by McKinley and Pierce, she does represent something of a superwoman in training. The witches in *The Changeover* demonstrate the fluidity of gender roles, a reimagining of female development, and the female negotiation of power, agendas that were a priority of feminists and feminist writers of fiction in the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹⁵

Mahy recuperates the fairy tale witch to create a confident yet compassionate young woman who is an active hero. In her efforts to create a fantasy of female experience, Mahy relies on particularly Western discourses of adolescence as a period of “transition” and “emergence” defined by age, generational conflict, and (hetero)sexuality. Mahy associates the marginalized status of the witch with a protagonist who is a female, biracial, lower class, and under-aged other. Laura’s experience as a witch is not limited to her gender; race, as well as economics and age, are important factors in her identity. The novel, therefore, attends to the racial, economic, and sexual hierarchies that were being addressed in the late 1970s and 1980s feminist rhetoric by writers such as Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, bell hooks, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. In her landmark speech “The Master’s Tools Will Never

Dismantle the Master's House," Audre Lorde addresses "the role of difference within the lives of american [sic] women; difference of race, sexuality, class, and age" (*Sister Outsider* 110). Lorde claims, "Advocating the mere tolerance of differences between women is the grossest reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives" (*Sister Outsider* 111). Although Lorde is writing from the position of a black lesbian feminist about her feelings of exclusion from the predominantly white feminist movement in the United States, her call for the consideration for and appreciation of difference is in part applicable to the construction of Laura in *The Changeover*, as the novel implicates Laura's racial heritage, age, economic and family situation, and gender as factors that lead to her transformation into a witch. A few months before giving her talk at the Second Sex Conference in New York on September 29, 1979, Lorde wrote a letter to Mary Daly after reading *Gyn/Ecology*.¹⁶ In the letter, Lorde expressed concern over Daly's failure to consider the experiences of women of color in her collective *herstory* of women. She wrote, "To imply, however, that all women suffer the same oppression simply because we are women is to lose sight of the many varied tools of patriarchy [. . .] The oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial bounds, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those differences" (*Sister Outsider* 67, 70). While Lorde lambasts Daly for generalizing the experiences of white women as being common to all women, she ends her letter in the spirit of sisterhood, "So as a sister Hag, I ask you to speak to my perceptions" (*Sister Outsider* 71).

For Lorde, the figure of the witch was a useful metaphor for the outsider. In her poem “A Woman Speaks,” Lorde deploys the term “witch” as indicator of mystery, power, and sisterhood, and through the speaker of the poem brings the woman of color from the margins to the center of discourse.¹⁷ After referencing her “sister witches in Dahomey,” the speaker warns

I have been woman
for a long time
beware my smile
I am treacherous with old magic
...
I am
woman
and not white. (*The Black Unicorn* 5)

The poem brings the voice of the Other to the forefront by invoking the mythology of African culture. The poem, as well as the collection in which it is included, is an attempt by Lorde to regain her West African heritage. In “A Woman Speaks,” Lorde connects herself to a culture an ocean away, a sisterhood of witches whom she still seeks.

Mahy, too, presents a witch who attempts to reconnect with a distant heritage. As I will discuss later in this section, Laura’s dark complexion marks her as different from her family. The novel intimates that while she is primarily of European descent, one-sixteenth of her ethnic heritage is Polynesian. Laura’s single-parent, working-class family life presents certain challenges for the adolescent, challenges which are further

complicated when elements of magic and romance enter the picture, elements that are intrinsically paired in the novel. Furthermore, ideological tensions between a postfeminist agenda and feminist underpinnings are present in *The Changeover*. In the novel, strides are taken to undermine essentialized gender binaries, and the focus on empowering the next generation of young women indicates the girl power movement that would lead into the 1990s. While the main character's physical manifestations of a distant Polynesian heritage indicate an engagement of non-white identities, the heterosexual and maternal imperatives that frame the novel ultimately indicate a return to conservative notions of femininity. The witch may seem to offer a fantasy of empowerment in *The Changeover*, but the figure ultimately supports another kind of narrative, one of heterosexual and maternal normativity. In moving from child to adult, the adolescents in the novel disturb heteronormative boundaries only to reinforce those boundaries with the onset of maturity. Maturation, therefore, becomes a process of normalization.

The Changeover is the story of Laura Chant's journey to become a witch in order to save Jacko, her little brother, from being consumed by a mythical monster in the guise of Carmody Braque, a smiling, giggling, creepy old man. Laura's life, as it is presented at the beginning of the novel, appears to be less than spectacular. She enjoys a loving relationship with her mother and Jacko, and life in their disheveled, working-class home is relatively uneventful, except that Laura periodically receives mysterious warnings when something terrible is going to happen to her or to her family. The novel opens on the day when a voice, seeming to come from inside her mind, ominously announces,

“It’s going to happen” (3).¹⁸ Most disturbing about these premonitions is how powerless Laura feels after hearing them: “It always seemed to her afterwards that, once she had been warned, she should be able to do something to alter things, but the warning always turned out to be beyond her control” (3). More potent than what might be described as “women’s intuition,” the warning proves true when Jacko becomes a victim of the parasitic mark stamped on him by the mysterious Braque. Through this mark, which is an image of Braque’s eerily smiling face, the creature leeches the life out of Jacko. When the doctors’ attempts to cure Jacko fail, Laura seeks the help of Sorenson (Sorry) Carlisle, a boy whom she intuitively recognizes to be a witch. Sorry lives with his mother Miryam and his grandmother Winter, both of whom are also witches. They tell Laura that the only way for her to save her brother is to attempt a dangerous changeover and make herself a witch. The women explain that she is “a sensitive” who is “already on the threshold” of being a witch (102). Laura, after careful consideration, agrees to undertake the ritual, which involves regressing into the landscape of her own mind wherein she becomes the hero who awakens herself in a version of the Sleeping Beauty tale. After remaking herself as a witch, Laura uses her potent power to save Jacko and destroy Braque.

Mahy’s novel reimagines the boundaries of gender by undermining conventions of gendered roles and behaviors. For example, Sorry’s existence as witch emphatically disturbs notions that the craft is a solely feminine practice.¹⁹ When Laura tells her mother that Sorry is a witch, Kate responds, ““He’s the wrong sex for one thing, which

in these non-sexist days shouldn't matter much" (11). Later, when Laura visits the Carlisle house, Miryam explains,

It's very much a feminine magic—or so we think [. . .] And Sorenson sometimes resents it. He doesn't like being called a witch, although of course that is really what he is. Sometimes he feels like he's not completely a man or a witch but some hybrid, and he struggles to be entirely one thing or the other. But he can't give up either nature. (70)

Sorry, too, is aware of his unique powers as a male witch: "I'm a genetic freak, I suppose, like a male tortoise-shell cat" (161). Sorry's hybridity disrupts not only his own sense of being but the accepted categorization of witch as based on gender as well. Because Sorry was not born a girl and because Miryam did not think he would have the power of the Carlisle women, she sent him to live with a seemingly perfect family.²⁰ Defending herself to Laura, she says, "I am not a motherly woman and, when I thought of my son, I felt quite trapped" (91).²¹ The irony of Miryam's abandonment is revealed when Sorry returns to her sixteen years later as a powerful but emotionally damaged witch. In reference to issues such as Sorry's gender as a witch, Heather Scutter maintains that Mahy's "reversal of apparent binary oppositions works more and more to illuminate the constructedness of those roles, rather than to reinforce them" (10). Scutter goes on to suggest that Sorry "has to learn to play a 'masculine role,' but this role is exposed as just that, a set of signifying practices parodically represented in the 'women's' romances he reads" (14). Sorry recognizes the performance of gender when he tells Laura "I'm not a hero [. . .] That's for sure—but I can *pretend* to be one" (120,

emphasis in the original). Sorry's masculinity, therefore, is complicated by his categorization as a witch, a category which is fundamentally gendered.²² His attempts to be the masculine hero of romantic fiction are awkward and forced; he is not naturally suave and heroic, but he "pretend[s]" to be. Such a comment echoes Judith Butler's postulation of gender as parody and performance, something that is reconstituted through repetitive reenactment, which she argues in *Gender Trouble*. Sorry experiments with adolescent masculinity by enacting behaviors that fit within the category of masculine, behaviors that he derives from the romance novels that serve as his romantic guidebooks. The masculine heroes in these texts are often hyper-masculine ideals whose brute force is tempered by their love for the heroines. Sorry and Laura both incorporate cross-gendered roles—Laura as sword-wielding hero in her magical changeover and Sorry as witch within the landscape of the novel—thereby presenting a hybridity that subverts the gendered dimensions of these roles.

Mahy continues to challenge representations of gender by deconstructing fairy tale motifs. Through her many references to *Sleeping Beauty*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, the *Gingerbread Man*, and other fairy tales, Mahy reclaims a genre that was originally associated with women's voices but later coopted by male writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²³ The spinner of the old wives' tales and fairy stories was a sister crone to the witch in that both have power in their voices. When Laura insists that she is the *Sleeping Beauty* who woke herself, she consciously participates in the fairy tale imaginary but revises the end to demonstrate her agency (151). *The Changeover* participates in what Jean Webb finds in other young adult literary fairy tale revisions,

such as Diana Wynne Jones *Howl's Moving Castle* and Terry Pratchett's Tiffany Aching series,²⁴ that deploy the witch as hero: "They suggest to their young readers that stories, and the social conventions they represent, may themselves be resisted in the course of establishing individual identity" (156). Laura's resistance to discursive limits on female agency is apparent in her claim that she is the princess *and* the hero, and her awareness of her place in the fairy tale is a metafictional nod to her awareness of her new subjectivity. Elliot Gose contends that Mahy's disruptions of myths, legends, and fairy tales in *The Changeover* is a part of an effort "to fracture the patriarchal narrative mode and substitute one in which the power and creativity of the female become important" (10). Female voice and experience, therefore, dominate the narrative, with feminine rebirth as the fulcrum of the story.

Laura's development from normal girl to powerful young woman is framed within the metaphor of magic. As critics have noted, the frequent references to mirrors and reflections reveal Laura's exploration of herself and map her movement towards becoming a witch/woman. After hearing the warning at the beginning of the novel, Laura is shocked by the reflection that she sees in the mirror:

I don't look so childish, she thought, turning her attention from the warning, hoping it might give up and go away. But her reflection was treacherous. Looking at it, she became more than uneasy; she became frightened [. . .] the face was not her face for it knew something that she did not. It looked back at her from some mysterious place alive with fears and pleasure she could not entirely recognize. (3-4)

After her changeover, and when order is restored to her family's life, Laura catches her reflection in the mirror and sees "the very face that had been promised weeks earlier on the day of the warnings" (208). Her magical transition as reflected in her mirror self is indicative of her identity development. As she becomes literally and figuratively empowered, the difference becomes apparent in her physical presence. Furthermore, identity development is reconstructed as a creative process: "witch" and "woman" are conflated as "imaginary creatures," from whom "power flows out of the imagination" (134), and "through the power of charged imagination," Laura is able to envision herself outside of the gendered conventions of the fairy tale, and thereby "make herself into a new kind of creature" (152).

As a new "creature," Laura must control how she uses her power. After crippling Braque and reducing him to a pathetic and impotent "thing," she debates whether she should kill him quickly or submit him to extended torture. As Alison Waller notes, it is Sorry who advises Laura to avoid cruelty, and through this warning, he "expresses a naturalized sentiment that [. . .] the power available to witches must be carefully monitored and kept in check" (141). Laura's power has been contained throughout the novel as usable only as a means of protection. Her motives for seeking power are selfless in that she risks her own life to protect the innocent and the weak. Power, in fact, initially frightens her, and yet the novel implies that her benevolent and self-sacrificing motives make her worthy to receive it.

Furthermore, the power of the witch and the period of adolescence are associated with difference. Mahy metaphorically marks the adolescent as an outsider through the

figure of the witch, who is a disturber of the established order. Two older women who physically live outside of such order are Winter and Miryam, a mother and her daughter who are set off from the community in their compound Janua Caeli (Latin for “Door to Heaven”), a home enclosed within a fairy tale garden and protected from the encroaching urbanization. Their middle-class affluence sets them apart from the working-class community of Gardendale, whereas Kate’s meager earnings as a bookstore manager barely sustain her family. Sorry is an anomaly, whose incongruous gender as a witch inscribes him as different and initially ostracizes him from his family. And Laura, through her Polynesian heritage, is marked as different within her family. With her “woolly, brown hair, dark eyes, and olive skin, [that] marked off from her blonde mother and brother because her genes were paying a random tribute to the Polynesian warrior among her eight great-great-grandfathers” (4), Laura’s difference foreshadows her transcendence into a warrior witch and invites a postcolonial reading of her relationship to her family and community. Sarah Fiona Winters notes that “Most [of Mahy’s novels] question the nature of being a Pakeha, or a New Zealander of European descent” (408). While Kate and Jacko’s blonde hair marks their European descent, Laura’s darker complexion and brown hair announce her Polynesian heritage, suggesting that her experience as a Pakeha is complicated by her connection to the indigenous Maori population, though the text never identifies her as Maori specifically. Her “sensitivity” to premonitions is indirectly linked to her Polynesian ancestry through the warning of the fierce reflection of herself in the mirror. Her heritage becomes an issue

of hybridity, similar to Sorry's identity as a male witch, which seemingly allows her to breach boundaries of subjectivity and experience.

The warrior within Laura comes to the surface when she fights to save Jacko from the parasitic Braque. Critics such as Perry Nodelman, Roderick McGillis, and Jacqueline Rose have likened childhood to a colonized space, and this connection is played out to a terrifying degree in Braque's colonizing of Jacko's body. While Nodelman and others refer to the adult who speaks for and about children as colonizing the child, Carmody Braque tricks Jacko, brands the boy with his smiling image, and begins to steal the life and voice from him, thereby colonizing the body rather than the mind of the child. Jacko's vitality becomes a resource that Braque extracts and leeches from him, and Jacko is powerless to stop him. There is an element of colonial and patriarchal resistance in Laura's destruction of Braque's parasitic control over the life and resources of Jacko's body. As one who has moved from powerless to powerful, Laura returns the would-be colonizer's gaze and "force[s] her [own] into ruthlessness and use[s] it as a goad to drive Mr [sic] Braque back toward his beginning" (192). Laura's power of resistance is ultimately a power of protection.

To save Jacko, Laura uses Braque's trick against him: she marks him with her own image and drains the life-force out of him, thereby restoring Jacko's strength. In confronting him face-to-face, she sees something of herself in him: "Carmody Braque fell on his knees, just as she had once done by Jacko's bed, watching the reflection of this very man's smile play wickedly over her brother's face. Now with shock and triumph she discerned her own ghost, looking back at her out of her victim's desperate

eyes” (166-67). In confronting this monster, Laura sees both her past powerlessness and her future potential for cruelty. She thinks to herself, “Like a model man he was under her remote control and no matter where he was in the city she could either consume or nourish him. [. . .] She had no mercy to offer” (166). Her look into the monster’s eyes demonstrates the trend in horror films that Linda Williams discusses in “When the Woman Looks.” Published the same year as *The Changeover*, Williams’s article posits “a surprising (and at times subversive) affinity between monster and woman,” such that when the woman looks upon the monster, she recognizes herself in it (85). Once she has marked Braque, Laura recognizes her former powerlessness, and he becomes a pitiful, rotting shell of a creature.

Braque’s previous gloating and childish revelation about how he hunts children shows the depths of his cruelty (162-63) and also mirrors the cruelty that Laura contemplates about how to torture him:

Laura was glad to see him so desperate and reduced. She felt enormously strong as she suddenly became aware of the full extent of her power over him. She could make him fall down fainting at her feet, could make him last for days, weeks, even months. No one would suspect her of anything, for everyone at school knew just how ordinary she was, and from behind this ordinariness, she was free to be infinitely revenged on someone who had invited her vengeance. (183)

Acting on these desires would make her no better than he, of which Sorry reminds her: “There are always two people involved in cruelty, aren’t there? One to be vicious and

someone to suffer! And what's the use of getting rid of—of wickedness, say—in the outside world if you let it creep back into things from inside you?" (185). After weighing Sorry's comments, Laura ends Braque quickly. In facing the monster, Laura is not punished; rather, she becomes aware of her past and possible future, and makes a conscious decision about the kind of witch she wants to be. The mercy she shows in Braque's swift death is not for him; it is for her. Laura chooses to be moral and responsible.

Laura's becoming a witch reinforces the maternal prioritizing of female experience. While maternal instincts may not be natural to all women, as Miryam's confession would suggest, Laura's protection of Jacko is associated with motherhood and counters Miryam's abandonment of Sorry. Because Kate is a single mother, Laura shares "domestic responsibilities" as a co-parent for Jacko (14). Her responsibility and love for Jacko blur the definitions of their relationship: "Sometimes it seemed to her that Jacko was not her brother but in some way her own baby, a baby she would have one day, both born and unborn at the same time" (16). As Christine Wilkie-Stibbs notes,

But the changeover has also brought with it a new, and unexpected, maternal dimension to Laura's experiences in which, for example, she shares in Kate's memory of Jacko's early breastfeeding as if it were her own: 'his nose pressed into her breast. . . . Laura's mind was so mixed with Kate's that the memory seemed entirely her own.' (*Feminine* 112)

The mother-daughter hierarchy between Kate and Laura shifts within the novel, from Laura wanting Kate to take over responsibility for Jacko, to the two as peers

brainstorming how to help him, to Laura embracing Kate “as if she were the protecting one” (179). As Laura becomes a young woman, the roles of mother and daughter become confused. When she kisses Sorry, she is disturbed by the multiplicity of feelings that swell within her, “for it seemed as if he kissed her for Jacko in the past, himself in the present and for another unknown child somewhere in the future” (155). The disruptions of the role-defining boundaries within her family position Laura as on the path to motherhood and suggest that her power is framed as maternal.

The reconstitution of the heteronormative family at the end of the novel, whether through the Chris-Kate-Laura-Jacko or the Sorry-Laura-Jacko configuration, positions *The Changeover* as a narrative of normalization. Laura’s power as a witch is defined within the protective framework of maternity, and Sorry’s power as a witch is coded within the similarly protective framework of heterosexuality. In the end, Laura and Sorry are presented as normal, though powerfully supernatural, teens. The supernatural within the narrative reinforces the natural, at least the heteronormative understanding of “natural.” Adolescence, it would seem, is not only a period of emergence and transition, but a period of tension between resistance and conformity and between personal desire and responsibility.

Conclusion: Responsible Witchcraft

The Changeover presents magic as a possible conduit for adolescent female empowerment. Promoting avenues for female agency and activism became an agenda in the late 1980s that led to the Grrrl Power movement of the early 1990s. In response to

social concerns about adolescent girls' welfare in relation to such areas as self-esteem, body image, and sexual abuse, a social movement to promote "girl power" emerged to empower the choices and voices of young women. The mission statement for this youth revolution was proudly screamed by female punk band Bikini Kill in 1992 in their "Riot Grrrl Manifesto." Reclaiming the term "girl," the young women of the band hailed their rights:

BECAUSE we know that life is much more than physical survival and are patently aware that the punk rock "you can do anything" idea is crucial to the coming angry grrrl rock revolution which seeks to save the psychic and cultural lives of girls and women everywhere, according to their own terms, not ours. (Hanna 395-96)

While the Riot Grrrls movement originated in the punk music industry, the celebration of girl power permeated other facets of popular culture and evolved into a massively popular social movement that was commercially successful, suggesting that such power could be purchased, or alternatively that the adolescent consumer had the power to purchase.

In the late 1990s, the figure of the teen witch and her associated girl power invaded popular culture like never before, reaching new heights in its popularity with the 1996 film *The Craft* and the television series *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*, first airing in 1996. The teen witch had arrived in all her glamour, enchanting her female audience with her power to change her look and get what she wants. However, Rachel Moseley argues that the "glamour" of the film teen witch contains female power "on the

spectacular surface of the text” (422). According to Moseley, “The ideological project of the teen witch text in relation to femininity and power—glamour—is ultimately superficial” (407). Female power, therefore, becomes a form of consumerism, with the teen witch procuring whatever commodities she desires. Despite the seemingly vapid power of the witch on screen, *The Craft* and the witches on television triggered teen curiosity in practical witchcraft, specifically Wicca.

In 1998, Silver Ravenwolf published *Teen Witch: Wicca for a New Generation*, a manual of sorts that presents the ideologies and practices of Wicca. According to Brooks Alexander and Jeffrey B. Russell, Ravenwolf’s *Teen Witch* “turned out to be the bellwether for a whole new genre of teen literature” (182). Two years later, Ravenwolf published *Witches’ Night Out*, the first in a series of teen novels, wherein a group of male and female teen witches work together to solve a mystery. In 2003, Laurie Faria Stolarz published the first book in her Blue Is for Nightmares series, five books following teen Wiccan Stacey Brown. In the novels, the protagonist Stacey uses her magical powers of intuition along with her folk knowledge of Wicca to protect herself and her friends from harm. Some of the books even come with a list of spells. Both series are backed by the new age publisher Llewellyn Publications, whose website states, “Since 1901, we’ve been at the forefront of holistic and metaphysical publishing and thought” (“About Llewellyn”). With Stolarz’s success, as well as the popularity of another Llewellyn author of teen literature, Maggie Stiefvater, the publisher has launched a new imprint, Flux, devoted to producing young adult literature.²⁵ While Stolarz’s writing interests extend beyond the topic of Wicca, the Blue Is for Nightmares

series and Ravenwolf's Witches' Chillers series present an ethical dimension of witchcraft. The main characters are students of the craft, who use it for good rather than for personal gain. Likewise in Cate Tiernan's fifteen-book Sweep series, the main character Morgan Rowlands learns that she comes from a line of powerful witches, and the first several books in the series depict how she learns to control her immense power. Christine Jarvis argues that "[t]he series operates within a moral and religious framework that allows girls to feel positive about their bodies and their sexuality and acknowledges the complex moral decisions many young women face" (43).²⁶ For Stacey Brown and Morgan Rowlands, being a teen witch involves studying the craft, reconciling with one's family and past, and using one's powers for protection and spiritual growth. As with Mahy's *The Changeover*, the Wiccan teen texts espouse a responsible use of magic for protection, but they also promote a feminist spirituality that unites the witch with the goddess.

