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A Second Gaze at Little Red Riding Hood's Trials and Tribulations

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In my book *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*,¹ I argued that the origins of the literary fairy tale can be traced to male fantasies about women and sexuality. In particular, I tried to show how Charles Perrault and the Grimm Brothers transformed an oral folk tale about the social initiation of a young woman into a narrative about rape in which the heroine is obliged to bear the responsibility for sexual violation. Such a radical literary transformation is highly significant because the male-cultivated literary versions became dominant in both the oral and literary traditions of nations such as Germany, France, Great Britain, and the United States, nations which exercise cultural hegemony in the West. Indeed, the Perrault and Grimm versions became so crucial in the socialization process of these countries that they generated a literary discourse about sexual roles and behavior, a discourse whose fascinating antagonistic perspectives shed light on different phases of social change. In discussing this development, however, I did not devote sufficient time to an examination of the illustrations which in many cases are as important or even more important for conveying notions of sexuality and violence than the texts themselves. Since a complete reexamination of the illustrations would require another book, I should like to limit my study here to one particular scene, the traditional depiction of the young girl encountering the wolf in the woods, with the intention of exploring further sociopsychological ramifications of the Perrault and Grimm versions. Before reexamining the key illustrations of the standard Red Riding Hood texts, however, I should like once more to summarize my arguments about the sociopsychological implications of the changes made by Perrault and the Grimm Brothers. Here it is important to refamiliarize ourselves with a rendition of the oral tale as it was probably disseminated in the French countryside during the late Middle Ages before Charles Perrault refined and polished it according to his own taste and the conventions of French high society in King Louis XIV's time.²

The Story of Grandmother

There was a woman who had made some bread. She said to her daughter:

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"Go carry this hot loaf and bottle of milk to your granny."

So the little girl departed. At the crossway she met *bzou*, the werewolf, who said to her:

"Where are you going?"

"I'm taking this hot loaf and a bottle of milk to my granny."

"What path are you taking," said the werewolf, "the path of needles or the path of pins?"

"The path of needles," the little girl said.

"All right, then I'll take the path of pins."

The little girl entertained herself by gathering needles. Meanwhile the werewolf arrived at the grandmother's house, killed her, put some of her meat in the cupboard and a bottle of her blood on the shelf. The little girl arrived and knocked at the door.

"Push the door," said the werewolf. "It's barred by a piece of wet straw."

"Good day, Granny. I've brought you a hot loaf of bread and a bottle of milk."

"Put it in the cupboard, my child. Take some of the meat which is inside and the bottle of wine on the shelf."

After she had eaten, there was a little cat which said: "Phooey! . . . A slut is she who eats the flesh and drinks the blood of her granny."

"Undress yourself, my child," the werewolf said, "and come lie down beside me."

"Where should I put my apron?"

"Throw it into the fire, my child, you won't be needing it anymore."

And each time she asked where she should put all her other clothes, the bodice, the dress, the petticoat, and the long stockings, the wolf responded:

"Throw them into the fire, my child, you won't be needing them anymore."

When she laid herself down in the bed, the little girl said:

"Oh, Granny, how hairy you are!"

"The better to keep myself warm, my child!"

"Oh, Granny, what big nails you have!"

"The better to scratch me with, my child!"

"Oh, Granny, what big shoulders you have!"

"The better to carry the firewood, my child!"

"Oh, Granny, what big ears you have!"

"The better to hear you with, my child!"

"Oh, Granny, what big nostrils you have!"

"The better to snuff my tobacco with, my child!"

"Oh, Granny, what a big mouth you have!"

"The better to eat you with, my child!"

"Oh, Granny, I've got to go badly. Let me go outside."

"Do it in bed, my child!"

"Oh, no, Granny, I want to go outside."

"All right, but make it quick."

The werewolf attached a woolen rope to her foot and let her go outside.

When the little girl was outside, she tied the end of the rope to a plum tree in the courtyard. The werewolf became impatient and said: "Are you making a load out there? Are you making a load?"

