CHAPTER 3:

FEARFUL BEASTIES

AND

MYSTERIOUS MAIDENS
Violence signifies the fact that the universe contains two radically different kinds of beings or substance-matters. The issues engaged in folk and fairy tales find resonance with the Freudian concepts of instincts, life and death instincts, and the structural theory of the mind propounded by Freud. Freud defined instincts variously but most cogently as “a concept that is on the frontier between the mental and somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demands made upon the mind for work in the consequence with its connections with the body.” Freud developed the theory of instincts in relation to the concept of libido and the consequent foundation of the psychosexual phases of development. However, violence as a component of the libidinal drives became increasingly important and could not be ignored. It was therefore elevated to the status of a separate instinct. It was further realized that humans were neither exclusively nor essentially good. Freud introduced his final theory of life and death instincts in 1920. Freud postulated that the death instinct is a dominant tendency of all organisms and their cells to return to a state of inanimativeness. The death instinct represented the aggressive or violent instincts and Freud later separated the libidinal and aggressive instincts from the ego and located them in a vital stratum of the mind which is independent of the ego. This line of thought led to the further differentiation of the psyche as per the “Structural Theory” into the id, ego, and superego. (Freud, 66)

The characters in folk and fairy tales manifest characteristics of the structural theory of the mind. Violent perpetrators would seem easily recognizable as the id, seeking instant
gratification, having an aggressive instinct, and having no moral or social mores that need be followed. They take pleasure in violence and similar to the death instinct ultimately may lead to their own destruction. Violence, in all its forms, sometimes drives characters to seek protection by transforming their appearances to defend themselves from its executors while at other times, it drives evil characters to assume disguises to revert to the role of a monster or a beast. This chapter shall dwell upon the various beastly characters and strange supernatural beings who are initially seen as fearsome or otherwise, mysterious, but may soon be revealed as bringers of fortunes. Their true selves are often hidden or disrupted by the dark exterior that they possess and it is usually by facing violent trials and tribulations, within a society that imposes its own idea of beauty and repulsiveness that they find their true selves. It shall also explore other characters who use either disguise or magic to alter themselves so as to fulfill their narcissistic desires which they could not attain otherwise. In folk and fairy tales, when a form is taken on involuntarily, the thematic effect is one of confinement and restraint; the person is bound to the new form. Voluntary forms, on the other hand, are means of escape and liberation; even when the form is not undertaken to effect a literal escape, the abilities specific to the form, or the disguise afforded by it, allow the character to act in a manner previously impossible. By far, the most common form of shape-shifting is the transformation of a human being into an animal (or conversely of an animal into human form). More rarely, the transformation may be into a plant or object, or into another human form (that is, fair to ugly, or vice versa).
Folk and fairy tales are replete with shapeshifting, matamorphosis and disguises. These core elements often serve to enthrall, entertain or intensify the plots of the tales. The richness of the visual elements and descriptions in the tales enhances the overall story arc and although the tales are meant to entertain the general population, there are certain areas that beg to be studied in depth. Magic will vanish with too much rationalisation, and folk and fairy tales derive their power from the enigma of enchantment and from the playful charm of the anthropomorphism.

The transformation of the characters in folk and fairy tales has been defined as:

- **Shapeshifting**, transformation, metamorphosis, transmogrification, morphing, or transmorphing... a change in the form or shape of a person, especially: a change from human form to animal form and vice versa; a change in appearance from one person to another "Shapeshifting" often refers to characters who change form on their own, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, and for a time; "metamorphosis", to permanent changes from any source, and any degree of willingness; "transformation", to externally imposed change of form. (Merlyn, 1)

Folk and fairy tales speak through beasts to explore common experiences – fear of sexual intimacy, terror and violence and injustice as well as struggles for survival. Marina Warner comments:
A tradition of articulate, anthropomorphised creatures of every kind is as old as literature itself: animal fables and beast fairytales are found in ancient Egypt and Greece and India, and the legendary Aesop of the classics has his storytelling counterparts all over the world, who use crows and ants, lions and monkeys, ravens and donkeys to satirise the follies and vices of human beings and display along the way the effervescent cunning and high spirits of the fairytale genre.

(Warner, 43)

These beasties often take the form of animals that would pose a real threat – wolves, tigers, bears and warthogs. But they can also assume a more domestic, less terrifying animal appearance – a ram, a frog, a bird, a hedgehog. There are also instances of characters taking the form of beasts who are indescribable or they may even be ogres and other supernatural beings. In every case, the outer form conceals the inner man, and very often, striking circumstances overturn the beast's fate and restore him or her to his or her proper identity. Beastly folk and fairytales like these follow a narrative arc: the story begins with a spell or a curse that binds the hero or heroine under a terrible disguise, and after a passage of ordeals and horrors, closes with recognition and fulfillment. Sometimes the plot follows emotional or psychological logic, but not always; a great deal of the impact of this literature depends on the stark absence of explanation, on the sheer mysteriousness of the premises and outcome. At other times, the stories have beasts and
mysterious maidens who are simply antagonistic from beginnings to ends and may function as the instigators of all misfortunes in the tales.¹ Beasts may also often be depicted as adversaries, wicked witches or stepparents who thwart the lives of the protagonists. In folk and fairy tales, metamorphosis has the old meaning of magical and radical change experienced by the subject, who may well have initiated as well as lived through the process. The keys to such transformation are reversibility and repeatability or irreversible unless a spell is lifted by magic. This transformation implies and emphasizes an external agent of change and may also concern changes in the nature of inanimate material. Thus, in folk and fairy tales, metamorphosis tends not to be arbitrary. Often it reveals the real nature of the subject and does not happen by accident for it comes from the nature of the subject. At other times, it occurs due to a curse inflicted upon a character. An abhorred metamorphosis is likely to have generated the story and resolve the story itself through a recognition of the true identity of the protagonist.