As this chapter has discussed, the teen witch must navigate the confusing and frustrating period of adolescence while coming to terms with her own magical identity. Carrie White's failure to control her supernatural powers, as well as her failure to overcome the trauma of adolescence, leads to her demise. Alternatively, Laura Chant successfully negotiates certain adolescent rites of passage, such as first love and parental conflict, and demonstrates control over and ethical responsibility for her powers. Through their powers, Carrie and Laura enact change in their communities: Carrie destroys hers, Laura protects hers. Perhaps the fantasy of the teen witch continues to

attract audiences because the figure presents a type of wish fulfillment, a desire for more power, more control, more influence, even if this excess brings severe consequences.

During a period when an adolescent girl can feel powerless under the seemingly totalitarian authority of the adult world, the fantasy of the witch can be very attractive, for the witch has a voice and agency that can make heads turn and ears listen. Texts such as *Carrie* and *The Changeover* demonstrate that one can indulge in the fantasy of supernatural powers, for Carrie and Laura, though both outsiders, eventually command the attention of and destroy those who would oppress them. However, these texts, as well as the works of MacDonald and Baum, also depict why such power, even imagined power, must be used within an ethic of maternal love and protection. Just as Bella Swan's magic power as a vampire, in Stephenie Meyer's final Twilight book *Breaking Dawn*, allows her to create a bubble of protection around her friends and family, the witch in literature must learn to become a mother goddess in her own right, and as a mother, she must be a nurturer and a protector of life.

Notes

1. “Fantasies of empowerment” is a term that Alison Waller employs in *Constructing Adolescence in Fantastic Realism* to categorize fantasies of the witch and the superhero.

2. Male witches have a small presence in children’s and adolescent literature. When they do appear, their sex is inevitably and immediately addressed. Wizard, sorcerer, mage, and magician are more common referents for men with magical power. In the third section of this chapter, I will address a young male witch in Mahy’s *The Changeover*.

3. Established in 1936, the Carnegie Medal is awarded annually to the most outstanding book written for young people that is published in the United Kingdom.

4. The wolf within Watho takes over her body as well as her mind as she shifts into a werewolf to punish and destroy Photogen and Nycteris.

5. Honig’s claim that Watho “seems to prefigure the many positive magical women that MacDonald creates” is problematic considering that she postdates Grandmother from *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), who is clearly presented as a powerful and positive woman.

6. In the 1996 paperback edition of Gregory Maguire’s *Wicked*, an adult revision of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Douglas Smith’s cover illustration reveals the Wicked Witch of the West, or Elphaba, as she comes to be named in the novel, cradling a small monkey like a child while petting a wolf. The image refigures the character as a

maternal and tender caretaker. In Maguire's novel, the animals become her companions, not her army.

7. Lilith has been described as having red hair and blue eyes. Marion Roach claims, "In all, [Lilith] is an icon in the history of the world of red hair, the oldest female cornerstone on which to build an argument for the evil and sexually charged identity of the red-haired woman" (25). MacDonald's Watho is also portrayed with red hair that matches the red fire in her eyes. As the über-witch, Lilith is the incarnation of beauty, seduction, monstrous motherhood, and evil. Witches such as Watho and perhaps even Glinda possess some of the attributes that have continually been associated with Lilith.

8. For example, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* got her own comic book series in 1971, which ran for seventy-seven issues until 1983. Jill Murphy's *The Worst Witch*, published in 1974, was the first in a series of children's novels about the misadventures of the young witch Mildred Hubble. The first book was adapted into a TV movie in 1986 and a TV series based on the books was produced in 1998.

9. And like C.S. Lewis's White Witch from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Margaret White is associated with persecution and death, as she prefers a world of sterility and enforced austerity. The White Witch, like Medusa, turns people to stone.

10. Carrie recognizes that the targets of witchy behavior are themselves products of reproduction—milk, butter, and crops—and as such connect the witch with a destructive maternity.

11. Margaret White's surname, acquired through marriage to Ralph White, alludes to her obsession with purity. Since her appropriation of the White name is part of a patriarchal ritual, whereby a wife takes her husband's family name, her adoption of patriarchal perspectives on the feminine seems fitting.

12. Creed is referring to the 1976 film directed by Brian De Palma. In the film, Carrie's first experience with telekinesis occurs in the locker room shower during her first menstruation; however, the novel details episodes during her childhood when unexplained phenomena occur during her moments of heightened emotions. The film associates the connection between her telekinesis and her menstruation more emphatically, whereas the novel suggests that following the onset of menstruation, Carrie becomes more independent from her mother and more psychologically and emotionally mature as she practices her powers, "flexing" them until she gains control over them. The male gaze of the camera in the film not only objectifies Carrie's body and the experiences therein but also constructs Carrie's menstruation as intrinsically linked to her supernatural powers, thereby accentuating the disorder of the female body.

13. McKinley's novels were published in 1982 and 1984, respectively. Pierce's quartet included *Alanna: The First Adventure*, published in 1983; *In the Hand of the Goddess*, published in 1984; *The Woman Who Rides Like a Man*, published in 1986; and *Lioness Rampant*, published in 1988.

14. Tamora Pierce and Meg Cabot co-founded *Sheroes Central*, a discussion board about female heroes. The site was purchased by Sheroes Inc., a non-profit organization that continues to run the discussion board.

15. In an interview, Mahy denied any conscious feminist agenda in the novel, noting that her concerns were with the folkloric elements of the story (“Interview”). Nevertheless, the novel presents a feminist revisioning of the witch, particularly through the characters of Laura and Sorry.

16. Lorde notes that the letter was written on May 6, 1979. After waiting four months for a reply, she made the letter available to the public (*Sister Outsider* 66).

17. “A Woman Speaks” was included in Lorde’s collection *The Black Unicorn* published in 1978.

18. Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from the 1994 Puffin edition of the book.

19. The novel presents the possibility of magicians but does not explain how they are different from witches. It is not clear to what degree gender is a dimension of this difference, but the novel explicitly identifies Sorry as a witch.

20. The façade of the perfect family is shattered by the abuse that Sorry experiences at the hands of his adoptive father, who beats him for his peculiarity.

21. Miryam is clearly echoing the feeling of some women by suggesting that mothering is not a natural instinct.

22. In an intertextual reference to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* towards the end of the novel, Sorry crosses paths with a wino, who drunkenly says to one of his bottles of wine, “Don’t worry, Dorothy. It’s just the good witch of the North” (194). While the reference humorously compares Sorry to the sweet, wrinkled old witch from Oz, it also indicates how Sorry has acted as a guide and helper to Laura much like the witch of the

North did for Dorothy, which draws attention to the gendered dimensions of the witch figure.

23. In her postscript to 2003 British reprint of *The Changeover*, Mahy connects the novel to the Grimms' fairy tale "Brother and Sister," in which an older sister watches over her younger brother who has been turned into a deer by their wicked stepmother (284-5). The notion of sisterly protection is at the heart of both the fairy tale and the novel.

24. Jones's novel was published in 1986. Pratchett's Tiffany Aching series includes *The Wee Free Men*, published in 2003; *A Hat Full of Sky*, published in 2004; *Wintersmith*, published in 2006; and *I Shall Wear Midnight*, published in 2010.

25. Both writers, Stolarz and Stiefvater, are *New York Times* bestsellers.

26. As paranormal romance, the series is interested in the sexual and romantic development of its characters, and while the main character is productively heterosexual (the final book follows the adventures of her daughter), two of the supporting female characters become romantically involved. Though the heterosexual relationship is the center of the series, alternatives to heteronormative relationships as well as patriarchal spiritualities are presented.

CHAPTER III

ANIMAL BODIES:

THE HOWLING HEROINE, HYBRIDITY, AND DISTURBING FEMININITY

Moving from the witch to the werewolf in this analysis of the female monster is an apt transition, as the two figures are often linked in folklore and literature. According to Marina Warner, “The wolf is kin to the forest-dwelling witch [. . .]. In the witch-hunting fantasies of early modern Europe they are the kind of beings associated with marginal knowledge” (181). In folklore spanning the centuries, it has been believed that witches shapeshift into other animals to torment good people. For example, writing in the thirteenth century, Gervaise of Tilbury presents eyewitness accounts of witches, men and women, flying at night on journeys to perform unspeakable horrors on unwitting sleepers: “They suck blood, steal infants from their beds, and [...] [t]hey take the form of cats, wolves, or other animals at will” (Russell and Alexander 64). These wicked witches eat special herbs and flowers (often the yellow wolfsbane), wear animal skins, rub salves on their bodies, or commune with the Devil to perform these metamorphoses. The stories discussed in this chapter feature werewolves who are not witches. Nevertheless, they are still dangerous outsiders. These are stories about young women who desire the change or who are born to endure and even enjoy it.

The female werewolf is a revolting figure and a figure in revolt. Hers is a complicated type of femininity. In societies that promote hairless, smooth skin as the model of beauty, the hairy girl is disturbing, as is the girl who literally chases men. Strong, wild, and violent, the literary female werewolf pushes against the boundaries of Western concepts of femininity to the point that she becomes something other than human. The figure's dual nature, which is comprised of human and animal identities, represents a type of hybridity, in which the constructs of human and animal are thrown into crisis, resulting in a conceptual paradox. The female werewolf is both in between species and outside of a particular species. While the female werewolf dynamically demonstrates the capacity for power and alternative ways of being, the creature's uncanny hybridity is problematic within the Western cultural imaginary, as humanity generally is defined in opposition to animality, much in the way that masculinity is defined in opposition to femininity. The figure of the adolescent female werewolf, however, breaches these oppositional boundaries, operating instead in the spaces in between.

As with the other figures in this dissertation, she is an abject creature that disrupts order and demonstrates the tenuousness of the border between human and animal.¹ The preceding chapter examined the role of the witch in feminist discourse and literature for teens. The narratives discussed contain the female empowerment that is derived from the witch's magical powers within an ethical framework. The witch can only be allowed to exist if she uses her powers in responsible ways, primarily for the protection of her family and community. For the female werewolf, tension arises from

her physical power as well as from her physiological hybridity and animalistic behavior. Although her fantastical body is both alluring and disturbing because of her divergence from Western notions of feminine beauty, as well as for her capacity for great speed and strength, narratives that feature a female werewolf as a protagonist contain the threat that hybridity poses by inevitably separating, or at least threatening to separate, the character from the larger “human” society. The animal side is kept hidden, except from close friends and other hybrids. To explore this social division, this chapter draws on Donna Haraway’s theory of the cyborg to focus on the ways in which the literary female teen werewolf’s hybridity demonstrates the social chaos that ensues from the emergence of deviant femininity and destructive sexuality.

The depiction of late twentieth-century literary werewolves is generally informed by cinematic representations of these monsters, and the cinematic female werewolf is “unmistakably a figure of horror” (Larbalestier, *Opulent* 3). She is portrayed as a violent, hairy, and grotesque monster with an insatiable appetite for sex, blood, and revenge. While most mid-twentieth-century cinematic werewolves were male, since the 1980s female werewolves have become increasingly common. They have been depicted in cult classics such as *Ginger Snaps* (2000), in which the female werewolf is aligned with the menstruating and sexually maturing girl; Wes Craven’s *Cursed* (2005), in which a murderous female werewolf kills her competition for a man’s attention; and the Halloween horror flick *Trick ‘r Treat* (2007), in which a coy Little Red becomes a savage wolf, relishing her sexually freighted first kill.² Film critics have discussed the female werewolf as a commentary on patriarchal fears of female sexuality and the leaky,

unruly female body.³ The onscreen bitches in the above films unleash their sexuality through their monstrous metamorphoses. Their consuming desires often lead to men, and sometimes other women, being devoured.⁴ Furthermore, the visual representation of the monstrous metamorphosis elicits terror by collapsing the border between animal and human. The ambiguity of the creature is the horrifying element. It is not a fully formed wolf; rather, it is typically a grotesque amalgamation of human and wolf physiology. The plots of such films generally demand that the female werewolf be destroyed or contained to restore social order, offering little hope of integrating the figure.⁵

In young adult literature, however, we can locate a more multifaceted configuration of the female werewolf as protagonist, one not so myopically defined by destructive female sexuality and blood lust, and one in which the experience of the “curse” is not inherently monstrous. The werewolves’ monstrosity in many of these novels is mitigated by their transformation into wolves, or at least creatures that appear to be wolves, rather than the horrific creatures depicted on screen. They see themselves as beautiful wolves, filled with strength and grace. Chantal Bourgault du Coudray claims that “women writers have frequently used lycanthropy [the scientific term for the werewolf] as a means of exploring a specifically feminine process of individuation” (60). For Kelsey in Suzie McKee Charnas’s “Boobs” (1989), Vivian in Annette Curtis Klause’s *Blood and Chocolate* (1997), and Micah in Justine Larbalestier’s *Liar* (2009), being a werewolf, or at least professing to be one, involves negotiating multiple identities and confronting issues of gender, menstruation, sexuality, body, race, family, and community. In *Blood and Chocolate*, the figure of the female werewolf functions as

a metaphor for adolescent angst and sexual desire. Similarly, in *Liar*, the female werewolf demonstrates the chaos of identity formation in the adolescent years, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality. And in “Boobs,” becoming a werewolf provides a liberating release from the repressive and bothersome realities of growing up female in modern American society. In this chapter, I argue that the literary adolescent female werewolf’s multi-faceted hybridity disrupts human-animal and masculine-feminine dualisms by operating outside binary modes of thinking; however, the texts in which this monster appears ultimately diffuse the tensions inherent in the character’s hybridity through the socializing practices that define mature female human behavior.

The liberating functions of hybrids like the werewolf are addressed by Haraway in her 1985 essay “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.”⁶ Haraway argues that in moving away from such dualisms as human-animal, human-machine, and mind-body, other binaries, such as gender, can be broken down, thereby creating in their place a sense of affinity and possibility rather than difference. In her section on cyborgs in feminist science fiction, a discussion I am aligning with human-animal hybrids in fantasy fiction, Haraway claims, “Cyborg monsters in feminist science fiction define quite different political possibilities and limits from those proposed by the mundane fiction of Man and Woman,” and she goes on to write, “Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves” (“Cyborg” 180, 181). Her manifesto argues “for *pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction” (“Cyborg” 150). The hybridity demonstrated by characters such as

Kelsey blurs the distinction between masculine and feminine, human and animal, woman and girl, and in doing so, the framing of the female werewolf challenges essentialized notions of female behavior and experience. The female werewolf is capable of brutal violence and active sexuality, and her body is fluid and unstable, but these conditions traditionally are suppressed and rejected in contemporary notions of appropriate femininity. Though the texts discussed in this section present monstrous protagonists who revolt against female passivity, they also demonstrate the backlash against such disruptive femininity, as the protagonists must keep their true identities as werewolves secret in order to prevent physical and social annihilation.

To address the multiple ways in which the werewolf is used as a metaphor for hybridity and deviant adolescent femininity, this chapter analyzes three texts featuring an adolescent protagonist who is a female werewolf. I examine the ways in which the character's body and its processes, her sexuality, and her violence are framed in relation to gender. The goal of this chapter is to interrogate the authors' presentations of protagonists who resist the socializing practices that shape female adolescence, in particular practices that attempt to manage menstruation and promote physical and sexual passivity. The first section of this chapter focuses on the short story "Boobs" by Charnas and the main character's rejection of menstruation and sexual harassment. Kelsey violates taboos, such as those against cannibalism and murder, in an effort to undermine a social order that she finds oppressive. Moving from resentful victim to euphoric aggressor, Kelsey's uncanny transformation, both literal and figurative, is disturbing on many levels. The second section shifts to an interrogation of Klause's

horror novel *Blood and Chocolate* and its ambivalent presentation of Vivian's defiant sexuality. Vivian begins the novel as a confident sixteen-year-old whose family loss and change in community lead her to question the social practices that govern life in her wolf pack, but as she breaks taboos against interspecies relationships by pursuing Aiden, a human young man, Vivian must navigate the violent consequences of defying the patriarchal order of her pack. Klause engages the theme of aggressive female sexuality as defiance only to suppress it through Vivian's compliant resignation to her place as a *loup-garou*, or werewolf. In the third section I attempt to rationalize the irrational as I unpack the convoluted and unreliable story of Micah in Larbalestier's postmodern novel *Liar*. Because the text is narrated by a self-professed liar, the story Micah presents about her experiences as an adolescent werewolf is suspect as well as disjointed and contradictory. The form of the novel, as well as the central character, revolts against traditional narrative forms to present an unreliable and ultimately unruly text and narrator. Through the novel's oblique treatment of insanity as a theme, Larbalestier challenges perceptions of reality and accepted ideas about gender.

Each of these texts, written in different decades, tells the story of an adolescent on the boundaries of society and of different species. She is part animal and part human and, at times, exhibits decidedly unfeminine and monstrous behavior. According to Haraway, "boundary creatures," which I suggest encompasses the werewolf, "are, literally, *monsters*, a word that shares more than its root with the word, to *demonstrate*. Monsters signify" ("Introduction" 2). Haraway posits that such boundary creatures, such as monsters, may signify alternative possibilities and "modes of being" ("Introduction" 2).

The werewolves discussed in this dissertation demonstrate such alternative modes of being through their fluid identities as they shift from girl to animal. These adolescent female werewolves' hybridity facilitates their deviant behavior, such as breaking taboos and pushing boundaries; however, it also poses a threat, and the social system that surrounds them will attempt to destroy that which challenges its ordering practices. As the protagonists move through adolescence and towards hybridity, normative femininity and sexuality are destabilized, and the monstrous feminine is depicted at times as violent and angry but also as powerful and liberated.

Boobs Bornstein Bites Back: The Menstrual Monster

The werewolf has been considered a metaphor for the mysterious and “horrific” period of adolescence, with its painful growth spurts, awkward sprouting of hair, and strange bodily urges that are beyond a young person's control.⁷ Furthermore, the cycle of the werewolf, through its link to the lunar phases, can also be connected to menstrual cycles, with the compulsive and painful transformation of the body from human to beast paralleled to the monthly symptoms of PMS. In many adolescent novels and films about female werewolves, the girl's transition into a wolf begins when she is simultaneously transitioning into a physically mature woman, a change that is signaled with the onset of menstruation.⁸ Horror novels such as *Carrie* have played upon the fear, mystery, and taboo surrounding menstruation, presenting protagonists who become monstrous after menarche. In the film *Ginger Snaps*, Ginger is bitten during a violent rape-like attack by a werewolf at the moment of menarche, a particularly symbolic incident summed up in

the movie's tag line: "they don't call it the curse for nothing."⁹ In contrast to the general emphasis on loss of control, however, in "Boobs," adolescent Kelsey (aka "Boobs Bornstein") transforms herself into a wolf through sheer willpower during her first menstruation. Susan Bordo considers the "bodily eruptions" depicted symbolically in werewolf movies as "metaphor[s] for anxiety about internal processes out of control—uncontained desire, unrestrained hunger, uncontrolled impulse" (189). In "Boobs," Charnas presents a twist on this trend by creating a character for whom the metamorphosis is not solely an eruption of untamed impulses. For Kelsey, being a part-time wolf is more desirable than being a menstruating, passive young woman; being a wolf is a means of control.¹⁰

Kelsey, who is around thirteen years old, is a frustrated and resentful adolescent girl who, as an early developer with large breasts, feels powerless and angry that her body is betraying her by turning her into what she sees as a "cartoon" version of herself (21).¹¹ Billy Linden, a boy at her school, sexually harasses her in the halls, calling her "Boobs" and constantly trying to grab or brush up against her chest. The first time he refers to her as "Boobs" and attempts to grope her breasts, Kelsey hits him in the shoulder in a moment of active resistance to being objectified.¹² In response, Billy brutally punches her in the face (19). From her first-person point of view, Kelsey describes her aggravation with her changing body: "I always used to wrestle and fight with the boys, being that I was strong for a girl. All of a sudden it was different" (19). Commenting on notions of difference that develop during puberty, Jane Ussher, in her study of discourses that categorize female reproduction as monstrous, explains,

“Becoming a woman signifies difference—for some, the unruly menstrual body marking the end of the illusion that a girl is the same as, as good as, a boy” (21). Hilda, Kelsey’s stepmother, tells her, ““You’re all growing up and the boys are getting stronger than you’ll ever be. If you fight with the boys, you’re bound to get hurt. You have to find other ways to handle them”” (19). Hilda’s advocacy of either passive resistance or compliance is unsatisfying for Kelsey, and when Kelsey experiences menarche (oddly enough, the morning after Billy breaks her nose), Hilda cheerfully tells her “how terrific it is to ‘become a young woman’” (19). Kelsey doesn’t buy it. After putting away her beloved stuffed dog Pinky in a “primitive” ritual Hilda suggests they perform to mark her transition into womanhood, Kelsey isolates herself at school, afraid that her classmates will “smell” what is happening to her (19-20).

That night, the night of a full moon, Kelsey stands naked in front of her mirror and pinches her body in punishment for its betrayal.¹³ Her self-punishment indicates a rejection of and alienation from her body. When she begins to feel her menstrual blood trickle down her legs, she can no longer stand it: “I pressed my thighs together and shut my eyes hard, and I did something” (21). Kelsey turns herself into a wolf.