When he realized that nobody was answering him, he jumped out of bed and saw that the little girl had escaped. He followed her but arrived at her house just at the moment she entered.³

It is obvious from this oral tale that the narrative perspective is sympathetic to a young peasant girl (age uncertain) who learns to cope with the world around her. She is shrewd, brave, tough, and independent. Evidence indicates she was probably undergoing a social ritual connected to sewing communities:³ the maturing young woman proves she can handle needles, replace an older woman, and contend with the opposite sex.⁴ In 1697, Charles Perrault revised the oral tale to make it the literary standard bearer for good Christian upbringing. Moreover, his fear of women and his own sexual drives are incorporated in his *new* literary version, which also reflects general male attitudes about women portrayed as eager to be seduced or raped. In this regard, Perrault began a series of literary transformations which have caused nothing but trouble for the female object of male desire and have also reflected the crippling aspect of male desire itself.

What are the significant changes he made? First, she is donned with a red hat, a *chaperon*,⁵ making her into a type of bourgeois girl tainted with sin, since red, like the scarlet letter A, recalls the devil and heresy. Second, she is spoiled, negligent, and naive. Third, she speaks to a wolf in the woods—rather dumb on her part—and makes a type of contract with him: she accepts a wager which, it is implied, she wants to lose. Fourth, she plays right into the wolf's hands and is too stupid to trick him. Fifth, she is swallowed or raped like her grandmother. Sixth, there is no salvation, simply an ironic moral in verse which warns little girls to beware of strangers, otherwise they will deservedly suffer the consequences. Sex is obviously sinful. Playful intercourse outside of marriage is likened to rape, which is primarily the result of the little girl's irresponsible acts.

In 1812, the Grimm Brothers delivered the second classic version of *Little Red Riding Hood*, based on Perrault's narrative, which had already become widely known through printed editions and oral transmissions by people from different social classes. The Grimms made further alterations worth noting. Here the mother plays a more significant role by warning Little Red Riding Hood not to stray from the straight path through the woods. Little Red Riding Hood is more or less incited by the wolf to enjoy nature and to pick flowers. Her choice symbolizes her

agreement with a devilish creature whom she has already directed to her grandmother. Instead of being raped to death, both grandma and granddaughter are saved by a male hunter or gameskeeper, who polices the woods. Only a strong male figure can rescue a girl from herself and her lustful desires.

The Perrault and the Grimm versions became *the* classical stories of Little Red Riding Hood and have served as the models for numerous writers of both sexes throughout the world who have either amplified, distorted, or disputed the facts about the little girl's rape. Obviously, one need not interpret the fairy tale as one of rape, though I suspect that the sexual motif has been dominant in the minds of most writers. Of course, lest eyebrows be raised too high, I point out here that I underscore that aspect of the tale because most literary critics have tended to shun the thought of rape, and the manner in which the girl is made to feel responsible for an atrocious act. However, there have been numerous psychologically oriented critics—mainly German—“brave” enough to discuss the sexual nature of the story.

For instance, commenting on the Grimm version, Erich Fromm maintains: “This fairy tale, in which the main figures are three generations of women (the huntsman at the end is the conventional father figure without real weight), speaks of the male-female conflict; it is a story of triumph by man-hating women, ending with their victory, exactly the opposite of the Oedipus myth, which lets the male emerge victorious from this battle.”⁶

Bruno Bettelheim views the tale differently:

Deviating from the straight path in defiance of mother and superego was temporarily necessary for the young girl to gain a higher state of personality organization. Her experience convinced her of the dangers of giving in to her oedipal desires. It is much better, she learns, not to rebel against the mother, nor to try to seduce or permit herself to be seduced by the as yet *dangerous aspects of the male*. Much better, despite one's ambivalent desires, to settle for awhile longer for the protection the father provides when he is not seen in his seductive aspects. She has learned that it is better to build father and mother, and their values, deeper and in more adult ways into one's superego, to become able to deal with life's dangers.⁷

My difficulty with such “enlightening” interpretations by two of the foremost German psychoanalysts of the twentieth century is that they fail to take into account that the tale which they treat is *not* an ancient and anonymous folk tale reflecting “universal” psychic operations of men and women, but rather it is the product of gifted male European writers, who projected their needs and values onto the actions of fictitious characters

within a socially conventionalized genre. Certainly the psychic condition of the creators of these tales needs some explanation before one deals with the psychological implications of their creations, not to mention the social and historical background of the creators. Moreover, Fromm and Bettelheim are totally unconscious of their own male biases. They feel more compelled to prove their theoretical assumptions about the oedipal or nonoedipal features of the story than to comprehend the historical derivation of the text and the possible psychological designation in terms of the changing sociogenetic civilizing process. Their response to the text can be contrasted with Susan Brownmiller's reaction in her book *Against Our Will*.