In many folk and fairy tales, transformation from human to other animate and inanimate objects occur when a magical chase is involved. A magical chase occurs where the pursued endlessly takes on forms in an effort to shake off the pursuer, and the pursuer answers with other shape-shifting, as, a water nixie is countered by a human couple by turning into a toad and a frog and an evil stepmother is escaped by her stepchildren only by turning into a duck and a pond. The pursued may finally succeed in escaping or the pursuer may succeed in capturing. This
aspect is evident in the Grimms’ “The Nixie in the Pond”, (Grimm 181) when a young wife is separated from her husband who has been captured by a water nixie. She desperately searches high and low for him and finally stumbles upon an old woman on a mountain who tells her the fate of her husband. It is from this moment that one witnesses the power of transformation through magic. Metamorphosis is a magic and radical change in shape experienced, normally through an act of will by its subject. When some external agent of change is involved, this transformation is a preferred choice for the character who changes. Magical items often serve as powerful tools to rescue helpless victims who are trapped in evil spells. In this tale, the woman gives her a golden comb and instructs her to comb her hair by the pond whilst thinking of her husband and then when finished, to lay the golden comb upon the sand. As the nixie steals the comb her husband's head emerges from the millpond. The man's wife returns to the old woman of the mountain who gifts her with a golden flute, bidding her to play and to do the same with the golden flute as she has done with the golden comb. The woman returns to the millpond and does so as she is bidden, to play whilst thinking of her husband. Leaving the flute on the sand upon finishing the golden song of her heart, the nixie loots a second time. As the flute submerges, half her husband's body emerges. The third time, she receives a golden spinning wheel from the old woman; upon the nixie's procuring of the spinning wheel of gold, her husband emerges completely from the millpond, and he steals his wife's hand with view for escape, to get far away
from the millpond. Tempestuous, the nixie tries to drown them, but the man's wife calls upon the old woman of the mountain, who turns her into a toad and him into a frog.

Then, in her fear, the wife called out to the old woman to help them, and at that very moment they were transformed; she into a toad, he into a frog. When the flood swept over them, it could not kill them... (Zipes, The Complete Fairy Tales, 530)

The ensuing flood of the nixie's wrath sunders them. They regain their human forms on dry land, However, the flood has separated them far apart and only in the end, they could be reunited. Transformation, for the couple, is a mechanism that strengthens their bond. As mere mortals, they are vulnerable and weak against the powerful and wily nixie who commands the millpond. However, when the old woman turns them both into a toad and a frog, the water nixie is no longer a threat for they can survive the flood that engulfs them and also escape the very water that imprisons them. While they would have been separated or even drowned as defenseless humans, with the aid of magical alteration they could evade death and continue to live “happily ever after”, thus sealing their undying union.

In “Sweetheart Roland” (Grimm 56), a girl gets her stepsister killed by switching places at night, when she learns that her evil stepmother connives to kill her after they are asleep. This tale reveals yet another effective magical transformation whereby the girl and her lover escape
the wrath of the evil stepmother only by changing themselves into a duck and a pond respectively. They must assume disguises in the form of both animate and inanimate objects thus, turning into entirely different entities. Very often, the characters such as these lovers, must change shapes at the cost of losing their own selves in an effort to be free from the clutches of their adversaries. The girl in the tale, has to resort to being a duck and her lover, Roland, to being a lake, using the magic silver wand they had stolen from the witch, her stepmother:

When the maiden saw the old woman coming, she used the magic wand to turn her sweetheart Roland into a lake and herself into a duck that swam in the middle of the lake. (Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, 197)

The witch is powerless to lure the duck towards her, and has to return home that night. Often, turning into other beings or objects gives control to the characters who otherwise would be incapable. When, the next day, the witch catches them again, she turns Roland into a fiddler and herself into a flower in a brier-hedge.

Meanwhile the maiden and her sweetheart resumed their natural forms...Then the maiden changed herself into a beautiful flower growing in the middle of the brier hedge, and her sweetheart was changed into a fiddler.197
The witch asks permission to pick the flower, and gets it, but when she crawls into the hedge, Roland plays his fiddle, which forces her to dance until the thorns tears her to death. Punishment and retribution could be executed only because the lovers have turned into entities unachievable when they were humans. Roland goes to his father to arrange for the wedding, and the girl remains as a red boundary-stone. Unfortunately, a wicked woman who has been attracted to Roland intervenes with magic and makes Roland forget his lover. Saddened, the girl turns herself into a flower, thinking that someone would trample her. The emotional upheaval and extreme sorrow of the girl is expressed by her wish to be trampled to death. Also, her capitulation as a flower accentuates the core issue of all folk and fairy tales- that magic prevails in the world of folk and fairy tales and emotions and lives are interconnected with the mysterious.\(^3\) Fortunately, a shepherd picks the girl who has turned into a flower lying on the ground and takes her home. He finds that whenever he leaves, all the housework would be done in his absence. At the advice of a wise woman, he throws a white cloth when he sees something move in the morning, and this reveals the girl.

In the wink of an eye, he ran over and threw the white cloth over the flower, and suddenly the transformation came to an end: a beautiful maiden stood before him, and she confessed that she had been the flower and had kept house for him.

*(Zipes, The Complete Fairy Tales, 198)*
She agrees to keep house for him. The consecutive transformations into animals and flowers and the relentless quests of the lovers prove fruitful when they are reunited in the end. At Roland's wedding, all the girls attending the wedding starts to sing, as is the custom, and Roland recognizes his true love and marries her instead of his new bride.

