Revenge narratives as a response to sexual violence: An analysis of how two comparative novels address their source text through adaptation theory and engage with the #MeToo movement.

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Fig. 1. Doré Gustave, *Red Riding Hood meets old father wolf*, 1862.
Fig. 2. Sayuri Romei, *Lady Macbeth*, 2011.

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Introduction

The topic of sexual violence is not new, but the #MeToo movement accelerated the conversation. The phrase "MeToo" was already used in 2006 by activist Tarana Burke but caused a lot of reactions after Alyssa Milano tweeted about it in 2013 (Miller and Viñas-Nelson). As a result, reactions, allegations, lawsuits, news reports and articles followed against the perpetrators. It is inevitable that this movement also affected contemporary literature. Consequently, it is very important to examine these effects to gain insight into our society and how it is changing due to the influence of the #MeToo movement.

This thesis examines two contemporary young adult novels that engage with the #MeToo movement in an interesting way. Both novels are adaptations of old stories and their plots focus on taking revenge against the perpetrators of sexual assault. The novel *Foul is Fair* is written in 2020 by Hannah Capin and is an adaptation of the play *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, written somewhere between 1603-1607. The novel is about a teenager Jade who, after being raped at a party, tracks down and kills the perpetrators. *Red Hood* is also written in 2020, by Elena K. Arnold and is based on the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood*, which first version originates from 1697 and was written by Charles Perrault. In *Red Hood*, the main character Bisou gains the power during her period to track down perpetrators of sexual assault. These perpetrators turn into wolves, whom Bisou then kills.

This research aims to address how these novels adapt the source texts and engage with #MeToo. How I am going to address this is by looking at the method of adaption, what happens concerning character, narrative voice, and the language being used. These all work together to build up this idea of victimhood versus vengeance and ideas of sisterhood and solidarity.

I will start this thesis with a theoretical framework chapter, in which I discuss adaptation theory and where I will explain how the #MeToo movement originated. After my theoretical framework, the analysis of the novels will take place. I will analyse the novels in the following order: First I will discuss how the old text has been adapted into the new version and what consequences this has for the plot and the characters. Next, I will discuss how the novel uses the revenge narrative to convey its message about #MeToo. Then I will examine the role language plays within the novels concerning gaining agency and involving the reader in the story. I will then debate the different ways in which victimhood is represented. Finally, I will describe what role sisterhood plays in the novel.

1.1 The attraction of adaptations

When asked “but Grandmother, why are your eyes so big?” all people, adults and children, almost immediately can answer: “All the better to see you with”. The text from the famous fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* is an important part of our cultural memory. The same can be said about the characters. Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, as well as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, are important characters in literature. Their recognizability makes them and their stories very popular and ensures that their corresponding works can count on a lot of attention too.

In this thesis, adaptations of the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* and the play *Macbeth* by Shakespeare are taken as case studies. Both stories are very well known and are adapted in large numbers. In her book *Adaptations and Appropriations*, Julie Sanders writes about the adaptations of fairy tales and Shakespeare and argues that these texts contain elements that have been passed down from generation to generation for many years (Sanders 45). Sanders gives several reasons for the fact that these texts have been adapted so often. One of the main reasons is the universal fame. Because the stories of fairy tales and Shakespeare are so famous in different countries, it is interesting for writers to rewrite them. The public already knows part of the story and this arouses interest. Linda Hutcheon explains in her book *A Theory of Adaptation* that adaptations are so appealing because they combine repetition (the story the audience already knows) with variation (new elements which alter from the story). She refers to this as the “ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise” (Hutcheon 4). Sanders agrees, stating that to truly appreciate the adaptation, the reader must participate “in the play of similarity and difference perceived between the original, source, or inspiration” (45). In this thesis, we will look at the similarities and differences between the adaptations of *Foul is Fair* and *Red Hood* and the source texts *Macbeth* and *Little Red Riding Hood*. We will discover why these texts are interesting choices to adapt concerning #MeToo-related events.

An interplay between old and new texts can result in a fruitful new text. However, adaptations are often not thought to be of high quality by academics and journalists. Because adaptations are based on an earlier text, this earlier text is seen as the superior text and the adaptation as secondary and inferior (Hutcheon xiv). In modern times, the view prevails that ‘imitating’ something often leads to poorer quality. Moreover, it can also be seen as copyright infringement. The fact that we often consider rewritings to be of lower quality is actually quite strange since stories always change over time. Before certain versions of the fairy tales were eventually written down by famous names such as Grimm and Anderson, they were

passed on orally for a long time and the stories have likely been changed and adapted (Rohrich 91).

In Shakespeare's theatrical texts, the situation is somewhat different. After all, we have a name that is most likely the author of these theatrical texts[1]. However, in the twenty-first century, Shakespeare has mainly become a sociocultural concept and the man as the writer behind these plays is almost forgotten (Malcolm and Marshall 1). Characters such as Macbeth and Hamlet have become cultural types in our society (Garber XIII). The familiarity of Shakespeare's stories and the fact that no legal rights have to be bought to run with his stories makes it attractive to adapt Shakespeare. Shakespeare himself probably also expected that his stories would be adapted in later times since adaptation was more common in his time than it is today (Sanders 47). Shakespeare's work itself is also heavily influenced by other stories. He got his inspiration from myths, fairy tales, and folklore (Sanders 46), stories he probably came into contact with during his education at the Stratford Grammar School and later in his life, in London's theatres and print shops (Oxford DNB).

Adaptation is therefore of all times. It can take place within the same art forms, but can also be adapted from one art form to another, for example, a book into a movie. However, Hutcheon points out that there is still a hierarchy in art, which means that some art forms are seen as being of higher quality than others, which can influence the opinion the public has about the adaptation (34). For example, an adaptation of Shakespeare into opera will be regarded as being of higher quality than an adaptation of Shakespeare into a game. Shakespeare's theatrical texts are also popular for adapting to novels. In "Strange Mutations, Shakespeare, Austen and Cultural Success", Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield write that adaptation is not simply copying, but reproduction through "reinterpretations, quotations, and transformations" (431). According to them, when adapting a work of art, some parts are left out and new parts are added to make it appropriate for contemporary times or audiences. Theatrical texts give us a broad perspective on events and characters, while a novel can take this story as a basis and then tell it from a certain character, for example, to write from the often used first-person, and thus from the perspective or that specific person. In this way, emphasis can be placed on people who are not often heard, such as marginalized characters or women. In this way, a novel can make clear which voice it finds important to tell. A different voice telling the story provides a different vision of the story. For this reason, dramatic texts

[1] Because Shakespeare left no letters or diaries, much about him and his life is unclear. Still, scholars assume that he is the author of at least 35 plays to his credit and that much of the guessed information about his life is accurate (Oxford DNB).

are suitable for adapting to prose works. It is also the case that theatrical texts often encourage experimentation with the text because it has to be performed and can therefore be presented in different forms. Writers who use theatrical texts can therefore be inspired to apply other forms of experimentation when converting these texts into, for example, a novel (Sanders 49).

The writers' urge to show certain characters or other angles of a story can thus be a clue to what they think is important at that moment. What writers consider important to tell can vary from time to time. By looking at how characters and stories change or are represented in other ways, a conclusion can be drawn about what is currently considered important by the writers and perhaps by society as a whole.

1.2 Changing ideologies

Shakespeare's plays have elements that are so close to our hearts that we want to keep telling them time and time again. Marjorie Garber writes:

> Shakespeare has scripted many of the ideas that we think of as 'naturally' our own and even as 'naturally' true: ideas about human character, about individuality and selfhood, about government, about men and women, young and age, about qualities that make a strong leader (Garber XIII).

Yet it also makes sense that not all elements of Shakespeare's stories that appealed to the public at the time still appeal to us. There are things that we want to oppose because the ideologies that prevailed at the time are no longer believed in. Stories always change over time, but in the second half of the twentieth century, there was a clear turning point in literature. This turning point was caused by changes in the world such as globalization and the internet, but also by movements that stood up for different groups of people, leading for example to post-colonialist and feminist literature. Andrew James Hartley writes in his book *Shakespeare and Millennial Fiction* that some themes became more popular to write about, such as terrorism, gender, migration, the internet, and LGBTQ+ (Hartley 4). The women's rights movement caused writers to think about how women were represented in literature. A new view arose on elements such as "self, romance, gender, migration, family and social power" (Bacchilega 7). This resulted in a lot of rewritings of fairy tales from a feminist point of view, such as *The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter, in which the main character is saved by her mother from a Blue-Beard-like man. According to Lutz Rohrich, "fairy tales always

reflect the society in which they are told" (5). It is interesting to see how the change in society then led to different versions of the stories that people know so well.

Fairy tales as a genre seem extremely suitable for adapting because of their non-constant context. According to Sanders, these characters seem to "transcend established social, cultural, geographic and temporal boundaries" (83). Fairy tales take place in an undefined time in an undefined place. The world of castles and kingdoms can be moved to different times and contexts, including that of the present. It is also the case that fairy tales often contain symbolic elements, which can (start to) mean something else in different contexts (Sanders 84). The power of a symbolic story helps us process cultural contradictions and respond to the story or take a stand (Tatar 3).

Christina Bacchilega looks at the origin of fairy tales and sees that they also used to be called "wonder tales". The word "wonder" comes from "to wonder, wonder/wandering". She argues that fairy tales can be a way of exploring different possibilities. In that respect, according to her, fairy tales are a perfect genre to adapt and apply elements that are currently relevant in our society (Bacchilega 6). Jack Zipes, a name well known when it comes to the theory of adaptations of fairy tales, wrote in his book *The Irresistible Fairy Tale* that fairy tales have a special function and states that "fairy tales are informed by a human disposition to action- to transform the world and make it more adaptable to human needs, while we try to change and make ourselves fit for the world" (Zipes 2).

The starting point of this thesis is in line with the ideas of Zipes and Bacchilega. Shakespearean texts and fairy tales are unique in that they are stories that people continue to find relevant to tell, despite being in different formats. In the following chapters, I will examine the similarities, but especially the differences and changes that take place in these adaptations from the older stories, focusing specifically on the representation of sexual violence in these contemporary novels.

1.3 Trauma and the #MeToo movement

While sexual assault had existed throughout history, trauma theory provided us with a new perspective. The term trauma originally referred to a physical wound. Little research had been done on mental illnesses. However, during the Industrial Revolution, a change in thinking emerged. As more technological inventions were made, there were also more accidents. People who had experienced these accidents were unable to function normally, despite having no physical injuries. This gave rise to the idea that it might be possible that these people had

suffered mental wounds that were not visible from the outside (Davis and Meretoja 1-2).