I felt myself shrink down to a hard core of sort of cold fire inside my bones, and all the flesh part, the muscles and the squishy insides and the skin, went sort of glowing and free-floating, all shining with moonlight, and I felt a sort of shifting and balance-changing going on [. . .] I was a werewolf, like in the movies they showed over Halloween weekend. But it wasn’t anything like your ugly movie werewolf that’s just some guy

loaded up with pounds and pounds of make-up. I was *gorgeous* [. . .] I was thin, with these long, slender legs but strong, you could see the muscles, and feet a little bigger than I would have picked. But I'll take four big feet over two big boobs any day. (21, 26, 25)

The description of Kelsey's transformation as a "cold fire" is indicative of her new hybridity. In the light of the moon, she becomes a paradoxical composite of fire and ice, human and animal. As a hybrid, Kelsey demonstrates "transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities," and as such, resists the "deepened dualisms" of Western thought (Haraway, "Cyborg" 154). The fluid shift from girl to wolf destabilizes the seemingly impenetrable boundaries that frame her identity as human.

Her metamorphosis is described in terms of how she feels, not in terms of how her shifting body looks. She enjoys the look and functionality of her new body. She defiantly returns the male gaze that was previously objectifying and oppressive, observing herself with newfound appreciation and wonder. With big feet and strong legs, she will be able to run and hunt with ease, whereas she sees no productive use in her human breasts or menses. On the contrary, they are a hindrance to her, making her an object of ridicule. Female breasts are sites of much debate and anxiety in contemporary American culture. Too big, too small, misshapen, cancerous, they are focal points of cultural attention and obsession. For Kelsey, her breasts are obtrusive and beacons for sexual harassment. Furthermore, her menstruating body and growing breasts are biological indicators of her ability to produce and feed children; however, as she is a thirteen-year-old adolescent, sex and babies are hardly on Kelsey's mind. She is

more concerned with revolting against what she sees as the oppressive aspects of being born female.

In her newly empowered wolf body, Kelsey runs and hunts at night, experiencing the world with her lupine speed and heightened senses. In her ferocious furry form she feels that she is in control: “I mean it felt—interesting. Like something I was doing instead of just another dumb body-mess happening to me because some brainless hormones said so” (24). The thrill she experiences is the actualization of agency. Gender metaphorically has become a matter of choice for Kelsey. As a girl she is unable to overpower the pack of boys led by Billy who bully her at school, but as a wolf she scatters a pack of dogs, and, in a vividly described scene, eats a little terrier, followed by two more dogs. As with the burial of her beloved stuffed toy dog, Pinky, Kelsey’s consumption of the little dogs is a definitive rejection of the cute, furry animals associated with pre-pubescent girlhood. Rather than a defanged pink, plushy little toy (girl), Kelsey becomes a ferocious, well-muscled beast.

In “Boobs,” Billy may initially seem like the predatory figure who threatens the girl’s virtue, but Kelsey reverses the power dynamic, becoming a threat to his manhood. It doesn’t take long for Kelsey to realize that in her animal form, she can exact revenge on the sexist and predatory Billy. She lures him to the park at night with promises of sexual activity, watches him through the bushes, and then violently attacks and eats him, just as she did with the other dogs. The episode is described in gruesome rape-like terms:

I was wild inside, I couldn't wait another second. [. . .] He thrashed around, hitting at me, but I hardly felt anything through my fur. I mean, he wasn't so big and strong laying there on the ground with me straddling him. [. . .] His clothes were a lot of trouble and I really missed having hands. I managed to drag his shirt out of his belt with my teeth. (34-35)

Kelsey's first strike is to crushingly bite his face. In this moment of castrating fear for Billy, Kelsey has become the embodiment of the *vagina dentata*.¹⁴ Resisting Billy's sexual oppression, Kelsey turns the tables to unleash her own forbidden appetite. The concupiscent pursuer becomes the impotent prey. It would seem that Kelsey takes Hilda's advice and finds another way to deal with boys.

Charnas has commented that readers are not able to get over Kelsey's slaying of dogs, but they can forgive her the murder of Billy (Tuttle 38). The terrier that Kelsey kills is perhaps too closely connected with the sentimentalized cute, furry animals of childhood, and as Kelsey says, "I mean, dogs are just dumb animals. If they're mean, it's because they're wired that way or somebody made them mean, they can't help it" (31). Kelsey remains hostile to the furry creatures that remind her of her own vulnerability as a girl. In the high school paradigm, ugly girls are called "dogs" and mean girls are called "bitches," verbal attacks intended to denigrate women by associating them with "man's best friend," with the non-human and uncivilized. Charnas undermines this rhetorical association by presenting the power and control that Kelsey gains metaphorically through the werewolf. Through the denigrating use of "dog" and "bitch," women have been associated with the subjugation of canines under

hu[man]s, but Charnas appropriates this practice to demonstrate female empowerment. Continuing to denounce the furry dogs of her childhood, Kelsey comes to associate “dumb dogs” with threatening boys. Both are victims of her increased powers as a werewolf. In killing the dumb dogs and cruel boys, Kelsey redirects the hostility she previously demonstrated in relation to her own body (when she pinched herself in front of the mirror) towards the creatures she associates with her vulnerability and the agents who threatened her safety. Furthermore, most neighborhood dogs are domesticated and tamed by humans to be obedient.¹⁵ Kelsey, a human-animal hybrid, rejects that power dynamic.

With Billy gone, Kelsey is able to walk through the halls of school more confidently, without anybody yelling, ‘Hey, Boobs!’” (35). And if any of the other boys at school tries to objectify or sexually threaten her, she has a bloody way to make him stop. In addition to a violent defense plan, Kelsey continues to hunt human prey as a wolf. Her monthly exploits earn her the label “The Full Moon Killer,” even though she considers her kills a public service: “I do pick and choose, though. [. . .] I have done a lot more for the burglary problem around Baker’s Park than a hundred dumb ‘watchdogs,’ believe me” (36).¹⁶ Nevertheless, her monthly killings have “the whole State up in arms and terrified as it is” (36). The threat she poses to the community requires that she be secretive about her identity, and she comments that eventually she will have to leave the area, presumably to avoid capture. Her destructive appetite is a closeted part of her identity, a secret that she reveals to no one.

Yet despite her grisly moonlight pursuits, Kelsey ends her story by revealing that she has reconciled with her girlfriend Gerry-Anne—who quit talking to her after a rumor spread through school that Kelsey and Billy Linden were sexually intimate at a party—and that she is going to go on her first date with a boy from another school. With a new perspective on life as a girl, she makes two vows: “One is that on this date I will not worry about my chest, I will not be self-conscious, even if the guy stares. The other is, I’ll never eat another dog” (37). It may appear that Kelsey has replaced her dark, wolf-like desires with the stereotypical priorities of an adolescent girl and a more confident view of her body; however, through a bit of dark humor, the final lines of the story reveal that her macabre personality has not changed, only her outlook on life’s possibilities. She can choose to be both girl and wolf, but she must keep the wolf hidden to integrate into human society.

The wolfish side of Kelsey endures rather than being contained or destroyed, which suggests an endorsement of female resistance and autonomy. Curiously, though, Kelsey continues to turn into a wolf once a month, and while she gets “a little crampy” and “break[s] out more than usual,” she does not menstruate, “which is fine with” her (36). In *Asimov’s* version of the story, however, this intimate feminine detail is omitted. Before publishing the story, *Asimov’s* encouraged Charnas to make Kelsey a more likeable character by focusing on the positive changes to her social life, omitting the fact that she becomes “The Full Moon Killer,” and removing disturbing lines such as “People can be awfully nasty, but they sure taste sweet” (36). While in both versions of the story she renews her female friendship and begins to date, the deletion of the fact that she still

hunts and prowls demonstrates a prioritizing of social acceptance and heteronormativity. Everything is “hunky-dory” in *Asimov’s* version.¹⁷ The threat of Billy has been removed, suggesting that the reader will forgive Kelsey for his murder because he/she has shared in her abuse, thereby making her actions more palatable. Like Carrie White, Kelsey has been abused by her peer, and his death is payback for the abuse he perpetrated against her. There are, however, two major differences between Kelsey’s revenge and Carrie’s. The first is that Carrie’s revenge against the town of Chamberlain is not premeditated; rather, it is almost an instinctual reaction to the trauma of years of abuse coupled with the shock of being publicly drenched in pig’s blood. In contrast, Kelsey plots to get back at Billy, luring him into meeting her at night in the park and stalking him like prey. Her description of how he tastes and the noises he makes as she consumes first his face and then his midsection are indulgently gruesome. Secondly, Kelsey is not punished for her cannibalistic crime, whereas Carrie’s death is both tragic and inevitable. On the one hand, Carrie’s innocence can only be preserved through death as a sacrifice that will lead to the end of chaos in Chamberlain. Kelsey, on the other hand, thrives after destroying Billy. Disorder continues in her community, and eventually Kelsey will have to move on, but in the meantime, she enjoys herself as a hunting wolf and as a young woman.

Nevertheless, Kelsey is somewhat domesticated and integrated into the social order in *Asimov’s* version, and the detail that she no longer menstruates is also removed. In the introductory paragraphs to Charnas’s preferred version of the story, Charnas writes: “‘Boobs’ addresses a matter of concern to one half of the human race

(menstruation, not lycanthropy), but it was not exactly suitable for *Redbook* or *Mademoiselle*; *Seventeen* wouldn't touch it, and *Ms.* told me they weren't taking fiction. In the end Gardner Dozois bought it for *Asimov's*. He asked for a minor rewrite of the ending, something to take a little of the chill off, so to speak" (qtd. in Jones 472), explaining that "both he and his editorial staff found our heroine to be a bit too 'unsympathetic'" (qtd. in Tuttle 37). Charnas explains her attachment to the original, more "flippantly nasty" ending,

I still like it best, but I recognize that my take on these things is darker than most people seem to be comfortable with -- in part because I'm a woman, of course. Nobody would ever ask David Skal or Steve King (even when he was an unknown) to soften an ending to spare the horror reader's delicate sensibilities!¹⁸

Asimov's treatment of Charnas as a woman writer and the magazine's concerns about representing a girl so unapologetically and wolfishly violent reveal social practices that attempt to contain female violence. As such, the editor's response to the story indicates taboos about female violence, even when a female imagines violence.¹⁹ *Asimov's*, to a degree, attempts to "tame" Kelsey.²⁰ However, Kelsey is not reformed in the original story. She continues to enjoy her freedom and power. Furthermore, Charnas, a feminist science fiction writer as well as fantasy writer, manipulates the boundaries between human and animal via the character of Kelsey, thus demonstrating Haraway's claim that "[t]he cyborgs populating feminist science fiction make very problematic the statuses of man and woman, human, artefact, member of a race,

individual entity, or body” (“Cyborg” 178). The status of Kelsey as a girl comes into question, including in relation to her violent tendencies.

Anxiety about female violence in the story is congruent with concerns about menstruation, a taboo topic that reveals the tensions within society’s perspective on the female body. Ussher explains: “Menarche marks the point at which a girl becomes a woman; when childhood innocence may be swapped for the mantle of monstrosity associated with abject fecundity. [. . .] The spectre of sexuality hovers in the shadows, warning of worse to come; woman as ‘deadly man-eater’, inciting desire in men, a disturbing presence who must be carefully contained” (19). Such a specter of sexuality hovers in the shadows in “Boobs.” Enhanced hearing is one of Kelsey’s new powers as a werewolf, which to her embarrassment allows her to hear her father and stepmother’s sexual intercourse. Naturally, her stepmother then becomes pregnant. Kelsey’s parents assure her that the new baby will be fun for her “and good preparation for being a mother [herself] later on, when [she] found some nice guy and got married” (30). The connection between menstruation, sexuality, and reproduction is made explicit in the story through Hilda. With the onset of menstruation, Kelsey becomes vividly aware of her parents’ sexuality and the physical reality of reproduction. From evidence of her parents’ sex life and lies about her being intimate with Billy, to stories about her friend having to change her baby sister’s diapers and whispers about a classmate being molested by her father, sexuality, specifically heterosexuality, is framed as oppressive for Kelsey, something over which she will seemingly have no control. The product of her parents’ sexuality will mean that she will have to change diapers, “yick” (30). The

lies Billy tells about her promiscuity lead to her being shunned by her friend. The girl who was molested by her father for years was powerless, too. Early in the story, Kelsey feels that her body, as well as her sexuality, is out of her control, and Billy's constant attempts to grope her breasts are a violation of her privacy, a violation in which Kelsey views her body as complicit. It would seem that by the end of the story, Kelsey is able to be excited about the prospects of her burgeoning sexuality and her first date because she has reclaimed control and found her power.

In replacing menstruation with lycanthropy, both of which have been considered medical conditions, Kelsey reasserts control over her feminine excess, and Charnas satirically depicts a menstrual “bitch” who refuses to be bullied. Ussher proposes that the cultural notions of woman as either monstrous or angelic surface in discourses of menstruation:

Cultural representations of idealised femininity juxtapose the monster feminine with the beatific mother, the Madonna with the whore [. . .]. This juxtaposition of the good and bad woman is central to women's positioning of themselves as having PMS—where the premenstrual self epitomises the monstrous feminine made flesh, and women use metaphors such as ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ to describe the premenstrual self [. . .]. Women position the premenstrual phase of the cycle as a time when they are not themselves; instead, they are a woman possessed. (47-48)

Ussher goes on to explain: “When emotions or behaviours are split off as ‘not me’, as symptoms of PMS, women foster a sense of alienation or distance from themselves”

(48). While Kelsey would seem to be the embodiment of all that is dangerous and “bad” about woman, the narrative supports her transition into an animal as an improvement over the powerlessness she feels and the abuse she encounters from hostile male attention. Clearly her PMS violence as a girl is less effective than her menstrual violence as a wolf. In Charnas’s preferred version of the story, Kelsey remains a predatory, powerful wolf who has friends and even a potential boyfriend. Because she is able to replace menstruation with lycanthropy, Kelsey no longer feels alienated from her body. She promises herself that she will not feel insecure about her breasts. Furthermore, Larbalestier, in her study on Tanith Lee’s werewolves, maintains that the werewolf functions as the “quintessential otherness of humanity” (*Opulent 2*). Kelsey’s acceptance of and exultation in her ability to shift into a wolf is a rejection of the socio-cultural limits imposed on “woman” in particular and “human” in general.

Moreover, Charnas’s frank description of Kelsey’s menstruation violates taboos that enforce an air of secrecy and shame about the process. Michelle Martin explains that the media’s emphasis on the secrecy and shame of menstruation has alienated young women from the processes of their body (“Periods” 22). Such shame and secrecy is clearly on display in “Boobs,” as Kelsey fears people will know and be able to smell that she is having her period, but Kelsey’s narrative subverts this secrecy by graphically detailing her experience. The cessation of Kelsey’s menses also anticipates current debates about women’s choice to opt out of monthly menstruation. Celebrating menarche rather than treating menstruation as a shameful secret or affliction is a possibility to which, according to Martin, “Mainstream American culture has not (yet)

awakened” (Martin, “No One” 151). Hilda’s cheerful reinforcement of the joys of becoming a woman is an example of such rhetoric. Kelsey, nevertheless, is quite content to not be subjected to the “joys” of this part of being a woman.

Kelsey’s transformation into a wolf and her refusal to be a victim of male hostility and sexual harassment are a dark but potentially liberating model of female power and resistance. Some of Charnas’s readers find Kelsey’s unapologetic violence too disturbing, but perhaps this is the point. Kelsey disturbs precisely because she disrupts the boundaries of the “human” body and expresses the frustration, anger, and violent power that are denied to women. Kelsey acknowledges that she has been labeled a killer, but she does not internalize this label, nor does she allow it to suppress her dark desires. The difference between Ginger’s and Kelsey’s werewolf transformations is a matter of agency. Whereas Ginger is violently infected during a rape-like assault by a werewolf, Kelsey takes control of her body, compelling herself to change and rejecting the cute, fuzzy notions of femininity embodied by her stepmother, Hilda. Her lupine condition, therefore, is not an affliction, nor is it a matter of infection or heredity; it is a matter of choice. To her, becoming a wolf means freedom and power. When the lines between human and animal are blurred through hybridity, the female werewolf is free to move beyond social limits on female potentiality: she can be active, powerful, and fierce. She becomes one of the “promising and dangerous monsters who help redefine the pleasures and politics of embodiment and feminist writing” (Haraway, “Cyborg” 179). Overall, “Boobs” implies that the human girl can fight back against abuse and

oppression and choose freedom and power, though perhaps without the magic and murder.

Taming Vivian's Sexual Aggression: The Wild Wolf

The female werewolf begins to subvert gender binaries by appropriating the traditionally masculine figure of the wolf. In folk and fairy tales, the wolf is often associated with male predators on female virtue. For instance, the wolf in Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood" is equated with the dangerous male suitor. Who can forget the cautionary note in Perrault's moral: "From this story one learns that children, especially young lasses, pretty, courteous and well-bred, do very wrong to listen to strangers, and it is not an unheard thing if the Wolf is thereby provided with his dinner" (Hallett and Karasek 8)? "The Story of Grandmother," the tale on which some scholars contend Perrault based his story, identifies the wolf as a "bzou," or werewolf (Hallett and Karasek 1). Because in the majority of versions, the wolf, or werewolf, threatens to eat, or actually succeeds in eating, the young girl, the story has often been categorized as a commentary on the male sexual appetite and its danger to young women. Novels and films that depict female werewolves, however, turn the tale of Little Red Riding Hood on its head, for in these stories the girl becomes the wolf and hunts the boy. Vivian Gandillon, the howling heroine in Klause's novel, positions herself as the fairy tale's wolf when she thinks "Hello, Little Red Riding Hood" while in the midst of destroying the room of a girl whom she believes has stolen the heart of her love interest (212).²¹ As she lies partially hidden under the covers of Kelly's bed, with her snout and claws

exposed, Vivian, in this instance, recognizes her position as the wolf, both literal and figurative, as well as the connotations surrounding the predatory figure.²² It is her desire for Aiden, a gentle human boy, that drives the narrative.²³ Her potency as a character stems not only from her status as a werewolf, but also from her clear articulation of her desire. Books such as *Blood and Chocolate* that recognize the presence of this often unspoken feeling ratify the idea that women, even young women, are sexual beings who have the power to name and indulge their often hidden desires.

Despite her nightly hunts and hairy alter ego, what classifies Vivian as monstrous is not, in fact, monstrous to her. She admires and enjoys her wolf body as much as she does her human form. From Vivian's perspective, her hybridity is a gift, a blessing. As a beautiful *loup-garou*, she is aware of the multiple facets of her being, but sees herself as separate and different from humankind. Nevertheless, she has what Alice Trupe calls "a fierce and unabashed sexuality" that fascinates her human love interest, Aiden (215). Vivian is confident in her body, her strength, her abilities, and ultimately herself, whether she is wolf or woman. Despite her confidence, which is part of her allure, her struggle throughout the novel is to find her place within her pack and within the human world. Haraway sees hybridity as a potential conduit for affinity between groups divided by binary modes of being, but Vivian's attempts to bridge connections between *loups-garoux* and humans are fraught with secrecy and danger. Instead, affinity is perhaps achieved between Vivian and the human reader, who is able to recognize elements of herself despite the barriers of fiction, fantasy, and lycanthropy.

The novel begins when Vivian's home in the West Virginia hills is burned to the ground, a traumatic event that results in the death of her father, who is trapped inside the fiery tomb. The fire was set by humans in the nearby community as an act of revenge because they believe the *loups-garoux* murdered two human girls. The fire and the concomitant death of her father are object lessons for Vivian, making concrete the possible consequences of revealing one's identity as a werewolf. After relocating to a Maryland suburb, Vivian must acclimate to a new environment where she is surrounded by concrete and humans. She becomes interested in Aiden, whom she finds intriguing but pities, for she considers him only "half a person" (25). In her eyes, he is lacking the freedom and completeness that come from synthesizing the human and animal sides of life. She even wonders whether she is a "pervert" for liking him, reasoning with herself that "It's only a game...to see if I can snare him" (26). Her family and pack disagree with her choice to pursue a "meat boy," a human; as her mother explains, "Don't date if you can't mate" (29).²⁴ In a moment when she feels isolated in her wolf pack as well as in the human community, Aiden helps her feel better about herself, at least for a while. Throughout the course of their star-crossed relationship, *she* pursues *him*, though she lets him think he is in control.²⁵ She thinks to herself, "I will howl for you, human boy...I will hunt you in my girl skin but I'll celebrate as wolf" (31). In acknowledgement of her position as the wolf, the two lovers play out the question-and-answer scene from "Little Red Riding Hood": "'What red lips you have,' he said in her ear. Did she dare say it? 'All the better to kiss you with, my dear,' she replied" (51). In the context of the folk tale, Aiden is the prey about to be consumed.²⁶

While Aiden is weak when compared to Vivian's physical strength, Gabriel, the male wolf who will take Vivian's father's place as leader of the pack, is incontrovertibly strong and confident.²⁷ He appreciates Vivian's capacity to defend herself and her pack and patiently pursues her as she pursues Aiden. Mark Vogel, in his article on adolescent animal transformation in young adult literature, argues "In these books the stark differences between the animal world and the human world [. . .] make decision-making for these protagonists especially difficult" (60). Vivian's struggle to choose between the human world and life with the pack is the crux of the novel. Gabriel's overt representation of traditional models of masculinity in the first half of the novel is a stark contrast to Aiden's feminized passivity. Gabriel shamelessly makes his way through the female members of the pack, receiving their seductions with "languid amusement" (37). He is a strong enough fighter to win the Ordeal—a physical battle between the male wolves to become alpha of the pack—and he doesn't "mind hitting females" (159). And yet he only uses violence to maintain order among the wolves. Aiden, alternatively, may think that witches, vampires, and werewolves are exciting, but he is so gentle that he does not even kill an ant that is crawling on his arm. When Vivian sees him let the ant crawl onto a blade of grass, she laughs and tells Aiden, "I don't think you'd make a good werewolf" (58). He is an artist, a poet, and an optimist, who is associated with the sun and the free flowing friendship of the Amoeba, his group of friends. Gabriel is mainly associated with the night and the rigid rules of the pack. It seems that in the first half of the novel, Klause sets up a falsely oppositional relationship between Aiden and Gabriel, indicating that Vivian will have to choose between lovers who are polar opposites and in

doing so decide who and where she wants to be. In the second half of the novel, however, these binary differences disintegrate. Aiden becomes the gun-wielding defender of humanity, and Gabriel becomes the tender and nurturing hero. Vivian's attempts to categorize Aiden and Gabriel as emblems of what she thinks she does and does not want painfully fail. Aiden's gentleness and Gabriel's ferocity are not mutually exclusive.