Another such instance can be seen in the Grimm’s “Foundling” (Grimm 51). A forester finds a baby in a bird's nest and brings him back to be raised with his daughter Lena. They call the child Foundling, and he and Lena love each other. One day Lena sees the cook carrying many buckets of water to the house and asks what she is doing. The cook tells her that the next day, she would boil Foundling in it. Lena goes and tell Foundling, and they flee. The cook, afraid of what the forester would say about his lost daughter, send servants after them. Foundling turns into a rosebush while Lena becomes a rose that blooms on it. The servants fail to recognize this transformation and they go back empty-handed. Like Roland’s lover, Lena and Foundling must resort to becoming flowers in order to evade their pursuers. When the pursuers tell the cook they had seen nothing but the rosebush and the rose, she chides them for not bringing back the rose. They go in search again, and Foundling turns into a church, and Lena, a chandelier in it. Such an instance denotes that in folk and fairy tales, mysteries and magic have been accepted as normal and what may not be condoned or unattainable in reality is feasible. When the pursuers fail to return them, the cook sets out herself and as such, Foundling turns into a pond and Lena a duck
in it. The cook kneels down to drink up the pool, but Lena catches her head and draws her into the pond to drown. In the end, the children goes safely home again.

When the cook arrived and saw the pond, she lay down beside it and began to drink it up. However, the duck quickly swam over, grabbed her head in its beak and dragged her into the water. The old witch was drowned, and the children went home together. (Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, 177)

As frail children, they stand no chance against the larger and stronger cook but with the aid of magic and wit, they could easily triumph over their superiors.

A similar Mizo tale called “Rahtea” (Tribal Research Institute, 25) describes the plight of a young boy, Rahtea, who turns into a cicada to escape being tortured to death by his stepmother and father. Mizo tales have abundant elements of magical chase where the pursued would transform magically in order to escape the pursuer. The subjugated characters such as orphans, wives and servants are often aided by magic to evade the wrath of the exploiter. The strong didactic bent in these tales often work in favour of the persecuted and magic is employed to exult these good characters as against the evil ones who, in opposite effect, suffer dreadful consequences. “Rahtea” begins with a young boy who is denied proper clothing and food by his stepmother. In an attempt to permanently remove Rahte from their lives, the cruel stepmother pretends to be critically ill and pleads with her husband to sacrifice their son as offerings to
appease the causes. When Rahtea overhears this conversation, he is mortified and he runs away from home. Despite numerous pleas from his family, such as his elder brother, his grandmother and his own father, Rahtea refuses to return home. Their appeal goes thus:

Rahte, Rahte, lo hawng rawh,

I nu’n khuang a chawi dawn e,

I pa’n khuang a chawi dawn e,

Rahte, Rahte, lo hawng rawh.” (Tribal Research Institute, 130)

(“Rahte, Rahte, come home,

Your mother’s hosting a feast

Your father’s hosting a feast,

Rahte, Rahte, come home”)

But, Rahtea holds steadfast to the Thingsir tree whose nectar he has been feeding on:

“Ka thin, ka lung in ei ai chuan,

Thingsiri par ka tlan e,

Ka puar e, ka fan e” (Tribal Research Institute, 130)
(Rather than you eat my lungs and liver,

On the *Thingsiri* flowers, I shall feed

Full and filled, I am”)

He knows well that he is not wanted at home and because he knows they would relentlessly pursue him, he turns into a cicada in the end and flies away while claiming:

“Ka nu mi ngai manang che,

Keiin ka ngai manang che- reng” (Tribal Research Institute, 131)

(Mother, do not pine for me

As neither do I, for you”)

With these words, he turns into a cicada and flies away, never to be abused. In the world of magic, even orphans seek and find freedom through endless means including, growing wings to fly away. In all such tales, nature works in accordance with the elements of the fantastic to accommodate the persecuted and the disadvantaged- tragic lovers, orphans, subservient men, women and children. As Rutkoski opines:

Nature merely needs to make its own inevitable metamorphoses (the ravages of time and the elements and predation) collude with or offset our inner
metamorphoses. Here the changeableness of the world provides a ready vehicle for the externalization of our own desire and its destabilizing effects. In this fantasy, the game once again played against nature’s transformative clock now incorporates it (Rutkoski, 2).

“Tualvungi and Zawlpala” (Zama)\(^7\) depicts the tragic story of two lovers who are determined never to part even after death and like the tale of Rahtea, magic turns their tragedy to a happy ending. The lovers turn into butterflies and thus, the mysterious incident (the transforming action to butterflies) in the tale is what enables them in the end despite the antagonist’s advances. Tualvungi is a woman of exceeding beauty who falls in love with the equally handsome Zawlpala. The two eventually marry and live very happily together. However, tragedy befalls upon them soon after Tualvungi is courted by Phuntiha, the Raja of Tripura.

