

# The Monstrous Encounter

by

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## Abstract

This research project proposes that the monstrous encounter in art, film and story can signify the change from the understood to the unknown self, using the historical context and literary elements of *Little Red Riding Hood* as a framework. Within this framework three visual artists, Kiki Smith, Jazmina Cininas and Matthew Barney are investigated to demonstrate how the monstrous encounter signifies the change from the understood to the unknown self.

In order to use *Little Red Riding Hood* as a framework the historical context of the tale has been broken down into three periods, identified as the *original*, the *bourgeois* and the *contemporary*. In each period it is shown how the monstrous encounter signifies the change from the understood to the unknown self.

The research project draws on the work of Jack Zipes, *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1993) and *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (1983); Jon Elster, *The Multiple Self* (1985); Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine* (1993) and *Phallic Panic* (2005); and Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* (1982). These key references are used to define important ideas and strengthen terminology specific to the project, such as self, monster and monstrous encounter, abjection and transformation.

As a result of using *Little Red Riding Hood* as a framework the majority of the research looks at the monstrous encounter almost exclusively in the form of lycanthropy, which lends itself most easily to concepts of metamorphoses and the divided self. The werewolf enjoys enormous popularity in many avenues of contemporary culture and there exists countless references to this particular genre of monstrous encounter. However, this is not a project about werewolves but an investigation of the monstrous encounter, whatever form it takes. Whether it is an internal event like the work of Matthew Barney or an external process as in Cininas's use of Angela Carter's contemporary Red Riding Hood, the monstrous encounter in art, film and story can be demonstrated to signify the change from the understood to the unknown self.

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## Contents

List of Figures	4
Introduction	6
Chapter One <i>original, bourgeois, contemporary</i>	10
Chapter Two <i>self, abjection, transformation</i>	14
Chapter Three <i>the monstrous encounter in art, film and story</i>	19
<i>The fractured body: The monstrous encounter of Kiki Smith</i>	20
<i>The geography of the body: The monstrous encounter of Jazmina Cininas</i>	25
<i>The body in a 'nanomoment': The monstrous encounter of Matthew Barney</i>	29
Conclusion	33
References	34
Bibliography	36
Figures	39

## List of Figures.

Fig. i Kiki Smith, *Rapture*, 2001, bronze 170.8 x 157.5 x 66.7 cm edition of 3 + 1 A.P.  
Source: Bird, 2003:86 \_\_\_\_\_ 39

Fig. ii Kiki Smith, *Daughter*, 1999, paper, bubble wrap, cellulose, hair, fabric and glass,  
121.9 x 38.1 x 25.4 cm, collection: Ann and Mel Schaffer Family. Source: Bird,  
2003:168 \_\_\_\_\_ 40

Fig.iii Gustave Dore, illustration for *Little Red Riding Hood*, 1862, source:  
<http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/illustrations/ridinghood/dored1.html>, updated: 28  
July 2002, viewed: 24 May 2007 \_\_\_\_\_ 41

Fig. iv Kiki Smith , *Ribcage*, 1987, terracotta, ink, thread, 50.8 x 38.1 x 22.9 cm,  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, gift, Peter Norton Family Foundation. Source:  
[http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist\\_work\\_lg\\_146D\\_1.html](http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_work_lg_146D_1.html) viewed: 24  
May 2007 \_\_\_\_\_ 42

Fig. v Kiki Smith, *Digestive System*, 1988, ductile iron, 157.5 cm x 66 cm source:  
<http://www.renaissancesociety.org/site/Exhibitions/Images.65.0.0.0.0.html?image=1313>  
, viewed: 24 May 2007 \_\_\_\_\_ 42

Fig. vi Kiki Smith, *Blood Pool*, 1992, painted bronze, 35.6 x 99.1 x 55.9 cm, source:  
(Bird, 2003:62) \_\_\_\_\_ 42

Fig. vii Jazmina Cininas, *Angela Prefers the Company of Wolves*, 2005 reduction lino  
cut, 49.5 x 47, source:  
<http://www.portjacksonpress.com.au/showart.php?ref=ae3587pjpa30450506146>,  
viewed: 24 May 2007 \_\_\_\_\_ 43

Fig. viii John Landis, detail from *An American Werewolf in London*, 1981, Universal  
Pictures, source: <http://movies.yahoo.com/movie/1800340823/photo/547213> , viewed  
24 May 2007 \_\_\_\_\_ 44

Fig. ix Jazmina Cininas, Details of printed and hand-sewn gloves  
From the series *The Girlie Werewolf Project*, 2002 Photo: Polyanna Sutton, source:  
Sutton: 2002 n.p. \_\_\_\_\_44

Fig. x Jazmin Cininas, *Rue Dingo*, 2004, reduction lino cut, 69 cm x 47cm, source:  
<http://www.portjacksonpress.com.au/showart.php?ref=ae1346pjpa78197221467>  
viewed: 24 May 2007 \_\_\_\_\_45

Fig. xi Matthew Barney, detail from *Cremaster 3* 2002, Photo: Chris Winget, source:  
<http://www.indymoca.org/public/index.asp?pg=events&ev=cremaster-photos> viewed:  
24 May 2007 \_\_\_\_\_46

Fig.xii Matthew Barney, *The Third Degree* (detail), 2002, 2-C prints in acrylic frames,  
106.7 x 85 x 3.8 cm each, source: Spector, 2002:308 \_\_\_\_\_46

*We're not just afraid of predators, we're transfixed by them, prone to weave stories and fables and chatter endlessly about them, because fascination creates preparedness, and preparedness, survival. In a deeply tribal sense, we love our monsters.*

E.O. Wilson.

## **Introduction**

For me monsters have held a lifelong fascination, particularly their relationship to the body and their presence in cultural productions. In this investigation I have attempted to study part of the deep and complex relationship that we have with our monsters. Going beyond a solely artistic view, I aim to show that monsters are part of our social as well as our psychological make up. This research is not simply about art, its makers and its mythologies but also about our desperate need to experience the monstrous encounter.

In this investigation I propose that the monstrous encounter in art, film and story can signify the change from the understood to the unknown self, using as a framework both the historical context and literary elements of *Little Red Riding Hood*.

*Little Red Riding Hood* is a tale that has undergone countless revisions and adaptations. In order to use it as a framework for this study the historical context of the tale has been broken down into three periods, identified as the *original*, the *bourgeois* and the *contemporary*. This framework is used to support an investigation into the work of three visual artists, Kiki Smith, Jazmina Cininas and Matthew Barney, to show how the monstrous encounter may signify a change from the understood to the unknown self.

As well as investigating the artists, this research has drawn on key references that help define the Red Riding Hood framework and strengthen terminology specific to the project, such as 'self', 'monster' and 'monstrous encounter', 'abjection' and 'transformation'. *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1993) by Jack Zipes is one such reference providing extensive material on the long and convoluted history of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Zipes explored the social and cultural contexts that have been a part of the development of the tale, from the pre-Perrault oral tradition, identified by Zipes as *The Tale of Grandmother*, to the contemporary feminist versions

and parodies. It is this comprehensive discourse provided by Zipes on the socio-historical developments of *Little Red Riding Hood* that supports the concept of *original, bourgeois* and *contemporary* contexts in the investigative framework.

