

Youthful Melancholy: The Loss of Innocence in *Another Country* and *The Company of Wolves*

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Youth in culture is a highly suggestive symbol. The in-between nature of the youthful state – having more power than the child, but not fixed as an adult – has symbolized rich possibilities beyond the conventional. In the midst of the seemingly light-hearted and fun loving glossy 1980s, specific examples in popular culture have featured the youth as a site of ambiguous energy, uncertain loyalty and overall unreliable members of the community. Their experiences, as represented in the media, may give us a glimpse of the hidden anxiety and the buried mournfulness packaged in youth experiences.

The proposed article will discuss two British film adaptations, of a stage play and a short story respectively, to examine how the media have depicted the melancholies of the era through the youth's experiences. *Another Country* (1984), directed by Marek Kaniéwska, was based on the play by Julian Mitchell, alluding to the early life of spy and double agent Guy Burgess, in the main character Guy Bennett. The film starts with the aged Bennett being interviewed and recalling his young days at the elite boarding school. As the students are all elites in the social hierarchy, the school masters have turned a blind eye to the many deviant behaviours among the youths. Guy Bennett, staying true to his homosexual orientation, learns his lesson when trying to protect his illicit love. The uncomfortable sense of oppression and repression follows through Bennett's remembrance, and mourns for the loss of the self that started so many years before. Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984) is based on the short story written by Angela Carter, and adapted into a gothic-style horror fantasy. The fearless Rosaleen, the teenage version of Little Red Riding Hood, transgresses the human world into the bestial world, to understand desire and its potential power of overturning the order of the world. Packaged as a horror story, the film suggests the buried underside of orderly and rational society, and its special bond with the youth, who is at the crossroads between childhood and adulthood.

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Introduction

Growing up in the colonial city of Hong Kong during the 1970s and 1980s, I remember my youth filled with names and titles from popular culture over the world – admittedly only materials that were available to a teenage girl from a lower-middle class family, and who attended a convent school which prided itself on using English as the medium of instruction. We had to study Shakespeare (in abridged versions) and were encouraged to form a habit of reading English novels, and watch English-channel television programmes. I still remember that the weekend evenings were given to screening recent blockbusters, while the afternoon timeslots were usually given to lesser-known films – I watched the young Anthony Hopkins and Anne Bancroft in *84 Charing Cross Road* (1987) during one of these afternoon English-channel screenings. At school, during recess and lunchtime, we girls exchanged the latest gossip and news about local and international popular stars; names such as Michael Jackson, Madonna, George Michael, Kondō Masahiko, Nakamori Akina, and news about them were very much part of our girlish consumptions during lunchtime.

Looking back, it was a happy time; my biggest worries were not having enough money to buy my idol’s latest album or failing to get my mother’s permission to go see a movie by myself. Sometimes I got angry with myself as I didn’t manage to wake up in the middle of the night to listen to my favourite DJ’s 2 am programme, or when I discovered that someone beat me to the newly acquired novel which just arrived at the school library. These were the minor blemishes to my overall very happy and carefree teenage years during the 1980s, which I had always imagined to be an equally bright and happy time for everyone in the world. It was, of course, when I “became an adult”, that I realized life was not just fun and enjoyment as we used to glimpse from popular culture, and (to be fair), that popular culture had indeed more to tell than just the fun side of life, if one had the intention to examine it critically. As a middle-aged adult now, I perceive quite a different picture of this golden period of my life when I recall in my mind some episodes of this journey. The fun-loving 1980s (to the world), to me the teenage girl growing up in colonial Hong Kong, was marked by two particular films telling stories of youthful loss, packaged in beautiful visual nostalgia and daring excitement. To the middle-aged academic writing in postcolonial Hong Kong, the remembrance carries not only sentiments, but a space for creation of new meanings as well.

I saw *Another Country* (1984) by myself at a private screening in Hong Kong one Saturday when I was 15 years old. It was a film adaptation of Julian Mitchell’s stage play of the same title, which went on at the West End for six months, a huge and surprising success (Groves 2014, n.p.). When I walked into the cinema, I had no knowledge about the director and the actors, or even about Guy Burgess, the original inspiration for the stage play, the English spy who defected to the Soviet Union in the 1950s. All I had was a leaflet with the very nice publicity photo featuring Rupert Everett and Colin Firth, and a brief introduction describing the film as a love story between schoolboys. At the time, the Hong Kong Motion Picture rating system,¹ which would

¹ The Hong Kong Motion Picture rating system started to operate officially in November 1988. Under this system, motion pictures to be screened publicly in Hong Kong would be rated based on their content. Motion pictures which content are deemed appropriate for audience of all ages will be rated category I, while those with content which requires some degrees of parental guidance to children will be rated category II. Motion pictures that contain explicit violence or sexual content will be rated category III, and no audience under the age of 18 will be allowed into the screening venue.

have given the film a category III rating, had not been established yet, so there was nothing to stop me from such a daring adventure as going to watch a film about schoolboys in love with each other. Watching *The Company of Wolves* (1984) was a much more “above board” experience for me, as it was one of the cultural activities offered by the British Council in Hong Kong. After school, I went to the British Council library (to “improve my English”) and waited until the time of the screening in the activities room. I watched this horror movie (to me back then) dressed in my school uniform in a room full of English-speaking adults, a nerve-wracking enough experience for me.