He was named Phuntiha by his subjects, a very apt name really since it meant that no one dared to complain in his presence. He was of a tyrannical disposition, always wanting to possess the best of everything. It was no wonder then, that when he heard of Tualvungi’s great beauty, he at once set off to visit her village with the intention of marrying her should her beauty please him. (Zama)

When Phuntiha inquires about her, Zawlpala reluctantly tells a lie and denotes that she is his sister because he knows Phuntiha would kill him if he reveals that he is her husband. One
immediately witnesses the failing and timidity of Zawlpala who is unable to protect even his own wife. Phuntiha at once offers to pay the bride price for Tualvungi to which Zawlpala deliberately demands a stupendous sum hoping he would not be able to meet such huge demands. But Phuntiha achieves the impossible and carries away Zawlpala’s beloved to his lands. Many years later, Tualvungi hears the news that Zawlpala has died. Despite obstacles laid out by Phuntiha, Tualvungi goes at once to the grave, digs it again and jumps into it and persuades an old woman to kill her. Not to be outdone by the lovers, Phuntiha chases after his wife and convinces the woman to kill him, perhaps in the hopes of catching his wife even after death. Gallagher claims that metamorphosis or transformation enable characters to perform or become what would otherwise be impossible:

Metamorphosis, a concept so prevalent in ancient writings….was a particularly advantageous device to conjure up magical situations in Marchen(fairy tales). A crucial aspect of the device of using metamorphosis is that it transports the reader to a supernatural romantic fairy-tale world where the ordinary laws of realism no longer operate. (Gallagher, 27)

As humans, the greatest power the lovers can exert is to die together but enchantment works in their favour after death. They turn into two beautiful butterflies and although the persistent
Phuntiha also turns into a black, repulsive butterfly, he could not turn into the same type and he pursues yet relentless, forever powerless to catch up with the two identical butterflies.

But the spirits of Zawlpala and Tualvungi, determined never more to be parted by Phuntiha, flew out of the grave together in form of beautiful butterflies. The persistent Phuntiha flew out after them, and this is why today, a butterfly couple flying together are always followed by the third behind them - never quite catching up. (Zama)

The tale of “Lasiri and Lasara”/ “Two Sky Women and Two Earth Men” (Jacob) is yet another interesting story that depicts two young sky women who have fallen in love with two men from earth. The very fact that celestial beings and mortal men mingle and interact already points towards a fantastical and mysterious story. To heighten the appeal, the events that follow, with the transformations and strange occurring, make the tale even more interesting. Every night they rejoice at the sisters’ polished bamboo floors in the sky. But this is thwarted by the ugly and jealous Bakvawmtepu who wants the sisters for himself. As such, one night he goes up pretending to be the brothers but the sisters, through, cunning and wit are able to push him back to earth through a hole by asking him to shift many times claiming that they do not have enough space to sleep. When the actual brothers call out to the sisters, they are suspicious lest they be Bakvawmtepu again. Offended by the rejection, the brothers resolve never to return even as the
sisters hastily chase after them on realizing their mistakes. But whenever the sisters are about to catch up with them, the pride of the brothers which has been bruised comes into play. Therefore, they would decide to transform themselves into something else leaving the sisters to figure out the clues. The first time, they change themselves into hair-combs.

“Let’s disguise ourselves,” said Thangsira. “How?”

“Let’s turn into hair-combs. If they pick us, we will be re-united with them. If not…”

So the two brothers bent down and hid themselves, and turned into hair-combs and lay on the path. (Jacob)

When the sisters refuse to pick them up, they again change into glass bangles hoping to be picked up by the sisters. The sisters, in their haste to catch up with the brothers, ignore them and the third time, they transform themselves into a river and a bridge. Lasari could easily cross the bridge but the bridge creaks and sways every time Lasiri steps onto the bridge. Lasari, therefore, decides to carry her across but the bridge breaks and they drown. The two brothers, miserable and pining after the sisters, transform themselves into Fartua and Vaube trees respectively and agree to bloom together every year.
Thangzaia said,

You turn into Fartuah tree,

I’ll turn into Vaube tree,

And let’s bloom together every year. (Jacob)

It can be noted that in the tales that involve a pair, the transformation usually pair two characters into two particularly complementary forms as has been denoted in “Lasiri and Lasara”. These forms accentuate the acute connections between them, who love each other deeply. This means of transformation suggests that they are part of a coherent whole and that they lack wholeness when they are not together.

In many instances, folk and fairy tales also deal with transformations with a more negative spin to it. Violence is often inflicted in order to redeem a character from a spell-bound state to a normal condition. Gallagher remarks:

In the topos of the fairy tale, the metamorphosis further marks the boundaries between good and evil in the example of the evil witch, who malevolently transforms a male hero into an animal. The spell is broken so that the animal can return to normal human form either by the affiliated human being or a relative carrying out the decreed task…(Gallagher, 29)
The well known tale of “The Frog Prince” (Grimm 1) is one example, wherein a royal prince is cursed by a witch into the form of a frog, and can only be returned to his human shape with a maiden’s violent infliction. He is violently thrown against a wall when he angers the princess who despises his repulsive, cold form and immediately, the curse is lifted.

Soon after she had got into bed, he came crawling over to her and said, “I am tired and want to sleep as much as you do. Lift me up, or I’ll tell your father!” This made the princess extremely angry and after she picked him up, she threw him against the wall with all her might. “Now you can have your rest, you nasty frog!” However, when he fell to the ground, he was no longer a frog but a prince with kind and beautiful eyes. (Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, 4)

Two other stories, “Brother and Sister”(Grimm 11) and “The Seven Ravens,”(Grimm 25) use transformation as punishment. In the former, the obstinate brother is turned into a deer when he drinks from an enchanted pool, despite his sister’s warnings. Tired of the cruel mistreatment they endure from their wicked stepmother, who is also a witch, a brother and sister run away from home one day. Their cruel stepmother has bewitched all the water on their way. When they come upon a well, the sister hears a sound that says "Whoever drinks of me will become a tiger."( Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales*,38) Desperately, the sister begs her brother not to drink from the well, lest he transform into a wild animal and tear her to pieces. So they go back on
their way, but when they come to the second spring the sister heard it say, "Whoever drinks of me will become a wolf." (Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, 38) Again, the sister desperately tries to prevent her brother from drinking. Reluctantly, he eventually agrees to his sister's pleas but insists he would drink at the next spring they encounter. And so they arrive at the third spring, and his sister overhears the rushing water cry, "Whoever drinks of me will become a deer." (Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, 39) Unfortunately, she can no longer refrain him from doing it because the brother has already drunk from the water, and changes into a deer.