The crisis in the novel occurs when, in attempt to cultivate affinity, Vivian reveals her wolf form to Aiden in the hope that he will love all of her, not just the part of her that looks like a human girl. During what is meant to be their first sexual experience together, Vivian stands before Aiden naked, vulnerable, excited, and in love, and rapturously shifts into a wolf.²⁸ The power dynamic in this instance is underscored by the characters' physical positions in the room as Aiden, completely vulnerable, lies naked in bed and reaches up for Vivian as she stands. She is heartbroken when he responds with impotent fear and disgust:

Aiden's face was white in the flickering candlelight, his eyes large. He drew his limbs close to his body. Awkwardly he shifted away from her, crushing his back against the headboard. His mouth opened into a gash and from it came a hideous whining sound. Naked and wormlike, he cowered on the bed like a nightmare view of an asylum inmate. He stank of fear. (168)

His reaction makes her feel disgusted, guilty, and "unclean" (169). She longs to speak to him, but in her wolf state she cannot form words. They are both muted in the horror of

the moment. Even when she “wag[s] her tail like a dog,” he responds with pathetic violence, flinging a mug across the room at her (169). She tries to appeal to his sense of affinity with domestic animals, but all he can see is a wild, untamed beast. The tragedy of the event is that her loving intentions are met with abject terror. Though Vivian may be seeking to confirm the reality of her connection to Aiden, he is not prepared to learn of the secret she has been keeping from him.

After Aiden’s rejection of her, Vivian accuses him of being the monster when all she wanted was love (194). The term “monster” is reversed, thereby disrupting conventions of marking the animalistic human as a terrifying threat. She cannot understand why he does not see the beauty of her wolf, a part of herself that she euphorically embraces. It would seem that he is not confident enough or prepared to love all of her, whereas Gabriel, who shares her werewolf heritage, is. Aiden may enjoy fantasizing about the werewolves in art, movies, and literature, but Gabriel sees the beauty in Vivian’s animal state. He lets her fight her own battles and values her strength, as well as her vulnerability. Also, he validates her desire to indulge her curiosity about humans. The novel intimates that theirs will be a match based on honesty and equality, a relationship in which Vivian can express herself without fear of consuming a weaker other. Such a resolution may seem to suggest that a strong female needs a stronger man; however, I see the relationship as more nuanced. Gabriel doesn’t force Vivian into submission; he patiently waits for her, stops her from killing herself, and kisses her when she feels her ugliest. Perhaps more significant, though, is his own hybridity. He is not all brute strength and violence. He is also gentle and vulnerable.

Like Vivian, he, too, once loved a human who rejected his wolf side. When Vivian comments that humans are not like *loups-garoux*, he insightfully responds, “They can’t change. [...] But I do believe they have a beast within” (261).

Gabriel reveals that when his human lover rejected him, he hit her, accidentally killing her instantly. The fear of destroying a weaker other is entrenched in the novel.²⁹ Before approaching Aiden for the first time, she asks herself, “Would he be safe if he came close enough to fill her nostrils with his scent?” (28).³⁰ Calling him a “meat boy” only further equates him with prey and the taboo behavior of cannibalism, a taboo that Kelsey gleefully violates. Vivian’s powerful sexuality may seem dangerous to human men, or more specifically naïve young men. In response to the unveiling scene, wherein Vivian reveals her other side to Aiden, Karen Coats argues, “His gesture of sublimation is an attempt to hold the abject at bay, whereas her response is to recast the terms of abjection—*she* abjects *him* for his denial of his own corporeal, animal nature” (158). I would argue that it is not so much his own animality that Aiden is rejecting as it is the surprising transformation of Vivian into an active, sexual aggressor. Heretofore, Vivian has allowed Aiden to think that he is in control, that he is the one on top, but in that moment he becomes frighteningly aware of how powerful Vivian truly is. In recasting Aiden as the monster rather than herself, Vivian rejects him as the weaker of the pair, resolving to accept and celebrate her strength and beauty as a wolf. Coats’s argument, however, associates the animal with the corporeal, which classifies uncontrolled base physical urges with animalistic behavior and implements a subsequent hierarchical value to the human—and, by extension, mind—side of the equation. Experiencing the

corporeal as a part of her identity not inherently tied to her animal side, but somewhere in between the human and the animal, Vivian's hybridity disrupts not only the mind-body dualism but the human-animal and masculine-feminine dualisms as well. The animal and the human and the masculine and the feminine are not mutually exclusive in relation to Vivian; they are one and the same through her. Vivian's sense of self is composed not only by the way she sees herself but also by the way she experiences herself. Her body is, to use Elizabeth Grosz's terms, "the very 'stuff' of [her] subjectivity" (*Volatile ix*).³¹

The celebration of the corporeal experience and the validation of sexual identity are perhaps most strongly demonstrated when Vivian describes in detail the feeling of the physical transformation from girl to wolf:

Down by the river was a giant tumble of rocks that screened the riverbank. Behind the rocks, amid the shoulder-high weeds, she slowly slid off her clothes. Already her skin prickled with the sprouting pelt. A trickle of breeze curled around her buttocks, and her nipples tightened in the cool air off the river. She laughed and threw her panties down.

Her laugh turned to a moan at the first ripple in her bones. She tensed her thighs and abdomen to will the change on, and clutched the night air like a lover as her fingers lengthened and her nails sprouted. Her blood churned with heat like desire. *The night*, she thought, *the sweet night*. The exciting smells of rabbit, damp earth, and urine drenched the air.

The flesh of her arms bubbled and her legs buckled to a new shape. She doubled over as the muscles of her abdomen went into a brief spasm, then grimaced as her teeth sharpened and her jaw extended. She felt the momentary pain of the spine's crunch and then the sweet release.

(30)

Couched in patently sensual terms, this passage demonstrates the palpability of the sexuality tied to Vivian's experience of her corporeality, but I would argue that this sexual moment is not solely connected to her bodily sensations. Just before the change, she expresses her desire "to change because it was possible. She want[s] to run for the joy of it" (29). She relishes a moment of happiness, celebrating by enjoying a self-initiated metamorphosis. The transition from girl to wolf is a briefly painful but pleasant change for her, one that seems to demonstrate the solitary, orgasmic euphoria of masturbation. This episode in particular functions in opposition to a heteronormative model of sexuality, as masturbation indicates that a woman does not need a man to achieve sexual satisfaction. This moment of self-love indicates Vivian's pleasure in her body and her hybridity. Not only does she enjoy being a girl and wolf, but she also enjoys the transition between the two. In fact, this is the only scene in the novel when Vivian is described as experiencing such pleasure. While she is compelled to change with the full moon, she can change any other time at will, as she does in the aforementioned scene. In this instance, Vivian is an agent of her own desire as she explores and celebrates her sexual body, much in the way that Kelsey is an agent of her own empowerment. Their solitary and self-triggered changes are an affirmation of their

personal strength, though Vivian's is also an affirmation of her sensuality. And yet later in the book, when Aiden interrupts the pleasure of her change on the full moon, she becomes painfully sick and spends the night locked in the bathroom, a fitting place for the abject other.³²

Vivian's ability to articulate her own desire needs to be recognized since many studies show that such an articulation can be difficult for adolescent girls. According to Deborah Tolman, the adolescent girl reveals her "erotic voice" by discussing her own sexual feelings. The erotic voice is the adolescent girl's public expression of her sexuality, which validates her sexual subjectivity and empowers her to communicate her desire. However, the erotic voice is often at odds with the "accepted cultural voices that speak to and about female adolescent sexuality" (71). Therefore, it is often difficult for the adolescent girl to conceptualize the subjectivity of her own sexual feelings. For example, Tolman notes that when girls are asked about *feeling* sexy, they tend to respond in terms of *looking* sexy (74), and that when an adolescent girl can express her sexual desires, she is able to appreciate her own subjective experience. Throughout the novel, Vivian's tactile responses to Aiden, and to herself, are described in detail. While she knows what feels good to her, her physical relationship with Aiden is complicated by the fact that she wants him to accept her, all of her. His rejection of her hybridity teaches her not to seek out physical and emotional relationships for the purposes of social acceptance. It also complicates any notions of affinity between different groups because of Aiden's close-minded perspective of reality.

In an interview with Cynthia Leitch Smith, Klause commented that Vivian is a representation of the author in her teens: “angry, seething, frustrated, horny. There was a baser creature inside me who would get loose from the shy girl and do things carnal and wicked—and revel in it” (Smith). Klause’s frank descriptions of these feelings in the novel endorse subversive models of adolescent femininity. Vivian is a grrrl who growls, and the novel contains many reversals and inversions of male-female roles in folklore and contemporary settings. Vivian’s sensuality and desire suggest that Klause is endeavoring to provide a new model of adolescent female empowerment. It would seem that the novel is responding to a shift in gender ideology that equates sensuality with empowerment, even for girls not yet adult. While Vivian is cast as a traditionally monstrous figure—a werewolf—she demonstrates a strength and humanity that the novel validates, even in a scene in which she attempts to burn herself for the sake of the pack. In fact she sees herself as being better than just a human, as an enhanced and complete being in touch with her animal heritage. In her vision of a cyborg world, Haraway sees the possibilities of

lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. The political struggle is to see from both perspectives at once because each reveals both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point. Single vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters. (154)

Because she recognizes her affinity with both human and animal, Vivian can see and experience the world from different perspectives, which indicates the potential of hybridity.

Towards the end of the novel, Vivian becomes trapped in a transitory state between fully shifted wolf and girl. As with many of the film werewolves, she is neither recognizably human nor wolf-like. If, as I claim earlier in this chapter, the ambiguity of the film werewolf is the horrifying element, the lack of detailed description of Vivian's partially metamorphosed body amplifies the horror of her in-between state. The reader is left to imagine how terrifying and grotesque Vivian might appear. She is literally "stuck," morphologically part wolf while still morphologically part girl, and she isolates herself in her room to hide herself from prying eyes. Going so far as to call herself "the secret in the upstairs room," she associates herself with one of literature's most famous monstrous women, the wild and dangerous Bertha Mason from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.³³ But unlike Bertha, Vivian is not insane; she is angry, confused, and sad. Though she tries to isolate herself, Gabriel visits her and tells her, "Vivian, you are beautiful in anything you wear" (261). In a final moment that harkens back to the fairy tale tradition, Gabriel kisses her, after which she transforms into her beautiful wolf. A moment later she "claim[s] her human form again" (264). In kissing Gabriel, Vivian realizes what was missing from her experience with Aiden. Even in her horrific state, Gabriel still loves her, and he explains that "When we love someone we want our lover as mate in both our skin and our fur" (263). The kiss comes after Gabriel reveals his vulnerability by sharing the story of his human lover, and his sensitivity makes him

desirable to her. He accepts her for her strength and her heart, her body and her mind, all of her. And ultimately, by shifting back into a complete wolf after his kiss, she signals that she chooses him just as he chose her.

As a werewolf, Vivian would seem to represent aspects of femininity, as well as adolescence, that society considers frightening and threatening; she is aggressive, rebellious, and independent. However, in her narrative these aspects are a fundamental component of who she is, and as such they cannot be repressed. By validating Vivian's experiences as a werewolf, Klause normalizes her monstrosity as a metaphor for the tempest of emotions—angst, frustration, anger, and sexual desire—during adolescence. As noted earlier in this chapter, the teen body is a body in flux, an unstable body much like that of the werewolf. It is a body that sprouts hair in strange places, produces strange smells, and begins to grow into new shapes. These physical changes are accompanied by tumultuous emotional changes triggered by hormones, as well as the frustrations of denied independence. Yet Vivian sees her transformation as signaling new sensations and new experiences. It is not an ailment or a punishment; it is a part of her growth as a subject.

Blood and Chocolate presents a subversive discourse about female sexuality by celebrating the power and experience of female desire. Vivian's monstrosity does not negate her potential for offering new discourses about female experience. On the contrary, her wolfishness is a validation of female power even though moments in the text demonstrate the social backlash that can erupt when such agency violates social taboos. Through Vivian, Klause demonstrates that adolescent women can be more than

they are told they can be and can experience more than they are permitted to experience, but that these gendered revolts, even those that are covert, can have difficult consequences.

Micah's Mendacity: The Unstable Female

Merging Kelsey's menstrual anxiety with Vivian's potent sexuality, Micah's experience as a female adolescence in *Liar* is fraught with chaos, social, familial, biological, and mental. Unlike Vivian, Micah never considers herself beautiful or feminine. In fact, she spends the first days at her new school pretending to be a boy, then tells people she is a hermaphrodite, both of which are a rejection of a feminine identity. As a biracial, androgynous girl with short-cropped hair and a skinny frame, on scholarship at an expensive progressive school, Micah resists categories.³⁴ She explains, "I'm undecided, stuck somewhere in between, same way I am with everything: half black, half white; half girl, half boy; coasting on half a scholarship. I'm half of everything" (10). Micah's feelings of being "stuck" suggest a similar rhetoric of frustration associated with Vivian's horrific and freakish in-between state. Both characters are categorized as "freaks," as alienated outsiders.³⁵ Micah is a particularly compelling character because she disturbs categories of gender, sexuality, race, and species. Even her name disturbs categories. Midway through her narrative, she reveals that she is a werewolf, a confession that may come as a surprise to the reader. Because Micah is a self-proclaimed liar, the reader must choose whether or not to believe her. Constructed like a jigsaw puzzle, Micah's first-person narrative is disrupted with

flashbacks and brief segments of exposition that periodically interrupt the narrative. The reader is never sure which parts of her story, if any, are “true,” but what is worthwhile to consider is how Micah frames her “experiences” as a werewolf, in other words, what being a werewolf, real or imagined, means to her. Ultimately, she spins a tale that manipulates cultural anxieties about female bodies, sexuality, and lucidity through the metaphor of the werewolf.

As with Vivian, Micah is born a werewolf; however, Micah’s nuclear family does not consider her genetic inheritance a blessing in the way that Vivian’s does. Her father calls it the “family illness,” a euphemism that connects lycanthropy, and obliquely menstruation, to other medical conditions. Fortunately for her father, it skipped a generation, missing him but affecting his daughter. To resist changing into a wolf, Micah takes birth control pills every day, thereby stopping her menstruation, which, according to her father, is a trigger for the transmutation. Other triggers include alcohol, anger, sex, and even coffee, or so her father tells her. It would seem he wants to keep her chaste and subdued. Her grandmother and great-aunt (whom she calls the Greats) tell her otherwise. While her father teaches her to fear and repress her wolf side, meaning feminine side, the Greats, much like Klause’s *loups-garoux*, tell her to embrace it.³⁶ He sees it as dangerous and monstrous, whereas the Greats consider it a noble privilege and a gift.

Micah’s story hinges on her boyfriend Zach’s murder, tracing what her life was like before and after his death. As the mystery of Zach’s death unravels, so do the lies that Micah continues to spin. Throughout the course of the novel, she informs the reader

that Zach was purportedly killed by wild dogs, and that at one point she had a little brother who died from some kind of unexplained accident. The stage is set to permit the reader to infer that Micah has killed her brother, but another wolf, a male named Pete, takes the blame for killing Zach. Micah, though, is partially responsible for his death. According to the rules of werewolves in the book, male werewolves can only transform when triggered by the change of a nearby female wolf. Because she had shifted not too far from the male wolf, Pete, after having just been with Zach, she is indirectly responsible for his violent death. Even though Micah does not profess to be Zach's killer, female desire in this instance is threatening to men, much in the way that it is framed in *Blood and Chocolate*.

As with Vivian, Micah candidly expresses her sexual desire in her story:

Me and Zach slept together. Made love. Had sex. Fucked. Explored every inch of each other's bodies. [. . .] There were days when I didn't think I'd make it. I'd close my eyes. Imagine pulling him into the janitor's closet. Or worse, leaping across desks, jumping on him, demonstrating the reproductive systems [. . .] Sometimes it would make me sweat, make me damp between my legs. I'd have to run to the bathroom. Stick my head under the cold water faucet. Slap my face. Do anything but think of Zach. (272-73)

As with Vivian's descriptions of the Maryland heat wave that is the backdrop of her romance with Aiden, Micah's explicit details of her desire for Zach suggest an animal in heat. While she may not demonstrate socially prescribed femininity, she certainly

articulates the potential energy of female sexuality. Unlike Vivian, she does not pursue Zach. They become friends when she pretends to be a boy, and then they become running partners after her charade is over. In addition, Zach has a girlfriend, Sarah, while he is involved with Micah. As someone who enjoys secrets and evasions, Micah professes to have not been threatened by his relationship with Sarah. In fact, she claims to have liked it because it meant that they could keep their relationship a secret. Only later does the reader discover that the secrecy of their relationship is also necessary because Micah's father has forbidden her to date boys for fear that it will bring about the change.

Micah's sexual desire is not only limited to her experiences with Zach. After his death she describes two sexual episodes with Sarah, Zach's girlfriend, and Tayshawn, Zach's male best friend. The three of them comfort each other with kisses first in a cave in Central Park, the one where Zach was murdered, and then in Sarah's bedroom, though Micah later admits that the bedroom scene is a lie. During the second, and false, episode, Micah comments that she has a "fever" and expresses her desire "to make out again" (266). After this scene, Micah claims to feel stronger about Zach's death and about punishing the white boy, Pete, who killed him. Her experience with Sarah also demonstrates her exploration of a homosocial/homosexual bond with another girl. When she is with Zach and later with Tayshawn, she is not threatened by the presence of Sarah; rather, she enjoys sharing Tayshawn with her and sharing her with Tayshawn. Their intimacy, however, does not last.

As with her relationship with Zach, Micah keeps her interludes with Tayshawn and Sarah a secret from her parents. Micah's father is convinced that going into heat, rutting, or sex will trigger the change. It is his fear of a condition he does not have, the condition of being female, that keeps Micah enslaved in a sphere of secrecy and silence. The lies he has told to keep her true nature a secret have bred the compulsion to lie in her. She even has a long metal cage in her room to confine her when she is in wolf form. Living in the city, she feels stifled and trapped. To escape this feeling she runs in Central Park and spends every summer at the Greats' farm, where she is free to change into a wolf and hunt and play with her extended family.

Larbalestier, like Klause, establishes contexts that demonstrate the divisions between categories—such as wolves/animals in nature and humans in cities—as a way to address the restrictions of classifications and the ways they affect characters. It is where such boundaries are breached that the cyborg/monster/hybrid appears (Haraway, "Cyborg" 152). Setting in *Liar* is a primary context in which categories are set against each other. The matriarchal world of the Greats' farm upstate is described in stark contrast to the patriarchal world of the city. It is a place isolated from the human world, a separatist community, self-sufficient and off the grid. With forests and pastures, it offers Micah a place to enjoy her animal side in a country landscape. While there, she runs unimpeded as a wolf and hunts with her family. Her description of eating fresh game is similar to Kelsey's and Vivian's: "The fear [the deer] gave off was so pungent I would've gagged if it hadn't smelled so delicious, like swimming in chocolate" (210). The pleasure of hunting and eating a fresh kill as a wolf is exhilarating and more

enticing than the chocolates a sweetheart might bring to a human date. In their small matriarchy, the Greats demonstrate the homosocial bond that Micah finds so elusive. Micah's grandmother and great-aunt run the farm and watch over the motley crew of cousins, with the oldest male family member, Hilliard, living the end of his days as a country dog/wolf. She chooses not to stay on the farm permanently because she wants to continue her education and uncover more reliable information about her condition. Because the farm is a place trapped in the past, with no electricity, no telephone, and no internet, she would be isolated from the rest of the world, without access to new information or new opportunities to find a "cure" for her "illness." She feels she needs to find such a cure in order to be able to assimilate into the larger world, and her changing identities—boy, girl, black, white—are ways that she tries to blend in.

In contrast to the country, the city is claustrophobic and repressive.³⁷ Even the school she attends has metal bars on the windows, as it used to be a women's prison. To maintain her sanity and work out her frustration, Micah runs as a young woman through the parks, finding clarity in these small bastions of nature. During one of her many runs she is befriended by Zach, a boy from her school with whom she falls in love. Running and the freedom of movement are themes that recur in a number of texts with werewolf protagonists. Running, more specifically, represents being unbound, not limited by categories, cages, and curses. When describing her summers on the farm, Micah reflects, "But I miss my wolf days between those two twenty-minute bursts of change—human to wolf, wolf to human. Days when I run free and kill and eat raw and never think once about where I fit or who loves me or what I'll be when I get out of school. I

just am. I know where I belong. Until I'm human again" (174). Micah's language suggests that human and wolf are mutually exclusive terms in that she is either one or the other; however, they exist at the same time within her. It would seem that she is experiencing multiple identities and subjectivities. Haraway suggests that identity based on categories such as gender, race, or class is a kind of "[co]nsciousness through exclusion," and states that, for example, "There is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women" (155). Instead of such unity through identification, Haraway calls for unity through affinity (155). Micah resists categories of identity based on gender and race, but she feels excluded by her peers at school who are disturbed by the fact that she breaches such categories. Through running, though, she is able to develop an affinity with Zach.