This idea was reinforced when soldiers returned from the front after the First World War with similar complaints. Although their physical injuries had recovered, they continued to have mental complaints from the shocking experiences they had faced during the war. Finally, the Second World War with the Holocaust and the Vietnam War also played a major role in the change in thinking about trauma (Miller 232). Due to globalization and the rise of the media, the whole world was aware of these events. This generated not only medical but also political interest. Victims wanted to speak and write about their trauma. This created "issues of collective responsibility" and made us think about what we can do to prevent these traumatic events from happening again (Davis and Meretoja 1). Due to the worldwide fame of trauma, the term PTSD was finally officially adopted in 1980 (Sütterlin 11). Now that trauma had been given a name, this problem was seriously looked at, researched, and treated. Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja write in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* that there is a dual genealogy in which trauma has become a social concept in addition to a medical past. The change in thinking about trauma led to a major social shift which "created a new vocabulary for explaining suffering" (Davis and Meretoja 3). Because trauma was increasingly recognized, there was also room to think about different events that can cause trauma. In this way, there was also a change in thinking about the consequences of trauma from sexual assault, which is the focus of this thesis.

Just like the view on trauma, the view on sexual assault has also changed. To begin with, sexual assault was not understood as gender-based discrimination until 1986 (Miller and Viñas-Nelson). Only after this terminology could sexual assault be tried legally. Before this, it was not seen as a crime. Because there are often no witnesses present in these kinds of cases, the credibility question played a major role and it became a matter of "he said, she said". Even if the woman in question was then believed, the crime was often not considered serious enough to attach consequences or punishments. This changed in the second half of the twentieth century, and cases involving sexual violence against women were increasingly exposed (Miller and Viñas-Nelson). With the advent of digitization and social media, there was a real historic shift. As Brenna Miller and Jessica Viñas-Nelson tell in the podcast "The Long History of #MeToo", many testimonies of various elements had been reported by women in the past, but these were stored in basement offices so that they did not reach the general public. As a result, the seriousness and magnitude of the problem were not understood. This changed with the advent of digitization and social media.

The biggest breakthrough in this is the #MeToo movement, a movement that

originated as a program of work by black feminist and civil rights activist Tarana Burke who coined the term in 2006 to draw attention to sexual abuse. In 2013, actress Alyssa Milano used the term in a tweet in which she stated that if all the women who had ever experienced sexual assault put the hashtag as their status, the gravity of the situation would be seen. Her post received 60,000 responses, highlighting the seriousness and magnitude of the problem of sexual assault. Since then, many more reports have emerged of women reporting what happened to them (Miller and Viñas-Nelson).

Even though the #MeToo movement is now known worldwide, sexual assault remains a polarizing topic. According to Bianca Fileborn and Rachel Loney-Howes, many people would like to have a society without sexual violence against women, but at the same time, victims are still often not believed and not taken seriously (1). They write in their book *#MeToo and the Politics of Social Change* that we live in a rape culture where violence against women is still condoned or blamed on women. The fact that so many people responded to Alyssa Milano's hashtag at the time is confirmation of this (Fileborn and Loney-Howes 2). There is therefore a history of disbelief when it comes to sexual assault stories.

A victim of sexual assault will invoke facts rather than fictional elements in the court case. The question is therefore what role there is to play for literature, which is the opposite of facts. Emma V. Miller, therefore, states that "historically, fiction has both helped and hindered medical, criminal, political, and popular discourses surrounding the topic of sexual violence". She argues that "language can both be a part of the healing process and part of the problem" (227). With the advent of #MeToo, this branch of trauma has also become very political. To want to be taken seriously, you better stay away from fiction. However, literature can also help trauma, in ways judicial language cannot. For example, it can tell a narrative by using imagery and metaphors, so that the shock is less intense. It can also help people process trauma by reading about the experience of others.

Literature can also help when it comes to sexual assault. By highlighting the suffering and showing the emotional intent on the victim. When writers show those feelings, we start to feel something personal for the characters, and then it is no longer something that "happens to other people" (Miller 228). That way, people who have not experienced such trauma can, to a certain extent, understand the feeling. Joshua Pederson argues in the book *Trauma and Literature* that non-literary language (historical, archival language) can pinpoint traumatic experiences with great accuracy, but "literature (and literary narrative in particular) might process a privileged (if not unique) value for communicating our deepest psychic pains" (Pederson 97). Facts are legal language, but "narrative fiction might capture the "feel" of

traumatic experience even if it does not aim to reproduce facts" (Pederson 99). Literature can thus portray trauma in a different way, which can contribute to raising the issue of this problem in society.

2.1 *Foul is Fair* and *Macbeth*

Foul is Fair is a young adult novel written by Hannah Capin, based on Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth* in which Scottish general Macbeth receives a prophecy from three witches who tell him he will become king of Scotland. Macbeth tells his wife about the prophecy and Lady Macbeth convinces him to kill anyone who stands in the way of his kingship. In the end, both characters are driven mad by regret for their actions which leads to Lady Macbeth's death and Macbeth being defeated.

Similar to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, this adaptation by Capin also includes murder plans. Protagonist Jade is raped on her sixteenth birthday at a party by a group of frat boys. Together with her three friends Mads, Summer, and Jenny, she decides to take revenge on the boys and kill them. Katharine Eisaman Maus describes revenge novels as follows in the introduction of *Four Revenge Tragedies:*

> Revenge tragedies feature someone who prosecutes a crime in a private capacity, taking matters into his own hands because the institutions by which criminals are made to pay for their offences are either systematically defective or unable to cope with some particularly difficult situation. Such plays testify to an apparently ineradicable yearning for justice – a yearning that abides even, or especially, in the most unfairly victimized persons. But at the same time, they register a troubling discrepancy between the desire for equity and the means of fulfilling that desire (Maus ix).

The quote is very fitting for Capin's novel because sexual violence is difficult to prosecute. In this novel, Jade takes matters into her own hands and, together with her friends, tracks down the perpetrators, and then punish them. *Foul is Fair* fights against the injustice of rape but does so by punishing with murder, which is of course very unusual and in practice would not be a good solution against this injustice. However, with this revenge fantasy, the novel creates a world in which the punishment of sexual violence by men against women is justified. By adapting *Macbeth* into a revenge tragedy and by showing the differences in the adaptation in the setting and characters, it will become clear how the novel engages with the #MeToo movement through victimized characters who seize violent agency.

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part will show how Capin adapts the plot into a revenge tragedy and what changes in the setting of the story and characters. The second part of the analysis shows how these victimized characters seize agency based on language, witchcraft, and sisterhood.

2.2 Male domination in *Macbeth*

The biggest similarity between *Macbeth* and *Foul is Fair* is the division of roles, in which especially the interpretation of the female roles is placed in a different light. Despite the presence of female characters, *Macbeth* is a male-dominated play. The Collins English Dictionary says about male domination: “A male-dominated society, organization, or area of activity is one in which men have most of the power and influence” (CED). In the article “Patriarchal Dominance in Shakespeare’s Macbeth: Viewing from a Feminist Perspectives,”, Mohammad Jashim Uddin and Halina Sultana cite several examples of male domination in *Macbeth*.

A first example is that Lady Macbeth helps her husband with his career by plotting to assassinate the king, but does not think about her aspirations to become queen. Female ambition simply does not fit the patriarchal society in which she lives (Uddin and Sultana 68). Another example is that her femininity is “considered a flaw in patriarchal society” (Uddin and Sultana 75). To help her husband, she must renounce her femininity and take on masculine traits such as ambition and violence. Finally, Uddin and Sultana argue that Lady Macbeth has no identity of her own. “To seek the identity of Lady Macbeth, it becomes clear that she has no opportunity to oppose herself and to do what she wishes, but she is capable of doing, how she is instructed and guided by Macbeth and patriarchal society” (Uddin and Sultana 72). She is just a pawn that helps the male character and thereby advances the plot. As will be explained later in the analysis, Jade’s character turns against these three ways Lady Macbeth has been presented and against this view of femininity considered as a flaw.

The way the female characters in *Macbeth* are portrayed is also a reflection of the society in which Shakespeare lived. His plays were written at a time when women in society played a different role than they do now and they were mainly in the service of their husbands. For example, the female roles in plays were played by men because being an actor was a profession and women were not fit to work (Richmond). In *Foul is Fair*, a different interpretation of the female roles has been chosen, specifically the role of Lady Macbeth, who plays the leading role in this story. Capin’s novel is written from the eyes of Jade from a first-person perspective. She gains more agency than Lady Macbeth could ever have and fights against sexual violence in a male-dominated culture.

2.3 Femininity and ambition

In the novel, schoolboy Mack is persuaded by Jade to kill his friends. His character corresponds to the character Macbeth, as the name "Mack" suggests. Jade and Mack begin a

love affair, in which Jade deliberately incites him to kill his friend Duncan, the leader of the group of friends. In *Macbeth*, King Duncan is a kind king who rewards Macbeth with a new title after his deployment in battle and invites himself to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's castle. In *Foul is Fair*, Duncan is also described as a king by Jade: "Every second Duncan stays king is too long" (Capin 91). However, instead of going to battle with his men to protect the kingdom, King Duncan likes to do other activities. It turns out that he and his friends drug and rape girls at parties. Therefore it makes sense that Jade dislikes him and rightly sees him as a bad "king" of the school. After Duncan is killed, Mack sits in the school cafeteria where Duncan always sat: "At lunch Mack sits in the king's place. I sit next to him" (205). A comparison is made here with the banquet given by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth after Duncan is murdered and they become king and queen. In Capin's novel, high school is likened to a kingdom in which everyone has a certain rank. In Shakespeare's play, King Duncan is portrayed as a grateful king. He greets Macbeth with the words: "O worthiest cousin,/The sin of my ingratitude even now/Was heavy on me" (Mac. 1.4.14-16). Although this is also a political game of the king, Macbeth cannot complain about the new title he has obtained. However, he is not satisfied and wants to become king. He kills King Duncan not because he is a bad king, but because he stands in the way of his becoming king: "For in my way it lies" (1.4.50). In *Foul is Fair*, Jade persuades Mack to kill Duncan because she says he has a right to King Duncan's place, but this is just a lie that hides her real motive: Jade wants revenge on Duncan and the other boys for raping her. It is actually "King" Duncan's bad behaviour that prompted Jade to desire his death. Killing Duncan and the other boys thus becomes an act of justification, as is often the case in revenge narratives. Also, the character Jade, who seems to assume the role of Lady Macbeth when she is with Mack, gets a motive for her actions, while Lady Macbeth in the play is mainly in the service of Macbeth. Jade does not put herself in the service of a man but uses him to reach her personal goals.