For the specific terminology I have drawn on the work of Julia Kristeva, Barbara Creed and Jon Elster to clarify the terms of abjection, transformation and the self, respectively. The work of Kristeva is crucial to the project as abjection affects the way in which the monstrous encounter is identified within this investigation. According to Kristeva abjection is the crossing of borders and is that which '...disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The inbetween, the ambiguous, the composite.' (Kristeva, 1982:4). Particular to this investigation is what Kristeva termed the 'clean and proper body', that self-contained vessel of ourselves that 'must bear no trace of its debt to nature...' (Kristeva, 1982:102). Abjection, along with the clean and proper body is discussed in relation to identity and self in Chapter Two.

In these terms the abject manifests itself in many areas of the monstrous encounter of *Little Red Riding Hood*. It occurs through the wolf, which in both the original and contemporary versions is represented as a werewolf, a composite creature who disturbs the borders of both human and non-human, existing in '...those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*.' (Kristeva, 1983:12). Abjection also occurs within Red Riding Hood herself. As the girl undergoes that transition to womanhood she is made abject, most noticeably in the bourgeois tale where woman's body is culturally perceived as a site of abjection which, '...because of its maternal functions, acknowledges its "debt to nature" and consequently is more likely to signify the abject.' (Creed, 1993:11). The abjection shared by both werewolf and girl appears as a unique relationship in the work of Jazmina Cininas and is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

Another key reference is Barbara Creed who uses Kristeva's essay on abjection in her own research into horror and monstrosity in cinema. Creed helps to define the term transformation and its relationship to abjection in the monstrous encounter, in *The Monstrous Feminine* (1993) and *Phallic Panic* (2005). The term self was clarified by Jon Elster whose book *The Multiple Self* (1985) made that change from the understood

to the unknown self a possibility. Theories within *The Multiple Self* are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

In Chapter Three the terminology of abjection, transformation and self along with the framework of original, bourgeois and contemporary come together to explore the monstrous encounter in *Little Red Riding Hood*: that initial meeting between the girl and the wolf in the forest. Zipes described this meeting as the 'scene of transition' (1993: 359). This is the point from which the rest of the story can unfold. In each context of original, bourgeois and contemporary the monstrous encounter signifies the change from the girl's innocence, her understood self to her maturity, her unknown self and with each period this change represents a different outcome.

Both framework and terminology are then applied to the study of the artists in Chapter Three beginning with *The fractured body*, an examination of the work of Kiki Smith who focuses on internal and external workings of the human body. For Smith the transition to the unknown self is the unification of the body with nature.

*The geography of the body* investigates the work of Jazmina Cininas whose own research looks at the female werewolf as social barometer. Cininas' work involves fine line cuts, costume and video that reference contemporary Red Riding Hood tales, with the monstrous encounter manifesting itself through the meeting and merging of girl and wolf. The dimension of film has been added to this research through Cininas's own commentary on contemporary werewolf folklore and comparisons made between the monstrous encounter in the work of Cininas and the encounter in the film *An American Werewolf in London* (1981).

*The body in a 'nanoment'* looks at Matthew Barney, a sculptor and filmmaker who focuses on the body in terms of its own transformation and development. His *Cremaster cycle* (1994-2002) traces the journey of sexual differentiation within a fetus and the organism's resistance to this differentiation. The '...cremaster is the muscle that raises or lowers the testicles, in response to outside changes in temperature or involuntary reflexes.' (Tomkins, 2003:np). Yet it is not the muscle itself that concerns the *Cremaster cycle*, it is in fact the motifs of ascension and descension that form '...the

process of sexual differentiation that takes place within the womb.' (Tomkins, 2003:np). Focusing on the third film in the *Cremaster cycle* the investigation shows that the unknown self in Barney's work is the human body beyond gender, the perfect balance, free of the culturally binary views of sexuality.

The quote by E.O. Wilson at the beginning of this Introduction touches upon the abundant possibilities that exist within the study of monsters, how they extend into so many facets of our culture, psychology and even biology, deepening our understanding of who and what we are. However, for reasons of simplicity I have been careful to focus on only three artists within the *Little Red Riding Hood* framework. This along with the afore-mentioned terminology enables me to show that the monstrous encounter in art, film and story signifies the change from the understood to the unknown self.

## CHAPTER 1

### *Original, bourgeois, contemporary.*

The tale of *Little Red Riding Hood* has existed over hundreds of years undergoing many adaptations and interpretations. To use the tale as a framework for this investigation means not only following the sequence of events within the tale, with the monstrous encounter as the main focus, but also using the tale as it has existed over time. The time frame of the story and the era of each adaptation are keys to how the monstrous encounter plays out within *Little Red Riding Hood*. The three distinct adaptations of the tale, identified as the *original*, the *bourgeois* and the *contemporary*, are used to investigate how the monstrous encounter can signify the change from the understood to the unknown self in art, film and story.

*Original* is a term that denotes the traditional oral tale of Red Riding Hood that existed in Europe during the Middle Ages, in which the girl is encouraged by the wolf to eat the flesh of her own grandmother. Afterwards she tricks the wolf and escapes unharmed. Identified as *The Tale of Grandmother* in Jack Zipes' *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1993) the tale was used to warn children about the dangers that awaited them beyond their home. Zipes explains that the tale:

...involved hostile forces threatening children who were without protection. Either an ogre, ogress, man-eater, wild person, werewolf, or wolf was portrayed as attacking a child in the forest or at home. The social function of the story was to show how dangerous it could be for children to talk to strangers in the woods or let strangers enter the house. (Zipes, 1993: 19).

However, more than just a warning to children this tale reflects the peasants' reverence for natural cycles, particularly those of reproduction and the ability to bare children. The courage the girl demonstrates in handling the wolf and her consuming of the grandmother's flesh are symbolic of the '...arrival of puberty and initiation into society. The girl proves that she is mature and strong enough to *replace* the grandmother.' (Zipes, 1983:29).

This tale also reveals the residual pagan attitudes of the peasantry during the Middle Ages including belief in the possibility of human to animal transformation and the shamanic powers of metamorphosis which, according to Creed (2005) links to the origins of werewolves. However with the rising influence of the Christian Church these beliefs either died out, were assimilated into Christian fables or devolved into superstitions:

Gradually the term 'werewolf' changed from denoting a spiritual or sacred creature to an outlaw. With the rise of Christianity and the banning of pagan religions, the term 'werewolf' was frequently used to describe opponents of Christianity. ...The pagan belief in the spirit-wolf is related to, but different from, the myth of the werewolf which was strengthened by the behaviour of men, known as lycanthropes, who actually believed they were able to transform into wolves. (Creed, 2005:125-126)

In France during the seventeenth century there was a shift toward a culture of strict social standards based on the proper moral behaviour of the individual. This new social context created an environment for the monstrous encounter to change, reflecting the attitudes of the surrounding society.