Between then and now, I had followed the careers of Everett and Firth, watched other films directed by Jordan, and had used these texts (including Angela Carter’s short story) in different ways in my teaching. They became rich and useful narratives to discuss youth, sexuality, (British) identity, feminism, and creative rewriting of stories in the various courses I had taught. Despite my constant “interaction” with these two films in my professional life, I had never thought about these two 1984 films as events happening in the same period, moreover events that had played a part in the formation of my teenage self in colonial Hong Kong. Now more than three decades later in postcolonial Hong Kong, when I reflect on my growing up experience in the context of the story of my home city, these films assume a more complex identity than simply entertainment. The loss of innocence that was the main story featured in these two films becomes my subject when I look back on the golden era of my life. When I turn to what is left of my teenage times, what I find is a (re-)collection of narratives waiting to be unlocked to reveal the multiple meanings they carry.

The following is a personal reflection on and critical remembrance of two seemingly different but also eerily similar films that depict experiences of loss. Although the setting and nature of the stories were different, to the young protagonists in both films, growing up is an experience of loss, something remarkably out of their expectations. In *Another Country*, Guy Bennett with his privileged birth and elite education is set to establish himself in the highest echelon of his society. His insistence to be openly true to his sexual orientation however lands him in disgrace and forces him to bid farewell to his dreamed future. His reaction to this loss is revenge of the gravest kind – treason – as he tells the reporter who goes to Moscow to visit him 50 years after the original moment of loss. *The Company of Wolves* is set in contemporary (1980s) Britain, where young Rosaleen falls into a dream of horror after quarrelling with her sister. She becomes a teenage Little Red Riding Hood who strays from the path of safety, encounters the most surprising creatures and events that strip her of her innocent beliefs. At the end of this dark dream, despite Rosaleen’s courageous rise to the occasion, the waking girl finds that the darkness of her dream has transgressed into her reality and threatens to destroy it.

Melancholia: Lingering in Experience of Loss to Create New Meanings

Freud argued in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) that these two emotions are both human responses to loss. When a specific love object has been lost (e.g. the beloved has died), a person feels grief, and this mourning process is consciously felt and visible. This open process is usually considered natural and in fact healthy, because it allows the person to honestly acknowledge the loss, learn to face it, and finally get accustomed to it. But in the situation when a person feels grief for a loss that is not identified, or that cannot be fully explained by the grieving person, that process is melancholia, taking place in the unconscious. This is quite frequently seen in people who have fallen out of

love, when the object of love is “lost” in the sense that the relationship is broken, causing a change in the person’s daily emotional life. Due to its unconscious nature, melancholia is not a positive transformative process for the self, as the cause is hidden and there is no visible opportunity for the person to acclimatize to the loss and heal from it.

Commenting on Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, Eng and Kazanjian in the introduction chapter of *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* highlighted the tension between two different emotional actions found in the responses to loss – “one version moves and creates, the other slackens and lingers” (2003, 2). This tension between the two emotional actions, according to Eng and Kazanjian, produced a space for critical re-examination of loss, and gave rise to the various discussions of cultural representations of loss in their essay collection. One insight gathered from such critical examinations of cultural texts was that “the work of mourning is not possible without melancholia” (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 4). They explained:

Melancholia is the precondition for both the ego and the work of mourning. It is precisely the ego’s melancholic attachments to loss that might be said to produce not only psychic life and subjectivity but also the domain of remains. That is, melancholia creates a realm of traces open to signification, a hermeneutic domain of what remains of loss. (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 4)

Focusing on the remains of loss rather than what was lost, the various stories of loss became the site of melancholia, from which subjectivities emerged and subsequently completed their journeys of mourning before leaving the site with new understandings of the loss while giving new meanings to this previous experience.

Guy Bennett in *Another Country* has often professed his love for a fellow schoolmate, James Harcourt, not only in front of his best friend, Tommy Judd the self-claimed Marxist, but quite openly, even in front of much younger boys of the house. An early sequence of the film has shown the school’s attitude towards same-sex love – while the boys gather at the schoolyard singing “I vow to thee, my country” paying tribute to soldiers who sacrifice their lives for their country, two boys are hiding in the laundry room having sex. A patrolling schoolmaster discovers this private rendezvous, is seemingly scandalized, and later in the film one of the boys hangs himself in the chapel. The matter is not to be discussed among the schoolboys, and the only official response of the house is a collective prayer, during which chapter 18 of Leviticus is read, more as a warning than as a consolation to all those present. In the public school (alluding to Eton) featured in *Another Country*, homosexuality is definitely not accepted, and at best tolerated if one keeps very quiet about it and is lucky not to be discovered. Bennett’s open profession is not only careless behaviour given his desire to become a “god” (senior prefect) in the house, it is also a hopeless action as there is no chance that this relationship can be accepted.