The second thing that stands out is that Jade has the same horrific plans as in Shakespeare's play, but that she can carry out these atrocities as a woman, without making excuses for her gender. As in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, she easily persuades beloved Mack to choose the evil path by saying that he "must be given power because he deserves it" (Capin 82). She also states that without her help "noble Mack would never pick up a knife" (101). Mack, who takes on the dubious role of Macbeth, comes across as quite anxious. Jade repeatedly says that he is "weak" (38). When Mack slowly goes mad because he keeps thinking about the murders they committed together, her coven states that it is not guilt he is suffering from, but fear (125), while in Jade both guilt and fear are hard to find as they are

washing the blood off their hands: “There’s no guilt in my eyes. Only cold pride” (171).

In Shakespeare’s play, Lady Macbeth can only incite Macbeth to cruelty if she renounces her feminine gender, as to help him she needs masculine qualities such as ambition and cruelty. In her society, these qualities are not considered feminine. To be able to help her husband, she asks the spirits to renounce her femininity, by saying: “unsex me here" (1.5.39):

> Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
> Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood (1.5.38-41).

That courage, cruelty, and determination are masculine qualities are also apparent from the following quote: “When you durst to do it, then you were a man” (1.7.49). Macbeth responds to her decisive words with: “Bring forth men-children only,/ For thy undaunted mettle should compose/ Nothing but males” (1.7.72-74) Because she acts so masculine, she should only bear male children, he says, proving once again that a "fearless spirit" is a property primarily attributed to men.

2.4 Femininity as an advantage

In an article in the National Post, Ashley Csanady writes that the female roles in Shakespeare’s plays are products of their time. According to her, there are only three different roles for women in his plays: the object that could be lost or won, deadly temptress, or “bitch”. Lady Macbeth is an exception to this, however, as she is seen as the “strong woman behind a baffling man” (Csanady). She has to "unsex" herself to participate in the hard man’s world. She goes against the patriarchy in the only way possible for her, because “until last century, women could only rise to power through the men around her” (Csanady). The reason Lady Macbeth does not fit into the traditional picture of Shakespearean women is the reason she is so often scrutinized. However, within the research community, her femininity is still often discussed and categorized as “corrupted, fraught, inescapable, and unnatural” (Phillips 353). This is because the lust for power in Shakespeare’s time was seen as a masculine quality and so Lady Macbeth has to turn away from her femininity. Pragati Das writes in "Shakespeare’s Representation of Women in his Tragedies":

> When Lady Macbeth desires to be ‘unsexed’, her words reveal the assumed discordance between feminine nature and political ambition. By putting these desires in masculine or gender-neutral form, Lady Macbeth explicitly suggests their unnaturalness. Shakespeare’s language here induces tension and reflects the political gender tensions already existent in the Elizabethan world (46).

Lady Macbeth can only behave like this in the play because she renounces her feminine sex. It is an excuse that allows her to assume a more dominant role as a woman.

In Capin’s novel, there is something remarkable about Jade’s character. She is all three of these roles that Csanady described in the course of this novel, and more. Within the group of friends at St. Andrews high school, as a “new girl” she is seen by the boys as a prize they can get and pass on to each other. Banks tells Mack: "I’ll take her when you’re done with her, golden boy" (Capin 87). For Mack, through her alternate identity as “Jade”, she plays the deadly temptress, first having him kill all his friends, then killing him. She tries to win him over with sweet words, but it was clear from the very beginning of the plan that he would be abused for these atrocities and be blamed. Finally, she is also seen as a "bitch", for example by Banks: “Still think you’re a twisted bitch” (Capin 211) when it turns out that she is not interested in him and does choose Mack, or when she does not behave like the sweet passive neat lady they expect her to be. “Girls are still taught to be nice and pretty, and by extension, objects to be coveted,” says Csanady, and you can see that in these examples. However, Jade plays with these different roles to make them work in her favour. For the teachers at St Andrews, she plays the sweet innocent girl in order not to arouse suspicion and to infiltrate the group of friends. These different roles eventually allow her to kill the boys. Like Lady Macbeth, she takes on different roles to achieve her goal, except that Jade does not have to forgo her femininity, but can use all different forms of femininity to her advantage. Besides the aforementioned roles, Jade shows many other feminine roles such as girlfriend, the leader in the coven, and daughter of her parents. She always chooses which role she takes on to get what she wants. The fact that, as a character, she does not fit into one of these aforementioned boxes, supports the idea that women are not categorized, but can be different things. This shows not only that femininity can come in different shapes and sizes, but also that femininity in the novel is seen as something in which you can be ambitious and even be as a means to achieve your ambitious goals.

2.5 Magic, language, and fate

The language in Capin's novel is striking and is characterized by short mysterious sentences that seem to have been plucked from a legend or fairy tale, such as the sentences that Jade uses to order her coven: "Find them" (6) and sentences the coven uses to accept orders from her with words such as "Done. Before sunset" (10). Because of the wording of the command and the response to the command, the action seems almost impossible to fail. It seems to be fate. This incantatory language corresponds to the language of the witches in *Macbeth* who say things to each other like "That will be ere the set of sun" (1.1.5) and to Macbeth: "Speak" and "Demand" (4.1.61). Although the novel *Foul is Fair* takes place in the present, in a high school, Jade and her coven maintain the incantatory language found among the witches in *Macbeth*.

In the first scene of *Macbeth*, the witches all simultaneously say "Fair is foul, and foul is fair/ Hover through the fog and filthy air" (1.1.10-11). This quote is adopted in Capin's novel, as a girl from the coven, Jenna, uses the phrase: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (8). This shows that Jade's coven symbolizes the witches. In Jenna's line, Jade thinks: "another spell" (8). This is a reference to magic. Another example is when Jade decides to change her name from Elle to Jade. When the coven repeats her new name, it sounds like magic to her: "It's dark magic, a spell from my three witch-sisters" (6). Jade's new name gives her the strength to continue her gruesome plan. She needs a new identity to be untraceable, but she also uses it as an alter ego, to break free from her previous self, the girl who was raped. Because her coven immediately accepts the name, it strikes her as a spell and something that should have been. Her actions as Jade are destined and linked to a fate similar to the witches in *Macbeth*.

Frank McGuiness writes about *Macbeth*: "This is a play that sets itself in motion as a spell. It creates a world that is out to agitate and antagonize, unsettle and disturb. This is a universe where abnormality is the norm, the paranormal making a parallel system of beliefs to the believable" (70). According to McGuinness, the magic in *Macbeth* creates a world in which abnormal is the norm and everything is possible. *Macbeth* begins with a scene showing the witches, rather than Macbeth. The witches appear in "Thunder and Lightning" (1.1.). Bad weather and witches as signs of magic suggest chaos at the beginning of the play. McGuinness: "This is Scotland, and it is a country on the brink of destroying itself" (71). An important difference between *Macbeth* and *Foul is Fair* is that *Macbeth* starts with chaos, in which the witches symbolize evil and the manipulation of the human mind, while in *Foul is Fair* the chaos, fury, and destruction only start after something bad happened, namely the rape. In *Foul is Fair*, there is an obvious human evil that Jade and the coven oppose. In an

otherwise quite realistic context – a high school – the language, the magic, and the references to fate allow an alternate reality to emerge in which it makes sense to kill the perpetrators of rape. In this universe that is created where perpetrators are punished for their violence against women, there is a form of justice. Like *Macbeth*, the novel aims to "antagonize, unsettle and disturb". Not because perpetrators of rapes in the real world have to be killed immediately, which is an extreme element, but to create a world in which victims can finally get some form of justice.

2.6 The coven: witchcraft and sisterhood

An interesting part of Capin's novel is Jade's three friends: Mads, Summer, and Jenna, whom she also refers to as her "coven". Oxford English Dictionary describes a coven as "a gathering of witches" (OED). In today's time, you would not easily call your group of friends a coven as it is a somewhat outdated word. It refers directly to *Macbeth* and shows that these three girls play the witches in this story. They are the ones who predict for Mack: "And then they appear. All three of them, almost out of nowhere, and stand three-in-a-row across the path to the parking lot" (Capin 56). They wear masks so Mack cannot see who they are and without moving they say, "Mack, their time is up", "Mack, your time is there", "Connor will fall. You'll take his place", "And then you'll take Duncan's" (56). The fact that the coven appears "almost out of nowhere" indicates that, like the witches, they are good at staging themselves in such a way that they appear supernatural. In *Macbeth*, the play reads "Witches vanish" (1.3.79) and when Banquo asks "Whither are they vanished?"(1.3.81) Macbeth replies with "Into the air" (1.3.82). Phrases like "Connor will fall" are explicit phrases used by mythological creatures. It is older language, one is not likely to say someone "falls" these days. It seems like there is no free will for Connor and Mack and their future is already set.

In Capin's novel, the meeting between the coven and Mack takes place later in the book, only after Jade and the coven have figured out exactly how they are going to plan their revenge. In Shakespeare's play, on the other hand, it is destiny that Macbeth hears the prediction and the fate of this prediction propels the narrative forward. In Capin's novel, this prediction takes place as part of the revenge plan. Therefore, the major difference here is that Jade and the coven, all four women in the book, are in control. It is not something that is fixed in advance, but something that they are going to take care of.

In Shakespeare's play, it is unclear whether the witches are men or women. Banquo tells the witches, "You should be women,/ And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ That you are so" (1.3.46-48). In Capin's novel, it is clear that the coven are women who are in

charge of their own destiny.

The symbol of the witch was seen as evil in Shakespeare's time, in which King James I was in power. This king was fascinated by witches and magic and instigated many witch hunts because he suspected that a coven of witches was targeting the Scottish throne (Barstow 174). Because of the many witch hunts, witches were seen as something bad that went against the Christian religion. They were seen as the "other", as an outcast of society. When someone in the neighbourhood behaved differently than the mainstream, these outcasts were often denounced as a witch and persecuted (Briggs 23). Witches were also seen as people who could persuade, physically injure, or even kill other people. They were seen as tricksters (Thomas 436-437). This explains why many people were afraid of witches and witchcraft. Incidentally, the role of trickster is also one of the aforementioned three roles for female characters in Shakespeare's plays.