“The Seven Ravens” (Grimm 25) is the tale of seven brothers who, after failing the simple task of retrieving baptismal water for their younger sister, were turned into ravens with a careless word from their father. In both stories, the victims of the transformation are eventually returned to their human forms, after a specific task is performed. The former necessitates the burning of a witch while the latter indicates sacrifices made by the only sister of the seven brothers. This is what Marie-Louise von Franz calls “compensatory tendencies” which demands that compensatory tasks be performed in order to restore things to normal and she claims “Such compensatory tendencies are to be found in fairy tales everywhere” (Franz, *Shadow and Evil in Fairy Tales*, 147). In “Brother and Sister” (Grimm 11), as the initial feeling of despair cleared up, the brother and sister decide to stay and live in the woods forever. When a king decides to marry the sister, a wicked witch intervenes, killing the sister and replacing her with her own
daughter. Thus, both the brother and the sister suffer tragic transformations and are pulled apart. When the king realizes the truth, on catching the sister’s ghost, the two wrongdoers are duly punished. The witch’s daughter is banished while the witch herself is burned alive. As soon as the witch is burned to ashes, the curse on the brother is lifted and he receives his human form again. Thus, sacrifices and punishment must be meted out in order to restore the harmony that the witch and her daughter have disrupted.

The daughter was taken into the forest, where wild beasts tore her to pieces, while the witch was thrown into a fire and miserably burned to death. When there was nothing left of her but ashes, the fawn was transformed and regained his human form. (Zipes, The Complete Fairy Tales, 42)

In “The Seven Ravens” (Grimm 25), when the brothers fail to return with the water as requested by their father, their father curses them and so they turn into ravens. When their youngest sister is grown, she sets out in search of her brothers. She attempts to get help first from the sun, which is too hot, then the moon, which craves human flesh, and then the morning star. The star helps her by giving her a chicken bone and tells her she will need it to save her brothers. She finds them on the Glass Mountain. But having lost the bone, she chops off a finger to use as a key thereby sacrificing herself for their wellbeing and rescues them. Adam Gidwitz claims that this story denotes the necessity of shedding blood sometimes for the welfare of others:
But what this solution does is that it takes all the guilt this girl was feeling—about the transformation of her brothers, about the lost chicken bone—into blood. It turns emotional pain into physical pain. (Gidwitz, 57)

Many transformations involve a change of shape in order to obtain new abilities which would be unattainable in their initial form. A young character may learn of his or her shape-shifting abilities, and exploring them becomes part of a development or progress for them. Some are able to change form only if they have some item, usually an article of clothing. Most of these are innocuous creatures—even if they are werewolves or tiger-person. In the Mizo tale “Chawngvungi and Sawngkhara” (Dahrawka, II.5)\(^\text{10}\), Sawngkhara endlessly pursues Chawngvungi for his bride. But the unfortunate, ugly appearance of Sawngkhara does not appeal to Chawngvungi and she determinedly ignores him. Sawngkhara has to resort to magic and transform into a bird and also has to use a certain love potion in order to woo Chawngvungi who otherwise would have never paid attention to her. Desperate to woo her, he resorts to a love potion and applies it on her wrist band. From that day, Chawngvungi becomes so obsessed with him that she could no longer do her chores. But her mother could not accept this change of heart and Sawngkhara is not allowed to enter their house in order to court her. Sawngkhara then turns himself into a bird and perches on a tree near Chawngvungi’s jhum; he sings calling out her name for three days. Still, her mother would not relent. Tired of waiting, he administers the love
potion on the broom that Chawngvungi’s mother has been using and finally, she also becomes infatuated with him and welcomes him into the house. In his case, his transformation into a bird becomes a tool for drawing Chawngvungi’s attention. The bird’s melodious voice touches Chawngvungi’s heart and she could not ignore it:

A tukah chuan Chawngvungi leh a nu chu lovah an feh ta a. Sawngkhara chu savate-ah a chang a, an fehna vauah chuan a lo hram a, “Chawngler, Chawngler” a va ti a. Chu chu Chawngvungi chuan a nu hnenah chuan-

Ka nu kan vauah sava te chuan

‘Chawngler, Chawngler’ a ti e;

Haw rawh, i haw then ang ka nu,“ a ti a. (Dahrawka, 139).

(The following day, Chawngvungi and her mother went to their jhum to farm. There Sawngkhara had turned himself into a little bird and sang “Chawngler, Chawngler” from across the field. When she heard this Chawngvungi said,

“Mother, even the little bird across the field is singing

‘Chawngler,Chawngler’

Come, mother, let us go home.” )
Thus, the magical transformation proves fruitful for Sawngkhara and this ability helps him win a wife for himself.

The Grimms’ “Fitcher’s Bird” (Grimm 46) relates the story of a sorcerer who assumes the guise of a poor man to “go begging from house to house to catch beautiful girls. No one knew where he took them, since none of the girls ever returned.” (Zipes, The Complete Fairy Tales, 155) He appears at the doorstep of a kind man in the guise of a poor beggar and using his magic, he draws the eldest of his three daughters into his basket and takes her home as his wife. His ability to disguise himself through magic helps him several times to gain for himself wife after wife who always suffer the same tragic fate of being chopped to pieces after a show of slight disobedience.