Micah's ending, like her story, is ambiguous. It is not clear if she is telling her story from a university dorm or from a prison cell, if she is a werewolf or a pathological liar, if anything that happened in her story is true or not. But in fact, whether her story is "true" is irrelevant. She is writing her own story, the way she does and does not want to see it. The fears and anxieties she projects about werewolves are intimately connected to her experiences as a girl, but these fears have been passed down to her by her father. They are tied to the repressive discourses of the patriarchal city. In the same way she is oppressed by the smells and sounds of the city, she is also repressed by the rules passed down by her father that limit her experience and curtail certain behaviors. On the matriarchal farm surrounded by the wide open spaces of the country, she has freedom to move around and be whom she wants. In other words, her sexuality is not inherently

dangerous and destructive; it is cast that way by the fears and uncertainty of her father, a point which is central to most representations of young women as monsters.

Micah tries to avoid and deny “the curse” throughout the novel. It is something she fears, not only for the pain but for the uncertainty that comes from changing within the city as opposed to the open and protected space on the farm. After Zach’s death, for which Micah’s parents believe she is responsible, she brings Pete to her father to prove her innocence. Nevertheless, her parents still abandon her, leaving her with the Greats. She runs away from the farm and returns to the city where she finds her biology teacher, Yayeko Shoji, for help. Micah explains to Yayeko that she is a werewolf and that she uses her birth control pills to prevent the change. At first Yayeko is convinced that Micah is deliberately suppressing her femininity. Because the wolf is associated with masculinity, she believes Micah is pretending to be a wolf in the same way that she pretended to be a boy and then a hermaphrodite. After replacing Micah’s pills with sugar tablets, Yayeko eventually sees that Micah has been telling the truth.

A common thread throughout Micah’s story is the issue of control: control over one’s body, over one’s environment, over one’s life, a theme that has been present in each of the texts in this chapter. Micah seems to be constantly on the cusp of losing control, but one of the ways she maintains it is by telling her own story. Conversely, loss of control is epitomized by her change from girl to wolf, which is a process like menstruation that can be suppressed but that is a natural function of her body. Notably, the pain and chaos of her transformation drastically differs from the momentary cold fire

of Kelsey's shift in "Boobs" and the orgasmic change that Vivian experiences in *Blood and Chocolate*. Micah explains:

The change comes with my period.

It hurts. Every nerve, every cell, every bone, the shape of my eyes, nose, mouth, my arms, my legs. All of it. Shifts and grinds and groans. Bone stretches, elongates; the muscles, too. Fibers twitch and snap. It's as if every bone in my body has not only been fractured, but broken open, the marrow spilled. Muscles sheared from bone. Eyes pop. Ears explode.

I howl.

For the duration. For the twenty minutes of change I am nothing but a howl. It breaks and deepens and stretches and snaps. Starts human, ends wolf. It's just as bad when it starts wolf and ends human.

The cells in my brain. The gray matter. Squeezing and breaking my memories.

I, the girl, I, the human

Is not

I, the wolf. (172-73)

It has been said that there is a fine line between pleasure and pain. Vivian embraces and enjoys a change that *she* has initiated, whereas Micah suffers an uncontrollable shifting of her body. The descriptions of Micah's and Vivian's transformations present two different sides of the female experience. The pleasure Vivian derives from her

metamorphoses is aligned with orgasmic sexual pleasure, a pleasure she can initiate. Perhaps her pleasure is an acknowledgement of the fact that she accepts her wolf side, whereas Micah's pain reflects her fear of it, a fear created by her father. Micah's pain is linked to the discomfort of menstruation, which is much more than the nuisance Kelsey experiences in "Boobs," and which is amplified by her father's persistent and controlling actions to suspend her menstrual cycle.³⁸ While her father may see menstruation as a process that turns his daughter into a raving maniac and monster, the matriarchs of the family certainly do not. On the farm she is free to be a wolf, while in her home her parents keep a large steel cage at the ready in case she changes.³⁹ As Micah so poetically explains, through her transformation the human side is separated from the wolf side. There is a split in her identity, one of many.

Micah tells her own story and thereby fashions her own identity. The fragmented framework of the narrative reflects the different aspects of Micah's identity. As liar, narrator, and writer of her own story, she decides: Who am I today? Who do I want to be? How do I want you to see me? Black, white, male, female, hermaphrodite, human, wolf, heterosexual, bisexual, gay, murderer, victim, lunatic, sane, or some combination of all of the above. She seems to be searching for her self, piecing together her story to find meaning. The style of the novel demands that the reader coauthor the text by searching for meaning and uncovering the "truth" in Micah's narrative. Sarah Rees Brennan describes *Liar* as "not just a choose your own adventure story, but in many ways the quintessential detective story" (Larbalestier, "Liar Spoiler" Comments).

Readers of the text have proposed numerous theories about the truth behind Micah's story and the truth about who she is. On Larbalestier's blog, many readers believe she is actually a werewolf. Others see the werewolf as a veil for mental illness. A few even consider the werewolf as a symbol of Micah as an intersexed person. Whether she is a werewolf, mentally ill, or intersexed, Micah is an outsider, like Kelsey and Vivian, who resists categories and experiments with multiple identities. On the level of text, *Liar* also resists categories. It can be read as a fantasy and as a work of realism. It is a hybrid, as Micah seems to be. Through its hybridity, the text challenges the intelligibility of reality and the reliability of truth. In terms of gender, Micah's resistance to truth is an expression of her authority and power as narrator and a resistance to assumptions about the limits of gender. Though the book is titled *Liar*, one might consider Micah's narrative style as "telling it slant." Taken from Emily Dickinson's poem, which begins "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—," the phrase has come to refer to "a way of speaking [. . .] forced on women in male-dominated society" (Michell 375). Evading, complicating, and adapting the truth, Micah tells her story in a way that reflects her moves to gain autonomy under her father's repressive parenting. In the first pages of the novel, Micah's description of Broadway, the street on which she runs with Zach, is a metaphor for the novel as a whole: "Broadway was our path north through the island. Zach said it used to be an Indian trail, which made it the oldest street in Manhattan. That's why it twists and turns, sometimes on the diagonal, sometimes straight like an avenue" (4). As with Broadway, Micah's story has direction, but it veers off, diverges, turns around, but still manages to make its point. Ultimately, the

disjointed and conflicting elements, the episodes of family history and personal history, and the jumps between past and present, combine to create a complex narrative that expresses and simultaneously stands in for the chaotic and dynamic experiences of adolescence that resist categorization.

Though the reader is not sure what to believe or what ultimately happens to Micah at the end of the novel, Micah's tale of lycanthropy and family crisis is a biting account of female resistance. One wonders whether being a socially appropriate girl is a lie in itself. Micah may be biologically girl, but she is not feminine in a traditional sense. She even thinks that she would be a better boy than a girl (8). Her father fears the reproductive processes of her female body, and her sexuality is a threat to other men. And like Kelsey and Vivian, she is a disturbing character because she disturbs the category of girl. Nevertheless, within the context of the novel, her feelings, emotions, and desires are real, and she candidly articulates them in *her* narrative. Even though she is a liar, it is still her story to tell.

Conclusion: Anger, Exploration, and Subversion

Kelsey, Vivian, and Micah might not be considered "likeable" characters. Kelsey is angry, sarcastic, and bent on revenge; Vivian is angry, haughty, and bent on revenge; and Micah is angry, unreliable, and distant. Hence they are the heroes of their stories, with the authors consciously rejecting the model of cute, sweet girlhood. As werewolves, Kelsey, Vivian, and Micah would seem to represent aspects of femininity that society considers frightening, threatening, and taboo; however, in their own

narratives, these aspects are fundamental to their identities, and as such they attempt to subvert repression. Kelsey acknowledges that she has been labeled a killer, but she does not internalize this label, nor does she allow it to suppress her dark desires. Vivian never denies her own monstrosity. She understands that she is different from humans, but to her this is a source of strength. Likewise, Micah only lives in fear of her wolf side because she was taught to fear it by her father. She enjoys her wolf body when she is away from his repressive control and the oppressive atmosphere of the city.

For Kelsey, Vivian, and Micah being werewolves identifies them as hybrids, outsiders, and monsters, yet the feelings they express are common to many female adolescents: confusion about social acceptance, frustration with one's body, and resistance to parental guidance and control, and perhaps this is where the hybrid's potential for affinity matters most. Teen reviewers of *Blood and Chocolate* have picked up on the "typical" teen conflicts dealt with in the novel. Tara D., in her review for *Teen Ink*, a website with reviews written by teens, notes that Vivian "deals with the usual teenage drama: boys, friends, her mom." She also recognizes the werewolf transformation as a reprieve from human worries: "But [Vivian] is able to escape all of her troubles by going through the change. The relief that carries her from girl to wolf helps her erase her worries." While the literary teen werewolves may boast supernatural strength and fierce spirit, they are also vulnerable young women who crave love and acceptance. Furthermore, they explore their bodies, sexuality, and gender, experimenting with their identities, naming their desires, and resisting the limits of gender norms. Ultimately, the texts offer a validation of the female teen experience, the horror, the mystery, the madness, the

pleasure, and the uncertainty of it, yet the texts contain this validation through the characters' need for secrecy. The animal sides of their dual natures are kept hidden from society at large. While they must repress their animal desires in public, in private they can revel in the satisfaction of being active creatures. The adolescent female werewolf's fantastic existence haunts the borders between the human and the animal, the masculine and the feminine, and the social and the moral, with her hybridity extending the limits of gender, sexuality, and identity.

Notes

1. As Julia Kristeva explains, the abject “does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (4). Because the werewolf’s body is changing and unstable and because the identity of the creature is neither that of an animal nor that of a human, its very presence, even in fiction, disrupts the boundaries that define human subjectivity. Kristeva writes,

The abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*. Thus, by way of abjection, primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism, which were imagined as representatives of sex and murder. (emphasis in original 12-13)

The female werewolf’s association with sex and murder is a threatening reminder of the human’s proximity to animal and the tenuous boundary between them.

2. Recently the ABC television series *Once Upon a Time* shockingly revealed that its Red Riding Hood character, also a sexualized young woman, is the violent wolf in disguise. Her grandmother explains that the “curse” of turning into a wolf is passed through the family. (“Red-Handed”)

3. See Creed 1993; Nielsen 2004; Miller 2005; Barker, Mathijs, and Mendik 2006.

4. In *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis*, Barbara Creed connects the film monster’s bite, the ensuing blood, and the void left behind as

indicators of castration anxiety and the fear of the maternal abject. I would add that the female's bite is both sexually loaded and uncanny in its demonstration of active female appetite. The animalistic desire to consume paradoxically intersects with social assumptions about feminine passivity to create a horrific crisis, wherein the indulgence of the female appetite becomes the terrifying reality that cannot be.

5. In her study of structures and figures in children's literature, Margery Hourihan addresses significance of the werewolf in fiction and film. She writes that "the werewolf is eventually destroyed by the representatives of social order, hero figures whose purpose is to control the wildness of nature and of human nature which is, by implication, an ever-present threat to civilization" (124). She goes on to claim that werewolves "are a visual image of 'the beast within', of the human capacity for violence, cruelty and slaughter" (124). Though the texts discussed in this chapter do feature moments of violence, cruelty, and slaughter, they also present moments of joy, liberation, and pleasure.

6. I will be referring to the revised manifesto published in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, published in 1991.

7. Leonard Heldreth comments that the circumstances of the werewolf in film are similar to the sexual and physical changes that mark adolescence (119). Heldreth goes on to connect the werewolf's monthly transformation with the biological process of menstruation: "The werewolf's transformation occurs once a month, at the time of the full moon, and lasts for two or three days, during which he or she must indulge in bloodletting; the most obvious manifestation of sexual maturity in adolescent women is

the commencement of monthly menstrual periods” (119-20). It should be noted that Heldreth’s study focuses primarily on male werewolves, with only a brief mention of the existence of female monstrous transformations in film, specifically referencing *Cat People*. (Also see Carroll 1981, Creed 1993, Lawrence 1996, Nielsen 2004, Miller 2005.)

8. For example, Richard Lupoff’s *Lisa Kane* (1976), Justine Larbalestier’s *Liar* (2009), and Christie Peterson’s *Claire de Lune* (2010) all feature teen werewolves who discover that with the onset of menstruation they will turn into wolves. In Stephen Cole’s *The Wereling: Prey* (2004), Kate, a pre-transformation werewolf, teases post-transformation Tom that he is temperamental because it is his “time of the month” (9). Even in film, this connection is often made explicit.

9. Menstrual blood historically has been feared as a biological and superstitious contagion for disease and infection. In “Boobs,” Kelsey identifies Rita as an outsider like herself because Rita’s brother has AIDS (24). Similarly, lycanthropy has been depicted as a contagious condition spread through the blood. Furthermore, Ginger, from *Ginger Snaps*, experiences menarche abnormally late, with her violent transition into a grisly beast mirroring her developing sexuality.

10. Similar to Angela Carter’s “The Company of Wolves” (1979) and Tanith Lee’s “Wolfland” (1983), Charnas’s “Boobs” is a compelling short story that focuses on female empowerment rather than victimization in its rendering of the classic monster.

11. Because different versions of the short story have been published, I will be summarizing and quoting from the author’s preferred version, which was published in

1990 in Lisa Tuttle's collection *Skin of the Soul: New Horror Stories by Women*, and is the version most often anthologized. I will discuss the difference between this version and the one published in *Asimov's* later in the chapter.

12. Because she experiences menarche the next morning, her physical resistance could be attributable to PMS. Nevertheless, this instance demonstrates her agency and the subsequent amplified backlash. Furthermore, her bloody nose is a painful sign of the menstrual blood that will come.

13. As she punishes her body, Kelsey is reminded of an anorexic girl who starved herself to death: "I understood her perfectly. She was trying to keep her body down, keep it normal-looking, thin and strong" (21). If as Bordo claims, "The emaciated body of the anorectic, of course, immediately presents itself as a caricature of the contemporary ideal of hyper-slenderness for women" (170), then the furry, vicious body of the female werewolf presents itself as a caricature of the contemporary fear of female power. Both Kelsey and the anorexic girl try to control their bodies through self-deprivation and punitive discipline in response to the oppression they experience as females.

14. According to Creed,

The myth about woman as castrator clearly points to male fears and phantasies about the female genitals as a trap, a black hole which threatens to swallow them up and cut them to pieces. [. . .] The *vagina dentata* is particularly relevant to the iconography of the horror film,

which abounds with images that play on the fear of castration and dismemberment. (106, 107)

In “Boobs,” Kelsey devours Billy, dismembering him and then swallowing him. While she initially rebuffs his sexual advances, her attack on him is framed in violently sexual terms, with her sexual appetite literally consuming him.

15. Man’s proximity to dog is the subject of Haraway’s most recent manifesto, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Incorporating Louis Althusser’s concept of being “‘hailed’ through ideology into [. . .] subject positions,” Haraway asserts that “animals ‘hail’ us to account for the regimes in which they and we must live. We ‘hail’ them into our constructs of nature and culture” (17). Though Haraway argues for transgressing boundaries to promote affinity and kinship, Kelsey’s consumption of humans (presumably men) and dogs would seem to defy the possibility of kinship with either group. Her description of the terrier tasting like “eating honey or the best chocolate malt you ever had” is disturbing because it connects the Western cultural taboo against eating dog with the pleasure of familiar sweet foods (28). And yet the scene confronts the reader with the arbitrary construction of such taboos, questioning the logic between the boundary dividing human and animal.

16. “Dumb ‘watchdogs’” is yet another rejection of the cute furry animals she associates with her former powerlessness.

17. Page 94 of the version published in *Asimov’s Science Fiction* in July 1989.

18. From email correspondence with the author of this dissertation on July 23, 2010.

19. In her review of Martin H. Greenberg's collection *Children of the Night: Stories of Ghosts, Vampires, Werewolves, and "Lost Children,"* in which "Boobs" is reprinted, Amy L. Montz alludes to the taboo against female violence when she writes, "The reader finds herself cheering young Kelsey on, silently of course, because she must remain horrified when Kelsey takes matters into her own hands" (2).

20. On a side note, I like to think that Laura Lakey, the artist of the illustration that accompanies the story in *Asimov's*, was able to subversively sneak in one more act of defiance by Kelsey. Notice a subtly placed hand gesture in the bottom right corner. It would seem that the female werewolf is a figurative "Screw you!" to those who would see appropriate femininity as passive, primped, and polite. Lakey responds that this detail in her illustration was unintentional (from email correspondence on April 16, 2012). Nevertheless, the "Word of warning" at the top of the image appropriately warns of the story's disturbing nature (see fig. 1).



Figure 1. Illustration by Laura Lakey accompanying “Boobs” in *Asimov’s*. (Reprinted with the permission of the illustrator.)

21. The Gandillon family is framed as a foreign other through their French surname, which is a historical allusion to the members of the Gandillon family who were convicted as werewolves and burned at the stake in 1598 in France.

22. This scene is an allusion to the many representations of the wolf waiting for Red Riding Hood in her grandmother’s bed.

23. Dangerous romance is a plot device in many stories about female werewolves. In the *Twilight* books, Leah, the exotically beautiful and only known female shapeshifter, pines for her lost love Sam. His romantic rejections lead her to be a

dangerous and angry loose cannon in the Quileute pack. In stories where the female werewolf is the protagonist, the romantic relationships drive the narrative. Some examples include Maggie Stiefvater's series "The Wolves of Mercy Falls" (2009-2011) and Rachel Hawthorne's "Dark Guardian" series (2009-2010).

24. The mother's crude comment suggests that romance and sex are only appropriate if the relationship can be biologically productive. In Klause's novel, it is intimated that *loups-garoux* and humans cannot produce children together, yet they can still share in sexual intercourse. Vivian's male peers enjoy relations with human girls, but they are threatened by her affair with Aiden. When they find out she has been seeing him, they tell her, "We don't like our woman hanging out with meat-boys. It's unnatural" (41). Because she is one of the precious few adolescent female *loups-garoux*, the taboo against sex with humans is akin to the taboos against bestiality and cannibalism.

25. This sounds like a tactic of which Hilda in "Boobs" would approve.

26. Even the 2007 film adaptation of the novel alludes to the folk elements of the character. Agnes Bruckner, who portrays Vivian in the film, haunts the dark allies and streets of Bucharest in a red leather jacket.

27. The Oedipal conflict between Vivian, her mother Esmé, and Gabriel is hard to ignore. Before pursuing Vivian, Gabriel casually dated Esmé. By the end of the novel, Vivian replaces her mother as female alpha to rule the pack with her father's successor, Gabriel.

28. The growth of her tail is described in phallic terms: “She uttered a guttural cry of pleasure as her spine extended into a tail, the bone quickly wrapping itself with flesh, then fur” (168).

29. In contrast, in “Boobs,” Kelsey destroys the weaker other, Billy the bully, with pleasure not fear.

30. Eight years after the publication of *Blood and Chocolate*, *Twilight* reverses this paradigm. Edward Cullen fears that Bella’s scent will trigger him to lose control over his vampiric instincts to consume her blood and kill her.

31. Grosz goes on to describe what she means by body:

The body is a most peculiar ‘thing,’ for it is never quite reducible to being merely a thing; nor does it ever quite manage to rise above the status of thing. Thus it is both a thing and a nonthing, an object, but an object which somehow contains or coexists with an interiority, an object able to take itself and others as subjects, a unique kind of object not reducible to other objects. [. . .] If bodies are objects or things, they are like no others, for they are the centers of perspective, insight, reflection, desire, agency.
(*Volatile* xi)

I will explore this mind-body connection further in the next chapter.

32. This is also an interesting reversal of metaphorical erotic sexual denial, or more specifically “blue balls,” which is more commonly attributed to male orgasm denial. Aiden’s attempts at romance—a wine and cheese rooftop picnic—keep Vivian from succumbing to the call of the “swollen moon leer[ing] at her” (66). After he leaves

her alone in the bathroom, “She shudder[s] into her final shape, raise[s] her muzzle, and howl[s] in frustration” (67).

33. Interestingly, even Kelsey lives in a cramped attic room. These characters, including Micah in *Liar*, seem to be closeted, hiding away parts of themselves that are dangerous in society.

34. Her identity has even been an issue for the marketing of the book. Controversy surrounded Bloomsbury’s decision to include the image of a white girl on the cover of the first edition. When the cover was posted on the Internet, people expressed confusion and frustration over why the girl on the cover of the book did not resemble the story’s heroine. Larbalestier became concerned that the cover would be misleading and perhaps undermine her efforts in the book. She writes, “I worked very hard to make sure that the fundamentals of who Micah is were believable: that she’s a girl, that she’s a teenager, that she’s black, that she’s USian. One of the most upsetting impacts of the cover is that it’s led readers to question everything about Micah: If she doesn’t look anything like the girl on the cover maybe nothing she says is true” (Larbalestier, “Shame”). But so-called “white-washing” of book covers seems to be a persisting trend. As Larbalestier explains,

Editors have told me that their sales departments say black covers don’t sell. Sales reps have told me that many of their accounts won’t take books with black covers. Booksellers have told me that they can’t give away YAs with black covers. Authors have told me that their books with black covers are frequently not shelved in the same part of the library as other

YA—they're exiled to the Urban Fiction section—and many bookshops simply don't stock them at all. How welcome is a black teen going to feel in the YA section when all the covers are white? Why would she pick up *Liar* when it has a cover that so explicitly excludes her?

(Larbalestier, "Shame")

While this only touches on a larger and more complicated political problem, the issue indicates that defining identity goes beyond the level of the text. See figure 2 for the published first edition cover of the novel. The original cover may be viewed at the following web address: justinelarbalestier.com/blog/2009/04/10/the-usian-cover-of-liar/.