Later, however, there was a shift in thinking about the role of witches. Around 1970, feminist literature began to look more closely at the role of women in history and literature and saw the witches as interesting figures committed to claiming female power and daring to oppose the patriarchy. They were also seen as symbols of repressed female power and as martyrs (Pearson 192). Within feminist theory, the witch thus acquired a slightly more positive connotation.

A coven of witches could be a strong example of sisterhood, a concept that became popular in the second wave of feminism. Sisterhood gave an idea of solidarity to women who fought for equality. Robin Morgan wrote in 1970 in her book *Sisterhood is Powerful* that all women together could stand strong in this movement as according to Morgan "there is no getting away from the shared, primary impression of being female in a patriarchal world" (xxxv). Sisterhood would strengthen horizontal relationships between women. In the third wave of feminism, however, the term was criticized, as it became clear that there is always a hierarchy between women, despite the good intentions of sisterhood. Also, women did not want to be seen as a group, but as individuals. There was also criticism that you had to be a woman specifically to be classified under sisterhood, which was a problem for trans women and others who wanted to fight against patriarchy. Finally, it was also discussed that there was still class difference and discrimination among women. The term sisterhood was therefore no longer entirely appropriate (Evans 112).

In "'For Solace a Twinne-Like Sister': Teaching Themes of Sisterhood in *As you Like it* and Beyond" Jan Stirm writes about sisterhood in Shakespeare's plays. She writes that the many examples of forms of sisterhood in early modern plays were often of patriarchal order

and benefited not the women, but mainly their families and society (Stirm 376). For example, women were used as conduits for their husbands or used their sisterhood to ask for favours. Sisterhood was mainly seen as dutiful. From what has been described above, we can understand why Stirm describes the three witches from *Macbeth* in her article as “most problematic” (385) when we look at sisterhood. The witches, as far as we know, are not controlled by the wishes of a man. However, it is unclear what the witches’ intentions are and why they appeal to Macbeth. They do not seem to act out of a personality of their own but are merely a symbol of evil. We have seen before that witches were seen as “different” persons and as inferior persons and were often persecuted for this. Within the three possibilities of female characters in Shakespeare’s plays, they belong to tricksters. The fact that they easily fit into this category indicates that the witches do not have a personality of their own, but rather their female character is used to achieve a goal: to trap the main character Macbeth. Finally, it is not even clear whether the witches are women or human at all, so they cannot be seen as female individuals. The witches do act together as a team, or as sisters, but they can by no means be seen as fully-fledged female characters with their own personalities and will.

In *Foul is Fair* there is a completely different role for the coven. These three girls will do anything for Jade and together they fight against the injustice that has been done to her. This can be seen as a form of sisterhood. Despite Jade commanding her coven and occasionally acting like their leader, she says "They are mine and I am theirs" (Capin 7). This implies that she would do the same if this had happened to one of the others. They take these actions, however, at their own discretion. While the motive of the witches in *Macbeth* stays unknown, the entire narrative in *Foul is Fair* stems from the motifs of Jade and her coven. They do not have power because they are mythical creatures or have been given their powers from a higher power, but because they have decided that they are powerful. For example, Jade says things like “I decide how it ends” (59) and, despite what has happened, tries to live her life the way she wants and in a way that she has agency and control.

However, some things do not correspond to the idea of sisterhood, if we look at the critique of the concept given in the paragraph above. The language the coven uses and the opinions they hold about the outside world make it clear that they are an exclusive group that is not open to others. They have turned inward. They have been together as a group of friends since childhood and are not open to other friendships: “We never needed other friends. We never wanted other friends” (130). With people apart from their coven they speak normal language, while with each other they use mysterious language like “Done. Before sunset” (10). In this way, they make their group exclusive.

It is also clear that the girls from the coven are all very wealthy. They go to good schools, have their parents' cars at their disposal, their parents are lawyers and plastic surgeons (10) and Jade has a cleaner in her house (124). Their wealth makes them an elite and that is how they see themselves: "But nobody turns away girls like us" (2). While the way the girls support and stand up for each other seems like a good element of sisterhood, the group ultimately satisfies more of the sisterhood's criticisms. There is no easy way to join this group, which creates a more exclusive environment that does not fit the idea of sisterhood as a movement that is accessible to all women.

In conclusion, *Foul is Fair* is a novel in which Lady Macbeth takes on her own motives, and agency and uses her femininity as a force. Her murderous plans get a motive as Jade reacts with revenge on an environment in which it is normal to objectify and rape women. Through the revenge narrative, the novel goes against this view and offers a form of justification in which perpetrators of sexual violence are punished. The language used by the coven contributes to this vision. Because there is talk of magic and prophecy, the events seem destined to happen. The language the coven uses strengthens the bond between them, but along with their rich lifestyle and high self-esteem also make them an exclusive group. This does not meet the concept of sisterhood as described earlier and ensures that the novel provides a specific narrative in which sexual violence occurs that is not easily recognizable to others. The revenge in the novel provides a narrative in which perpetrators are caught but does not argue for a change in society to solve the problem of sexual violence for everyone, as we will see that *Red Hood* does in the next chapter.

3.1 *Red Hood* and *Little Red Riding Hood*

It is not to be missed that *Red Hood* from Elana K. Arnold is an adaptation of the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood*, the first version of which was written by Charles Perrault in 1697. This version was a morality lesson for adults in which the girl should not listen to the wolf because then she would risk wasting her virginity (Thernstrom). Many versions of the fairy tale are now known. *Red Hood* is undeniably an adaptation of it. The title *Red Hood* has a part of *Little Red Riding Hood* in it and several characters return such as the Grandmother, the Hunter, and the Wolf. The novel also plays with catchphrases such as "the better to see you with" (Arnold 19) and "the better to eat you with" (17), which are taken directly from the fairy tale. These catchphrases occur in the mind of the main character, Bisou, when she looks at the wolf's teeth coming towards her or when she looks at his eyes. Unlike most versions of the fairy tale, the wolf does not eat this girl. Bisou turns out to be a hunter who, during her period, has the power to kill wolves that harass women. The wolves appear to be a metaphor for men who threaten women with sexual violence. This version of the fairy tale is influenced by the #MeToo movement and carries a clear message: stop sexual violence against women.

The fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* is an interesting fairy tale to adapt regarding #MeToo as it has a history with different meanings about the role of women and femininity. For example, Catherine Orenstein writes in *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked* that the red hood of Little Red Riding Hood may have been a reference to menstrual blood and thus the moment when a girl becomes a woman (Orenstein 4). Menstrual blood also plays an important role in the novel *Red Hood* because her period gives Bisou the power to hunt wolves. Another morality lesson, this time for children or young women, was that girls should not go with strangers (Orenstein 6). In still other versions, "going off the path" stood for: not behaving as you should, such as unchastity, for example. In the well-known version of the Brothers Grimm, the girl was punished for her curiosity. Fortunately, she was rescued by the Hunter, a husband or father figure who could "save the woman from her folly" (Orenstein 5). Later, versions emerged, in which Little Red Riding Hood could save herself from the Wolf, sometimes with the help of Grandmother (Orenstein 6). Striking is that in these older versions of the fairy tale Little Red Riding Hood has a lot of rules imposed upon her and has to adhere to certain moral codes, while no one asks questions about the Wolf. Why does he behave like this? *Red Hood* takes the blame and responsibility away from Little Red Riding Hood and places it on the Wolf. In this way, we start thinking about sexual violence in our society.

This analysis will show that the novel has been strongly influenced by the #MeToo movement. I will also show that the novel expresses itself against rape culture and rape myths

and argues for a change in society in regards to sexual violence against women. The analysis will first discuss the role of the hunter and the Wolf as metaphor for men. Then I will look at the relationship between Bisou and James where I will consider how masculinity and femininity are represented and what role consent plays in their relationship. After this, it will be described how the novel cites and rejects rape myths. Finally, I will examine how the novel discusses the differences between generations, looking at the mother and then the grandmother. Sisterhood will also be discussed here. The novel indicates that there is a difference between generations but also states that we all want to achieve the same and advocates social change.

3.2 Hunters and wolves

In the previous chapter, we saw that *Foul is Fair* borrowed some characters from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, but gave them a feminist twist. This is also the case in *Red Hood*, where the roles of previous versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* are given a different interpretation and femininity becomes something from which strength is drawn and from which action can be taken. In *Little Red Riding Hood*, the four main characters are Little Red Riding Hood, the Wolf, the Hunter, and the Grandmother. In the story of the Brothers Grimm, Little Red Riding Hood and Grandmother are eaten by the Wolf and the hunter saves them. In *Red Hood* this is different. The main character, Bisou, lives with her grandmother but turns out not to be Little Red Riding Hood, but a hunter. Every month, during her period, she goes into the forest to "hunt" wolves that attack women, as her grandmother used to do. It is striking here that in this story Bisou and her grandmother are not passive female characters who need to be rescued by a man. They save themselves and other women.

The wolves in this story are men who sexually assault women. They turn into wolves during these actions. After Bisou kills them, they slowly turn back into human beings. The novel also contains a reference to the three little pigs, another fairy tale: "Your house in Quebec was not built of straw nor sticks, yet still the wind rattled it like the rageful breath of a hungry wolf" (Arnold 63). The house built of "straw nor sticks" refers to the three little pigs who have to build sturdy houses to stop the Wolf. The Wolf blows a house of straw over, after which he can easily eat that piglet. There was domestic violence in Bisou's parental home. The "rageful breath of a hungry wolf" here points to her father's aggressiveness. In this story, men who commit violence against women in any way can turn into a wolf, explains Mémé: "Sometimes boys become wolves" (110).

The wolf has had a negative connotation for hundreds of years. Wolves were known to

be aggressive carnivores that ate cattle, and could also attack humans. They are often characterized as rapacious, voracious, greedy, deceitful, murderous, and criminal (Marvin 7). Because in Perrault's version Little Red Riding Hood climbs into bed with the Wolf and takes off her clothes, the wolf has since also taken on the meaning of "seducer" (Orenstein 4). *Red Hood* is inspired by the #MeToo movement as the men who commit sexual violence against women are an important element in the story. Men who are not sexual aggressive do not turn into wolves. The change to a wolf thus makes it clear that someone has exhibited sexually transgressive behaviour and that this behaviour is frowned upon in this novel. Once men take these kinds of actions, they take the form of "something bad". For Bisou and her grandmother, it is immediately clear that these men have committed a crime and that they can be hunted. The killing of these men is legitimized here because they no longer have their human form, but that of a wolf. The fact that men sometimes act normal and the other moment can just change into a wolf is a metaphor for society in which sexual violence against women is common and sometimes difficult to recognize. Mémé tells Bisou that there are not always men who turn into a wolf but that there is always the "threat of a wolf" (276). The constant possibility of sexual violence is a structural issue in society.