In some cases, a man steals the article and forces the shape-shifter, trapped in human form, to become his bride. This lasts until she discovers where he has hidden the article, and she can flee. The Mizo tale, “Sichangneii” (Dahrawka, I.6) is a brilliant portrayal of such a case. A man traps a lovely swan maiden named Sichangneii who comes from the sky. She and her sister would come every dusk to bathe in a small pond that is owned by the man. When he notices that the water has been dirtied whenever he comes to it in the morning, he decides to catch the culprit. He catches Sichangneii and chops off all her feathers. He imprisons her as his wife and
she bears him seven sons. Eventually, Sichangneii discovers her feathers through her youngest son and escapes:

Tlumtea chuan, “Ka nu, Ka pain min awm ni chuan englo chang kan tawn a, kan lam siau siau va, kan hlim viau thin asin,” a ti ta a. (Dahrawka, 77)

(Tlumtea confessed, “Mother, when father is around, he made us play with feathers and this made us all very happy.”)

The elder sons are desperate to hold on to their mother but the innocent, goodhearted, Tlumtea again suggests that she looks stunningly beautiful. Perched on the window sill, she asks:

“My sons, am I beautiful?”, she asked. The boys replied, “Not at all, mother, you look disgraceful. Come back home lest people see you. But Tlumtea said, “No, Mother, you look lovely.”…and she flew, away from that place and her children, up towards the sky.)
The family suffers a number of ordeals and trauma after their mother has left. Their father kills himself in distress because he misses her terribly and wishes her to return home. The orphaned sons roam about, helpless, poor and homeless until finally, Sichangneii takes them back under her wing. Barbara Fass Leavy has argued that a woman as a “swan maiden” symbolizes a subdued female:

In most cultures, woman was a symbolic outsider, was the other, and marriage demanded an intimate involvement in a world never quite her own. (Leavy, 2)

Some transformations are performed in order to remove the victims from their position, so that the transformer can usurp it. “In Brother and Sister” (Grimm 11), when two children flee their cruel stepmother, she enchants the streams along the way to transform them. While the brother refrains from the first two, which threatens to turn them into tigers and wolves, he becomes uncontrollably thirsty at the third, which turns him into a deer. In “The Frog King” (Grimm 1), a young prince is transformed into an ugly frog by a witch and he loses his kingdom only to regain it back when the spell on him is broken by the princess. “The Raven” (Grimm 93) depicts the story of an impatient queen who wishes that her infant child would turn into a raven and in turn, she could have some peace and quiet. Her wish is instantly fulfilled and the transformed child flies away into the forest.
Once upon a time there was a queen who had a daughter that was still so little she had to be carried in her mother’s arms. One day the child was very naughty, and no matter what the mother said, she would not keep quiet. (Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, 315)

The wish is blurted out by the selfish queen against her own flesh and blood who displays tantrums as is typical of a child. The selfish queen wants a space on her own and this desire culminates in her extensive wish to do away with her own daughter.

She opened the window and said, “I wish you were a raven and fly away! Then I’d have my peace and quiet.” No sooner had she said those words than the child was changed into a raven and flew from her arms out through the window. (Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, 315)

The six swans who have previously been princes are also transformed by their stepmother in the “The Six Swans” (Grimm 49) The tale is about a king who has seven children (six sons and a daughter) and when he remarries, he has them kept in the forest so no one can find them for fear that the new queen would resent them. When the queen finds out she is filled with rage. So she sews shirts that are magical so that whoever wears them would turn into swans. The queen traces the children and puts the shirts on them, and instantly the six brothers are all transformed into swans.
She threw a shirt over each one of them, and as soon as they were touched by the shirts, they were turned into swans and flew away over the forest. The queen went home, delighted with herself, thinking that she was rid of her stepchildren. (Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, 169)

The most pertinent and most instructing issue in relation to transformation in folk and fairy tales is perhaps the numerous instances of marriage between humans and animals and these relationships are not generally portrayed as wicked or immoral. What makes these tales attractive is the manner in which this marriage between animals and human is deeply entrenched in the myth of romantic love even as its representational energy is channeled into the tense moral, economic and emotional negotiations that complicate courtship rituals. Marriage tales are often completed with happy endings in which the animal magically transforms into a desirable human being, often of high status. In other cases, they are sometimes moralistic, ending with the destruction of the animal lover or the desertion of the human partner. There are some tales of animal paramours who become conventional human mates and numerous accounts of supernatural brides who when they recover the means of freedom, leave their mortal partners. Although there are variations in animal-bride stories, there is a basic plot. Generally an animal takes on the form of a woman and marries her lover who is an ordinary human. The couple lives together for a while and children are born. But eventually the husband commits an error or violates some prohibition, causing the wife to revert to her animal form and leave him, taking the
children with her. In many versions, the animal first becomes a woman by casting off her pelt and she must regain that pelt in order to turn into an animal again. In some of the tales of human-animal marriage, the roles are reversed: the animal is the groom and the woman is the bride. Even when such marriages are doomed to failure, often a gift is left behind in the form of children, wealth, good fortune, or the acquisition of magical skills (such as the ability to find fish or game in plentiful supply). Such wished-for children may become monstrous brides or bridegrooms. Other such characters have no explanation for their forms, because their tales focus on the person who must marry them.