Rape seeps into our childhood consciousness by imperceptible degrees. Even before we learn to read we have become indoctrinated into a victim mentality. Fairy tales are full of a vague dread, a catastrophe that seems to befall only little girls. Sweet, feminine Little Red Riding Hood is off to visit her dear old grandmother in the woods. The wolf lurks in the shadows, contemplating a tender morsel. Red Riding Hood and her grandmother, we learn are equally defenseless before the male wolf's strength and cunning. His big eyes, his big hands, his big teeth—'The better to see you, the better to catch you, to eat you, my dear.' The wolf swallows both females with no sign of a struggle. But enter the huntsman—he will right this egregious wrong. The kindly huntsman's strength and cunning are superior to the wolf's. With the twist of a knife Red Riding Hood and her grandmother are rescued from inside the wolf's stomach. 'Oh, it was so dark in there,' Red Riding Hood whimpers. 'I will never again wander off into the forest as long as I live. . . .'

Red Riding Hood is a parable of rape. There are frightening male figures abroad in the woods—we call them wolves, among other names—and females are helpless before them. Better stick to the path, better not be adventurous. If you are lucky, a good *friendly* male may be able to save you from certain disaster.⁸

After commenting on her own youthful fantasies of rape which recall poster images relating to World War I (Belgium's rape by the Hun), and concentration camp victims of fascism, Brownmiller makes the following points about male myths of rape, and she implies that *Little Red Riding Hood* can be considered under these aspects: 1) they tend to make women willing participants in their own defeat; 2) they obscure the true nature of rape by implying that women *want* to be raped; 3) they assert the supreme rightness of the male either as offender or protector.

Brownmiller's comments on male attitudes toward women and rape shed more light on the historical development of the Little Red Riding

Hood story and the debate concerning its essence than the male psychoanalytic point of view which has either repressed the notion of imposed rape—that is, the rape which Perrault imposed on the folk version—or redressed it in a seemingly positive guise. The history of *Little Red Riding Hood's* textual development has already revealed to what extent Fromm, Bettelheim, and other critics have twisted the sexual signs to reaffirm conventional male attitudes toward women: the girl is guilty because of her natural inclinations and disobedience. However, by reexamining the major illustrations of the tale and their signs, we may be able to see other features of the tale noted by Brownmiller—features obscured by a male screening process. I want to work from the texts and illustrations themselves to understand their referential systems. What do the signs refer to within the illustrations? How do they reinforce particular aspects of the literary text? Which text? What is the reference point which the components of an image are addressing?

My comments about the illustrations to the Perrault and Grimm versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* are not about an isolated case. All the most popular, classical fairy tales from *Cinderella* to *Snow White* have been illustrated basically in a sexist manner, whether the pictures have been drawn by a male or female hand. By sexist I mean that the signs center around the male power and rationalize male domination as a norm. Thus the history of standard *Little Red Riding Hood* illustrations shares a great deal in common with that of other illustrated fairy tales, and there are several generalizations about fairy-tale illustrations which must be made before dealing exclusively with the intriguing scenes of the little girl and the wolf.

The earliest illustrations of fairy tales, dating back to the eighteenth century, were largely black and white woodcuts.⁹ Since the market for such illustrations in Europe did not really develop until the nineteenth century, when fairy tales for children became more acceptable in middle-class homes, the real beginning of fairy-tale illustrations in the western world—and I am dealing mainly with France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States—is approximately 1800, and it was not really until the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s that prominent illustrators such as Thomas Bewick, Ludwig Grimm, George Cruikshank, Ludwig Richter, and Gustave Doré turned their hand to illustrating fairy tales. Here again it is important to note that all the pioneers of fairy-tale pictures were men. The industry of design and engravings was controlled by men. Or, in other words, male illustrators were the interpreters or mediators of the fairy-

tale texts, and they projected their sexual fantasies through the images they composed.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the primary audience for illustrated fairy-tale books was composed of the middle class and the aristocracy. No illustrator drew a picture without first taking adult censors and conventions of socialization and the Christian religion into account. In short, the lines laid down by the pen had already been laid down in mind and society before the image came to be printed. Only the subtle variation of the lines leave tell-tale marks of rebellion and subversion by individual needs and dreams. Though the illustrators offered their images primarily to the wealthy, because the cost of the picture books made them prohibitive for the masses, there were broadsides, penny books, and chapbooks which were mass produced by the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, the advances in technology enabled the fairy-tale illustrations to reach all social classes. And the early black and white woodcuts with their sharply drawn simple lines yielded gradually to colorful prints with subtly drawn characters and scenes. For each one of the classical fairy tales, there are thousands of illustrated books. And yet, despite this number, there are an astonishing number of repetitions, slightly varied images of standardized characters and scenes which have prevailed over the years. This is no accident.