This next phase in the development of the tale is termed the *bourgeois*. This is Charles Perrault's version of *Little Red Riding Hood*, developed in 1697 during the reign of Louise the XIV. Zipes states that this new version by Perrault was 'recreated ...to suit the needs of an upper-class audience whose social and aesthetic standards were different from those of the common folk.' (Zipes, 1993:18). In this version the wolf devours both girl and grandmother. This tragic tale reflects Perrault's disdain for women in a culture where sex and rape is the result of female stupidity and women are held responsible for the violence enacted upon them by men. Zipes lists the changes Perrault made to this story:

First she is topped with a *red* hat, a *chaperon*, making her into a type of

bourgeois girl tainted with sin, ...Second, she is spoiled, negligent, and naïve. Third, she speaks to a wolf in the woods – rather dumb on her part – and makes a type of contract with him: she accepts a wager which, it is implied, she wants to lose. Fourth, she plays right into the wolf's hands and is too stupid to trick him. Fifth, she is swallowed or raped like her grandmother. ...Sex is obviously sinful. Playful intercourse outside of marriage is likened to rape, which is primarily the result of the little girl's irresponsible acts. (Zipes, 1993: 348-349).

After Perrault's tale came the successful *Little Red Cap* developed by the Brothers Grimm in 1812. In this version the Grimms are '... consciously working within a bourgeois literary tradition, and the significant changes they made reflect the social transformations in how children were viewed and reared.' (Zipes, 1993:32). This was now a tale for the rising middle classes, the changes include the explicit warning given to Red Riding Hood by her mother and the eventual salvation of the girl. Although Perrault let the wolf devour both the girl and the grandmother, the Grimm Brothers offer a reprieve for Red Riding Hood in the form of a man who cuts the victims from the wolf's belly: 'Instead of being raped to death, both grandma and granddaughter are saved by a male hunter or gamekeeper. ...Only a strong male figure can rescue a girl from herself and her lustful desires.' (Zipes, 1993:349)

Then in the late twentieth century there appear adaptations of Red Riding Hood that disrupt the bourgeois tradition and break the pattern of sexual repression introduced by Perrault and Grimm. Two adaptations that come under the term *contemporary* are *The Company of Wolves* (1979), a story by Angela Carter and the 1984 film of the same name, for which Carter collaborated with director Neil Jordan.

Both film and story revive the original themes of werewolves and coming of age. The girl is once again peasant stock and proves capable of taking on the challenges of living in a forest. Along with these characteristics of the *original*, the girl also reminds us of her *bourgeois* period when she is given a red cape by her grandmother and deviates from the forest path. Unlike the original version, however, she does not trick the wolf nor try to escape, nor is she devoured as in the bourgeois tale. The girl takes the great

wolf-man as her lover in her own grandmother's bed accepting the wild aspects of her identity. In the film this acceptance is reinforced when the girl herself becomes a wolf.

*Little Red Riding Hood* is a narrative of transformation and abjection and, with motifs of self and identity, it provides an ideal environment to explore how the monstrous encounter can signify the change from the understood to the unknown self. The specific terminology that supports this investigation, including that pertaining to the self, is defined in the following chapter:

## CHAPTER 2

### *Self, abjection, transformation.*

Along with the framework of *Little Red Riding Hood*, this investigation into the monstrous encounter is supported by the writing of Jack Zipes, Jon Elster, Barbara Creed and Julia Kristeva. These key authors, with others, help to define important ideas and strengthen terminology specific to the investigation, such as self, monster and monstrous encounter, abjection and transformation.

Self is an important and complex term as it is used within this investigation. There is no single discreet self that acts as a 'inner kernel' of identity (Zizek, 1999:312) but there is instead a system of interacting layers of symbol and reality. In *The Multiple Self*, (1985) Jon Elster discusses the idea that a single person can contain within their identity 'a set of sub-individual, relatively autonomous "selves"' (Elster 1985: 1). Elster outlines several ways in which this theory of the multiple self can be understood.

Firstly there is 'the loosely integrated self' which refers to coordination failures that occur between the multiple selves within the individual. Elster puts these in terms of contradictory belief systems that exist within the one person.

...examples are provided by the child who believes in Santa Claus, yet asks the parents about the price of the Christmas gifts; ...by the Romans who believed in the divinity of their rulers, yet on important family occasions always turned to their traditional gods. (Elster, 1985:4).

In *the multiple self*, there can be found different and contradictory desires or urges within the one individual, the Faustian selves: 'It is common fact' writes Elster 'that people are often torn between different desires. They want to do several things that as a matter of fact or a matter of logic are mutually exclusive.' (Elster, 1985:8).

'Successive selves' concerns the self within contextual time. The self of now differs from the self of then because of changes that occur to an individual over time. Elster uses examples of political or religious conversion and points out that although changed,

the current self '...does remain in touch with the earlier self...' (Elster, 1985:14).

Then there are 'parallel selves', which describe the self of the narrative imagination, human existence within the realm of fantasy: 'In addition to our immediate personal experience we often enjoy the vicarious experience provided by daydreaming, reading novels or writing them.' (Elster, 1985:17).

The idea of the multiple self is used within this investigation to support the terms the *unknown* self and the *understood* self. The unknown self in this investigation is that part of us that remains to be discovered. In the context of *Little Red Riding Hood* the unknown self is her new maturity, the self-awareness she gains as she crosses over into adulthood.

Also important to the systems of multiple self is what Elster calls 'the Freudian Legacy'. In describing this multiple-self system he observes that,

Freud left us with a new language for talking about the divided self. On the one hand he introduced the division into conscious, preconscious and unconscious; in addition he proposed a distinction between id, ego and superego. (Elster, 1985:20).

It is this 'new language' of Freud that underwrites the work of Julia Kristeva in her essay on abjection in *The Powers of Horror* (1982) and Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous Feminine* (1993) and *Phallic Panic* (2005). Both Creed and Kristeva are vital to examinations of the monstrous encounter in art, film and story as both authors develop Freudian theories to present their work in a more contemporary and feminist context. This new context is applied to the investigation of abjection and the divided self and their role in the monstrous encounter.

The *understood* self in this investigation is what Julia Kristeva refers to as the 'clean and proper body', a term that is tied to her theory of abjection, which will be discussed in more detail later. Nick Mansfield in his book *Subjectivity* (2000), discusses the nature of self and refers to Kristeva's essays on abjection to describe the way we often identify

the self in terms of this clean and proper body. He writes that, 'This "clean and proper" self-controlled body is the one we imagine we are referring to when we use the word 'I'. It is the one social institutions demand of us when they check on our cleanliness, truthfulness, our hard work and citizenship.' (Mansfield, 2000:82). Mansfield's statement summarises what is meant by the understood self and in terms of *Little Red Riding Hood* it was the monstrous encounter with the wolf in the forest that disrupted Red Riding Hood's clean and proper body, taking her to that previously undiscovered part of her being, leaving her childhood behind.