In certain cases, the hero or heroine must marry, as promised, and the monstrous form is removed by the wedding. Animal-bridegroom tales often focus and represent explorations of the transforming effects of sexual and romantic love, along with its dangers. “The Frog King” (Grimm 1) relates the tale of a princess who has been forced to entertain a frog because of a promise made and who ultimately accepts him when he turns into a handsome prince. When a young princess accidentally drops her golden ball in a well, she is distressed but a frog, who is actually a prince cursed by a witch, comes to her rescue. This frog promises to retrieve her ball in exchange for her companionship back as the palace. She agrees but runs away as soon as she gets her ball back. When the frog comes knocking at the palace door to settle the promises, the king orders the princess to carry out the promise.
Then the king said, “If you’ve made a promise, you must keep it. Go and let him in.” (Zipes, The Complete Fairy Tales, 3)

The princess detests the ugly frog who insists that he dines with her, shares her plate, sits with her and even beds with her. It frightens her because this hideous frog continues to shamelessly disrupt her space, especially the sanctity of her royal bed.

The princess began to cry because the cold frog frightened her. She did not even have enough courage to touch him, and yet, now she was supposed to let him sleep in her beautiful, clean bed. (Zipes, The Complete Fairy Tales, 4)

But the king adamantly refuses to comply with her tearful retorts, firmly resolving to force her daughter carry out the promises made.

But the king gave her an angry look and said, “It’s not proper to scorn someone who helped you when you were in trouble.” So she picked up the frog with her two fingers, carried him upstairs, and set him down in the corner. Soon after she had got into bed, he came crawling over to her... (Zipes, The Complete Fairy Tales, 4)

The curse on the prince is lifted when the princess hurled the frog against the wall in a fit of extreme anger and impatience. This can be interpreted as a coming of age moment where the
initial repulsion, apprehension and fear of physical contact with a male is conquered, sometimes with acts involving violent retorts on the part of the female. In keeping with her father’s wishes, she marries the prince and they ride off to his kingdom. Interestingly, the beautiful princess who reacts with aversion, loathing or anger to the beastly exterior of her prospective spouse seems no less likely to effect a magical transformation than her tenderly and affectionate counterpart. Despite her father’s admonition, this princess balks at the idea of letting the frog into her bed and reveals a princess who is perfectly capable of committing acts rivaling the coldblooded violence of dashing a creature against the wall. The frog, who is supposedly beastly, turns out to be more compassionate than the princess who is self-absorbed, ungrateful and cruel. He not only forgives her but also take her his wife. Looking at relationships between mortal women and animal bridegrooms, Marina Warner writes:

In her encounter with the Beast, the female protagonist meets her match, in more ways than one. If she defeats him, or even kills him, if she outwits him, banishes him, or forsakes him, or accepts him and love him, she arrives at some knowledge she did not possess; his existence and the challenge he offers is necessary before she can grasp it.(Warner, 45)

Sometimes the bridegroom removes his animal skin for the wedding night, whereupon it can be burned. “Hans My Hedgehog”(Grimm 108) falls under this grouping. A wealthy but
childless merchant wishes he has a child, even a hedgehog, and comes home to find that his wife has given birth to a baby boy, that is a hedgehog from the waist up. When he becomes an adult, he decides to take a wife of his own. But due to his unusual condition, he could not secure a bride for himself. As such, Hans Hedgehog punishes these princesses who reject him with sharp prickles. Fortunately, a very kind princess decides to accept him as husband and with sheer joy, he promises her that his prickles will not harm her. Then he suggests to the king, the father of the kind princess, that he should build a big fire on their wedding night. When Hans takes off his hedgehog skin, four servants who have been assigned to burn his skin immediately spring into action. With this act, Hans becomes a handsome young man. The princess, who has fallen in love with Hans even while he is half a hedgehog, lives in content with the transformed groom. It is simply the power in which the bride is capable of appreciating complexities which others have not recognized in the half-hedgehog man, that makes the marriage successful.

On relationships between mortal men and Animal Brides, Midori Snyder writes:

It is the task of the hero to wrestle with the ambiguous power of the fantastic world and return with its fully creative potential in hand. The young Prince proves his loyalty and compassion, and from the [animal's] beastly skin there emerges a beautiful bride. The bride is unlike her mortal counterparts, no matter how brave and courageous they may appear in the other tales, for she presents a union, a
partnership between the human hero and the creative forces of the fantastic world. (Snyder, 2)

The animal bride and bridegroom can be considered to represent the wild aspect embedded in man. They represent the wild within lovers and spouses, the part of them that they can never fully discern. They represent the others who live unfathomable lives right beside man — cat and mouse and coyote and owl; and the others that live only in the dreams and nightmares of the imagination. For thousands of years, their tales have emerged from the place where man draw the boundary lines between animals and human beings, the natural world and civilization, women and men, magic and illusion, fiction and the lives that man lives.

Despite the profusions of transformations and the ease with which men slip in to the role of beasts, there is a deeper significance to these metamorphoses, to the seeming interchangeability of man and beast. To begin with, it is important to note that men such as Bluebeard and monsters such as Beat fulfill the same paradigmatic function and are virtually all bridegrooms. The central female figures of the tales in which they appear are, therefore, either newlyweds or girls about to enter the state of (in this case) unholy matrimony.

Often they have been coerced into marriage by a father who has frivolously promised to hand over the first living thing that meets him on his arrival home or who seeks financial gain through the favorable marriage of his daughter. (Tatar, 170).
Therefore, it can be interpreted as the heroines perceiving their grooms and husbands as beasts and monsters. Fairy tales, after all, are notoriously hero-centric: figures and events in the tale are all presented from the perspective of the central figure, in this case the heroine, who sees in her future husband, nothing but the incarnation of inhuman impulses, a creature capable of violent mutilation and murder. Oddly enough, it is generally the human bridegrooms who indulge in shockingly uncivilized behavior and remain unrepentant to the bitter end. Their bestial counterparts, by contrast, are models of decorum and dignity. A ferocious or repugnant countenance can prove wholly misleading in fairy tales. Contrary to the conventional wisdom about fairy tale appearances, physical ugliness is not necessarily a sign of moral deformity; it can throw moral beauty or other merits and distinctions into sharp relief.