In a moment of playful seduction with his best friend Judd, the 16-year old Bennett makes the remark that “[e]veryone gives in in the end! It’s Bennett’s Law!” In his romantic pursuit of Harcourt, however, there is no need for anyone to give in, as he finds in him a kindred spirit. This relationship is doomed, ironically, due to the truth of Bennett’s law – people do give in in the end – illicit promises are made, privileges are exchanged, and everyone finds ways of serving their own interests in the name of tradition. When one of the prefects intercepts his secret love note to Harcourt, he receives a good whacking, and that spells the end of his long-held ambition to become a “god” in the house. Judd asks Bennett why he doesn’t save himself by threatening to

expose the many other homosexual relationships in the house, as he has done previously. Bennett answers because that will implicate Harcourt, his beloved. In the moment of truth, Bennett has chosen to protect Harcourt rather than his own ambition. He loses both his love and the possibility of realizing his dream to rise to the top. The film does not tell us what happens between this original moment of loss and the subsequent action of revenge, but we are shown the older Bennett talking to the American reporter 50 years later. In fact, the entire film is Bennett's melancholic remembrance of the loss, and the narrative is the remains of what has been lost. Reading the remains of this loss, however, offers us an opportunity to create meaning out of this cultural narrative made in the mid-1980s.

A similar sense of loss, although eliciting very different responses from the young protagonist, permeates *The Company of Wolves*, a film adaptation of Angela Carter's short stories. In the various versions of the Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale, the young female protagonist preserves her innocence until the end – either the end of the story, or the end of her life when the wolf attacks and kills. Carter's short story "The Company of Wolves" (1979) revisits the fairy tale and gives the protagonist a voice and a will of her own, by making her a teenager at the threshold of womanhood. The emerging sexuality awakens in the protagonist an awareness of her physical body and its power over the lives around her. Neil Jordan invited Carter to co-write the screenplay, but his adaptation has taken the story even further from the fairy tale, and has given the girl a name Rosaleen, as well as a contemporary social setting to frame the fairy tale as an ambiguous dream. Rosaleen the protagonist in the dream has received and discarded the blood-red shawl as she gradually welcomes her womanhood, and finally takes control by transforming herself into a wolf and leaves with the company of wolves. Rosaleen the contemporary dreamer in the film loses her foothold in reality when she opens her sleeping eyes only to see the pack of wolves in her dream crushing into her real-life bedroom.

There are plenty of deaths in the dreamed-of fairy tale world. At its beginning is the funeral of Rosaleen's elder sister, who is killed and perhaps also ravished by the beasts. Rosaleen's Granny is killed (beheaded like a China doll) by the werewolf who dresses up as a 17th century gentleman. Rosaleen's father sets a trap for wolves and when he carries home the trophy – the wolf's paw – it turns out to be a human hand. Granny tells a story about a husband disappearing on his wedding night, only to reappear many years later when his bride has already married another man and borne his children. Seeing that his wife has continued her life without him, the first husband is transformed by his own fury back into a wolf; when the second husband returns home, he kills the wolf to save his family. The severed head of the beast falls into the cauldron and returns to the condition of a human head – bearing the gentle expression of the first husband, now also a little sad – just as it was on the first wedding night. Despite the death toll, Rosaleen does not mourn, as death is a terrible but normal occurrence in that world where human and beast are fellow creatures sharing the same habitat. Rather she is overwhelmed by the undiscussed sexuality that she is beginning to be aware of in herself. The loss of innocence pushes her into a different identity, and she is both amazed and frightened by this new being in herself. The film uses a dream to frame this experience of loss, and itself becomes the remains of this melancholic experience. Reading the film as the remains of loss offers the opportunity to understand the culture that produced this narrative.

Both films feature a young person experiencing a great loss – Bennett is disgraced and Rosaleen bids farewell to childhood innocence – and the protagonists’ melancholy is reflected in how the narratives dwell and linger on that loss. While Bennett’s disgrace and Rosaleen’s sensing her sexual maturity is the work of a moment, the telling of that story of loss occupies almost the entirety of the films. Despite the significance of the loss, the remains of the loss (i.e. the telling of the story) is given much more time and attention in both cases: Bennett remembering and talking to the reporter, while Rosaleen dreams elaborately. “This attention to remains generates a politics of mourning that might be active rather than reactive, prescient rather than nostalgic, abundant rather than lacking, social rather than solipsistic, militant rather than reactionary” (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 2).

At one level, the telling of these personal stories (of loss) may be seen to serve the function of self-understanding for the protagonists, as “[w]e are the accumulation of the stories we tell ourselves about who we are” (DeSalvo 1999, 11). At another level, these films which are products of the 1980s, are also remains of a bygone era for us to “re-visit our past and review and revise it. What we thought happened, what we believed happened to us, shifts and changes as we discover deeper and more complex truths” (DeSalvo 1999, 11). Standing at a historical moment so many years behind these stories, Eng and Kazanjian’s words about the discussion of loss are particularly poignant: “the dawn of the twenty-first century is a moment when the pervasive losses of the twentieth century need to be engaged from the perspective of what remains (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 2). In the following, *Another Country* and *The Company of Wolves* will be examined and discussed as the remains of a historical and cultural period which has also produced some of the most fun-loving objects. As “[a]vowals of and attachments to loss can produce a world of remains as a world of new representations and alternative meanings” (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 5), the following will be an investigation into these new representations and alternative meanings.