In order to understand how the monstrous encounter signifies the change from the understood to the unknown self it is important to clarify both the terms monster and monstrous encounter. In *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* Jeffery Cohen states that:

The monster prevents mobility (intellectual, geographic, or sexual), delimiting the social spaces through which private bodies may move. To step aside this official geography is to risk attack by some monstrous border patrol or (worse) to become monstrous oneself. (Cohen, 1996:12).

In this investigation the monster is the living gap between the understood and the unknown self. Monsters are otherness made flesh and in art, film and story take their shape from the particular fear and anxiety that bred them. While Cohen describes them as some kind of border patrol I would argue that they do not simply patrol but in fact *are* that border, that delimiter of growth. It is making contact with that border, the living gap, that initiates the monstrous encounter.

The monstrous encounter can bring death to those who make contact with that border because monsters are otherness and 'Death is the repressed other of life...' (Creed, 2005:19). In art, film and story, change from the understood to the unknown self can mean the change from life to death, which in *Little Red Riding Hood* occurs within Perrault's adaptation where for the young girl reaching her unknown self is fatal.

The nature of the monstrous encounter, and monsters themselves, is abject. Kristeva

writes that the abject is 'the inbetween, the ambiguous, the composite.' (Kristeva, 1982:4). Abjection confuses borders and disrupts systems and, as Creed observes, it '...can be experienced in various ways' (Creed, 1993:9). In the context of *Little Red Riding Hood* the girl is abjected not only when she encounters and interacts with the wolf but also when she eats the flesh of her grandmother, as in the original tale. Creed writes, 'Kristeva claims that food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and archaic form of abjection. ...Food ...becomes abject if it signifies a border between two distinct territories' (1993:9), as in the separate territories of the clean and proper body of the girl and the grandmother's dead flesh. Creed observes the power that food loathing holds in contemporary culture: '...in relation to the horror film, ...food loathing is frequently represented as a major source of abjection, particularly the eating of human flesh.' (Creed, 1993:9).

In the original tale the wolf is often portrayed as a werewolf and abjection lies in his composite form: he disrupts the separate systems of nature and culture, animal and human. In the Perrault and Grimm versions abjection occurs when the girl is devoured by the wolf and the discrete systems of outside and inside are disrupted. In the Grimm version, the girl's abjection continues even after she is rescued by the woodsman because the boundaries of her clean and proper body were violated when she experienced the world from within the wolf. In the contemporary versions abjection takes place when the girl crosses the border between human and animal by sleeping with the wolf, accepting her own wildness and disrupting her clean and proper body. In the film version this scene of abjection is taken further when she herself transforms into the wolf.

Transformation, or metamorphosis, appears throughout this investigation and is the *change* that is signified by the monstrous encounter. The metamorphosis may be physical, as in the contemporary tales of Red Riding Hood where the girl becomes wolf or, as in both the original and the bourgeois contexts, it could be a metaphor for the girl's new sexual maturity.

Metamorphosis is abject in that it disrupts the systems of nature and culture that are separated by the skin: '...“a fragile container” whose function is to preserve a border

between inside and outside in order to maintain a clean and proper body.' (Kristeva in Creed, 2005:124). Creed describes metamorphosis in Wolf-man mythology (werewolf tales) as man giving birth to himself. The wild inner nature pushes its way through the fragile skin of culture and the clean and proper body is perforated. 'He is a "versipellous", that is a "skin changer", a creature who is able to turn his skin inside out as he metamorphoses from human to animal ...the thinnest of membranes – separates the inside from the outside of the body. (Creed, 2005:124).

Transformation is abject and reminds us that the repression of our natural cycles is never complete, our wildness will always find us. In this way monsters and the monstrous encounter are closely tied to nature.

## CHAPTER 3

### *The monstrous encounter in art, film and story*

Before the investigation can move on to the three visual artists, it is necessary to revisit the structure of *Little Red Riding Hood* with emphasis on the pivotal point of the tale: the meeting between the wolf and girl in the forest.

In the *original* the monstrous encounter is a rite of passage and the understood self is the girl's childishness, her body before social or sexual development. Her 'clean and proper body' is then made abject by the encounter with the wolf and she reaches her unknown self, her maturity, that also represents a unification of the wild and civilised aspects of her self. Recalling Zipes:

In facing the werewolf and temporarily abandoning herself to him, the little girl sees the animal side of her self. She crosses the border between civilization and wilderness, goes beyond the dividing line to face death in order to live. Her return home is a move forward as a whole person. She is a wo/man, self-aware, ready to integrate herself in society *with awareness*. (Zipes, 1983:30).

In the *bourgeois* it is the girl's disobedience that leads her to interact with the monster, as a result both herself and her grandmother are devoured. This adaptation '...reflects general male attitudes about women, portrayed as eager to be seduced or raped.' (Zipes, 1993: 348). The perforation of her clean and proper body is a thing to be discouraged and her unknown self, the maturity and awareness, are dangerous and result in her murder.

The *contemporary* then offers a tale where the girl's unknown self is once again her awareness and independence. By straying from the path and encountering the wolf, the young girl '...[takes] charge of her own sexuality.' (Zipes, 1993:380).

In all versions of this tale the monstrous encounter symbolically guides the understood self of the girl, her superficial 'I' and her clean and proper body to her deeper and unknown self, the self of maturity and awareness. The monstrous encounter unites the

fragmented aspects of her identity.

By recognizing the wolf outside of her as a part of herself, just as the wolf seeks the female in himself, she can become at one with herself. ...The self can explore its possibilities and undergo symbolic exchanges with nature inside and outside the self. (Zipes, 1993:361)

The difference between the three versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* lies in the social and cultural contexts that surround the story at the times of its adaptations. It is how the authors and audience view themselves and how these views change over history that dictates the nature of the monstrous encounter and whether the unknown self implies self-awareness, sexual deviancy or the awakening conscience.

The monstrous encounter in the story is the transitional catalyst which enables the following events in the tale to take place. It is this point of the beast interacting with the clean and proper body of the girl that is used as a framework to investigate how the monstrous encounter in art, film and story can signify the change from the understood to the unknown self. This point is evident in work of each of the three artists, Kiki Smith, Jazmina Cininas and Matthew Barney.

***The fractured body: The monstrous encounter of Kiki Smith.***

The art of Kiki Smith aligns itself well with the narrative of Red Riding Hood as it appropriates myth and fairytales to address the concerns of a contemporary environment. The monstrous encounter in Smith's work manifests itself through the human body and is most clearly represented in the sculptures, *Rapture* (2001) (Fig. i) and *Daughter* (1999) (Fig. ii). As in Gustave Dore's 1862 illustration of the monstrous encounter for Perrault's text (Fig. iii), Smith's sculptures make reference to the literary elements of the fairy tale, namely those of girl, woman and wolf and also to the themes of abjection, transformation and growth.