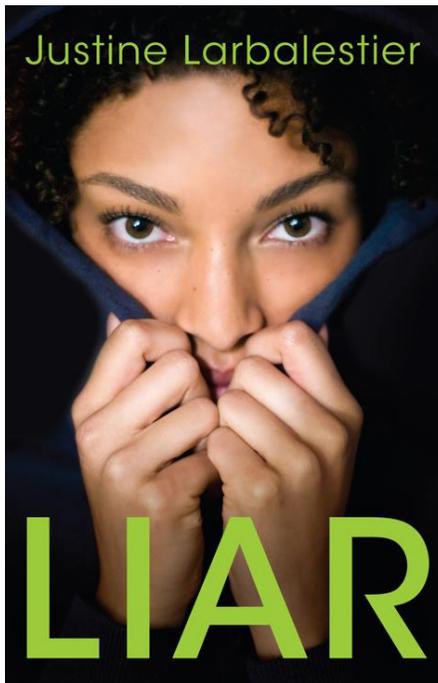


Figure 2. First edition U.S. cover of *Liar*. (Jacket designed by Danielle Delaney. Reprinted with the permission of Bloomsbury Publishing.)

35. In *Liar*, “freak” appears almost thirty times in reference to Micah.

36. The Carlisle women in Mahy’s *The Changeover* similarly encourage Laura to accept her magical (feminine) side, which proves to be dangerous to tyrannical men.

37. Physical location in *Liar* is explicitly gendered, with the matriarchal countryside set against the patriarchal city.

38. The Greats and Hilda, from “Boobs,” celebrate femaleness, specifically menstruation.

39. The cage is like an asylum, ready to protect her or to protect her family from her. The incarceration of Micah during her transformation, which is explicitly connected to menstruation, again demonstrates a patriarchal rhetoric about menstrual monstrosity and PMS as mental illness.

CHAPTER IV

NOBODIES:

THE GHOST GIRL, CORPOREALITY, AND RECOGNITION

My discussion of the literary werewolf addressed the social consequences of excess displays of femininity, sexuality, animality, and physicality. The wolf girl in young adult literature becomes a threat to and is threatened by people who witness the fluctuations of her body because society finds her unstable body disturbing. In contrast, the ghost girl must struggle with her lack rather than her excess of body, for she has no body through which to express her femininity and sexuality.¹ As a silent witness, she haunts the borders of the living world, seemingly powerless to act or be seen. While the specter of her powerlessness is in itself disturbing, the literary ghost girl's uncanny ability to haunt a specific person or location disturbs oppositional boundaries between life and death, past and present, and body and soul, and this disturbance heightens the fear associated with the figure.

While there are many nefarious ghost girls, who dangerously tempt living children (as in the works of Mary Downing Hahn); sentimental ghost girls, who haunt their parents and families (as in short stories by Frances Hodgson Burnett and Rudyard Kipling); and tricky ghost girls, who misbehave and cause chaos (as in Vera Brosgol's 2011 graphic novel *Anya's Ghost*), there are fewer ghost girls who are the protagonists of stories.² Perhaps this dearth of ghostly protagonists is due to the challenges of conceptualizing subjectivity without the body, for how can one experience the world and

act without a body? Diana Wynne Jones's *The Time of the Ghost* (1981) is, to my knowledge, one of the earliest novels with a ghost protagonist.³ Perhaps still more innovative than her use of a ghost protagonist is the manner in which Jones presents the narrative from the ghost's perspective utilizing passive action and paradox, thereby allowing the reader to envision what it might be like to experience the world without a body. But even without a body, the ghost in the novel can still see and hear, suggesting that echoes of bodily experience remain and demonstrating how difficult it is to completely remove the body from notions of subjectivity.

In *The Time of the Ghost*, the protagonist, with no body and only vague memories, spends the early part of the novel trying to discover her identity and the reason for her unsettling condition. Within the first sentence, the reader learns that the story is about a girl, but the next few pages reveal that it is not clear what has happened to her and to her body. It is not until chapter two that the text directly states that the protagonist, who is possibly named Sally, could be a ghost. Since she lacks a mouth to articulate her words, her thoughts are her silent voice.⁴ She tries to communicate with her sisters and friends on several occasions: once during a séance, another time by forcing a boy's hand to write what she wants,⁵ and a third time by speaking muffled and broken words during a blood ritual. Her experiences as a ghost, a *no-body*, reflect her insecurity and weaknesses in the past and in the present while simultaneously, perhaps even paradoxically, demonstrating her determination and potential strength.

What interests me about this literary ghost, as well as other ghost protagonists, are the ways in which her state of bodilessness is described in the narrative, her identity

is linked to her non-corporeality, and her gender and female physical development are treated in the novel. According to Joan Jacobs Brumberg, “Today, many young girls worry about the contours of their bodies—especially shape, size, and muscle tone—because they believe that the body is the ultimate expression of the self” (97). Texts featuring ghost protagonists trouble this belief that “the body is the ultimate expression of the self” by erasing the contours of the body that many young girls think outline their identity. Brumberg goes on to explain, “The body is a consuming project for contemporary girls because it provides an important means to self-definition, a way to visibly announce who you are to the world” (97). For the literary ghost girls, not having a body means remaining hidden and silent, and even more disturbing, possibly not knowing one’s identity. For example, in *The Time of the Ghost*, Laura Whitcomb’s *A Certain Slant of Light* (2005), Amy Huntley’s *The Everafter* (2009), and Tara Hudson’s *Hereafter* (2011), at the beginning of the novels, the ghost girls do not remember who they are. They have no recollection of their names or their past lives. Their lack of bodies seems to be connected with their lack of identities, which conceptually implicates the body’s role in subjectivity and memory.

Texts featuring ghost protagonists provide an opportunity to consider how the materiality of the body fits into theorizing about adolescent identity development and subjectivity. The female body is central to feminist theory and action. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick provide a succinct summary of the body in feminist theory:

Feminism has from the start been deeply concerned with the body—either as something to be rejected in the pursuit of intellectual equality

according to a masculinist standard, or as something to be reclaimed as the very essence of the female. A third, more recent alternative, largely associated with feminist postmodernism, seeks to emphasise the importance and inescapability of embodiment as a differential and fluid construct, the site of potential, rather than as a fixed given. (2-3)

The novels featuring ghost girl protagonists seem to fit Price and Shildrick's description of the body in feminist postmodernism in that they demonstrate such fluid and differential perspectives on female identity in relation to the body.

To facilitate an investigation of the role of the body, I now turn to Elizabeth Grosz's and Moira Gatens's feminist theories of corporeality and to the tensions between notions of performance and materiality in Judith Butler's work. According to Grosz, "misogynist thought" presumes that "women are somehow *more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men" (*Volatile* 14, emphasis in original). Gatens, Grosz, and Butler write against such universal notions of the body to address the question of the body's materiality in feminist theory. For example, Gatens discusses "the historical effects of the ways in which power constructs bodies [. . . and] of how bodies become marked as male and female" in terms of the material reality of bodies over time (69). Particularly relevant to this chapter is her discussion of body image, in which she claims, "Our body image is a body double that can be as 'other' to us as any genuine 'other' can be" (35). In the context of this chapter, body image, as articulated by Gatens, becomes an exercise in remembering the ghost's living (or lived) body, wherein the ghost girl becomes the other to her living self. In terms of adolescent body

image, Grosz argues, “Adolescence is [. . .] of significance in understanding the development of the body image, for this is a period in which the biological body undergoes major upheavals and changes as an effect of puberty” (75). Grosz goes on to explain, “Experientially, the philosophical desire to transcend corporeality and its urges may be dated from this period” (75). But the adolescent ghost girl in YA literature finds such a transcendence of corporeality troubling. For instance, in *The Time of the Ghost* the shift in perspective between the ghost Sally and the living Sally indicates such a disconnect between identity and body, as ghost Sally cannot grasp her identity. The notion of transcendence in the book is undermined by Sally’s efforts to reconnect with her physical (bodily) reality. Similarly, Charlotte in Tonya Hurley’s humorous novel *ghostgirl* (2008) repeatedly possesses the living Scarlet’s body in order to realize her dream of being noticed by the students in her high school, particularly her high school crush, and in effect finally mattering in the social sphere of high school. But in Charlotte’s situation, another person’s body will work when hers is no longer available.

Both Gatens and Grosz take a phenomenological approach to the body, focusing on the connection between the lived body and identity. Butler is interested in the process of materialization, whereby regulatory norms materialize constructs such as sex (10). Butler argues for a focus on matter “as *a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter*. That matter is always materialized has, I think, to be thought in relation to the productive and, indeed, materializing effects of regulatory power” (9-10, emphasis in original). In terms of discussing the ghost girl, this process of materialization is of interest, particularly in

terms of performativity and the regulatory norms that attend adolescence. Ghosts often materialize during moments in the texts, allowing them to be seen by other characters. For example, a ritual may bring forth the image of their bodies, such as the one that will be discussed later in this chapter. The process of materialization, therefore, is literal and metaphorical in these episodes: the ghost girls literally want to be seen by people and metaphorically want to be incorporated into society. The performance of having a body, and the associated actions that constitute femininity, create tension between ideas about the material body and the regulatory practices that shape concepts about it. To return to the example in *ghostgirl*, Charlotte must materialize via Scarlet's body to matter. Her desire to do so can be seen as a response to the regulatory norms that shape female adolescent identity development and body image.

In this chapter, I investigate mind/body dualism in relation to a figure without a body of its own—the ghost. Examining *The Time of the Ghost, A Certain Slant of Light*, and *ghostgirl*, I address the ways in which the body, or lack thereof, interacts with the mind to create a sense of self and what this construction of self suggests about female identity development in relation to visibility, agency, and corporeal experience. In the first section of the chapter, I examine Jones's novel in terms of the main character's fractured yet fluid identity and the ways in which the ghost's non-body demonstrates the role of the body in subjectivity. In the second section, I explore the significance of the ghost's possession of a human body and the ways in which memory and recognition are tied to the body in Whitcomb's novel. In the third section, I address the ghost as a metaphor for unpopularity in Hurley's high school satire. In my examination of the

ghost girl's insubstantiality, her body image, and her performance of gender, I suggest that the body is important, though not absolutely vital, to subjectivity. Overall, I argue that the representation of the female ghost in novels for young adults expresses anxiety about female social integration and physical maturation, specifically the associated social and physical experiences that mark this development, and demonstrates the concomitant frustrations often experienced by young women who want to be seen, be heard, and have the power to act. Furthermore, these novels work against the standards of the female body as object of the male gaze, as spectacle, by reasserting the identity, the person, behind the body that wishes not only to be seen but to interact with and be counted as a part of society.

Discovering Identity without a Body: Jones's Nameless Ghost

For Sally the ghost in Jones's *The Time of the Ghost*, the knowable self is ripped from the physical body, and she must piece together her identity while negotiating a world that does not see or hear her. In her ghost form she is frustrated by the impotence of disembodiment, and yet through strength of will she is able to attract her sisters' attention and, with their help, subvert the power of Monigan, the ancient female force that threatens to claim her life in the present. Jones's representation of Sally's disembodiment metaphorically suggests a fractured sense of self. To be sure, "Sally" appears in three different forms in the novel: as the ghost protagonist Sally, as the thirteen-year-old able-bodied Sally in the past, and as the twenty-year-old injured Sally in the present. As the narrative moves back and forth in time, Sally questions who she

is, who she was, and who she can/will become, questions that are complicated by heightened feelings of powerlessness associated with her lack of body as a ghost, as well as with her broken body in the present. Furthermore, because she does not have a body, the vehicle through which one acts, Sally the ghost struggles with resolving conflict and managing her desire to act and be seen, as well as to have a body that matters.

And Jones seems to play with the multiple definitions of “matter” as there is “something the matter” with the ghost’s matter, her physical body. For example, on the first page, the narrator describes the ghost’s first thoughts: “She could not quite work out what was the matter” (1). A few pages later, the ghost wonders, “*What’s the matter with me*” (4).⁶ “Matter” in these instances refers not only to a problem, that which is wrong, but also to the lack of bodily matter, which is specifically what is wrong with the ghost. What ghost girl novels depict is that *matter* matters, that the body is an important component of identity. The ghost girl, therefore, becomes a metaphor for times when it seems that girls do not matter, even though the female body has been and continues to be a hotbed of controversy in terms of who or what regulates it. In terms of the materiality of the female body, Grosz and Butler take different approaches to gauging what *matters* about the physical matter of the body. While Grosz attends to the materiality of the body in *Volatile Bodies*, Butler’s work on performativity in *Gender Trouble* has been criticized for not attending enough to materiality. In the preface to *Bodies That Matter*, Butler reveals that she is repeatedly asked, “What about the materiality of the body, Judy?” (ix). Her goal in the book is to show that “the regulatory norms of ‘sex’ work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to

materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative" (2).⁷ Grosz, however, still sees Butler's contemplation of the material body as insufficient, exclaiming, "Mattering becomes more important than matter [in Butler's work]!" (qtd. in Ausch, Doane, and Perez). Such a perspective seems to reflect the priorities of the protagonist in *ghostgirl*, who co-opts another girl's matter (body) so that she may finally feel as if she matters. In contrast, in the scope of Jones's novel, the ghost, through much strength of will, is able to matter despite her lack of matter, but this is all an effort to protect her material living body.

Because of its time-traveling ghost protagonist, who has a limited memory, the novel invites discussions of differential concepts of identity, especially in relation to Jones's configuration of the multiple Sallys. Which one is the "real" Sally? Jones presents multiple identities alongside multiple realities, thereby suggesting the mutability of subjectivity and the inadequacy of conceptualizing a unified and stable self. Sally's identity in the novel is fractured yet fluid. The Sallys are effectively three different people even though they share a space-time continuum. The point of view in the novel is split between Sally's experience as a ghost in the past and as a twenty-year-old in the present. The first half of the novel follows the ghost's point of view, and then the ghost wakes up seven years later as the living Sally in the present lying in a hospital bed. As she did as a ghost, she surveys her surroundings and the state of her body to try to determine what has transpired. Even at this point, she is still confused about who she is. Sally eventually puts the pieces together and figures out how to become the ghost in the past and break the curse of Monigan that threatens her life in the present.

Critics of the novel tend to focus on issues of identity, memory, and power in relation to the ghost. Exploring the psychological and gothic elements in the novel, Anna Jackson claims that the novel ends with the uncanny overcome through “a new self-possession that is represented as a release from a more limited sense of identity” (169). The ghost’s engagement with the familiar and the unfamiliar helps her to re-evaluate her life choices in the present. Focusing on the discourses of reading and the perspective of the ghost, Ruth Waterhouse sees the book as thematically “explor[ing] Sally’s search for selfhood, her adult refusal to accept and identify with the girl she became when [. . .] she and Julian Addiman dedicated themselves to the service of the ancient goddess Monigan” (136). Focusing on the development of the character of the ghost, Attebery writes, “Without boundaries, there is no distinction between the Self and primordial Humanity. In Jones’s terms, the ghost has no way to hide from the goddess until she learns to draw the magic circle of identity around her Self, and that circle, that identity, is the product of confrontation with a community of others” (78). Attebery considers the ghost’s confrontation with others as necessary for informing her identity, but the different Sallys have different identities that are specific to different times, locations, and situations. He describes Sally the ghost girl as “a disembodied consciousness with a memory of belonging in a particular place but no memory of who she is or was” (75). Places feel familiar to her, and through these spatial associations she is able to recognize certain people, including her parents and her peculiar sisters (Imogen, Cart, and Fenella). Farah Mendlesohn argues that in the novel “Jones is [primarily] interested in memory as a tool of analysis” (*Diana Wynne Jones* xxiv). She

reads the story as “an argument for [the] adolescent moment, and for its importance and its power” (“Now” 35). Finally, according to Sanna Lehtonen in her study of female invisibility, Jones “uses invisibility to illustrate a girl’s powerless status” (220).

I agree that because she is not seen by others, except for the cook Mrs. Gill, the ghost may seem powerless, but I would add that her ability to communicate with and influence the movements of others (as she does when she controls her friend Ned’s hand and has him write her words) exhibits her sustained determination, which is an indication of her potential power. In other words, the ghost is able to circumvent the limitations of invisibility. Although these studies address identity, memory, and power, as I am doing in this chapter, the body and its connections to subjectivity and the character’s gender generally are not investigated in depth. The character’s lack of body complicates her understanding of her identity. Through the ghost, Jones explores how bodily memory is a component of awareness and subjectivity.

Even before she has a material body in the text, the strange protagonist is identified as “she.” Gender, in the first pages of the novel, precedes identity and even a body. We know the protagonist is a She before we know that she is a ghost. In fact, because the thrust of the novel involves discovering the ghost’s identity, gender seems to be a fixed, intrinsically understood aspect of the ghost. The protagonist may not be sure which of the four Melford sisters she is, but she does seem to unquestionably sense that she is female. Jones’s concept of the ghost’s gender suggests that it is not solely determined by the material body; however, the memory of the body, its movements and sensations, resonates even after the physical body has been removed. Many novels

featuring ghost girls echo this narrative tactic: the ghosts are aware of their gender. Curiously, what Grosz might refer to as “the stuff” of subjectivity—the body—seems to remain because, while people may not see her, creatures, such as a bee, avoid the ghost: “*There must be something of me for it to dodge*” (Grosz, *Volatile ix*, Jones 6).

The ghost’s absent body is the focal point of the first half of the novel, but one wonders how a ghost can tell a story. From what position does it speak? Jones presents the ghost as a shadow of a body, a non-body, something like a phantom limb. The essence of a former body is evident. For example, when the ghost tries to engage with the physical world, her body is described in the negative: with her “nonhand” and “notfingers” (8) she is able to move some objects (including people’s fingers and hands), but doing so takes enormous exertion. She is described as “the bodiless person” (11) with a “nonface” (15), “nonexistent head” (20), and a “bodiless mind” (26). She even quips about her missing body. When she forgets where she is going, she tells herself, “*It probably comes of not having a proper head to keep my thoughts in [. . .] I shall have to be very careful [. . .] If I put my hand right through, I might knock all the thoughts out*” (5).⁸ At times she wants to cry “disembodied tears” where her eyes ought to be (8). And yet she continues to speak about the different elements of her body—her hands, eyes, and head—as if they were still there, just not visible. It is significant that the first person she thinks recognizes her is her father, whom she calls “Himself” and who is the head of a boys school. After she pushes open the door to his all-boy class in her ghostly form, he seems to look directly at her and to be dimly aware of her presence before he closes

the door and says, “Nobody there” (9). As a ghost her interactions with him mirror those had as his living daughter. She is not seen and does not matter; she is nobody.

Describing the ghost’s experience without a physical body, Jones uses passive action on the ghost’s non-body to highlight her seemingly physical impotence. When the ghost becomes anxious and hysterical, she “[is] swept away” like a big balloon (3). As she approaches her home, she finds she “[is] reared up above the hedges” outside of it (2). These actions happen to her; she does not initiate them. And yet these moments when she is powerless to withstand the currents of the wind are juxtaposed with such phrases as “she made herself” (3) and “I will do it! I will, I will!” (4), phrases that demonstrate her strength of will. It may seem as if her body is at odds with her will, but what remains of her corporeality, the shadow of it, influences and is influenced by her initial uncertainty and later by her determination. Rather than competing, these elements (her corporeality and subjectivity) reflect and inform each other. Even though she does not have a body, she remembers what it was like to have a physical presence, and she begins to learn how to control the way she moves. She comments that she must have grown because she seems taller, but in fact she is floating higher about the ground. It would seem that the essence of the body remains through cognitive awareness of how a body should navigate through the world: “Now she knew herself to be bodiless, she was almost interested by the way she moved, dangling and drifting, with her head about the height she was used to. She could rise higher if she wanted, or sink lower, but both ways made her uncomfortable” (Jones 5). Through the body we not only see and hear, senses that ghosts seem to retain, we also taste, touch, and smell. Because the ghost girl still

has access to sight and hearing, it would seem that the body cannot be removed even conceptually from subjectivity.

The ghost girl is a paradox. She can partially sense the world, yet her presence is not sensed by most people. She is not quite alive and not quite dead. Jones enhances this notion of the ghost as a paradox with phrases such as “positive harm” (4). That the ghost’s identity exists without a material body is a paradox. Grosz uses the model of the Möbius strip, an infinity symbol and three-dimensional paradox, to demonstrate

a way to problematiz[e] and rethink[] the relations between the inside and the outside of the subject, its psychical interior and its corporeal exterior, by showing not their fundamental identity or reducibility but the torsion of the one into the other, the passage, vector, or uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside. (*Volatile* xii)

Grosz sees the Möbius strip as a model that “enables subjectivity to be understood as fully material and for materiality to be extended and to include and explain the operations of language, desire, and significance” (*Volatile* 210). Maria Nikolajeva also refers to the Möbius strip as a visual representation of the multiverse in her discussion of heterotopia, or “a multitude of discordant universes” (“Heterotopia” 25), in works by Jones. Nikolajeva contends that “Heterotopia [. . .] becomes a reflection of the adolescent’s chaotic worldview” (“Heterotopia” 27), and demonstrates how it “is connected with the confused, multiple subjectivity of [Jones’s] protagonist[s]” (“Heterotopia” 30). While Grosz employs the Möbius strip as a way to subvert mind/body dualism, Nikolajeva finds the model useful for visualizing the multiplicity of

realities. I would like to bring their perspectives together to think about the confluence of mind and body in the figure of the ghost in the novel and how she functions as a paradox, an impossibility.

Because she operates outside of binaries, the ghost is a liminal figure that, according to Jeffrey Weinstock, “problematize[s] dichotomous thinking [. . .]. Neither living nor dead, present nor absent, the ghost functions as the paradigmatic deconstructive gesture, the ‘shadowy third’ or trace of an absence that undermines the fixedness of such binary oppositions” (4). It is out of its time; its identity is split between the past and the present. It is a shadow of its former self, of its former body. What is horrifying about the figure of the ghost is its stasis, its impotence, and its boundarylessness. In the novel, Jones’s repeated use of the words “vague” and “queer” crafts a foggy ambiance of uncertainty and anxiety. Both the reader and the protagonist are unsure of how to interpret the physics of the situation. This uncertainty is a result of the breakdown of binary opposition. The ghost girl has “a queer, light, vague feeling,” and she “think[s] vague, anxious thoughts” (2). Uncertainty, however, can breed curiosity and lead to new possibilities, even alternative ways of exploring the boundaries of gender.