Losing One’s Heart: The De-politicized Movie of a Spy

According to Julian Mitchell, who wrote the original stage play *Another Country* which subsequently was adapted into the film starring Rupert Everett (who also played Guy Bennett in the stage play) and Colin Firth (who took up the role of Tommy Judd), it was an easy story to write. He described the story in an interview as one that “was set in a 1930s public school and looked at how such places might turn people into traitors” (Groves 2014, n.p.). Although the film could easily be perceived as a “spy movie”, Mitchell’s description was more a story about how environment shaped human beings, in this case, young people from the elite class of the British society in the 1930s. The specific example being portrayed in the film was Guy Bennett, who aspired to a career in the Foreign Office, defected to the Soviet Union, and agreed to tell his story of betrayal to a reporter many years later. Grenier also remarked that “*Another Country* is not concerned with praising brave men who saved their country in its hour of peril; it seems to prefer traitors, at least if they underwent an ordeal that deeply stirs our sympathies, such as not becoming a ‘god’ at an imaginary Eton” (Grenier 1984, 62). It was a spy movie which focused on the spy and his becoming, but not the spying.

Critics referred to *Another Country* as one of a cluster of movies made about the (in)famous British spies, reflecting major concerns about governance throughout the British society Grenier 1984; Kennedy 1984; Girelli 2011). Kennedy summarized this cultural situation very succinctly, “[w]hen a ship of state springs leaks – as Britain’s has

been doing like a colander in the last four years of Thatcher government, with old spies being unmasked, top-secret documents fed to the Press and media, and mini-Watergates opening up from Westminster to Wapping – astounding things start happening to that state’s popular culture” (Kennedy 1984, 9). And one of the astounding things that happened was that “the political leakiness of modern Britain is opening up a new era of *films traiteurs*” (Kennedy 1984, 9). The “old spies being unmasked” were referring to a number of British spies who passed information to the Soviet Union during World War II and were active from the 1930s to the 1950s. Many called them the Cambridge Spy Ring because they were recruited when still being students at the Cambridge University. Besides the young Guy Bennett in *Another Country, An Englishman Abroad* (1983) directed by John Schlesinger, written by Alan Bennett, also featured Guy Burgess, one of the Cambridge Spies. The spy indeed had become the figure of attention in the British popular culture during the 1980s.

But *what* about the spy? What was the focus of these films about those who betrayed their country? Kennedy referred to Burgess, a character portrayed in *Another Country* and *An Englishman Abroad*, as “neither hero nor villain but a man of a hundred moods, paradoxes and motives: petulant, dilettante, proud, mawkish, sarcastic, despairing, funny” (Kennedy 1984, 10). If Burgess was seen as an example of such characterization, then these people who were traitors to their country were portrayed in popular films with much greater sympathy than before. During the 1950s, the defection of spies caused great public horror, but in the 1980s film portrayals such as *Another Country*, “it is also plain that treason is not what it used to be” (Grenier 1984, 63), to the extent that treason became “some sort of forgivable misdemeanor” (Grenier 1984, 63). The representation of the spy as a human being whose life and dreams are brutally crushed by unfavourable circumstances may encourage audiences to be more understanding and tolerant to their ultimate betrayal – because they have suffered some injustice in the first place.

Bennett invites sympathy as “the man fallen-from-high-places” (Kennedy 1984, 10), because the film seems to present an argument “that it was thanks to the persecution and disappointed hopes of promotion he experienced at school, because of his deafeningly indiscreet homosexual adventures, that Burgess turned to the panacea of Marxism” (Kennedy 1984, 10). Indeed, as Grenier remarked, “[t]o become a ‘god’ is Bennett’s overriding goal, the engine without which *Another Country*’s plot would not advance at all” (Grenier 1984, 62). A great deal of film time is spent on exposing the absurd elitist mentality and practices in the school, through direct portrayal of behaviour, or indirectly through students’ own comments. The only motivation sustaining Bennett in this system is the dream of climbing to the top of this hierarchy one day. When that dream is thwarted, “he decided to scorn the hierarchy as a whole, and turn to ‘another country’² where all men were equal (but some were more equal than others)” (Kennedy 1984, 10). Everett, who played the role of Bennett, expressed this loss vividly: “So he’s blown it. All his dreams and ambitions. And that’s terrifying. At the age of 16 or 17 he’s blown every chance of being a leader, which he could otherwise have been” (Kennedy 1984, 10).

² *Another Country*, the title of the film, can be referring to the Soviet Union, where Guy Bennett was staying at the beginning of the film, giving an interview to an American reporter. It could also be referring to the lyrics of the patriotic song “I vow to thee, my country” which was composed just after the formation of the Royal Air Force in the early 20th century. This other country described in the song was a place of freedom and love, beyond the suffering of this world. It could be read as the symbolic ideal place that the spy Guy Bennett imagined could exist, given a different political system.