In the case of *Little Red Riding Hood* one could almost talk about a “conspiracy. There are three major scenes which almost invariably accompany the text, whether it be the Perrault or Grimm version: 1) the mother with a raised finger addressing her daughter (see figure 1). Generally speaking, the pictures of both the Perrault and Grimm versions have the mother instruct and warn the girl, even though the warning is not explicitly stated in the Perrault text. However, in the minds of the illustrators the girl is already guilty before a crime is committed. She is made responsible for whatever may happen. 2) Little Red Riding Hood’s encounter with the wolf as a type of pact or seduction scene (see figures 2 and 3). The girl is rarely afraid of the wolf, despite his large size and animal appearance. The viewer must ask him or herself on some level whether she is stupid. Does she want to be violated? Is she asking for something? Is she leading him on? We shall return to these questions. 3) The wolf violating Little Red Riding Hood as punishment according to the strict Perrault version (see figures 4 and 5) or the stalwart hunter/father saving Little Red Riding Hood according to the more lenient Grimms’ version (see figure 6). The dreadful punishment scene generally represents the consequence of Little Red Riding Hood’s illicit desires and designs. Generally speaking, it is preceded by Little Red Riding Hood in bed smiling at the wolf (see figure 4). The more prudish version of



Fig. 1: *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*, Conte d'apres Ch. Perrault, Paris: Editions Ruyant, 1979. Illustrator: M. Fauron. This edition is a reprint of a book published by Emile Guerin at the beginning of the twentieth century. The mother is quoted underneath as saying "above all, don't amuse yourself along the way!" The constellation of the temperate mother trying to temper the potentially rebellious or free-spirited daughter is standard fare in the picture books of the last two centuries.

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Fig. 2:



Little Red Riding Hood, New York: J.B. Jansen, 1824. Illustrator unknown. Typical of the early woodblock illustrations, the wolf is as large as the girl, who expresses interest in the wolf instead of fear.

the Brothers Grimm does not call for Little Red Riding Hood to strip—and there are striptease scenes—and get into bed. She is simply gobbled up by the wolf. And, as in figure 7, she owes her salvation and life to a male who is likened to a father figure. Explicit in these illustrations is that a girl receives her identity through a man, and that without male protection she will destroy herself and reap chaos in the world outside.

During the course of the past two centuries, these illustrations have been varied extensively, and there have been some radical changes such as in Thurber's illustration of the girl who shoots the wolf with a pistol or in the Liverpool feminist group's depiction of the girl and her grandmother slaying the wolf.¹⁰ But, for the most part, the traditional images have prevailed and continue to be circulated by a culture industry primarily interested in making profits by gambling with our subliminal sexual fantasies and reinforcing male notions of rape. The underlying question in the images depicting the male/female encounter, whether it be in magazines, books, films, advertisements, or cartoons, concerns women's use of their sexual powers to attain supreme gratification through male sexual

proress. As every reader/viewer subconsciously knows, Little Red Riding Hood is not really sent into the woods to visit grandma, but to meet the wolf and to explore her own sexual cravings and social rules of conduct. Therefore, the most significant encounter is with the wolf because it is here that *she acts* upon her desire to indulge in sexual intercourse with the wolf, and most illustrations imply that she willingly makes a bargain with the wolf, or, in male terms, “she asks to be raped.”

The wiles of Red Riding Hood are many, or to be more exact, the iconic projections of illustrators reveal a great deal about the semiotic means of fairy-tale illustrations which serve to corroborate male notions about sexuality and rape. Here I should like to focus on several illustrations selected from well over 500 that have recurred with significant regularity in similar shape. Not only do they suggest that Little Red Riding Hood is guilty for her own rape, but they reveal a curious *ambivalence* about male fantasies which needs more explanation.