The body that is central to the monstrous encounter is central to Smith's investigations of issues that surround identity. Posner notes that Smith's career has created a story

through art that '...is in part her own creation myth, an engagement and a reshaping, with the body as her focus, of the religious, literary, and art historical tales that have governed the way we perceive our origins.' (Posner, 1998:7).

In her early work Smith breaks apart the clean and proper body, dismembering limbs, exposing internal organs and subverting the skin with fluids and excretions. In *Ribcage* (1987), and *Digestive System* (1988) (Figs iv and v) she gives equal attention to the internal and external processes of the functioning body. The interplay that occurs between beauty and abjection in these dismembered bodies is a way for Smith to reach from the understood to the unknown self. Smith's later work then pieces the body parts together forming more complete figures as in *Blood Pool* (1992) (Fig. vi) and also evident in both *Rapture* and *Daughter*. Sometimes these figures manifest as composite forms with the bodies being partially made up of animals and even plants.

Smith's work calls on myths and symbols from Christian creation stories while also incorporating '...ancient Egyptian and classical Indian to modern myths like that of Frankenstein...' (Posner, 1998: 7-8). Alongside mythological and religious motifs, Smith's technique evokes a sense of craft and the handmade, creating in her work 'feminine' objects such as dolls and doilies. Smith constructs a world where grandmothers talk to granddaughters, sharing warnings and wisdom around the hearth as in the original version of Red Riding Hood. Within this environment of mythological motifs and domestic objects, the monstrous encounter is introduced to initiate change and growth. Even in the contemporary context of Kiki Smith it is necessary for granddaughters to grow and face the trials of maturity.

In Smith's work both biological and cultural systems alike are abjected. By synthesising mythological themes with contemporary issues Smith challenges current perceptions of the body within cultural systems. This engagement of culture and society through fairytale aligns Smith's work with the bourgeois context of Red Riding Hood. Like Perrault and Grimm, who used the tale to demonstrate the importance of the civilized body detached from nature and its urges, Smith uses the same tale to attempt to heal society and reunify the body to the natural world:

[Smith] understands her mission to be nothing less than the fundamental healing of our fractured selves, ..Smith's quest culminates in the eventual restoration of humanity to a state of grace, envisioned as an ideal realm in which human beings, the animal world, and the landscape exist in concert. (Posner, 1998:8).

Throughout her career, Smith has investigated the complacency of certain cultural systems toward issues that affect the body, in particular the issue of domestic violence in her installation *Life Wants to Live* (1982). With her focus on the body as containing both internal and external processes, Smith reveals the root of this violence and the cultural ambivalence toward it to be the result of a fractured society that harbours a mistrust of the body and the abjection of its natural functions:

The discomfort with bodily interiors, with the body's fluids, functions, weaknesses, and messiness in some way subtends or underwrites the invisibility of domestic violence; invisibility is shaped by the exclusive focus on surface symptomology, documentation and evidentiary marks of proof (Coulthard, 2004:31).

This ambivalence leads to the cultural system either placing responsibility upon the victim or making the victim completely 'invisible' as discussed by Coulthard in her research into *Life Wants to Live*.

Smith's *Life* addresses itself to the public secret of domestic violence and engages the particular problems of documentation, intimacy and invisibility associated with this form of violence. Considered in this way, *Life* suggests the problem of knowing someone else's pain and suggests the invisibility of intimate violence in culture, society, and representation. (Coulthard, 2004: 23).

Smith's *Life* uses the body and all of its functions, hidden and open to make visible the secret devastation of this violence.

Smith's work builds on the original context of myth and fairy tale and their synthesis with contemporary issues, to question the fracturing of society in a unique and subversive way. Like Angela Carter's *Red Riding Hood*, Smith's 'story' is also about reclaiming control over the body. While Carter's *Riding Hood* was concerned with '...taking charge of her own sexuality' (Zipes, 1993:380) Smith's work from the very beginning has been about questioning and challenging the '...complex medical, legal and religious struggle for control of the body...' (Posner, 1998:7). Smith states herself that 'Our bodies are basically stolen from us, ...it is about trying to reclaim one's own turf, or one's own vehicle of being here.' (Isaak, 2003: 51). In this way Smith's work aligns itself with the contemporary context of the *Red Riding Hood* tale.

The subversive quality of Smith's work can be seen in *Rapture* (2001), as the sculpture itself '...derives from the part of [Grimm's] Little Red Riding Hood story in which the Grandmother steps out of the wolf's cut-open belly...' (Princenthal, 2007:124). Unperturbed by the chauvinist overtones of the Grimm story, Smith simply allows the symbolism to remain open to individual interpretation, which is demonstrated by Holland Cotter who describes his reactions on seeing *Rapture*:

...many other thoughts came to mind, including words that the poet Audre Lorde wrote just after she had a breast removed as a result of cancer. 'Maybe this is the chance to live and speak those things I really do believe, that power comes from moving into whatever I fear most that cannot be avoided. But will I ever be strong enough again to open my mouth and not have a cry of raw pain leap out?' For some reason, for me 'Rapture' evoked Lorde's struggle, and seemed a positive answer to her question. (Cotter, 2006:E.2:33)

This reclamation of the female body through the monstrous encounter is also evident in *Daughter* (1999). A comparison may be made with Gustave Dore's illustration of that same scene of transition, both show girls at the point of their monstrous encounter. Smith's *Daughter* encounters the monster internally and her hairy and wild inside pushes through the civilized border of her petite female form. She has reconciled the

different aspects of her being and stands there as her self made flesh, uniting the elements of girl, woman and wolf. Looking at Dore's image, which was created specifically for Perrault's bourgeois text, we see the monstrous encounter as an external process where the child corrupts herself through her own lustfulness and deviancy. This child's transition from girlhood to adulthood is one of shame and the ensuing self-awareness and maturity is fatal.

The monstrous encounter within the work of Kiki Smith signifies the change from the understood, the fractured body, to the unknown self through uniting the broken pieces that constitute identity and making the bodies whole. Although bodies come together either as Frankenstein composites or, later in her career, complete human-looking figures, the process to coherency is never fully resolved and the complete unification of the fractured identity remains unfinished:

Making images, fashioning new narratives produces change in the world; ...If the images [Smith] fashions offer hope, it is not in their resolution, but in their latency. ...[H]ope is the process, that which is not yet, that which impels us into the future, an authentic anticipatory mode of working in the world, that needs, in fact, to be visualized. (Isaak, 2003:72).

While Smith's work shows how the monstrous encounter signifies the change from the understood to the unknown self it also shows that the monstrous encounter manifests as both an internal and external process. Physically rebuilding and reuniting bodies and psychically reuniting and reforming identity, this internal/external space lies in contrast to the work of Jazmina Cininas, who shows that the monstrous encounter can manifest as a geographical as well as bodily experience.