Thus, Mizo folk tales and the Grimms’ fairy reflect earlier times when man lived in close proximity with nature and transformation from one being to another seemed a natural occurrence. They also reflect the idea that in most ancient traditions was rooted the belief that between man and animal as well as all other elements of the universe, there is no permanent separation because they all bear a trace of their common origin. Therefore, they are intricately linked and consequently, there is the possibility of transition from one form to another or even hybridization of different forms into one being. Both Mizo and Grimm tales dealing with shapeshifting tend to have both positive and negative spin to it. In the tales examined, the victims of the transformations are eventually returned to their human forms, after a specific task is performed.
These stories, which may be intended as an explanatory tale to shed light on the protagonists’ transformations, are also obviously cautionary tales. They are tales that warn against the dangers of being too egotistical. None of the shapeshifted protagonists, in terms of transformation from human to animals, gain any special boon from their animal form, though the characters in the folk and fairy tale do find ways to adapt and exist happily, though they are still elated to be human again. This theme firmly situates the animal as something less than human, something undesirable, even when the human mind is in control of the bestial body. This suggests that the loss of humanity or the beast winning over human reason, is a danger of shapeshifting and transformation in the tales.

The different beasts, magical elements (both animate and inanimate) and mysterious maidens, through transformation and magic, have been found to comprise of three types. The first comprises of monsters, these include wolves and bears, but also the man-eating giants who threaten to devour the hero as he makes his way through the world. The second group consists of social deviants; among them are the robbers and highwaymen who waylay innocent young women, murder them, chop up their corpses, and cook the pieces in a stew. The third is composed of women. These are the various cooks, stepmother, witches and mother-in-law with voracious appetites for human fare, sometimes even for the flesh and blood or for the liver and heart of their own relatives. These people inhabit the fairy world and make the tales exciting while also helping to engender the plots of the tales. The stories of shape-shifters, animal people,
fox wives, cat brides and bear husbands let us cross the borders between many worlds, at least in imagination. Thus, through the power of story and magic, men wear many shapes and inhabit many skins, but remain men beneath these allegedly repulsive exterior. The tales clearly asserts human nature as possessing two aspects, leaving open the question of what these aspects constitute. Perhaps they consist of evil and virtue; perhaps they represent one’s inner animal and the veneer that civilization has imposed. Often this duality or transformation from one object to another tends to imply a malign or seductive relationship between a surface personality and a submerged aspect of that personality which haunts the surface self, often also, threatening degradation. Tales involving man-woman relationships frequently end in scenes of integration that makes it clear that any marriage of the two halves of the self is likely to be fatal. This is consistent with a general tendency in folk and fairy tales to treat the imploring side of the self as inherently obscene. A contrasting aspect is the fact that although transformation does occur to some of the characters, it does not diminish their personality, even in the state of turning into an animal forms, thus, retaining their innate humane qualities. Often, it enables them to secure good fortunes in this state and turns the story to a positive outcome that enables them to triumph.
NOTES

1 These transformation may represent evil characters and these in turn may be personification of the evil forces that man faces in life: natural disasters, fearful wild animals, wicked men and even hunger.

2 The insertion within the inclusion marks indicates the collector and the serialized number assigned for the tale in the collection of Grimms’ fairy tales, Zipes, Jack. The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm. New York: bantam Books, 1987 and henceforth, this manner shall be employed to indicate the source of a tale.

3 The lives of animals, according to Jungian concept, are shaped by “call patterns”, a certain mode of fighting, of courting, of aggressive mood and of flights when facing dangers. They regard that this same pattern occur to a certain extent on the human level. As such, patterns of animal behavior and human sometimes overlap, at the onset of certain extreme case, especially when the fear instinct is triggered by a frightful incident. In folk and fairy tales, these are common occurrence rendered easier by magic.

4 The insertion within the inclusion marks indicates the collector and the serialized number assigned for the tale in the collection, Tribal Research Institute. Mizo Thawnthu, 2nd ed. Aizawl: RK Printing Press, 1997. Print, and henceforth, this manner shall be employed to indicate the source of a tale.
In pre-colonial Mizo society, the tradition of sacrificing animals to the spirits was observed on the occasions of marriage and death, festivals as well as to cure the sick. This task was handled by the priests called Sadawt and Bawlpu who performed the rites with selected animals. In “Rahtea”, the wife has specifically asked for the sacrifice of Rahtea, which is a horrifying demand, not typically practiced.

*Thingsir*, a small tree that bears fruit with sweet nectar.

The insertion within the inclusion marks indicates the translator of the tale, Zama, Margaret Ch. “Tualvungi and Zawlpala.” *MizowritinginEnglish*. 9 Feb 2009 Web 12 April 2013.

*Bakvawmtep*, a bear with human attributes who is hideous and wicked.

The insertion within the inclusion marks indicates the translator of the tale, Jacob, Malsawmi. “Two Sky women and Two Earth Men.” *MizowritinginEnglish*. Web 12 April 2013.

The insertion within the inclusion marks indicates the collector and the serialized number assigned for the tale in the collection, Dahrawka, P.S. *Mizo Thawnthu*, 5th ed. Aizawl:
Thankhumi, Chhinga Veng, 2008. Print, and henceforth, this manner shall be employed to indicate the source of a tale.