Because the ghost in Jones’s novel is identified as female, the horror of her experience can be connected to her gender. The ghost in the novel thinks she is thirteen-year-old Sally. (Surely the thought of remaining a thirteen-year-old girl forever is horrific enough.) While Lehtonen sees the ghost’s invisibility as tied to femaleness, Jones transcends the ghost’s invisibility and non-body to address issues of menstruation

and sexuality, issues that theoretically align women with the body, in alternative and subversive ways. Thus, conceptualizing the ghost involves attempting to erase the boundaries of the body that influence definitions of gender.

A particular episode in the novel demonstrates Jones's subversive treatment of female social and physical development and the ways in which the ghost's non-body and mind converge. After the ghost tries to reveal herself to her sisters during a séance, her sister Cart remembers reading something from *The Odyssey* or *The Iliad* or Virgil's *The Aeneid* about ghosts being able to speak after drinking blood. So the three sisters, Cart, Imogen, and Fenella, much like *Macbeth's* Weird Sisters, and two boys from the school, Ned and Howard, concoct a plan to get human blood for the ghost to drink so that they can discover who she is and how they can help her. Fenella tells the boys to provide some of their own blood by cutting themselves and then to go see if any blood is available in the biology lab. Imogen points out how often she sees little boys with nosebleeds, and she, Ned, and Howard go collect as many little boys with nosebleeds as they can. Fenella tries to punch some blood out of her nose, and Cart and Imogen cut their wrists and produce small samples of blood. Cart even absconds with some ox heart blood from the kitchen. Later, after they have endured their father's wrath for trying to corrupt his students with their witchcraft, the three sisters, along with Ned, Howard, Julian, and some of the nose-blood donors, steal away to the orchard to perform their blood ritual. Led by Fenella, the group invites the ghost to drink from the bowl, but the ghost is disgusted, thinking to herself that doing so would be tantamount to cannibalism. Nevertheless, she senses a spark of power in the blood and tries to drink some of it. The

ritual works, in part; a fuzzy image of her appears to the group, but her words are muffled, as if she were speaking under water. By breaking a taboo—drinking blood—the ghost partially materializes. The material of other people's bodies becomes a proxy for her own.⁹ There is a bit of a paradox here in that Sally the ghost must put aside her human repugnance and act like a ghost, a figure of horror, in order to demonstrate her presence. Taboos such as those against cannibalism and incest operate by delineating what is human and inhuman, or monstrous. Rather than be shunned by society, Sally breaks a taboo and consumes human blood to momentarily be incorporated into society.

Interesting about this scene is the way in which it reflects and reinscribes menstruation. Rather than a thirteen-year-old girl leaking menstrual blood, a series of donors leak for her, and from this blood she comes into being, or at least into hazy visibility. Bodily Sally, who is thirteen, a typical age for the onset of puberty, is absent from the ceremony. Since the ghost does not have a body of her own from which to bleed, the blood collected from the diverse mix of donors is a substitute for her own, and rather than expelling it, she consumes it. In drinking the blood, significantly obtained primarily from boys and painfully from her sisters, Sally materializes briefly for her sisters and friends to see. Through their blood—an abject fluid—she is able to partially integrate into society. Almost paradoxically, abjection leads to incorporation, to affinity. And yet the blood that facilitates this integration is associated mostly with young boys. While nosebleeds are uncontrollable leaks, though in this case some were triggered with punches, the stigma associated with them is minor compared to the stigma of menstrual blood.

Women's bodily fluids, menstrual blood specifically, have been represented as sources of contamination and categorized as uncontrollable. Theoretical and philosophical conceptualizations of the body tend to view the leaky, uncontrollable body as counter to autonomy and contained identity. Because male body fluids are not generally classified as unruly and uncontainable to the degree of women's fluids (though the fluids of thirteen-year-old boys may be an exception), the male body, in binary thinking, is the norm as well as the ideal. However, through the comical collection of male nosebleeds, Jones undermines the notion of the male body as autonomous and contained. Her demonstration of the ways in which the male body is as leaky as the female body complements Grosz's argument about sex difference in *Volatile Bodies*, in which Grosz

hypothesizes that women's corporeality is inscribed as a mode of seepage. [The] claim is not that women have been somehow desolidified but the more limited one which sees that women, insofar as they are human, have the same degree of solidity, occupy the same genus, as men, yet insofar as they are women, they are represented and live themselves as seepage, liquidity. (203)

The metaphors of uncontrollability in literary and cultural representations of women "may well be a function of the projection outward of their corporealities, the liquidities that men seem to want to cast out of their own self-representations" (Grosz, *Volatile* 203). In the instance of the blood ritual, rather than the girl hiding her menstrual blood,

everyone else bleeds so that she may be seen, and Jones effectively demonstrates how the pubertal body, regardless of sex, seeps blood.

For a little while after drinking the blood, the ghost feels as if she has a body and is “hearing, seeing, and smelling as people do in bodies” (220). Yet her feelings of embodiment only last a short while, and then she begins to fade again. The ghost’s disturbing non-body could be considered a reflection of body image. Gatens refers to body image as a kind of double for the self, which she claims “allows us to imagine and reflect upon ourselves in our present situation—to be in a sense our own ‘other’—but it is also involved in what allows us to project ourselves into future situations and back to past situations” (35). In the novel, the ghostly Sally can be seen as a double for the bodily Sally, her “other” self, reflecting how she has felt and what she may become. Using the configuration of the Möbius strip, the ghost operates as the past, present, and future Sally. The projection of the ghost and the way she experiences her non-body reveal her self-doubt and alienation and the dissatisfaction she feels over the choices she has made, primarily her consuming relationship with Julian, which almost kills her. The ghostly double not only allows the bodily Sally in the present to save herself by circumventing her debt to Monigan, but also helps her gain a unique perspective on her life, past and present, so that she may save her life and shape her future with new possibilities. Grosz sees the period of adolescence as crucial to the development of body image. She contends, “[Body image] changes orientation or inflection as the child develops into adolescence and adulthood. [. . .] It is in this period [of adolescence] that the subject feels the greatest discord between the body image and the lived body,

between its psychological idealized self-image and its bodily changes” (*Volatile* 75). Grosz’s point about the schism between idealized self and the body is amplified in terms of the ghost girl who sees her former lived body. When this happens in a text, there is a sense of a fractured identity, one character with two different experiences and perspectives. In Jones’s novel, the ghost, a shadow of the thirteen-year-old bodily Sally, is the alien other that gains perspective from the outside on Sally’s personal problems, in the past and the present, and her future danger. And with this strange perspective, she is able to save and change her life. Sally appears in three different roles in the novel, and though she is meant to be one person, she is an ambiguity, a paradox, for she is one Sally and three Sallys at once. This splintering of a whole presents a subjectivity that is fluid and fractured rather than fixed and demonstrates how the subject can be affected by alterations in body image.

The story of the ghost girl in Jones’s novel engages several issues related to female adolescence, including identity and body image. On the surface the ghost demonstrates the feelings of invisibility and insignificance that teen girls can experience, and yet the protagonist’s indomitable spirit helps her navigate the challenges of not being seen or heard. She is persistent and brave, and her experiences in her non-body highlight these qualities. Through her multiple incarnations, fluid boundaries, and various identities, Sally undermines binary modes of thinking. She has the power to move, the power to see, and the power to witness her mistakes and learn from them. Her tenacity and optimism make it clear that the matters of her body matter greatly to her.

To Get a Body: Possession and Feeling in *A Certain Slant of Light*

In Whitcomb's *A Certain Slant of Light*, the ghost protagonist relies on the bodies of others. To avoid an eternity of darkness in a grave, the ghost, formerly a twenty-seven-year-old woman named Helen¹⁰ who died in a flood, "cleaves" to certain people, hovering around them like a moon orbiting a planet. She bears witness to their lives, and in return she is able to have something of an existence beyond the grave. But attaching herself to a single living person is a commitment that must be maintained. If she allows too much distance to come between her and her host, she sinks into a painful place of solitude and despair.¹¹ Helen learns from James, another ghost who was formerly a twenty-nine-year-old soldier who died in World War I but in the present possesses the body of a teenage boy named Billy, that she can have a body again by possessing a living person, or more specifically a body that has been abandoned by a soul.^{12 13}

In choosing to analyze this text, I am moving a bit beyond the category of adolescent protagonist. While ghosts suggest a sense of timelessness, Helen died as an adult and even had a child, yet cleaving to Mr. Brown, a high school English teacher, places her alongside the world of adolescents. She focuses her attention on Mr. Brown but still notices the behavior of the teenagers in his class. When she takes over the body of fifteen-year-old Jenny, she physically becomes an adolescent again. The novel, therefore, invites the reader to identify with an adult consciousness, which is a reversal of Helen's experience relating to teenage Jenny. The teenage reader is provided with an outsider's perspective of what it is like to experience adolescence. Helen's possession of

Jenny—the mind of a twenty-seven-year-old occupying the body of a fifteen year-old—presents an opportunity to explore theoretically mind/body duality and the role of a body in determining identity. Through the episodes of possession, the text engages the issue of who controls the female body. While Helen and Jennie both inhabit the same body, other figures in the text aim to control the fifteen-year-old body, namely Jennie’s religious parents. Therefore, this section of the chapter will focus on the boundaries and control of the female body by examining the treatment of ghostly possession.

The novel covers six days of Helen’s experience in another person’s body. She explains that as a ghost she can only see and hear but cannot touch, taste, or smell; however, she can feel the pain of the grave when she is separated from her host. While she does not have a body that living people can see, she still describes her actions as if she did have a body:

The old pain returned, first to my feet, like ice slippers, then up my legs, slowing me to a crawl. I could still see the road in front of me, but as I fell forward, I heard a splash and cold rods shot up my arms and into my heart. I called to her until my mouth was full of water. The evening had gone black as my grave. [. . .] I thrust out my hands, feeling blindly for her skirts, but I felt only wet wooden boards. Clawing at them, I felt a corner and then a flat shelf, then another shelf. I dug into the boards and pulled up. When I reached out this time, I felt a shoe. (7)

Noteworthy in this description of her struggle to stay with her host are the details associated with sensation and physical activity. Although ostensibly a creature who can

only see and hear, Helen clearly feels pain and engages with the world as if her body were intact. The fact that the living cannot see her does not negate the way she conceives of her body as whole, if not permeable. She has feet, legs, arms, hands, and mouth, as well as eyes and ears, presumably, through which she sees and hears. But she cannot move things with her body. Helen may be able to reach out for and cling to her host, but her host does not feel her touch. Grosz explains that “[t]ouch is regarded as a contact sense” in that it “provides contiguous access to an abiding object; the surface of the toucher and the touched must partially coincide” (*Volatile* 98). There is conflict in the way Helen describes her sense of touch. While she cannot “feel paper between [her] fingers,” when she crawls out of the grave, she can feel her living host’s shoe, but her host cannot feel her (1, 7). The sensation she feels when clinging to her host in this moment is one-sided. Touch is a means of connecting with another person in that both people feel the sensory response. Whitcomb’s description of Helen’s physical sensations indicates a tension between conceiving of Helen as a non-corporeal entity and of conceptualizing how she can engage with the world without a body.

While she cannot move things with her hands, she can “send a ripple into the tangible world” with her emotions (3). As with Sally in *The Time of the Ghost*, Helen learns that when she has a strong emotion, the living can sense it. For instance, “A flash of frustration when your host closes a novel he is reading too soon might stir his hair and cause him to check the window for a draft” (3). Her mind, in these moments, seems to have more power than her body, even if the physical effect is unintended. Moments such as these in texts about ghost girls seem to speak to pervasive notions that women’s

strength is not tied to their bodies as much as to their intentions, will, and spirit. Such episodes may obliquely be reflecting perceptions of female powerlessness in comparison to male physical strength, but they also reveal ways in which women circumvent limits to power. Ghost girls often face barriers to effecting physical change, but they usually find creative ways around such obstacles. In Helen's situation, she can whisper in her host's ear and sometimes influence his thoughts.

And similar to Sally and other ghost-girl protagonists, Helen remembers almost nothing of her life, only her name, her age, and that she was a woman. I find it interesting that both Sally and Helen seem intrinsically to know, or at least remember, that they are/were women. Their gender transcends memory and the loss of body, leaving an imprint on their seemingly fractured identity. If the body is gone, how does gender remain? Is gender only a category defined by physical status, or is it defined by behaviors, which again depend on bodily actions? In these texts, gender is an intrinsic part of the ghost's identity because the body remains a part of the conceptual framework of identity. To follow Butler's argument, the regulatory practices that shaped their lives as young women were pervasive enough to inform their understanding and awareness of their gender past the point when they no longer have a body.

Because she has not been seen in decades, Helen has a mixed reaction when a student, Billy, whose body is possessed by James, gazes directly at her, demonstrating that she still has some essence of a body to see: "I had two strong and seemingly contradictory sensations. [. . .] Nothing was more disturbing to me, and yet nothing compelled me more" (14). Because she has not been seen by a human in so long, she

feels special, “somehow chosen” (14), a response a living adolescent girl might have to the gaze of an adolescent boy. The power of the gaze here seems to pull her back into being, into mattering.¹⁴ What is interesting about this moment in the novel is that it assigns power and even subjectivity to being the object of the gaze. The attraction she feels indicates the sexual undercurrents of the moment, and she also likens her fear to being “beheld naked when you know you are clothed” (14). And yet, for a moment, she is angry because she feels his look has “shattered [her] privacy” (15). His look may briefly feel like an invasion of privacy, but she realizes that it signals a break from her isolation. Her invisibility has enabled her to be a “contented voyeur” who gazes unimpeded on those around her (16). However, James’s gaze offers the promise of a real connection to another person, not just the ongoing one-sided devotion to her host. Implicit in his ability to see her is his understanding of what she is. He can see her because he is also a ghost, but one in possession of a living body. As such, he recognizes her presence as a ghost and sees her as a person. This connection to James, this mattering to another person, propels the action in the novel that ultimately results in her transcendence.

James’s gaze functions as a reflection for Helen, as he tells her what she looks like.¹⁵ As with Sally’s appearance after the blood ritual, Helen, in James’s eyes, is “like water. Sometimes you’re full of color, sometimes you’re gray, sometimes almost clear” (30). The boundaries of Helen’s body are fluid and she lacks the concentrated color and depth of a living body, but through James’s eyes, she gets a sense of who she used to be and a direction for how she can recover her lost memories. The book establishes that

memories are tied to the body, which is another example of how subjectivity and corporeality are connected. James explains to Helen, “But since I’ve been inside a body again, some things have been coming back to me. [. . .] I remember more things every day” (27). The experience of being in a new body reconnects the spirit with past experiences in another body. Therefore, according to the parameters of the novel, having a physical presence in the world via the material body is integral to constructing a more cohesive sense of identity. As Helen enters the body Jenny’s spirit has abandoned, the text transitions the body from belonging to Jenny to belonging to Helen:

I felt the shape of her, the shape of myself, inside the fingers and shoulder and knees of her. I even felt the snug shoes and the difference between her warm arms inside her sweater and her cool legs exposed to the breeze. I could feel the tickle of Jenny’s hair brushing my cheek. My hand went to my mouth when I heard myself cry out in amazement. I opened my eyes to see every face in the circle turned to me. (117)

This passage engages the issue of bodily boundaries as the ghost enters and possesses the body of a living girl.¹⁶ Even though Jenny’s spirit has vacated her body, part of her identity remains through the materiality of her body. This moment in the text demonstrates the paradoxical figuration of the presence of another soul in a person’s body. Helen’s merger with Jenny’s body seems to efface the shadowy boundaries of her spectral body. Jenny’s body becomes Helen’s body, and yet it still remains the body of fifteen-year-old Jenny. Subsequently, through possession, Helen becomes two people in one: she and James know her to be Helen, but other living people know her to be Jenny.

The possession takes place during a church picnic, and when Jenny faints, the crowd speculates as to what has happened. Some think she was possessed by the Holy Spirit, but her mother whispers to Jenny, asking if she is about to start her period. The presence of a twenty-seven-year-old spirit in a pubertal fifteen-year-old body becomes a problem for Jenny's position in her family, as her ultra-religious parents become disturbed when their once submissive daughter begins to assert her own ideas and adult will. As Helen once watched the intimate details of her hosts' lives, so too do Jenny's parents monitor her life, from her bodily functions to her progress in school. When Helen as Jenny returns home from the picnic, Jenny's mother checks her daughter's menstrual calendar to investigate whether PMS might be the cause of her daughter's spell. In concert with Jenny's mother's surveillance of her bodily function is her father's watchful eye. After their regular morning prayer meeting, Jenny's father has her stand up and turn around so that he may see what she is wearing to school: "He stood, hands on hips, never looked me in the eye but scanned me: my face, my body, my legs" (132). He even tells her to take off the sweater she is wearing over her dress. Helen, and presumably the reader, feels this scrutiny as an invasion of privacy. His gaze is objectifying and oppressive.

In her first days as Jenny, Helen's exploration of bodily life is tempered by Jenny's parents' attempts to control every facet of their daughter's existence. But the text presents their control as a dangerous illusion that led to their daughter's depression and her subsequent escape from her body. Helen tries to placate the parents for a while, as she is sensitive to their feelings, but she inevitably pursues what makes her happy:

emotional and physical intimacy with James. So much anxiety about the adolescent female body is centered on control, mainly size, shape, appearance, behavior, and even menstruation (or at least monitoring it). Many of these forms of control are demonstrated in the novel. Gatens speculates about regulation and shame in relation to menstruation: “In our culture, [menstruation] is associated with shame and modesty—both characteristically feminine attributes. An interesting speculation would be whether this shame could be connected to the more general shame involved in the failure to control one’s bodily fluids, excretions, wastes, given the great store put on this control in our culture” (10). But the perceived passions of the female body seem to be the threat that must be contained in society, and in the novel, the center of power is the father whose role is informed by Judeo-Christian tenets. As Gatens notes, “Women are most often understood to be less able to control the passions of the body and this failure is often located in the a priori disorder or anarchy of the female body itself” (50). In terms of the female adolescent, the idea of such passions seems to be particularly disturbing. In Larbalestier’s *Liar*, the father’s attempts to regulate Micah’s body and behaviors work only to alienate Micah from her identity as a woman; they do not succeed in staving off her development into mature womanhood, which is associated with being a werewolf. Similarly, Jenny’s parents’ efforts to limit her independence and self-expression result in their daughter’s rejection of her physical body—her spirit appears to have vacated her body. The novels that feature monstrous protagonists often demonstrate how parental control not only ultimately (and inevitably) fails to regulate the teen body but also can do harm to the adolescent girl’s sense of self-worth.

Helen's expressions of sexuality in the novel blatantly undermine Jenny's parents' rules and concerns. Moments of intimacy with James bring Helen joy as she revels in the senses of her living body. Furthermore, her experiences in this lived body help her regain memories of her past life. Biting into an apple brings forth an image of her old kitchen. Drinking milk triggers a vision of her milking stool. Such traditionally domestic images indicate that she is from a time gone by, and yet they also are empowering images as they are evidence of her progress in reclaiming her identity. Ultimately, her experiences living through Jenny's body help her to remember the circumstances of her death. The material body here is integral in her remembering her past and uncovering who she was and is. But nearly as important as the material body in this process is her relationship with another person, in other words mattering to someone else. The emotional intimacy Helen and James share materializes in the physical intimacy they express through the bodies of Jenny and Billy.

To Matter: Social Recognition as Life in *ghostgirl*

For Helen, not being seen creates a sense of freedom that simultaneously and paradoxically feels like a curse. Through her invisibility, she cultivates what she feels is an intimate knowledge of her hosts. Heartbreaking to her, though, is the realization that this intimacy is one-sided, as her hosts know nothing about her. Whereas Helen's story is a dramatic and sentimental exploration of intimacy and memory, Charlotte's story in *ghostgirl* is a humorous satire of adolescent preoccupation with not only being seen but also being popular. *The Time of the Ghost* and *A Certain Slant of Light* both detail the

ghost protagonist's alienation from her self, but *ghostgirl* explores the girl's alienation from her peers, living and dead.

The novel follows the death of high school student Charlotte Usher, who chokes on a gummy bear during the first day of school. After losing her life in such an ignoble and pathetic way, Charlotte finds she is now a member of a new class of students, all of whom are dead, who must work together to achieve a goal—save their home Hawthorne Manor—so that they may transcend their existences as ghosts. Charlotte, however, is more preoccupied with being a member of the living world. Unlike Sally and Helen, Charlotte remembers her life, and plans to go on living despite death. Before this school year, she had been ignored and overlooked, but she was determined to become popular and nab the heart of her high school crush, Damen. And she is not going to let death get in the way. With the help of living Goth girl Scarlet, Charlotte tries to “live” out her desire to be seen by the popular crowd and catch the attention of Damen.

Author Tonya Hurley uses pop culture references and slang to depict adolescence as a vapid world obsessed with popularity and trends. Ironically, Charlotte was already something of a ghost before her death, as nobody knew who she was, hence the reason the book title is not capitalized—to underscore how unimportant Charlotte is. She continues to find herself “on the outside looking in” and wondering if it is “*really possible to feel so alone in a crowded room*” (Hurley 9; italics in original); “She had been filed under ‘Nobody’” (72). The novel, therefore, equates social death with physical death. Somebody actually takes notice of Charlotte when she dies. Scarlet is tapped to write her obituary and recalls that she was rude to Charlotte in the moments

before her death. Her guilt makes her sympathetic to Charlotte and amenable to allowing her to possess her later in the book. Death finally gets Charlotte noticed (Hurley 104).