Fig. 3: *The Sleeping Beauty in the Woods and Little Red Riding Hood*. London: Dean and Munday and A.K. Newman, ca. 1830. Illustrator: unknown. Here the girl appears to smile in a friendly fashion and to be willing to help or accompany the wolf.



Figs. 4 and 5:

Jean Boulet, *La Belle et la Bette*, Paris: La Terrain Vague, 1958. Illustrator: unknown. These illustrations date most likely from the late nineteenth century. They are characteristic of all the standard Perrault versions in which the girl gets into bed with the wolf. Again, the most famous bed scene is that of Gustave Doré. Since she is most often on the far side of the wolf and the viewer, she must have had to climb across the wolf. Thus, she would have noticed that the wolf was not her grandmother or a man, but a wolf. Yet, she appears to want to get into bed with the wolf and often smiles flirtatiously at him. Such sinful desire is then punished severely by society in the form of brutal retribution. There is no rescue in Perrault's narrative, just rape as punishment.

Perhaps the most famous engravings of *Little Red Riding Hood* are those by Gustave Doré (1832-1883), who illustrated Perrault's fairy tales in 1862. His images or imaginings were so striking that they were used in other editions soon after. For example, they appeared in Tom Hood's *A Fairy Realm* (1864) and Morris Hartmann's *Märchen nach Perrault* (1869). By the end of the nineteenth century, they were known throughout the western world, and Doré's portrayal of Red Riding Hood meeting the wolf (see figure 8) has undoubtedly influenced numerous other illus-



Fig. 6: *The Gingerbread Boy, Little Red Riding Hood, and the House that Jack Built*, Racine, Wisconsin: Whitman, 1945. Illustrators: Hilda Miloche and Wilma Kane. The final scene of salvation and rebirth varies. Often the father/woodsman helps the girl and grandmother step out of the wolf's belly. Sometimes he sits and drinks tea with the two females while the wolf lays slain at their feet. Or, as in these typical illustrations, the industrious and fearless woodcutter has no time for pleasure. He is off to work while the two grateful females celebrate their rebirth in orderly fashion. They have time now to redomesticate themselves.



Fig. 7:

Little Red Riding Hood, New York: Platt & Munk, 1934. Illustrator: Eulalie. Notice how father and daughter resemble each other; also to the point that the father's face could be the mother's face as well. She has become his little doll, and the series of illustrations leading to this scene reveals her growing smaller so he can carry her on his broad shoulders. It is through the father that she receives her identity, and she clings to him because she is unable to stand on her own two feet.

trators and continues to frame the manner in which we see Red Riding Hood's encounter with the wolf.

To explore the ideological connotations of Doré's illustration and others, a semiotic approach can be useful. Here the image or sign needs to be broken down into signifiers (the striking features of the major figures) and signifieds (the concepts to which the signifiers allude). By doing this we can move toward a comprehension of the whole sign or image. In the case of a fairy-tale illustration it is important to bear in mind that the signifiers in the image refer to each other and to the text in order to create a sensory impression. It is up to us as viewers/readers to convey ultimate



Fig. 8: *Les Contes de Perrault*. Paris: J. Hetzel, 1862. Illustrator: Gustave Doré.

meaning upon the patterns, and we do this in a conscious and unconscious manner, but always within a sociohistorical context which has already framed the way we receive signals about sex and sexuality. As Bill Nichols has remarked in *Ideology and the Image*: “Images are always particularized representations, a way of seeing is built in (since a way of seeing built them) and hence connotation is built in.”¹¹

In Doré’s illustration it seems to me that the more expressive aspects of the image are: the longing if not seductive look of Little Red Riding Hood as she peers into the eyes of the wolf, and her faint smile; the enormous size of the powerful wolf who looks down into the eyes of the girl

in a nonthreatening manner; the proximity of wolf and girl who appear to be touching and to be totally absorbed in an intimate *tête à tête*. It is almost as if the viewer were an intruder who chances to come upon an assignation of two lovers in the woods. Certainly the viewer is invited to gaze voyeuristically upon a familiar world and to confirm meaning that seems always to have been there. What then is this meaning?