The killing of the wolves is a form of revenge and we can view it in the light of the aforementioned revenge quote:

> Revenge tragedies feature someone who prosecutes a crime in a private capacity, taking matters into his own hands because the institutions by which criminals are made to pay for their offences are either systematically defective or unable to cope with some particularly difficult situation. Such plays testify to an apparently ineradicable yearning for justice – a yearning that abides even, or especially, in the most unfairly victimized persons. But at the same time, they register a troubling discrepancy between the desire for equity and the means of fulfilling that desire (Maus ix).

It is often difficult to bring perpetrators of these crimes to justice. This is apparent in the novel when Bisou's friend Maggie is being stalked by a boy and the police cannot help her with it. Because sexual violence by men against women – in the real world and the novel – cannot easily be punished, the novel finds a solution to punish them after all. Mémé and Bisou often know the victims and want to enact revenge upon the perpetrators. The hunting is also a form

of protection for other women against this violence and evil. When Bisou or Mémé turn into a hunter, they rescue all the women they encounter in the forest. They are given extra senses to feel when someone is in need. As hunters, Mémé and Bisou become heroes who alone can defeat the wolves. The women in the forest, on the other hand, take on a more passive role of victims who cannot save themselves without the hunters. The fact that a woman saves another woman is very powerful, but it would be even better if everyone could save themselves and no hunters were needed. This is also discussed in the novel. Bisou says: “It’s not that we need more hunters. It’s that we need men to stop becoming wolves” (243). This shows that the novel uses this fairy tale element in which people can turn into a wolve or a hunter as a means to clarify the purpose of the revenge novel: what is happening is wrong and these men should be punished. In the novel, a universe is created in which it is possible to punish the perpetrators of these acts. By adapting *Little Red Riding Hood* and using fairy tale elements of being able to change into another person or being, the injustice is solved. The metaphor makes us think about our society. In this way *Red Hood* advocates against rape culture and wants a cultural change in which women need to be less afraid of sexual violence from men.

3.3. Consent and the relationship between James and Bisou

Much research has been done into the meaning of the different elements in *Little Red Riding Rood* and in several versions of the fairy tale femininity is seen as an important part. As mentioned before, the path that Little Red Riding Hood has to travel from her house to her grandmother might indicate the journey from little girl to femininity and the “red hood” could refer to menstruation (Orenstein 4). In the time of Perrier, there even was a saying that a woman would have lost her virginity “if she had seen the wolf” (Orenstein 26). In *Red Hood*, femininity also plays an important role because Bisou’s menstruation makes her a hunter. The novel also discusses menstrual shame when Bisou thinks James does not want to see her anymore because she was having her period in his presence and he now definitely finds her "gross" and "disgusting" (Arnold 38). She also says "how dare you bleed" to herself (13), while of course she can not help having her period as is something natural that happens to all women. Later, she learns that her strength as a fighter comes from the bleeding. In contrast to the way femininity is expressed in *Little Red Riding Hood*, Bisou’s femininity allows her to do new things and take on a strong position of a hero who saves other women. The bleeding becomes a superhero’s powerful weapon and gives her the opportunity to take action. Later it turns out that James does not mind at all that she got her period. He thinks it is much more

important that she is well and states that it is something normal. Hence, the novel goes against the idea that women should be ashamed of their periods and advocates that it should be seen as something normal and natural.

James is not described in the novel as having typical masculine features, the way Lady Macbeth wanted Macbeth to have. When Bisou describes James to Mémé, she says: “He is kind, […] that’s one of my favourite things about him. Also, he’s a good listener, and he’s smart, and he’s…I don’t know, loyal, I guess” (109). Mémé thinks these are good qualities. Bisou also says that James “loves everyone” (4). That is what she likes about him. Being a good listener, being loyal, and being loving are not typical masculine qualities and might be more appropriate for women. Yet Bisou makes it clear that these are the qualities she looks for in a man.

As Bisou fights wolves, she takes on a position that would be considered masculine in *Macbeth*. She describes herself as strong and fast: “You are stronger than you were, and faster than you were, and you, in this moment, are made for this moment” (151). When she fights a wolf and her clothes fall off, she resists the fact that women should always remain chaste: “you have more important things to do than maintain modesty” (16). Yet she is clearly still a woman. “Breast bared, teeth bared, you scream. It’s high, your scream, unmistakably female, and it propels you forward” (19). The words “unmistakably female” is important here. She does not try to be a man but makes it clear that as a woman you can fight just as well. Bisou fights in a feminine way and wins. The novel states that women are strong in their femininity and must fight for their rights: “and you will step toward him, not away, because you are not his prey” (20). Where Little Red Riding Hood may have been eaten by the Wolf, Bisou makes a different choice: she fights and conquers the wolf.

Another important part of the relationship between Bisou and James is consent. The #MeToo movement has put a special focus on issues of consent. The relationship between Bisou and James in *Red Hood* is portrayed as a happy one. A lot of consent is discussed here or things that resemble this. For example, when James sees that Bisou is not feeling well during an exciting sexual moment in the woods, he asks "You okay?" (11). A second example is Bisou’s reaction to her mother’s third poem. Her mother’s poem begins as follows:

the first time
he kissed me
he bunched up my hair
pulled back my head

the first time
he hit me
it made sense
it answered a question (114).

In this poem, Bisou's mother likens her first kiss to Bisou's father to the first time he hit her. The first kiss already showed signs of violence. She writes that "he bunched up my hair" and "pulled back my head" (114). This may come across as passionate, but when you read the second part you will notice that it is not passionate, but rather that the father has violent tendencies and starts beating her. This is a brief outline of the relationship between Bisou's parents where the father comes across as violent.

Bisou answers this poem by writing about her relationship with James:

The first time James kissed me
he asked me first
if he could
and I said yes (281).

This is a clear example of consent. By comparing these two first kisses within different relationships, it becomes clear that the first relationship is an abusive, unhappy relationship and the second is a loving relationship where both people want to kiss. Bisou's relationship with James rewrites the relationship between her mother and father. It becomes clear that Bisou chooses a different relationship in which consent plays an important part. By juxtaposing these two examples, the novel carries out that the second relationship is the normal relationship in which people are happy with each other and that the first version is the unhappy relationship. Due to the rise of #MeToo, consent has become a concept that we find increasingly important in our society and within relationships. This influence is visible within *Red Hood*.

3.4 Rape culture and victim blaming

Through a movement like #Metoo, sexual violence against women is increasingly taken seriously and seen as something bad for which the perpetrator should be punished. Often, however, he is not punished. A view that often reappears is that women themselves are

responsible for what has happened to them. These are stereotypes or myths and are also called rape myths. Rape myths contribute to a hostile climate for rape or sexual abuse victims (Burt 218) and contribute to rape culture. In “Cultural Myths and Supports for Rape”, several examples of rape myths are mentioned: “Examples of rape myths are ‘only bad girls get raped’; ‘any healthy woman can resist a rapist if she really wants to’; ‘women ask for it’; ‘women ‘cry rape’ only when they’ve been jilted or have something to cover up’; ‘rapists are sex-starved, insane, or both’” (Burt 217).

In order not to be assaulted or raped, according to rape myths, women have to take responsibility and behave in a certain way. If they behave outside a certain norm, they seek the danger themselves. There are many examples in *Red Hood* showing that women are often blamed for these things. A first example is that a boy from her school likes Bisou, but she does not feel the same way. She describes how he suddenly finds her a "bitch" (48) and goes looking for another girl to worship. Instead of accepting that sometimes love is not mutual, this boy blames Bisou for the bad feeling he experiences.

When Maggie is stalked by the same guy and finds disturbing gifts in her locker like used condoms, and feels ashamed, Bisou tells her immediately: “It’s not your fault, Maggie” (294) and “It’s his fault, for doing all that shitty stuff to you” (294). Maggie feels guilty that this is happening to her when the only one to blame is this boy. When Keisha finds out that Bisou is a hunter, she goes to investigate, she tells her that "witches used to be blamed for things men did" (251). Today, through rape myths, women are still blamed for things that men are responsible for. *Red Hood* wants to encounter this.

The most important example, however, is grandmother Méme’s frame story. The women she cannot save as a hunter and die from male violence are immediately given a bad reputation. About the first girl Mémé tells Bisou:

> Before she was even in the ground, there were whispers about how she wasn’t a very good girl – not that she deserved what happened to her, of course, no one was saying that, but that if she hadn’t been out so late, way past curfew, and if she hadn’t been known to be so free and loose with boys, with men, then she would have been perfectly safe in her own bed that night (177).

The woman in question is blamed for what has been done to her. If she had behaved better, had been in bed earlier, and had worn different clothes, this might not have happened. These are typical examples of rape myths. After all, the focus should not be on what the women

were wearing that evening or what time they were home, but on why the man in question committed this act. Following the #MeToo movement, an important Belgian exhibition of clothes of people who had been raped contributes to this question and aims to put an end to the rape myth about what clothes women wore when they were raped. After visiting the exhibition, Liesbeth Kennes writes “What you immediately notice when you walk around here: they are all very normal pieces that anyone would wear” (BBC News). It turns out that the clothes women wear have nothing to do with the sexual assault.

Red Hood engages with an important part of the #MeToo movement by discussing rape myths. This is done through the story of Mémé. When Mémé finds the man who killed two women and kills him, he is spoken of very differently: “A dead boy – especially a dead Big Man on Campus, a dead star athlete – seemed to make much bigger impression on just about everyone than two dead girls” (192). The way he dressed or behaved that evening is not questioned: “This time, no one asked about how Dennis shouldn’t have been alone in the woods, no one reported having seen him drunk and disorderly in the days and weeks before his death. Everyone mourned” (193). The reputation of the men and the women is viewed differently when something like this happens. This shows that there is an inequality between men and women during such an event and rape myths are still widely used.

Mémé tells how the girls this happened to were seen as she talks about a “girl who didn’t keep her legs closed, who played too fast, too hard. A morality tale for the rest of us. A warning” (184). Striking is that the first version of *Little Red Riding Hood* was also a morality tale that wanted to convey a warning to other women. By adapting the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* and showing the story of Mémé, the novel contradicts that it is the women’s fault if such a thing happens. The novel states that women should not remain in the safe boxes that the patriarchy has built for them, but fight for their femininity and safety.