*The geography of the body: The monstrous encounter of Jazmina Cininas*

Jazmina Cininas is an Australian artist who uses werewolf folklore from contemporary culture to inform her depictions of female lycanthropy. Cininas explores the monstrous encounter within the body, the girl becoming wolf as a point of change from the understood to the unknown self. Her techniques include fine reduction lino prints, costume and video.

Like Kiki Smith, Cininas depicts human bodies that begin at the point of abjection. They are separated from the animal world by the most fragile of systems leaving them particularly susceptible to the changes brought on by the monstrous encounter. Their skin, that most delicate of membranes and already perforated by the wolf, can no longer divide the clean and proper body from the wilderness within.

The werewolf in popular representations, particularly cinema, has traditionally been male. He is a divided beast who is both loathsome and pitiful. '...both a source of horror and sympathy.' As Creed observes 'This is because he has no desire to become a wolf; ...the man about to metamorphose [is] a helpless victim of his own body.' (Creed, 2005:126-7). Creed explains that the true source of horror in the werewolf story is man, symbolically associated with the systems of civilization and order, being brought into the realms of woman which are commonly associated with the disruptive, the animal and the abject: 'The symbolic male body is discreet, firm, closed and classical. Woman's body, by contrast, is fluid, open and malleable.' (Creed, 2005:128). In becoming a werewolf the man becomes subjected to monthly cycles, hair growth and the perforation of his clean and proper body. The post modern werewolf, in most cases a female incarnation, differs from her traditional/male counterpart. She comfortably assumes the role of the wolf as though she were made for it and with the female body often perceived as a site of abjection, indeed she is.

The easy transition from woman to wolf is evident in Cininas' print *Angela Prefers the Company of Wolves* (2002) (Fig. vii). This image directly references the collaboration between Angela Carter and Neil Jordan on *The Company of Wolves* (1984). The simultaneous beauty and abjection of the woman on the point of the monstrous

encounter illustrates Carter's Red Riding Hood overcoming repression and taking 'charge of her sexuality' (Zipes, 1993:380). This contrasts strongly with the suffering of the male werewolf in the John Landis film *An American Werewolf in London* (1981) (Fig viii). This image of the protagonist in the throes of transformation illustrates Creed's statement of the traditional/male werewolf representing man as victim of his own body who reluctantly succumbs to the chaos of feminine abjection. Rather than defining an identity like the girl in *The Company of Wolves*, when that border between nature and culture blurs in *An American Werewolf in London* there is only violence, murder and eventually the protagonist's own death.

Cininas uses traditional mythologies and icons in her work to question the issues of gender and identity that the female werewolf embodies. These she draws from her Lithuanian heritage. Interestingly, the change from the understood to the unknown self in the work of Cininas is also reflected in her life, as Pollyanna Sutton discusses in an interview with Cininas' about the exhibition *The Girlie Werewolf Project* (2002):

Her fascination with the wolf developed as she explored her Lithuanian heritage. The series began with the symbol of the iron wolf, an integral part of Lithuanian culture. On her first night in Lithuania, a wolf escaped from the zoo two doors away, and was shot outside her hotel. In the morning she found blood on the snow, some fur and a tooth. (Sutton, 2002).

Through her own monstrous encounter with the iron wolf of Lithuania, Cininas, like the girl in the original tale of Red Riding Hood, has reclaimed her ancestral heritage. By becoming a part of the Lithuanian culture she can define her place within that community: 'My Lithuanian roots became more important after my grandmother died. She was my contact with the culture and the language and it became obvious that if I didn't become a part of the community I would lose it.' (Sutton, 2002).

It is the female werewolf that lies at the centre of Cininas' work. Cininas regards the wolf to be 'liminal human' (Cininas, 2002) and in referencing the contemporary Red Riding Hood of Carter and Jordan, she also sees the adolescent girl as 'liminal woman'

(Cininas, 2006). These two creatures, the girl and the wolf, exist on the cusp of transformation that is brought on by their rendezvous. In Cininas' world, for the girl to change from the understood to the unknown she must first become wolf.

Cininas' research into werewolf folklore reveals a society's attitude toward the female body as a thing of abjection and naturally containing the monstrous.

It is even suggested that women are better suited to lycanthropy, sharing with werewolves, as they do, unwanted hair growth and a monthly cycle. Court trials have seen PMS used in defence of normally rational women who at the time of their full moon, become uncontrollable, ravaging beasts. (Cininas, 2002).

Cininas calls on the symbolism of her heritage, to create costumes based on traditional Lithuanian designs (Fig. ix), referencing in their patterns wolf skin so that '...the long gloves with their talons look like fur, yet close-up you can see the digital manipulation of Lithuanian knitting patterns.' (Sutton, 2002). Like enchanted skins these costumes turn the wearer into a wolf in the process recalling Kristeva's theories of abjection. The fragility of the border between inside and outside the body suggests that removing the costumes could possibly cause them to bleed. With these references to myth and heritage Cininas' work operates within the traditional context of the Red Riding Hood framework.

By addressing contemporary issues of culture using her ancestral myths, Cininas' work also operates within the bourgeois context of the Red Riding Hood framework. In exploring the reclamation of gender identity through the female werewolf in the popular culture avenues of film, television and the internet Cininas also takes her heritage and her current historical and geographical location to develop a werewolf folklore for the Australian dingo (Fig. x). The notions of 'liminal territory' that accompany her investigations of the wolf also inform her more recent explorations into geographical identity of which the dingo is a significant feature. Cininas explains in her exhibition *Between the Wolf and the Dog* (2006) why dingos, like wolves, lend themselves to that borderland of the monstrous encounter:

Like the dog, werewolves co-exist in human society, but can never be fully domesticated, the periodic call of the wild compromising their manners and etiquette. The dingo – a wild dog capable of domestication or, as its recently been argued, a domestic dog with a feral disposition – also floats between the wolf and the dog. (Cininas, 2006).

The 'dingo variations' that Cininas brings to her investigation build on the original Lithuanian icons and Medieval mythologies that she uses to question the place of the female werewolf in society. She synthesises her heritage and her current culture to bring a unique and contemporary view of the monstrous encounter. This view seeks to define identity in terms of gender and geography that also places her within the contemporary context of the Red Riding Hood framework.

As gender and identity become associated so closely with the figure of the wolf in contemporary culture, Cininas also questions the integrity of the wolf as a surrogate identity:

...the empowerment of women that this seems to reflect is undermined by the corresponding shift in the portrayal of the wolf itself. Once a feared predator, its 'endangered' status has seen the wolf recast as a victim, with the ensuing spate of wolf calendars, web sites and new age paraphernalia bordering on saccharine romanticism. One questions whether is it [sic] the wolf's altered status that recommends it as an increasingly acceptable champion for women (Cininas, 2002).

In the art of Jazmina Cininas the monstrous encounter signifies changes that occur within the liminal bodies of adolescent girls by intersecting them with the bodies of wolves. This unification of body and beast in terms of identity is reflected in Cininas' own experiences with her avoiding the loss of her ancestral connections within her current geographical location. The monstrous encounter with her own inner wolf, Lithuania, goes some way to unite her fragmented identity, bringing Cininas closer to

her unknown self.