This disillusioned man therefore explains (through the reporter) “his intention of ‘having the last laugh’, of exercising ‘revenge’ on a system that has oppressed and rejected him” (Girelli 2011, 130). And here comes one of the most interesting features about this film with a spy as the protagonist – there is no spying action of any kind, not even any discussion of his political belief. Although the film begins (and ends) with the reporter visiting his place in Moscow in 1983, Moscow is only a room where the elderly Bennett tells his own story, moreover a story focusing on just one of the years he spent in the elite British public school. This year of his life is important not because he is inspired intellectually by Marxism, but because he has carelessly put his romantic target at risk, and in order to protect him, he sacrifices his dream to be among ‘the gods’ in the school system. This movie about the spy presents his development into a traitor in terms of a revenge, because he is ousted from what he has wanted – the reason for his expulsion being his homosexuality. In fact, a critic remarked that “in terms of allotted screen time, *Another Country* is first and foremost a rhapsody to the beauties of homosexuality. It is, furthermore, narcissistic, elaborately self-pitying, and smug” (Grenier 1984, 61).

Other critics too had expressed this view that *Another Country* was primarily a film about homosexuality, or one of the British heritage films that discussed sexual desire (Groves 2014; Girelli 2011; Monk 1995). One of the most memorable moments for the older Bennett is the heart-to-heart talk he has with his best friend Judd, after he has suffered the caning and kissed goodbye to his hope of being a god in the house. He says wishfully that it would be good if Communism was real. This can be read as a young man trying to find some consolation right after an emotional defeat; but also in the words of a critic, “it explains Guy’s conversion to Communism as an act of personal defiance, as a reaction to a homophobic system whose repressive authority is guaranteed by the powers that be. Ideological motivations seem conspicuously absent from Guy’s thought process” (Girelli 2011, 130). Guy Bennett is never shown in the film to have any enthusiasm about Marxism or Communism as an ideology or a way of life. He is presented to be very comfortable in enjoying the many material privileges of his class. In fact besides the rather shabby Moscow room where Bennett is interviewed, the film is a visual gala of heritage Britain: the Oxford architecture of the Brasenose College, the dinner jackets, the Ralph Lauren cricket costumes, and even the Harrods mug that Bennett still kept in his room in Moscow after all those years (Monk 1995).

In this film about the spy Bennett, we see in the forefront his homosexuality, set in an English heritage location, with the characters all dressed up nicely befitting their elite class background (except for Judd who was trying to be true to his Marxism belief), and presented as an exploration of his reason for choosing to be a traitor. Girelli argued that “the narrative centrality of the homosexual theme is exactly paralleled by this nostalgic heritage aesthetics, so much so that the film effectively collapses two discourses into one” (Girelli 2011, 131). Englishness is carefully colluded with a specific image of homosexuality, “specifically constructed as young, beautiful and very camp” (Girelli 2011, 131), so well created and carried by the young Rupert Everett that this film made him a star. Besides the visual pleasure of heritage film, *Another Country* presents its protagonist’s conversion also in ways aligned with heritage discourse: “it is fueled by emotion and by the need for self-expression, and despite its momentous consequences, it is a rebellion without revolution” (Girelli 2011, 136). The recognition of this personal rebellion probably stops audiences from asking why Bennett imagines that the Communist regime would tolerate a blatant homosexual man such as himself – it is not really about any ideology at all.

While Mitchell claimed that his story was to explain how such system might turn people into traitors, Girelli proposed an ironic reading of the film's "investigation" – the focus on his homosexuality, and the ostensible absence of any discussion of ideology was to "actually misrepresent Burgess in the effort to normalize him" (Girelli 2011, 132). This very beautiful, moody and camp spy who comes from the elite class is then "rendered perfectly safe, and comfortably inserted in a nostalgic, ideology-free English narrative" (Girelli 2011, 132). The investigation of why someone with such a background turns into a traitor comes up with an answer so attractive that it directs our attention away from the fact that treason is a serious matter. Instead of discussing what is wrong in the system, *Another Country* presents the political in the personal: Communism just so happens to be Bennett's "available route to get back at the system, which is attacked for purely personal reasons: the only cause Guy Bennett is devoted to is his own, the liberation and vindication of this true self" (Girelli 2011, 136). As it is only a matter of personal revenge, there is no need to worry about serious matters such as the merits of different ideologies in providing a fair and open life for all. At the end of the film, "[the] radical, lethal and devoutly Marxist Burgess is thus stripped of his ideology and turned into a safe national icon" (Girelli 2011, 129) and all is safe again for those who are horrified by the series of political scandals at the end of the Thatcher era.

At the end of the film, when the reporter asked Bennett whether he missed anything of his previous life, he said "I miss cricket". Cricket is not only the quintessential English sport, but it also marks some of the happiest time he spent with Harcourt in the film. In this concluding moment of a spy's memory, what the camera presents us is the narrative of the lost love: the faded group photo of the students, and James Harcourt's picture. After all these years, the "truth" that Guy Bennett wants to leave for history is a story of lost love, his reason for betraying his own country is none other than the long-held melancholia from romantic disappointment, albeit a romance that is not permitted. As seen from the above discussion, Bennett's melancholia which is set in a national heritage discourse, can well be a cover up for a deeper melancholia much more ambiguous and murkier – the lost dream of a way of life that is mentioned but studiously avoided in the film.