3.5 Do not go into the woods

Little Red Riding Hood is a fairy tale in which the girl receives many warnings to avoid getting into bad situations. She should not stray from the path or speak with strangers. In *Red Hood,* girls get warned too. When Bisou passes by the location of Tucker’s body, the officers on site tell her that "it is not safe for a girl to be alone in the woods" and “You should stay on the street”(56). Later, another police officer says: “All right girls. Stay safe now. Don’t go into the woods” (254). Remarkably, both quotes specifically contain the word “girl” or “girls”. The forest is said to be a particularly dangerous place for girls. However, the roles are

reversed in this story. After these warnings, Bisou dutifully walks on, only to go deep into the forest every month and kill the wolves responsible for the violence. The grandmother and the girl are no longer the helpless female characters that experience dramatic events, but the hunters. They are the danger in the forest that the police are investigating and that everyone fears. There is thus a feminist role for the female characters who first played passive victims. At the same time it is emphasized that the morality of how women should behave is still deeply rooted within society, as the example of the exhibition of clothes from the previous section showed, also among the people who should fight against sexual violence, such as the police. *Red Hood* states that we need to look less at how women should behave and more at why some men become wolves. That way we can create a society that is safer for women. Because, Bisou argues, "Why should you be denied the pleasure of a solitary walk in the woods, just because you are a girl?" (56).

3.6 Generational differences and sisterhood: time for change

The novel makes clear that there is a difference in thinking about sexually transgressive behaviour in how it was handled in the past versus how it is handled more often now. The #MeToo movement can be an inspiration for this change. Three generations of women appear in the novel: Bisou, her mother, and her grandmother. Because the mother has passed away, she only appears in Bisou's thoughts and through the poems she has written. At the beginning of the novel, we already read the poems of the mother. Later Bisou reacts to her mother and the change in thinking becomes visible. When her mother hides with Bisou in Mémé's house after she has fled from her husband, Bisou's father, she writes this poem:

> people break things, my girl
> that is the truth
>
> promises
> hearts
> families
> bones
>
> not everything is broken

the velvet black sky
your steady, sleeping breaths
the path, thick with snow
my promise to you

but the dawn will break
your sleep will break
the path
the path
the path will break

i cannot stop the breaking (146).

In the poem, “people break things” refers to the father, who is violent, and has broken the things on the list below: “promises, hearts, families, bones”. Her mother briefly mentions the positive things by saying "not everything is broken", but at the end, she still ends with "i cannot stop the breaking". “Breaking” here refers to everything that the father destroys by his aggressive actions in their family. Bisou’s mother says she can not do anything to stop him. “People” in the first sentence refers to the father or to the men in general who act violently. The poem takes on a passive cast by not naming them explicitly. By using "people" the mother states that anyone can make mistakes. In doing so, she obscures the seriousness of the situation and avoids blaming the father, while it is very clear he is the one to blame. Bisou responds to this poem as follows:

Maybe people break things
Maybe that’s the truth

But they make things, too

Promises
Bread
Friendships
Families
Love

I can break things
I can make things, too.

I stand
On two strong legs
I kill
With two strong hands
I bleed
From one strong womb
I wish
With one red heart
That you could see me now (296-297).

Bisou responds to the poem by highlighting the positive elements. She says that people may break things, but they also make things like “Promises, Bread, Friendships, Families, Love”. She refers to Mémé, who makes bread herself, and to herself, as she makes friends with Maggie and Keisha. Her mother never knew her mother and therefore had a negative view of families. They just break. Because of her close relationship with Mémé, Bisou knows how much love there can be in a family and she tends to focus on that. She knows it is not the lack of family love, but the fact that men are violent towards women that causes things to break.

Her mother’s poem is passive with words: "i cannot stop the breaking", but also with punctuation. Her sentences do not start with a capital letter, but with a small letter, as if she were afraid to write them down. Bisou starts each sentence with a capital letter and says she is “strong”. She stands strong with two legs, she kills with two strong hands, and she bleeds from a strong womb as if to tell her mother that she was fine. Her mother says “i cannot stop the breaking” but Bisou wants to fight for this. Her ability as a hunter, her loving family relationship with Mémé, her friendship with Maggie and Keisha, and her confidence in herself and her femininity have given her the strength to fight against which her mother could not fight. Bisou wishes her mother could see her now because she stands up against sexual violence by men against women, and she thinks her mother would be proud of that.

In the fifth poem it is again apparent that the mother is afraid of the father and his violence:

> who’s afraid of the big bad wolf
> i am afraid
> of everything (327).

The phrase "who’s afraid of the big bad wolf" originally comes from a song, but here of course the mother refers to Bisou’s father, who became s a wolf through his domestic violence. Her mother is afraid of him, and because she feels so unsafe because of him, she is afraid of everything.

Bisou responds with:

> Who’s afraid of the big bad wolf?
> Not me,
> Fuck the wolf (327).

Bisou is not afraid of the wolf, which is synonymous with both her father and all other men who are sexually violent towards women. Her role as a hunter allows her to handle these wolves, and by saying “Fuck the wolf” it also appears that she is not only not afraid, but also wants to make a clear statement. She disapproves of this kind of violence and wants to fight against the fact that this kind of thing happens so much in society.

Besides the mother, Bisou’s grandmother, Mémé, also plays an important role. Bisou lives with her and has a loving relationship with her. Mémé has the same opinion as Bisou about sexually transgressive behaviour and, like Bisou, is a hunter. She therefore also campaigns against sexual violence. Mémé does state that a change is underway. For example, she says that today’s youth has the language to express themselves against these things: “When I was a girl,” Mémé says, “we didn’t have the language your generation has. In many ways, the world was a different place. In some ways, it’s the same as it’s always been. But you girls, you are changing it” (306). Due to the rise of the #MeToo movement, people have started to think about what is good and bad, where someone’s boundaries lie and how we can support each other in this. The influence of this is also reflected in Bisou’s upbringing. Like Little Red Riding Hood’s mother, Mémé wants Bisou to stay safe but does not do so by keeping her within certain paths. Unlike “stay on track”, she gives Bisou much more useful advice such as that Bisou should ask her if she needs anything to have safe sex, such as

condoms (109), or that Bisou is never obligated to have sex: “Also, my darling, you do know, don't you, that having sex in the past does not oblige you to have sex in the future. You never have to do anything you don’t want to do. You don’t owe James – or anyone – access to your body. Not now. Not ever” (110).

Bisou’s generation shows that the girls know how to distinguish right from wrong and therefore they are better able to act accordingly. When Maggie finds a used condom in her mailbox, Bisou tells her it is not her fault (294). Bisou also argues that we should not have “more hunters, but fewer wolves” (243). They know well what the problem is and therefore they can better support each other and fight against it. That way they are stronger together. Here we can read a form of sisterhood, in which the friends are all caring for each other and there is an inclusive atmosphere where everyone can participate. Maggie even calls it a “coven” with Mémé calling herself the “crone” (280). There is certainly a generational difference, but ultimately all generations want the same thing: that the forests and societies remain safe for women.

In *Red Hood*, we find the same changes regarding female characters as in *Foul is Fair*. Bisou and Mémé are not only Grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood, but also fulfil the role of hunter. They are in control and fight against sexual violence. The fairy tale elements and the metaphor for the wolf ensure that a universe is created that works like a mirror through which one can think about #MeToo-related elements such as consent and rape myths. Through language and poems, the change in thinking about sexual violence between generations becomes visible. Finally, Bisou, her friends and Mémé create a form of sisterhood that is characterized by diversity and accessibility. With this, they stand up for all women who have to deal with sexual violence.

4.1 The novels compared: adaptation, agency, and femininity

In the previous chapters, we have seen how the novels *Foul is Fair* and *Red Hood* correspond to the source texts of *Macbeth* and *Little Red Riding Hood*. For example, the titles refer to the stories, catchphrases have been taken over and the same characters appear in the adaptations. Most of the change in the adaptations has occurred in the female characters. These female characters have a more active role in the adaptations, have agency, and use their femininity as a strength, while in the old stories the female characters were often passive and their actions stemmed from male domination. For example, in Perrault's version, Little Red Riding Hood and Grandmother have to wait for a male hunter to rescue them from the Wolf's belly. And in *Macbeth* Lady Macbeth only takes an active and ambitious role to serve her husband and help him with his career.

In both *Red Hood* and *Foul is Fair,* these passive characters waiting for men to rescue them or serving men give way to active female characters with motives of their own. In *Red Hood,* Bisou takes matters into her own hands through her gift as a hunter and tracks down men who exhibit sexually violent behaviour. She does not have to wait for a male hunter to rescue her, because she is the hunter. Nor does she answer anyone with regards to hunting. The words of the police officers who ask her to stay out of the woods because "it is not safe for a girl to be alone in the woods" (56) even become somewhat ironic because the reader knows that Bisou need not be afraid in the woods. She is the one who kills the wolves and what the men should be afraid of. The naive little girl who must be rescued from *Little Red Riding Hood* is now taking care of herself.

Throughout *Macbeth,* male dominance plays a major role, since Lady Macbeth only steps up to help her husband. The reader does not find out what her ambitions are, nor how she feels about being a queen. Through servant Seyton, we finally hear that she has died: "The queen, my lord, is dead" (5.5.16). The active presence of Lady Macbeth at the beginning of the play has the purpose of steering the male protagonist in a certain direction in the narrative. *Foul is Fair* counters this idea by making Mack the supporting character. After killing several people, Jade, like Lady Macbeth, loses control and goes mad. But this time the story is told completely from her point of view.

Like Bisou, Jade does not wait for a man to rescue her. She refuses help from her parents. "Tell us what you need from us"(13) they say to her, to which she responds with "Let me handle it myself"(13). She also does not want to go to the police with her story and insists on taking action herself. Jade has a clear motive for murdering the high school students: they were all accomplices the night she was raped. Duncan, the boss of the group of friends and the

one who raped her, turns out to be someone who abuses and objectifies women. The fact that Jade is seen by the boys as an object that can be passed on is evident from sentences like: “I’ll take her when you’re done with her” (87). Duncan's “kingship” is at odds with King Duncan of *Macbeth*, who appears sympathetic and gives Macbeth and Lady Macbeth no reason to hate him. The witches, who seem to act out of nowhere in *Macbeth*, also get a motive in *Foul is Fair*. They are no longer metaphors of evil, but women helping another woman avenge the wrong done to her.