***The body in a 'nanomoment': the monstrous encounter of Matthew Barney***

From the monstrous encounter as a geographical manifestation to the encounter within the intimate and minute spaces of the body we turn to the work of sculptor and filmmaker Matthew Barney. His *Cremaster cycle* (1994-2002), is a series of five films that explore the sexual development of the human body, specifically the ascension or descension of the gonads during fetal development. This investigation of Barney operates within the original, bourgeois and contemporary framework of Red Riding Hood with mythologies, social critiques and the subversion of accepted cultural systems.

The *Cremaster cycle* is essentially one monstrous encounter after another, with the forces of ascension and descension manifesting as creatures undertaking choreographed rituals in diverse and lush environments. Therefore one scene from the whole cycle is used in this investigation to illustrate how the monstrous encounter signifies the change from the understood to the unknown self. It is a scene from *Cremaster 3* (2002) where the Entered Apprentice, played by Barney, confronts and defeats the Entered Novitiate, (Figs xi and xii) a monstrous manifestation of the Apprentice's own vanity. The confrontation is one of a series of trials undertaken by the Apprentice to accomplish the Third Degree, the highest order of the Masonic fraternity. The Novitiate is a shape-shifter who transforms from a '...couture model dressed in a white gown and crystal legs to a hybrid Egyptian warrior whose lower body is that of a cheetah. ...She is in essence, the Apprentice's (and Barney's) alter ego.' (Spector, 2002:56). As part of the conflict within the body the Novitiate tries to prevent the Apprentice from accomplishing the Third Degree and achieving ascension.

In this work, Barney juxtaposes internal spaces of the body with geographical locations to explore the transformation that occurs at the time of sexual definition, the cycle takes '...an eastward trajectory, beginning in the American Northwest and ending in Eastern Europe.' (Spector, 2002: 30). Nancy Spector explains how the five films of the *Cremaster cycle*, which are not made in sequential order, travel back and forth from

Idaho, to the Columbia Icefield in Canada, to northern Utah and the Rocky Mountains. The Chrysler Building in New York, the Guggenheim Museum, Saratoga Springs, Northern Island, the Isle of Man and finally Budapest. Spector observes that 'Barney started the the project with this map, knowing only the particular sites and degrees of “ascension” or “descension” they would individually express.' (Spector, 2003:30).

The monstrous encounter in the *Cremaster cycle* signifies change from the understood to the unknown self through the processes of ascension and descension. Change in the *Cremaster cycle* is one of sexual definition, the unknown self being a gendered body. However, '[t]he underlying motif of the five films ...has to do with the organism's struggle to resist that fateful moment of sexual definition.' (Tomkins, 2003:np.). This sexual definition occurs within the human body's first few weeks of growth, as Spector observes:

[The cycle] ...describes what is by comparison almost a nanomoment: ...During this fleeting interlude, the just formed fetus is pure potential. Neither male nor female it hovers in a realm of gender indeterminacy. ...It lingers before the moment of difference, the “either-or” that shapes all future thought and action. (Spector, 2002:33)

Body, place and time are all key aspects of the *Cremaster cycle*. Barney expands that single 'nanomoment' of differentiation into five films that span eight years, exploring opposing forces of ascension and descension in a body that ultimately never achieves a gender identity. Spector writes:

[The] *Cremaster cycle* is a self-enclosed aesthetic system. Born out of a performative practice in which the humanbody – with its psychic drives and physical thresholds – symbolizes the potential of sheer creative force, the cycle explodes this body into the particles of a contemporary creation myth. (Spector, 2002:4).

The entire process of the *Cremaster cycle* is abject in that it disrupts the borders and systems of gender. The self-enclosed system struggles to keep itself ambiguous and

undifferentiated. Mansfield writes:

...abjection unleashes ...the internal ambiguity and uncertainty that logical systems try to deny or disguise. In fact, the first and fundamental purpose of systems of order is to repress ambiguity and contradiction, to assert the singularity of truth, the certainty of law, the inevitability of order against the abominations of contradiction, mixture, incompleteness and difference in general. (Mansfield, 2000:85).

Through this disruption of systems the cycle challenges the accepted views of gender within society and denies the logical systems of a body being strictly male or female. Spector writes that this culturally binary view of gender is '...a modern invention dating from the late eighteenth century, when the "one-sex" model, premised on ancient beliefs in the essential sameness of the male and female reproductive systems, was discredited.' (Spector, 2002:13). The *Cremaster cycle* disrupts the clean and proper body of gender, perforating it with contradictions, ambiguity and possibility.

As a film *Cremaster 3* (2002) is significant in that it is the pivotal point in the cycle, a position that enables the Barney as filmmaker and protagonist to gaze both forward and back into the whole series. In this way *Cremaster 3* is itself a scene of transition and:

...reassessment, ...traveling halfway on the path toward differentiation and recognizing the fact that self-imposed resistance, no matter how powerful, cannot prevent the inexorable division of the sexes. Acceptance, however, is not a passive state: it represents a shoring up of internal resources for the battles between entropy and growth that lie ahead. (Spector, 2002:43).

In this moment Barney as the Apprentice defeats the Novitiate and in so doing defeats that primal part of himself that would otherwise prevent his ascension, both physically and spiritually. This scenario resembles the monstrous encounter in the original Red Riding Hood tale where the meeting and eventual 'defeat' of the wolf symbolised the girl facing her own wildness and reaching her unknown self.

Because the cycle is designed by Barney as a self-enclosed process the monstrous encounter only signifies the possibility of change toward the unknown self. The change is never completed and the potential remains untapped. It is not the final gender differentiation that interests Barney '[rather], it is the path traveled between the states of ascension (female) and descension (male) – and all the possible detours that can occur along the way – that activates and organizes Barney's mythological system. (Spector, 2002:13).

Like the girls in Cininas' work that first become wolf before becoming woman, the body of the *Cremaster cycle* must be subjected to the rituals of the opposing forces of ascension and descension in order to reach a gender. Within the body '...form cannot materialize or mutate unless it struggles against resistance in the process.' (Spector, 2002:4). The monstrous encounter is a necessary aspect of the change from the understood to the unknown self for without it there is no further growth possible.

With this in mind it is no surprise that the encounter in *Little Red Riding Hood* did not occur by chance or accident but was in fact deliberately engineered. Zipes recalls that '...Little Red Riding Hood is not really sent into the woods to visit grandma but to meet the wolf and to explore her own sexual cravings and social rules of conduct.' (Zipes, 1993:356). If she had not met the wolf, experienced abjection and undergone her transformation she would have likely remained a child forever, never able to fulfill her unknown self and perhaps the tale would not have endured for as long as it has.