Losing One's (Maiden)head: The Politicized Fairy Tale

While *Another Country* deliberately de-politicizes the promised spy story to tell a story of lost youthful love, *The Company of Wolves* is a fairy tale politicized to become a gothic horror story intruding into contemporary society. Neil Jordan was interested in Angela Carter's short story of the same title and invited her to co-write the screenplay when he decided to turn it into a feature film. Carter's short story is a well-known re-writing of the Little Red Riding Hood tale, itself already famous in other renditions. Charles Perrault's 17th century version ended with both the grandmother and the girl killed by the wolf, and the Grimm brothers' 19th century version had a happy ending, when a huntsman killed the wolf in time and save the girl and her Ganny. The target readers of these earlier versions were clearly children, as Perrault's tale actually carried a "moral" after the sad conclusion of the story: young girls were reminded to "stay on the path" or else they would suffer the same fate as the little girl in the story. Carter's re-telling (published in a collection in 1979) has made the girl a bit older, whose menstrual cycle has just begun. This mark of womanhood seems to have endowed the protagonist with a sharper sense of her identity, a confidence in her strength, and a

daring to explore her connection with the world out there, against the adults' reminder of staying on the path.

Due to the already well-established feminist-oriented interpretation given by Carter to the Little Red Riding Hood story in "The Company of Wolves", "many of Jordan's critics approach the film with a firm set of expectations based on their reading of Carter's short story. Several express their disappointment at the director's failure to realize his cowriter's feminist agenda" (McCann 2010, 68). On reflection, Jordan's film adaptation of Carter's story is not simply rendering a short story into a film. The fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood itself has such a rich history that the 1984 film adaptation was in fact a dialogue with the many versions that have been told and read before. When critics commented on the character Rosaleen in the film, they could be making comparisons to the many literary Little Red Riding Hood figures, as well as other filmic renditions of a girl advancing towards sexual awareness. Someone found Rosaleen "imprudent and narcissistic, which makes her not very different from Perrault's doomed heroine. In fact, both in the story and in the film, her survival depends not so much on her courage as on her luck: she is plain lucky that the wolf accepts her compassion and refrains from eating her" (Martin 2001, 27). Although Jordan has given her a name, Rosaleen is still very much considered as a "version" of the many Little Red Riding Hood figures, and the success of the film or the character is measured against the accepted readings of the previous tales.

At the end of Carter's short story, the girl has become the wolf's lover, sleeping peacefully between his paws. Sexual awareness has empowered the girl, daring her to reach beyond her protected circle and follow her sexual instincts, in defiance of the accepted code of behaviour. Although this ending is shocking to some readers, the sensation of empowerment through transgression has been celebrated by feminist critics. When Jordan's contemporary-framed Gothic horror style story came out, it was met with some disapproval, as he was seen to have abandoned "Carter's optimistic, erotically appealing plea for liberation, enhancing instead, possible for commercial reasons, the horrific elements implied in her story, especially her characterization of the wolf as a werewolf" (Martin 2001, 18). Rosaleen in the dream sequence inherits the necklace with the cross from her dead sister, and goes about life making her own decisions – engaging in flirtatious conversation with the well-dressed gentleman, deliberately losing the wager so that she has to kiss the handsome stranger, enjoying the tales told by Granny and treating them as part of life – but her "refusal to feel fear appears to be pure simple-mindedness" (Martin 2001, 19) probably because the overall film does not seem to follow Carter's feminist agenda.

Attempts to measure Rosaleen against other filmic heroines also found her inadequate, unfortunately. For some, situating *The Company of Wolves* in the context of American werewolf movies' "most innovative and productive period in its whole history" (Martin 2001, 20), the special effects did not measure up to the best horror movies made at the time. As for Rosaleen, a comparison "with the popular final girl Nancy – the heroine of three of the seven films in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* Series – shows how inadequate Rosaleen already was as a heroine" in the 1980s (Martin 2001, 26). Some critics found *The Company of Wolves* confusing because they could not find a "single, unified reading of Jordan's film – to find its centre – because it is a work whose meaning depends on the diachronic dialogue in which it participates with other versions of the same traditional fairy tale, and on the synchronic dialogue it established with the other werewolf films of the 1980s" (Martin 2001, 30). Making a film adaptation of a short

story which was a feminist re-writing of a handed-down fairy tale that was a few hundred years old was no easy task. On the one hand the rich and extended history of the tale offers plenty of room for symbolic and artistic development; on the other hand, the expected length of a feature film does pose some restrictions as to the depth and the number of intercultural conversations that the film could create (Martin 2001, 30).

For those who would like to trace a feminist filmic rendition of Carter's story, the contemporary-frame and the dream-sequence offered a visible structure for audiences to follow the director's feminist discussion. Critics referred to a number of sequences in the film which "creates a symbolic world where the transition from child to adult – from girl to woman – is both a beautiful and dangerous moment, one to be both celebrated and feared" (Rose 2007, 38). The bright red shawl that Granny made her was one of the most discussed: "the shawl itself is symbolic of the adolescent girl. She is on the cusp of puberty, a girl who is pure; a virgin who is experiencing, for the first time, sexual attraction, desires and fantasies. The shawl's colour is emotive of desire and of passion and, as will be identified later, menstrual blood" (Rose 2007, 40). The red colour of the shawl (in some versions the cap) marked not only Rosaleen's sexually developing body, but also the strong mind of a maturing female – in this film femininity was portrayed as in sync with the fundamental strength of nature, such as that found in the werewolf. Rosaleen in the dream was not afraid of the wild beasts and looked on the transformation of the well-dressed gentleman into a wolf in awe rather than fear. This symbolic identification between the feminine and the monstrous was remarked upon by feminist critics when referring to Carter's short story (Rose 2007, 49).