Another similarity between the two adaptations is that both Bisou and Jade use their femininity as strength, but each in their own way. In *Red Hood*, Bisou opposes the rules that women have to follow and goes into the forest to carry out her job as a hunter. When it is her time of the month, she gains some kind of supernatural power to feel and smell where victims of sexual assault are. At the beginning of the novel, there is still talk of menstrual shame and Bisou says things like “I’ve never had my period before. I am so, so sorry. It’s so gross, I don’t know what to say”(43), but she soon learns to appreciate her gift. Power is drawn from something that is enormously feminine so that femininity is framed as powerful and positive.

In *Foul is Fair*, showing and using different forms of femininity is used to achieve goals. Like Lady Macbeth, Jade transforms into something else so that she can achieve her goals within the patriarchal structure. The difference, however, is that she does not have to turn away from her femininity. She can use all the different forms of femininity. She manages to track down and kill the boys who raped her with the same ambition and violence as Lady Macbeth, but within the framework of strong femininity. Jade uses the male dominant view of various forms of femininity to her advantage. She turns into a form of femininity that suits her best at that moment. She plays the sweet girl for teachers, the “crazy bitch” for Duncan, and the temptress for Mack. This is all opposed to Lady Macbeth’s femininity, which she must suppress to take an active and ambitious role in helping her husband: “Come, you spirits/That tend on moral thoughts. Unsex me here” (1.5.38-39). In *Macbeth*, male traits are seen as the dominant and better traits with which you make ambitious and violent plans, but in *Foul is Fair* Jade and her coven make violent plans without having to suppress their femininity.

The difference between the two forms of femininity, is that Bisou uses her feminine power for a positive purpose: she protects other women from wolves who use sexual violence. Killing the wolves is still gruesome, but because she helps others, it is seen as a kind of heroic act. Jade uses her femininity to punish and kill all those who were complicit on the night she was raped. What has been done to her is horrible, but because Jade does not help others but uses her murder plans to avenge herself, this comes across as more horrific than the deeds

Bisou commits. *Red Hood* focuses on a safe society in general, while Jade is mainly concerned with her own trauma and avenging those perpetrators.

4.2 #MeToo and revenge narratives

Both novels can be seen as revenge narratives if we look at Maus' definition of revenge tragedy:

> Revenge tragedies feature someone who prosecutes a crime in a private capacity, taking matters into his own hands because the institutions by which criminals are made to pay for their offenses are either systematically defective or unable to cope with some particularly difficult situation. Such plays testify to an apparently ineradicable yearning for justice – a yearning that abides even, or especially, in the most unfairly victimized persons. But at the same time, they register a troubling discrepancy between the desire for equity and the means of fulfilling that desire (Maus ix).

Both Jade and Bisou take "matters into his [their] own hands" because punishing perpetrators of #MeToo is still very difficult. By using a revenge narrative, the perpetrators in these novels can be punished. After Jade is raped, she makes a plan to track down the perpetrators and make them pay for their actions. Bisou does this by tracking down and killing the men who have turned into wolves. Offenders get their punishment in both novels, but it proceeds in different ways. *Red Hood* uses a fairy tale element by turning men into wolves. It is very clear when a person has committed an evil deed because he changes form. That way Bisou can see this and punish him. In real-life #MeToo cases, it is of course much more difficult to see if and how much punishment someone deserves. Offenders do not turn into wolves and the boundaries of good or bad behaviour are much more blurred, making it difficult to bring someone to justice. The revenge in *Red Hood* takes the form of avenging the wolves who have sexually assaulted women or are about to do so. The punishment for the wolves is death. However, if they are not saved, the abused women also die. Death becomes a metaphor for the punishment of abuse and being abused. Because death is a common occurrence in *Little Red Riding Hood* and other fairy tales, it is not surprising in *Red Hood* that the punishment is death. The use of fairy tale elements and metaphors makes it clear that it all takes place in an alternate universe in which the reader sees death as a punishment for the wolf as justified.

In *Foul is Fair* this is different because the revenge revolves around avenging Jade

personally. Unlike in *Red Hood,* this is not about multiple victims, which means that the interface with society as a whole is missing. Killing the perpetrators stems from Jade's emotion and desire for action. After all, she hates being a passive victim and longs for control. In *Red Hood,* the opinion is that society as a whole should change, while that is less the case in *Foul is Fair*. At the end of *Foul is Fair*, there is a small indication that Jade may be criticizing the justice system when she thinks about Jenny's father, who is a lawyer and often gets murderers out: "I think of Jenny's father with his front-page headlines and his murderers who walk free" (323). Jenny tells Jade that she will be "his goddamn dream client" (323). By killing the boys, Jade does not have to wait for the – perhaps failing – legal system to get justice. The boys would then still have a chance to escape punishment, but now that they are dead, the punishment is immutable. Like Jade says: "What's done cannot be undone" (322), a variation on a quote from *Macbeth*: "What's done is done" (3.2.12). However, this is mainly about her own criminal process and her own future and less about how the perpetrators should be brought to justice.

It is obvious that Jade's parents are wealthy, as can be seen from several examples. Jade has a housekeeper (124), her father is a plastic surgeon (10) and she immediately asks for her lawyer when Mack and Jade are asked about the death of the classmate (252). This would allow them to help her with a lawsuit better than someone who is less privileged. Thus, the argument that Jade is taking revenge because society has not tried #MeToo cases well enough is weakened here by the fact that Jade is in a special position. Other victims of #MeToo wouldn't be able to kill their perpetrators and get away with it in court. Also, the fact that Jade says she's "the right girl" (315) for this may at first come across as an act of heroism, but again it has to do with her position. By saying how strong and wealthy she is, it becomes clear what opportunities others do not have. Much of the criticism of #MeToo revolves around the fact that these cases are still approached as very different. Less privileged people have fewer opportunities. Despite the horrific fact of what was done to her, as a wealthy girl with a lot of opportunities, Jade is privileged. The revenge narrative of *Foul is Fair* is therefore mainly based on the experience of Jade and her personal revenge, rather than focusing on combating sexual violence for all women across the globe, while *Red Hood* wants to speak out about various #MeToo cases and the entire sexual violence culture in society.

4.3 Behaviour of victims

The novels portray the role of a victim in different ways. In *Foul is Fair,* Jade firmly opposes the view that she is a passive victim. Almost immediately after the rape, she and her coven

decide to avenge the boys. When she is checked up in the hospital and the nurse calls her a "victim", she says she is more likely to call herself an "avenger" (Capin 16). In this way, she takes on the role of someone who takes action. She tells the sister not to call her a victim because "those boys didn't turn me into anything I wasn't before" (16). She also says she is "exactly the wrong way to be a victim (16)". Feeling powerless, Jade tries every possible way to regain control, such as manipulating the guys who did this to her and changing her appearance by dying her hair. She says this incident did not change her, but that is not true. She turns away from Elle because Elle is the one this has been done to and becoming Jade helps her deal with the situation better. Yet she is also increasingly realizing that the incident has affected her more than she originally thought. She has nightmares where she thinks Duncan is standing next to her bed and to feel safe she keeps a knife under her pillow (132). After she kills Piper in a rage, she says, "I've lost control. I've lost myself" (282). When she later looks in the mirror she says about herself: "She is weak. She's guilty" (289). Like Lady Macbeth, Jade is going mad. Just like Lady Macbeth – Jade tries to commit suicide, but she survives and wakes up in a hospital bed. The above examples show that the incident traumatized her enormously. It becomes clear that she cannot protect herself against the psychological effects the rape has on her.

Nevertheless, Jade turns away from the victim role, wants to appear strong, and will not let anyone help her. She calls the nurse at the hospital unkindly a "mouse": "They've sent an actual mouse to fix me" (15). She does not reach out to teachers at school and refuses help from her parents. This makes it seem like it is wrong to be a victim and to feel helpless, powerless, or passive after such an event, when it actually is very common to experience psychological problems after being raped. Many people might benefit from getting help. Jade might benefit from this too because she stubbornly insists that there is nothing wrong with her as she gets crazier and eventually can no longer deny that she is not doing well. Her behaviour makes the reader think about how victims should be behave, while there is not a right way to be a victim. The question of how a victim should behave should not be discussed. After all, victims of sexual violence are not to blame for what happened to them. Like *Red Hood* argues, the blame lies with the perpetrators. In *Red Hood*, the victims of sexual assault who are attacked by wolves behave in a passive way, but *Red Hood* does not promote the ideology that this is a bad thing. After all, the wolves are the ones who misbehave and their misbehaviour is what we need to focus on. Bisou states: "It's not that we need more hunters. It's that we need men to stop becoming wolves" (243).

It is also apparent from Mémé's stories, in which she tells various examples of women

who are attacked by wolves, that *Red Hood* focuses mainly on the perpetrators and less on how the victims should or should not behave. The society of these women in this story reacts to the incidents by looking at the behaviour of the women and what they were wearing. Mémé compares the women's cases with a case where the man is murdered and the society does not question his clothing or behaviour: "This time, no one asked about how Dennis shouldn't have been alone in the woods, no one reported having seen him drunk and disorderly in the days and weeks before his death. Everyone mourned" (193). By comparing these two, it becomes clear that if something happens to a woman, her clothing and behaviour are immediately looked while if the same thing happens to a man, nothing is sad about it. Women still have to abide by those moral rules as already described in *Little Red Riding Hood*, otherwise, they run the risk of being blamed for an event for which they should not bear any guilt at all. *Red Hood* thus conveys that it is not important how a victim behaves or looks in such an incident, because this is not what this is about, while in *Foul is Fair*, Jade is constantly very concerned with her appearance and how she should behave.

4.4 Language

Language plays a big part in both novels regarding the control and challenge of sexual violence against women by men. However, while *Red Hood* uses language as a form to fight against sexual violence in society, *Foul is Foul* fulfils a different function in this, where language strengthens the friendship between Jade and her coven but excludes the rest of the world. Jade uses mysterious and compelling phrases like "find him" (Capin 6), to which her coven responds in the same style: "Done. Before sunset" (10). This language is similar to the language spoken by the witches in *Macbeth* and aims to gain control over the boys that Jade and her coven want to take revenge on.