## Conclusion

In terms of the narrative and historical context, the framework of *Little Red Riding Hood* allows this investigation to look at the monstrous encounter in art, film and story using very specific terms, terms that have been reinforced by the key authors Jack Zipes, Julia Kristeva, Barbara Creed and Jon Elster. While the monstrous encounter can be identified within any fairytale or mythology, this investigation has used the tale of *Little Red Riding Hood* because it unequivocally '...raises issues about gender identity, sexuality, violence, and the civilizing process in a unique and succinct symbdic form...' (Zipes, 1993:343). Regardless of the historical context and whether the girl escapes, is rescued or dies the tale provides an ideal example of the monstrous encounter signifying the change from the understood to the unknown self.

By using this tale as a framework the majority of the examples in this investigation have shown the monstrous encounter almost exclusively in the form of lycanthropy, especially in the examples of Kiki Smith's *Rapture* (2001) and *Daughter* (1999) and Jazmina Cininas' own extensive research into contemporary werewolf folklore. Lycanthropy lends itself most easily to the terms of abjection, with the clear and violent disruptions of systems and order; to transformation and metamorphosis and the divided self. The werewolf enjoys enormous popularity in many avenues of contemporary culture and there exists countless references to this particular genre of monstrous encounter.

However, this is not a project about werewolves but an investigation of the monstrous encounter as part of the process of our own personal development, whatever form it takes. Whether it is an internal event like the work of Matthew Barney or an external process as in Cininas's use of Angela Carter's contemporary Red Riding Hood, the monstrous encounter in art, film and story can be demonstrated to signify the change from the understood to the unknown self.

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**Figures**

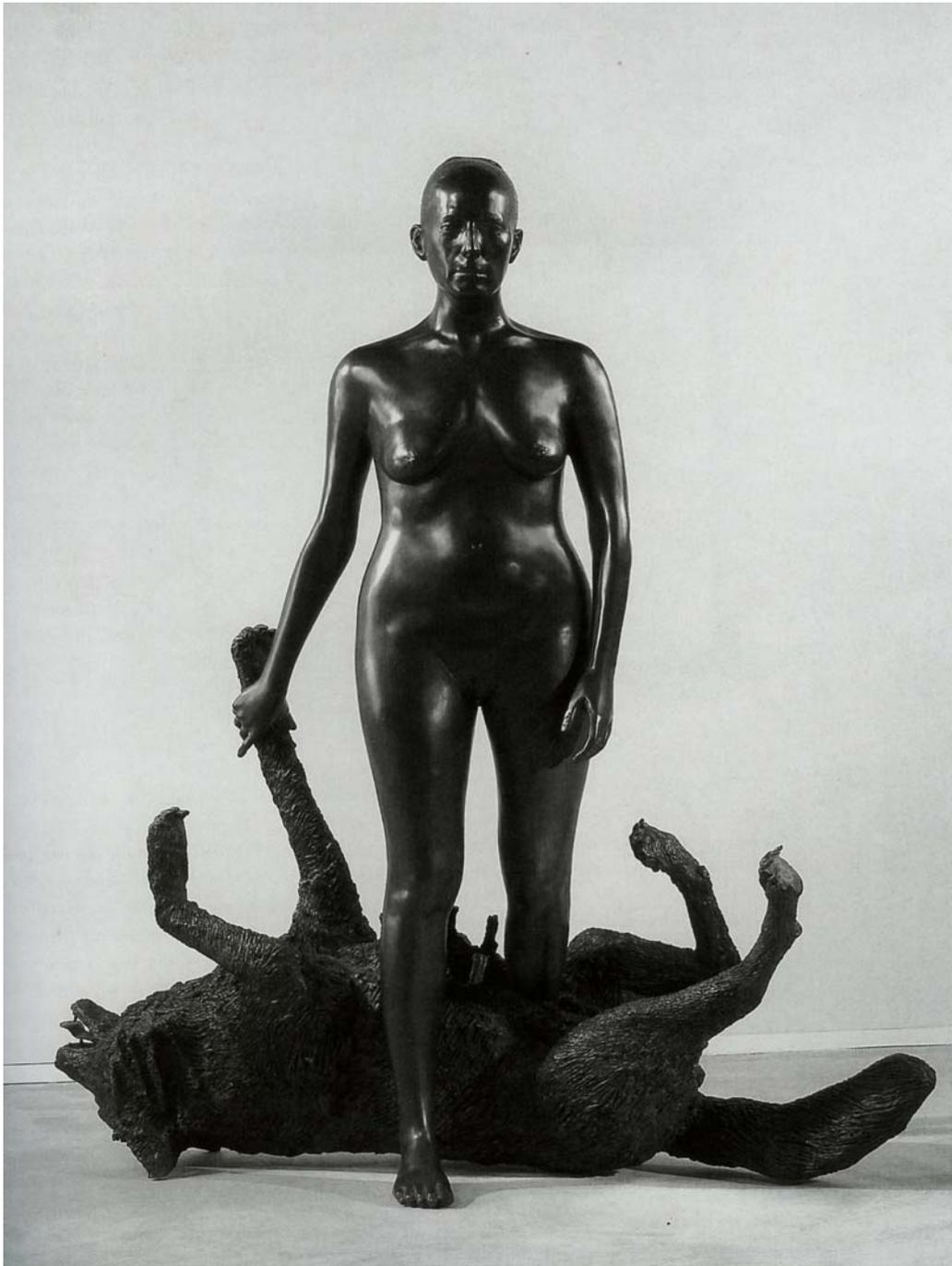


Fig. i  
Kiki Smith, *Rapture*, 2001, bronze 170.8 x 157.5 x 66.7 cm edition of 3 + 1 A.P.



Fig. ii. Kiki Smith, *Daughter*, 1999, paper, bubble wrap, cellulose, hair, fabric and glass, 121.9 x 38.1 x 25.4 cm, collection: Ann and Mel Schaffer Family.



Fig. iii  
Gustave Dore, illustration for *Little Red Riding Hood*, 1862, medium, dimensions and collection unknown.



Fig. iv



Fig. v



Fig. vi

Fig. iv. Kiki Smith, *Ribcage*, 1987, terracotta, ink, thread, 50.8 x 38.1 x 22.9 cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Fig. v. Kiki Smith, *Digestive System*, 1988, ductile iron, 157.5 x 66 cm

Fig. vi. Kiki Smith, *Blood Pool*, 1992, painted bronze, 35.6 x 99.1 x 55.9 cm



Fig. vii. Jazmina Cininas, *Angela Prefers the Company of Wolves*, 2005, reduction lino cut, 49.5 x 47 cm



Fig. viii. John Landis, detail from *An American Werewolf in London*, 1981, Universal Pictures.



Fig. ix Jazmina Cininas, Details of printed and handsewn gloves, from the series *The Girlie Werewolf Project*, 2002, Photo: Polyanna Sutton.



Fig. x. Jazmin Cininas, *Rue Dingo*, 2004, reduction lino cut, 69 x 47cm



Fig. xi. Matthew Barney, detail from *Cremaster 3* 2002, Photo: Chris Winget



Fig.xii. Matthew Barney, *The Third Degree* (detail), 2002, 2-C prints in acrylic frames, 106.7 x 85 x 3.8 cm each