In a disturbing episode, Charlotte is confronted with her corpse, a moment which highlights her position as an abject figure. The episode is terrifying and disturbing because it grotesquely affirms the reality of her death:

There it was. Her silent graying corpse, still wearing her first-day-of-school outfit, lying on the metal slab before her eyes. She wanted to faint, but she was paralyzed.

For the first time, she began to feel the cold in the room creep along her skin. She grabbed her wrist and pressed for her pulse. Nothing. She brought both palms to her chest to feel for her heart, which should have been pounding by now. But there was no beat. Freaked and shuddering, she moved closer to the cadaver and poked it gingerly in each limb, hoping for a reaction. Again, nothing. [. . .]

Charlotte recoiled in an effort to distance herself from the corpse and tripped, hitting a huge industrial metal fan on the desk. (33-34)

As with the other ghost protagonists, Charlotte experiences the world as if her body were intact. She feels the cold, she puts her palms to her chest, and she pokes the body. When she trips, Charlotte's hand goes through the blades of the fan. Even though she sees her fingers chopped off and flying in every direction, she feels no pain and finds that her fingers are still attached to her hand. Both moments in this scene—interacting with her

corpse and observing the phantom obliteration of her fingers—serve to help Charlotte accept the fact that she has died. Kristeva considers viewing a corpse as a formidable example of abjection:

[R]efuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. (*Powers* 3)

According to Kristeva, “The corpse [. . .] is the utmost of abjection” (*Powers* 3). As a ghost confronting her own corpse, Charlotte tries to confirm that she is, in fact, alive, but instead, she realizes she is both corpse and ghost, not a living being. Facing the corpse confirms her death. Butler perceives the abject as “relat[ing] to all kinds of bodies whose lives are not considered to be ‘lives’ and whose materiality is understood not to ‘matter’” (qtd. in Meijer and Prins 281). Within the setting of her high school, the living Charlotte, before her death, would fall under Butler’s category of abject. She was a nobody who did not matter to anyone; the poor showing at her memorial highlights that her life was not of value to her community of peers.

Despite the horror of her circumstances, Charlotte takes a narcissistic approach to death that speaks to her priorities: “Everyone dies, but rarely do they die this young, she rationalized, still trying to feel special. This was her time” (53). Overlooked most of her life, Charlotte seeks any avenue to feel special, and this desire to feel important and even popular makes her transition into death difficult. She clings to her life as if it were a

phantom limb. While sitting in Dead Ed, her new class for dead kids, Charlotte hears the school bell at living Hawthorne High, and she instinctively starts to get up. When another dead student grabs her arm and reminds her that she has nowhere to go, “nothing could keep the painful memories suddenly flooding her mind at bay. Maybe it was the fire alarm, the reminiscence of a tiny part of her daily life, but the twinges of hurt, like the phantom pain of an amputee remained” (60). Such a comment about the phantom limb perhaps indicates the way that the ghost operates as a phantom of the lived body and how memories stimulate sensations. According to Gail Weiss, “as the phantom limb phenomenon amply demonstrates, the body parts that may be incorporated or expelled in the body image need not be actually present to have an active role in its constitution” (34). Weiss goes on to bring in the work of Paul Schilder to claim that “the role that memory plays in the construction of one’s present body image(s) can only be understood if the emotional contexts that situate (and stimulate) these memories are also illuminated and addressed” (34). In a similar discussion, Grosz connects the phantom limb to a body phantom:

The biological body, if it exists at all, exists for the subject only through the mediation of an image or series of (social/cultural) images of the body and its capacity for movement and action. The phantom limb is a libidinally invested part of the body phantom, the image or *Doppelgänger* of the body the subject must develop if it is to be able to conceive of itself as an object and a body, and if it is to take on voluntary action in conceiving of itself as subject. (*Volatile* 41-2)

For Charlotte, her resistance to let go of her former life operates like a phantom limb, wherein she retains her former desires to maintain a coherent identity.

By relating mind-body development to female menses, the instructor of Dead Ed explains why the dead teenagers need their own special course in dealing with death and why Charlotte needs time to adjust:

Mind and body mature at different rates. [. . .] Just because your body is hormonally programmed to begin your peri . . . ah, menses, that is, because you are physically capable of reproducing at a certain age, does not mean you are emotionally or psychologically prepared. In other words, yours is a woman's body, still ruled by the mind of a girl. (148-49)

His line of thinking is perhaps at the heart of anxiety about adolescent female sexuality: the mind of a girl ruling the body of a woman. Such a perspective seems to uphold notions of mind-body duality in its assumption that the body is a servant to the whims of the mind. However, for the ghost girl, the habits of the body continue to influence the way she tries to interact with the world. What the Dead Ed instructor is trying to say is that Charlotte's is a dead body ruled by the mind of a living person and that she needs time to disconnect from the living and let go of her life. But this does not satisfy Charlotte, who seeks a living body that her mind can control.

The instructor explains that possession "is the ultimate act of selfishness" because it "defeats the whole purpose of acceptance" (150). However, when Charlotte learns that Scarlet is the only person who can see, hear, and touch her, she finds that possession can offer them both something they want. While Charlotte desires to be

visible and interact with Damen, Scarlet wants to be invisible and enjoys her isolation as a social outcast. While Charlotte is possessing Scarlet's body, Scarlet's spirit is free to go where it pleases, and she enjoys "no boundaries, no limitations, no authority" (186). The possession, though, brings Charlotte closer to true recognition as she finds a friend in Scarlet. Furthermore, she finds a community with the Dead Ed students. In the other two novels in this chapter, the protagonists work toward recognition and visibility as a path to resolution. And *ghostgirl* does this, too; however, the novel goes further to undermine the pursuit of popularity for acceptance in favor of finding substantial intimacy through authentic friendships.¹⁷ While being seen matters—in the sense of being a part of a group—being the object of the gaze is a desire to be overcome. Once Charlotte surrenders her goal of being adored by the school and helps her Dead Ed classmates save their home, she is finally able to be seen by the living students. No more tricks or disguises, Charlotte becomes more confident in herself and less reliant on the acceptance of others. She appears to the living when she is ready to be seen for who she really is (319). And then she and her Dead Ed peers cross over to wherever ghosts go. The corporeal and the phantasmal momentarily converge when Charlotte learns her lesson and accepts the responsibilities in her new identity as a dead girl. Paradoxically, it would seem that through death, Charlotte has more of a life than when she was alive.

Conclusion: Control and Cross-Gender Communication

Common to all three books discussed in this chapter are notable moments wherein the ghost girl manipulates a living boy's hand to articulate her thoughts. In *The*

Time of the Ghost, Sally the ghost desperately tries to communicate her need for help to one of the students in her father's class:

It was still immensely difficult. Ned's hand was like a dead weight, white, freckled, and bony. And it was used to writing Ned's way. It was not good at someone else's writing. She had to heave and force and thrust at it, and try as she would, she could not make writing of an ordinary, small size. Her letters were huge, sprawling and ungainly. Because of that and because of it being so difficult, she kept it short. "IM ONE MELFORD GIRL DONT KNOW WHICH 7 YRS OFF NEED HELP MONIGAN HELP." (188-89)

In a less cryptic and more romantic vein, Helen, in *A Certain Slant of Light*, tries to silently communicate with James while they are in Mr. Brown's classroom:

I placed my other hand on his shoulder and stroked his right arm from the top down toward his hand, willing him to relax. He let me draw the tension out of him, and when I felt his resistance subside, I started gently to move his hand. He breathed now, and I could feel his heart pounding. He looked at the word he had written, that I had written: *Write*. (35-36)

And in *ghostgirl*, Charlotte, desperate to help Damen pass his physics quiz so that he can attend the school dance, moves his hands to circle the correct answers:

Concerned that she might cost Damen not only just a ticket to the Fall Ball but also his place on the football team if this kept up, Charlotte made her best effort to focus on the task at hand. She ignored his broad

shoulders, his strong arms, his beautiful head of thick hair, his gorgeous eyes, his sweet lips, and his perfect nose, and without any further distractions took his hand in hers and gently guided it to the right answers just as time ran out. (215)

While these three ghosts are motivated by different reasons—vulnerability, intimacy, and infatuation—their actions highlight their paradoxical silent voices, how they maneuver when silence is not their choice. They must resort to sheer willpower because they do not have mouths or breath to verbally express themselves. Though their silence has been triggered by death, or a near-death experience, it metaphorically represents the ways that adolescent girls are potentially silenced in society. Scholars and critics including Lyn Mikel Brown, Carol Gilligan, Mary Pipher, and Deborah Tolman have addressed how the adolescent girl’s voice is jeopardized and even silenced as a result of several factors, including family dynamics and peer relationships. But the ghosts in these novels effectively subvert their instituted (institutionalized?) silence by “speaking” through boys. The gender dynamics here are unavoidable: the male body is activated and used by the bodiless female ghost for her expression. She may seem powerless and silent, but her appropriation of the male body is a powerful mode of subversion. She is not given a voice; she takes one as a means to becoming part of the social body.

In her discussion of corporeal representation, Gatens identifies the unified body politic as being implicitly masculine and leaving no room for other bodies, voices, and ethics: “If woman speaks from her body, with her voice, who can hear? [. . .] Our political vocabulary is so limited that it is not possible, within its parameters, to raise the

kinds of questions that would allow the articulation of bodily difference: it will not tolerate embodied speech” (26). In Gatens’s scenario, bodily difference is effaced to preserve the notion of the unified body, with different bodies becoming like ghosts: unseen and unheard. The ghosts in these novels, and many young women in general, feel unacknowledged. While the female body is the site of much visibility and objectification, young women still struggle with feeling invisible, with feeling as if they do not matter. Popularity becomes a signifier of acceptance, and to achieve this many girls feel pressured to manufacture certain appearances and behaviors, to perform and embody idealized femininity. In order to matter, though, the ghosts in the three novel discussed in this chapter do not rely on notions of proper femininity in order to be worshipped by their peers; rather, they form real connections and strive to make a positive impact.¹⁸ The authors demonstrate the challenges of female integration into society and the tensions of physical maturation. Insecurity and fear can leave girls feeling like ghosts who are looking from the outside in, and poor body image can lead to such insecurity. One’s body is a part of who she is, but as these novels demonstrate, it does not encompass the whole of one’s being.

Notes

1. The texts that feature ghost girl protagonists do not avoid ascribing gender to the character's consciousness. Gender remains even when the body is absent, at least in the novels addressed in this dissertation.

2. The same may be said of ghost boys and gender-neutral ghosts. An obvious example of a male ghost protagonist would be Casper the Friendly Ghost, but for the most part, ghosts occupy the roles of antagonists and supporting characters.

3. Ruth Waterhouse acknowledges Jones's ingenuity in positioning the ghost as the protagonist and discusses how the ghost's perspective is much like that of the reader.

4. Sally is able to relate her experience through what Brian Attebery identifies as "indirect free discourse, or quotation of her thoughts grammatically converted into third person, with occasional direct access marked by italics" (77).

5. A ghost girl using the power of her will to force a boy's hand to write her thoughts and words occurs in each of the three novels I discuss in this chapter. The image could be extrapolated to demonstrate metaphorically the subversion of patriarchal restrictions on women's writing. The ghost girl's movement of a boy's hand becomes a way for her to overcome her silence and achieve some sense of control.

6. The ghost's thoughts are italicized in the novel.

7. The heterosexual imperative is demonstrated in many ghost girl novels, but it is not valorized in Jones's. In fact, Jones prioritizes the sisters' bond over any other relationships, particularly her relationship with Julian Addiman. Julian is a student at the family's school for boys and is the grown-up Sally's charming yet controlling romantic

interest. His violent outbursts lead to Sally in the present being tossed out of his moving car, the incident that precipitates the fracturing of her identity.

8. This seems like a comment that Alice might have made in Wonderland.

Though the quip seems like nonsense, it underscores how difficult it is to make sense of experience without a body.

9. In the two novels discussed later in this chapter, the ghost girl uses the materiality of other girls' bodies through possession rather than drinking blood.

10. As with Sally's name in *The Time of the Ghost*, the text does not immediately provide a name for the ghost. It isn't until page 22 that the narrator says her name to the other spirit who sees her.

11. When she becomes separated from her host, she sinks into the "smothering belly of a grave," wherein "Icy water [burns] down [her] throat, splintering [her] ribs, and [her] ears [fill] with sound like a demon howling" (4-5).

12. James explains that such instances can occur after a near-death experience or in cases of severe depression. He tells Helen how he acquired the body he possesses: "He vacated it," said James. "He left it, mind and soul, like an empty house with the door open." He seemed excited to tell me his strange adventure.

"When his spirit left his body, why didn't he die?" I wanted to know.

"His body didn't die," he said, still fascinated by his own luck. "His spirit chose to leave. It's difficult to explain. Instead of the ship going down taking the crew with it, the crew abandoned the ship, but the ship was still seaworthy" (24).

13. For purposes of clarity, in the novel James is a ghost who possesses the body of a high school student named Billy. James helps Helen find a body to possess, and they choose Jenny, who attends the same high school as Billy.

14. The power of the gaze is a concept of frequent feminist theorizing. (See Mulvey 1975, Williams 1984, and Clover 1992.) According to Laura Mulvey, “In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly” (451). In *A Certain Slant of Light*, Helen enjoys an active gaze of the world around her, but the people she watches do not realize that she is looking at them. After she discovers that James can see her, she cautiously watches him as he walks from class. As the object of her gaze, he is aware that she is observing him.

15. James is given an advantage in the novel in terms of experience even though Helen has been dead longer (she 130 years, he 85): his physical body is older than Helen’s, he knows more about occupying bodies, and the effect of his gaze on her is significant in ways that the effect of hers on him apparently is not. While he is her love interest, he is also a guide of sorts, explaining the rules for possession. Helen relies on him and loves him, but towards the end of the novel, she must act alone to restore Jenny to her body and transcend to a more heaven-like afterlife.

16. In *The Monstrous-Feminine*, Creed focuses a chapter on the possessed girl, specifically as represented by *The Exorcist*. She argues, “Possession becomes the excuse for legitimizing a display of aberrant feminine behavior which is depicted as

depraved, monstrous, abject—and perversely appealing” (31). She associates the monstrous with the grotesque display of Regan’s body. In *A Certain Slant of Light* and *ghostgirl*, the ghost’s possession of the teen girl’s body is not depicted as grotesque or horrific perhaps precisely because it is not a hostile takeover. Jennie has left her body, and Scarlet agrees to let Charlotte in. Both possessions demonstrate a respect for the teen girl’s living body. But in a humorous allusion to *The Exorcist*, Scarlet spits up split pea soup, and Charlotte smiles at the reference to the film (155).

17. Teen readers pick up on the novel’s lessons about popularity and infatuation. MimaM, a teen reviewer for *Teen Ink*, writes, “This book is about popularity.” ELM522, another *Teen Ink* reviewer, comments,

I found it exasperating that [Charlotte] idolizes the Quarter Back, Damen Dylan, in fact, you can even call it a relentless obsession. Throughout the novel, her stalking continued. This was stereotypical because in countless books and movies, this almost seems uniform for teen girls. In reality, girls don’t wait around for a “flawless” guy, yet this seems to be a continuous theme for the media.

A reviewer named Amanda at *YA Books Central* writes,

Charlotte seemed like an average pretty likable character at first but THEN you learn about her plan to become popular...First of all I could really care less about popularity but Charlotte took it a little too far. Especially after she dies and still tries to get Damen to go out with her. Seriously? You think this is how you're supposed to do to make peace?

REALLY?! Because you don't even really know him. Get over it mmkay?

But that was practically the whole premise of the book.

A number of teen reviewers enjoyed the humor in the novel, but many were also put off by Charlotte's narcissism and selfish pursuit of superficial popularity, which the novel repeatedly mocks.

18. Sally helps save herself and her sisters from Monigan's curse, Helen forms a bond with James and helps Jenny back into her body, and Charlotte makes a real friend with Scarlet and helps save Hawthorne Manor so that her Dead Ed class may crossover together.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have attempted to demonstrate that the rise in monstrous female protagonists in contemporary fantasy and horror fiction encourages female agency by making the monstrous powerful and desirable, but that the trend simultaneously reveals anxieties about female power by framing it within moral and social standards of appropriate femininity. The monstrous protagonists in teen literature have amazing abilities: some have the magical capability to effect change in their community, some have the power to transform their bodies, and some have the ability to move through the world without the limitations of physical boundaries. As witches, werewolves, and ghosts, the characters are classic figures of horror, but in contemporary literature, they are less monstrous and even normalized to a degree as they metaphorically represent the potential power and agency of the teen girl. The monstrous protagonists push back and defy the rules, which makes them threatening and exciting.

Monstrosity, in many such texts, is embraced as an emblem of individuality and strength. The witch is a terrifying figure because she has the power to control and influence other people. The werewolf is horrifying because her metamorphosis violates the boundaries between human and animal and because her violent hunting practices conflict with notions of female passivity. The ghost is frightening because boundaries do not hold her back and she can affect the living even though she seemingly has no

physical power. Taken together, these monstrous figures are threatening because they violate norms and have the power to control, manipulate, and influence others.

Their monstrosity, though, is not solely tied to their fantastical bodies and powers. As adolescent girls, their bodies are changing and unstable. Adolescence is a transitional period of development, positioned as “the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (Kristeva, *Powers* 4). Scholars have commented on the connection between adolescence and abjection. In “Species Trouble: The Abjection of Adolescence in E. B. White’s *Stuart Little*,” Marah Gubar equates the abject with the “fraught frontier of adolescence, that unsettling period during which the boundary between childhood and adulthood is constantly breached and reasserted” (98). Similarly, Karen Coats, in *Looking Glasses and Neverlands: Lacan, Desire, and Subjectivity*, Jennifer Marchant, in “‘An Advocate, a Defender, an Intimate’: Kristeva’s Imaginary Father in Fictional Girl-Animal Relationships,” and Christine Wilkie-Stibbs, in “Borderland Children: Reflection on Narratives of Abjection,” all address issues of adolescence in relation to abjection, paying particular attention to identity development. The adolescent, it has repeatedly been asserted, is an abject figure by virtue of her position on the border between childhood and adulthood. When considering the various ways that abjection is associated with the female body through physical processes such as menstruation, the adolescent girl, I would suggest, is a particularly abject in terms of her adolescence and newly menstruating body.¹

Some of the texts in this dissertation address the potentially horrific experience of menstruation. Kelsey in “Boobs” is disgusted by puberty. Her menses is

inconvenient, and her developing breasts catch the negative attention of her male bully. Carrie White's experience with menarche is undeniably traumatic, as her peers ridicule her while she thinks the blood is a sign that she is dying. Jones takes a creative approach to menstruation by using other people's blood to bring the ghost girl into being. The process is disgusting for the ghost and painful for a number of the blood donors. Characters such as Carrie and Micah fear menstruation, but in the context of their respective novels, their parents are to blame for this fear. Carrie's mother never tells her what to expect with her changing body, and Micah's parents keep her on birth control to avoid her violent transition into a wolf which comes during her menses. Their stories reveal discourses of shame and threat associated with menstruation that can alienate girls from their bodies.

Overall, these monsters are not so horrific. Positioning them as protagonists leads to sympathy and identification, allowing the reader to see their humanity. The witch, werewolf, and ghost have been terrifying creatures populating myths, fairy tales, and horror films and novels for centuries, but in contemporary teen fiction they are used to demonstrate the challenging, frustrating, and powerful period of adolescence as well as the potential power the teen girl can choose to exercise. While Nina Auerbach claims in *Our Vampires, Ourselves* that "in the eighteenth century, horror was by definition a women's genre, but today, many women disclaim it (or try to), finding its world alien, almost insulting" (3), women writers in the last few decades have begun to reclaim the genre to explore the boundaries and potential of female experience. Writers such as Diana Wynne Jones, Margaret Mahy, Annette Curtis Klause, and Laura Whitcomb,

among many others, focus on the experiences of fantastically monstrous females—witches, werewolves, and ghosts—in ways that do not cast them as villains but as heroes and as complicated but positive sources of female power. In this reclaiming of monstrous figures, modern writers are redefining female experience, normalizing heretofore monstrous aspects of the feminine, which indicates a move from abjection to affinity. The characters in these texts seek connections with other people, some of whom share their supernatural abilities, and the reader is invited to identify with their frustrations and desires as they navigate the turbulent period of adolescence.

Contemporary young adult fantasy and horror fiction presents monstrous female protagonists who have exciting yet disturbing powers, thereby promoting female potential while also revealing anxiety about such possibilities. The characters in many of these texts explore the limits of their powers—Laura Chant considers torturing her brother’s nemesis, and Vivian Gandillon tries to frighten a girl competing for her boyfriend’s attention—but they also temper their desires and contain their powers within morally responsible frameworks in order to participate within a community. Carrie’s annihilation of Chamberlain is an object lesson of the fantastical potential of female power, but in the novel Carrie can no longer be allowed to exist after the depths of her destruction. Micah’s resistance to telling the truth, along with her potential murder of her brother and boyfriend, support the possibility that she is either in jail or a mental institution at the end of *Liar*. Charlotte’s desire to live out her dream of being Damen’s girlfriend and going to the Fall Ball threatens her friendship with Scarlet as she begins to take liberties with Scarlet’s body when she possesses it.

Being a strong young woman requires being a responsible one. Thus, the monstrous heroines in fantasy fiction must weigh their desires against the well-being of other people. This is a moral imperative with which women, in particular, are confronted as society expects them to be mothers and caretakers. Whether it is through showing mercy or self-sacrifice, the contemporary monstrous protagonists must consider the welfare of others in order to survive and to be an active member of a society. As such, these characters are potential models of responsible female empowerment.

Notes

1. See Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*, Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine*, and Ussher's *Managing the Monstrous Feminine*.

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