Because the language Jade speaks with her coven is so different from the language she speaks in other places, her coven is seen by the reader as an even closer group. This is not the case in *Red Hood*, where the friends talk to each other in normal language. Language is not a way to form an exclusive group, but something that is constantly changing. It is something you can understand the world with and thereby also change it: "When I was a girl," Mémé says, "we didn't have the language your generation has. In many ways, the world was a different place. In some ways, it's the same as its always been. But you girls, you are changing it" (306).

Another example of language in *Red Hood* that signals the change in thinking about the world and therefore #MeToo are the poems of the mother which Bisou rewrites. When her

mother writes “i am afraid” (327), Bisou writes “Not me” (327). And when her mother writes “I cannot stop the breaking” (146), Bisou paints a more positive picture of this: “I break things. I can make things, too” (296). In *Red Hood*, language shows how a change is taking place in thinking about sexual violence and how language can play a positive role in this, while Jade’s language aims to show how strong the friendship is between the girls of the coven.

Red Hood also inspires action. An example of this is the use of the form of address “you”. In *Red Hood*, the writing is based on the figural narrative situation (Klarer 26), focusing on the character of Bisou. However, the second-person narration “you” draws the reader directly into the story and makes it seem as if the story happens to the reader. The reader is Bisou and Little Red Riding Hood at the same time and experiences everything she also experiences. This ensures that action is encouraged. At the end of the novel, the narrative changes to a “we” and sentences are written like “We are the ones who fill his belly full of stones” (353). The "you" aims to provoke the reader to action one last time and to argue that this is not something that just happens to Bisou, but that we must tackle this together. Bisou fights against sexual violence and the reader is encouraged to participate.

This is not the case in *Foul is Fair*, where there is a first-person narrative situation (Klarer 26). As a reader, you feel for Jade because you experience everything she goes through, but at the same time, her thoughts frame her as someone you do not easily identify with because Jade very clearly cuts herself and her coven off from the rest of the world. Jade makes it clear that these four girls are above other people through phrases like "But nobody turns away girls like us" (2). Also, a sentence like “they picked the right girl” (213) causes Jade to frame herself as no ordinary girl who deserves to have revenge. Experiencing sexual violence has nothing to do with personality or wealth, therefore every woman should have justification. *Red Hood* acknowledges this and makes it clear by utilizing the “you” address and the narrative examples that this is a society-wide problem, that all woman can suffer from.

That *Red Hood* speaks not only for the women who are preyed upon in the novel but for all women who have ever encountered a "wolf", becomes clear in the beginning of the novel when Bisou says, “There’s a tree at your back. It rises behind you like all of history – your history, the history of girls in forests, the history of wolves and fangs and blood” (20). Sexual violence has been a problem for a long time and is as old as the fairy tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*. The adaptation of *Little Red Riding Hood* helps to show the breadth of the problem the novel aims to address. By connecting the "history of girls in the forest" with

"your history", *Red Hood* connects the problems Bisou faces and the problems others have faced in the past to the problems the reader might experience. This makes it clear that it is not just about the specific cases in the novel, but that *Red Hood* wants to speak up for all forms of sexual violence.

4.5 Sisterhood

Finally, the previously discussed use of language which can make a group more inclusive or exclusive matches the way sisterhood is represented in the novels. When we look at *Foul is Fair,* the coven consists of a group of friends who have been together since childhood and want to do everything for each other. Sentences like: “We never needed other friends. We never wanted other friends” (130) prove that the coven is not inclusive at all, while inclusiveness is seen as an important part of sisterhood. First of all, these girls have rich parents. After all, they all go to a rich school, have cars at their disposal, and their parents have good jobs. Although their parents do not appear much in the story, it is clear that their parents would do anything for them. They are very lucky to have this. Since they have formed a group from an early age, it seems impossible for outsiders to join this group. Because they are so strongly separated from others, an "us-them" relationship is formed with the rest of the world that affects them as a group. In *Red Hood,* the form of sisterhood described is much more inclusive. In the novel, Bisou forms a group of friends with Keisha and Maggie and develops an increasingly strong bond with these two girls. This was not the case in the beginning. This bond has grown as they have grown closer and have been able to accept and appreciate each other’s different characters. The fact that Mémé is effortlessly included in the group shows that different generations and ages are easily accepted into the group. Compared to the girl group in *Foul is Fair*, these girls are much more open to new people. The fact that they fight together to keep other women safe, is also a sign of this. Bisou aims to keep all women safe and possibly avenge them, while Jade and her coven are mainly looking for revenge for that one night when Jade was wronged.

In both the novels, the group of friends is compared to a coven of witches. In chapter 2 I wrote that witches used to be seen as the "outcast of society". In *Foul is Fair*, Jade and her friends call themselves a coven. They are an outcast of society but in a different way. They are different from the rest because they are wealthy and beautiful girls who grow stronger through friendships with each other and who like to exclude the outside world. The term witch takes on a completely different meaning with them. The coven becomes a kind of group full of popular, beautiful girls that you could never belong to, even if you wanted to. Their actions make them more of a kind of trickster or sirens, where the image of a witch as an

unwanted, ugly woman who does not belong in society is replaced by another image of a magical, perfect, female being.

In *Red Hood*, Maggie also refers to their group as a coven. Witches have come up before when Keisha told Bisou that witches used to be blamed for everything men did wrong. In this novel, the witch is therefore an outcast of society because men have made these women an outcast, and not because the women themselves wanted this. In *Red Hood*, the friends are a group of witches because they fight together against men who blame women for something, namely against men who blame women when they are assaulted or raped. For the girls in *Red Hood*, witches are therefore seen more as a form of a feminist hero who stands up for the rights and safety of women.

In the past, several people mentioned a disadvantage of sisterhood that as a group there was less individualism (Evans 112). This is the case in *Foul is Fair*. The reader knows nothing about Jade's friends. They are employed by Jade and Jade speaks highly of them and their personalities, but the reader sees no clear difference between the girls in the coven. They are stronger as a group than as individuals, which makes the girls in the coven flat characters. In *Red Hood*, the characters are round because they have each their own personality that works well in the group. Maggie is very cordial, while Keisha, for example, is very bold. So here we are dealing with different individuals working together in a group, instead of a group without clear individuals in it, as in *Foul is Fair*. By looking at how sisterhood is represented in the novels, we can therefore state that *Red Hood* represents a more inclusive form of sisterhood than *Foul is Fair*.

Conclusion

This thesis examined how the contemporary novels *Foul is Fair* by Hannah Capin and *Red Hood* by Elana K. Arnold address their source texts and how they engage with the #MeToo movement. This has been done through several elements that are key in both the #MeToo movement and the novels. During the analysis of the novels, in which a comparison between the modern novels and the source text was central, it appeared that there was a shift in roles, whereby there was more room for female characters such as Jade in the role of Lady Macbeth, her coven in the role of the witches from *Macbeth,* and Bisou and her grandmother as hunters in *Little Red Riding Hood.* These female characters were given more agency, had a clear motive from which they acted, and did not require male characters to help or save them, which stands in contrast to *Macbeth* and *Little Red Riding Hood*.

Second, there was a visible change in the view of femininity. In *Macbeth,* ambition is not a characteristic women can act upon, while Jade uses various forms of femininity to her advantage to achieve her goal. In *Red Hood,* Bisou gains the ability to hunt from her menstrual cycle. Her feminine body gives her that talent. In both novels, femininity is thus seen as something powerful.

Furthermore, both novels use a revenge narrative to convey the message that perpetrators of sexual violence should be punished. *Red Hood* uses the fairy tale atmosphere and the metaphor of the wolves to show that men commit an evil deed when they sexually assault women. Bisou and her grandmother hunt for evil. In *Foul is Fair*, it is more of a personal fantasy, or the fantasy of a mutual group of friends when Jade and her friends decide to track down Jade's rapists and kill them one by one. The revenge fantasy is inspired by the murderous acts of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. *Foul is Fair*, however, also takes the atmosphere of a select rich elite that *Macbeth* presents with his kings and generals. Jade and her friends are wealthy and do not allow anyone into their group of friends. Their act of revenge, therefore, seems more focused on personal reasons and focuses less on society as a whole. *Red Hood,* on the other hand, revolves around Bisou's story but by rescuing all the women who need help, Bisou becomes a hero fighting injustice. Because of this, *Red Hood* addresses society as a whole and incites change.

The representation of victimhood also contributes to this. *Red Hood* clearly states that victims are not to blame for events involving sexual violence and points the finger at the perpetrators. Their behaviour is what needs to change, not the victims. In *Foul is Fair*, Jade is very concerned with how she should behave and reacts against the passive role she would have as a victim. She prefers to think of herself as an avenger who needs absolutely no

outside help. This view of victimization can also be problematic, as victims of sexual assault can often benefit from help and should not care what type of victim they are, as their behaviour is not what we should be targeting. It is the behaviour of the perpetrators we should be focussing on.

The elements of language and sisterhood further substantiate the view that *Red Hood* is focused on changing society. The friends and grandmother speak to each other in normal language. By comparing her mother's poems with her vision, Bisou finds out that a generational difference is taking place. Her mother was not sure how to fight against sexual violence, while Bisou is more combative. However, she does not fight this battle alone, but with her friends and grandmother by her side. The coven in *Foul is Fair* uses the same mysterious mythological language as the witches in *Macbeth* speak, making the coven an inclusive group of friends in which almost no one else fits. This makes it clear that the narrative mainly revolves around them. They do not want to commit themselves to society as a whole, as Bisou in *Red Hood* does.

Foul is Fair therefore discusses the subject of sexual violence from an individualistic perspective by letting victim Jade tell her story from the first-person. Because *Foul is Fair* remains too close to the adaptation of *Macbeth,* by taking over the affluent and inclusive environment, a view on sexual violence in society as a whole is not taken into account. Nevertheless, the narrative makes it clear how much impact sexual violence can have on a person's mental state which can contribute to understanding the seriousness of these kind of events.

Red Hood wants to speak out about society as a whole and does so by covering various topics related to the #MeToo movement such as consent and rape myths. Because different examples are discussed in which sexual violence plays a role, it is becoming increasingly apparent how serious this problem is in our society. The novel tells about Bisou's life, but through the second-person narration "you", the novel involves the reader in the story. The form of sisterhood, in which diversity and accessibility are seen as important, also ensures that sexual violence can be fought together.

Overall, these novels demonstrate how widespread sexual violence is in our society and how it affects people. The novels also show how much impact a movement like #MeToo can have on current literature. Due to the major influence, it is important that research is expanded into this. By looking at literature or other art forms, we can learn more about our society and ultimately take action to make it the way we would like it to be.

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