Besides the red shawl that was visually distinguished, another much discussed scene in the film concerning Rosaleen's developing sexuality was the scene when she climbed up a tall tree to escape from the boy she was not interested in. Up she went, passing a serpent which coiled along a branch, to the top where she found a nest with eggs, a hand mirror and a box of lip colour inside. She put the red colour on her lips, looked at her own reflection in the hand mirror, when the eggs cracked open to show not birds but mini human baby figures in tears. She carried one of these baby figures in her palms back home to show her mother, while everyone in the village was looking for her because the boy reported her loss, thinking that she had been attacked by the wolves. This sequence was described as "laden with significance, but perhaps most unmistakable, and most important is the resemblance to the tree of knowledge. There are the archetypal images of loss, innocence, and entry into the world of experience; Rosaleen falls, like Adam or Eve, into what Northrop Frye called "the order of nature as we know it" (Zucker 2000, 68). This interpretation of the dream sequence supported a feminist reading of Jordan's film as similar to Carter's approach towards the Little Red Riding Hood story. Another strong support of such interpretation is the solidarity between Rosaleen and her mother – of the six kisses that Rosaleen gave in the entire film, the only one "given through choice and with real love" was that on her mother's cheek (Rose 2007, 42).

However, for critics who understood Jordan's film as a visual rendition of Carter's feminist re-writing of the fairy tale, the framing of the dream sequence by the contemporary story and the waking Rosaleen was puzzling. When the girl woke up from her dream, the wolves in the dream world crashed into her bedroom and destroyed the house in the midst of her screams of terror. While the "dream-Rosaleen is tough, independent, and unsentimental" (Zucker 2000, 67), in many ways a positive role model for girls, the waking Rosaleen was overwhelmed by her reality – if that indeed was the

reality – and was alone and helpless. It had been pointed out that it was not clear whether the “waking terror is yet another episode of Rosaleen’s dream, or if, in fact, the dreaming and waking worlds have collapsed into one another” (Zucker 2000, 69). The final voice-over in the film when Rosaleen (her voice) reminded the audience that the “sweetest tongue has sharpest tooth” had inspired different responses. Some regarded the sweet tongue as “Rosaleen’s dream of a mellifluous fusion of nature and culture, of powerful femininity and desire without reproach. The sharp tooth must then surely be the more painful reality into which Rosaleen must grow up. It is not a happy ending” (Zucker 2000, 70). But the fact that it was Rosaleen’s voice (not a man’s voice) who shared this observation might also be interpreted as hopeful that feminine wisdom would stand until the end.

So, was it indeed because “Jordan was in full control of neither the artistic nor the ideological discourse of his film” (Martin 2001, 22), that the film did not satisfy horror film fans, feminists, and those looking for a smooth unfolding of a simple story? One critic had noted Jordan’s deviations from Carter’s story: 1. the girl was given the name Rosaleen, and 2. she was “not a blond girl but a brunette” (McCann 2010, 70). While changes were expected in film adaptations, it was noted that “[i]n combination with the dark hair, the name ‘Rosaleen’ is clearly intended as a reference to the Irish *aisling* poem ‘Róisín Dubh’ or ‘Dark Rosaleen’” (McCann 2010, 70). On top of the discourse of the horror film, and that of the feminist revisiting of a well-known fairy tale, a reading of the film as a politicized fairy tale might clear some of the confusions or even dissatisfactions about this film made by an Irish director for the audience in mid-1980s. McCann referred to Taylor (1997), and pointed out that “IRA violence had long extended beyond the borders of Northern Ireland, culminating that same year in the bombing of the Brighton hotel where the Tory government was holding its annual party conference” (McCann 2010, 72). Such a reading of the film as an allegory to Northern Ireland’s situation may render some of the details and events more reasonable and meaningful. McCann referred to the repeated appearance of the Christian Cross (first as the necklace on the dead sister, later transferred to Rosaleen, and finally becoming the identifying feature of the Rosaleen-wolf), the many guns in the film, and even the severed hand brought home by Rosaleen’s father, as the symbolic Irish presence (McCann 2010, 73-74).

Viewed in this way, the “Dark Rosaleen” was not only a pubescent girl on the threshold of womanhood, she was also a land that was being persecuted and could only be saved by itself. As the IRA violence spread and caused extensive destructions, it was noted that “[i]n *The Company of Wolves*, predator and redeemer are one and the same” (McCann 2010, 77). This might shed some light on the final sequence of the film, when the girl who lived in the contemporary British-styled house woke up from her dream and found that her reality was also destroyed by the beasts of her dream. Although the dream was full of hopeful possibilities, and violence and killing had a taste of the magical, there was always a risk of the dream getting out of its realm and intruding into reality. Once the dream broke loose and got out of control, the result was the ruins of the big house, which may also be seen as a “metaphor for the declining power of the ruling Anglo-Irish elite in colonial Ireland” (McCann 2010, 80). Reading the film as only a feminist-oriented fairy tale, the final screaming of the young girl may appear confusing, but “by giving her the agency to dream her way into a fairytale existence, Jordan depicts Ireland as the maker of her own destiny. At once consolatory and cautionary, the film’s contradictory double ending illustrates just how uncertain that destiny was in the turbulent and terrifying years of the early 1980s” (McCann 2010, 81). The politicized

reading of the film adds another dimension to the contemporary rendition of the centuries-old fairy tale and addresses not only issues of the girl's personal identity development, but extends that symbolically to issues of a whole generation's collective identity development.

The Remains of Losses: New Meanings in Narratives of Revenge and Betrayal

Another Country and *The Company of Wolves*, very different films on the surface, were released in the same year -1984 - in the United Kingdom. The fictionalized version of selected moments in Guy Bennett's life seemed to tell us but one thing, which was his reason for betraying his own country despite being born into the privileged class of his home country. The contemporary retelling of Little Red Riding Hood was spiced up with werewolves appearing in dreams, and these beasts could storm out of the dream into the dreamer's reality. Despite the content and genre differences, these two films shared remarkable features that co-presented a picture of the 1980s world that was not seen in the many iconic cultural products of the decade. Guy Bennett had recognized his homosexuality, was determined to flaunt it in the rigidly hierarchical public-school system and still rise to the highest. He failed miserably not only because of the deep-rooted hypocrisy, but also because he wanted to protect his beloved. The extreme melancholia felt by young Bennett was multifacetedly presented in the film through the details of the rigid traditions, the heavy college architecture, and the silenced thoughts and feelings. Bennett's outbursts of passion and outrageous flirtations with Harcourt scandalized everyone but they refused to grace this forbidden love with their attention. Their official silence forced Bennett to be silent to the end – silent when being beaten, and silent about the various same-sex scandals he could easily expose to save himself.

The film spent so much time on old Bennett's recollection of his "courting" Harcourt and his frustration when it had to end that no audience could fail to explain his suffering as romantic in nature. We saw him fall in love, and despite his belonging to the elite class, the way he conducted his love affair was not acceptable to those who had control over his social and political success. He failed to rise to his desired position, and fifty years later he told an American reporter this episode of his life to explain his traitorous revenge. The camera also seemed to confirm this link between treason and romantic frustration by covering for us the scattered memorabilia from England, as we heard his answer to the reporter's question of "do you miss anything" – I miss cricket. All these diverted our attention away from the absence of political opinion this *spy* had expressed. If *Another Country* is one of the remains of the memory of the 1980s, then this narrative-remains is hinting to us strongly the loss – through the lingering presence of forbidden love and unfulfilled desire. The loss was what had not been discussed at all, namely any political beliefs that the spy-protagonist embraced. In fact, the only one time he talked about politics was when he wished (to Judd) that Communism was real. This distinctly depoliticized film about a spy was itself the remains that speaks of the most terrible loss – a discussion of patriotism among the elite, either because it was not possible, or non-existent.

The fairy tale Little Red Riding Hood had repressed the protagonist's voice for centuries, and Angela Carter gave her back her voice, by situating her in an important point of sexual development. Carter's protagonist was a pubescent girl who welcomed her monthly menstrual blood with courage and a strong sense of agency. This loss of childhood innocence as sexual awareness emerges was reshaped into a dream of horror that posed a threat to reality in Jordan's film. The girl in Carter's short story "betrayed"

her human kin by becoming the wolf's lover, but Rosaleen in Jordan's film betrayed her kind by becoming a werewolf. The mourning was reversed: instead of Rosaleen weeping for the loss of her love, it was the humankind who wept for her disappearance into the wild. Yet this was not the end of the film. Just as *Another Country* was framed by the old Bennett recalling his youthful days, *The Company of Wolves* was also told from the moment of "now" – a moment when the waking life was attacked by the dream, when the civilized world was ruined by the wildness of buried desire. Jordan's politicized visual fairy tale gave a voice, albeit symbolically, to the Irish identity struggle which had been suppressed both in action and in writing. The remains of this history of identity assertion, in the form of *The Company of Wolves*, invites interpretation and discussion.

Eng and Kazanjian referred to the "melancholic object" as having the ability "to express multiple losses at once" (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 5). The two British films discussed in this article may be seen as cultural remains of their time, presenting a story on the surface, but also alluding to a loss that was irretrievable. At most one could only approach an understanding of the loss through interpretation, which "allows us to understand the lost object as continually shifting both spatially and temporally, adopting new perspectives and meanings, new social and political consequences, along the way" (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 5). It is important to have these narratives which are remains of what have been lost, although ironically what is lost cannot be recovered even with continued story-telling. From the perspective of healing, however, recovery is at least partly possible:

Writing testimony, to be sure, means that we tell our stories. But it also means that we no longer allow ourselves to be silenced or allow others to speak for our experience. Writing to heal, then, and making that writing public, as I see it, is the most important emotional, psychological, artistic, and political project of our time. (DeSalvo 1999, 216)

While my teenage years flowed away with the last decades of the previous century, the memory remains in the web of texts and narratives that I lived in and through. Looking back and talking about some of these narratives in the present context becomes an act of creativity, in which new meanings of being can be produced.

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Filmography

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