The signifiers point to seduction, intimacy, and power. Doré stresses the desire of the girl and wolf for one another. But, by revealing the full face of the girl and her apparent seductive glance, Doré also suggests that it is primarily she who is asking for it. And, what is *it*? In this case it is an immense wolf or phallus, a male creature, who in his animal state represents both the girl's own libidinal drives *and* the voracious appetite of males, whose desire is allegedly to dominate and violate women, to lead them off the straight path—and naturally it is all women's secret desire to be misled. The erotic display in Doré's illustration indicates a transgression of society's rules of sexual behavior and sexuality while at the same time it confirms what we suppose to be true about both women *and* men: women want men to rape them; men are powerful but weak beasts who cannot help themselves when tempted by alluring female creatures. Since the sexes prey upon one another and cause their own destruction in nature as opposed to society, then another implicit message is that there can be no "true" love, certainly no Christian love, in sexual intercourse practiced outside of the institution of marriage. Only when sexual behavior is domestically ordered, as in the person of the mother and the father at the beginning and end of the fairy tale, can sex assume its "proper" reproductive function in society.

The central scene of the girl/wolf encounter in the chain of signification is the crucial one in all illustrated Red Riding Hood books, for it is the scene of transgression. As we have seen, the first standard image always indicates domestic order and tranquility in the person of the stern but caring mother. The last scene either represents the punishment as a result of the transgression underlined by Perrault's *moralité*, which we should not forget:

From this story one learns that children,
Especially young lasses,
Pretty, courteous and well-bred,
Do very wrong to listen to strangers,
And it is not an unheard thing
If the Wolf is thereby provided with his dinner.
I say Wolf, for all wolves
Are not of the same sort;

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There is one kind with an amenable disposition
Neither noisy, nor hateful, nor angry,
But tame, obliging and gentle,
Following young maids
In the streets, even into their homes.
Alas! who does not know that these gentle wolves
Are of all such creatures the most dangerous!¹²

Or, the last scene represents the restoration of domestic order by a strong male figure as in the Grimm version or the Grimm variant. In Doré's illustration it is obvious that the girl will become completely tainted by sin since she has stopped to talk to this strange creature. Given the enormous size of the wolf, the viewer must ask why the little girl is not afraid of the beast? Certainly any smart peasant girl would have run from this gigantic wolf. Any self-respecting bourgeois girl would have avoided the company of such a hairy monster. But here, Little Red Riding Hood apparently seeks his acquaintance, and the shadow of the wolf begins to cover her.

It is within this shadow that we may be able to locate the ambivalence of male desire. That is, it is possible to interpret Little Red Riding Hood's desire for the wolf as a desire for the other, or a general quest for self-identification. She seeks to know herself in a social context, gazes into the wolf's eyes to see a mirror reflection of who she might be, a confirmation of her own feelings. She wants to establish contact with her unconscious and discover what she is lacking. By recognizing the wolf outside of her as part of herself, just as the wolf seeks the female in himself, she can become at one with herself. The woods are the natural setting for the fulfillment of desire. The conventions of society are no longer present. The self can explore its possibilities and undergo symbolic exchanges with nature inside and outside the self. If we follow this line of thought, the formation of this scene (girl meeting wolf) by Doré demonstrates *his* unconscious desire to free himself of social restraints in a symbolic exchange with the other, and he also recognizes the mutual desire of the other. Yet, as much as Doré *desired* to depict the pleasure of recognition through a sexual symbolic exchange, he probably identified more with the wolf, and thus there is an indication in his illustration that the wolf seeks to *dominate* with his gaze which would cancel out mutuality. The text of the tale dictated the wolf's gaze as phallic domination—a point which I shall discuss later in reference to Jacques Lacan—and the conventions of society reinforced such male desire during Doré's time. In addition, the look or gaze of Little Red Riding Hood appears to invite the wolf's

gaze/desire, and therefore, she incriminates herself in his act. Implicit in her gaze is that she may be leading him on—to granny's house, to a bed, to be dominated. She tells him the way, the path to the house. But where is she actually leading him? Why?

Already influenced by other illustrations and the text, Doré's own illustration stamped many of the configurations of the late nineteenth-century images of the girl/wolf encounter.¹³ In England there were numerous illustrated books of fairy tales which reflected and embellished Doré's work. For instance, Raphael Tuck and Sons had a studio of artists who pursued Doré's lines and helped Tuck become one of the main distributors of fairy tales in England, France, Germany, the United States, and Canada. The illustrators are unknown, but they all maintained a particular style as if one hand drew each scene so that everyone could be attributed to Father Tuck, the name under which most of the fairy-tale books were distributed. One scene (see figure 9) reminiscent of the Doré illustration reveals Red Riding Hood on the right smiling and looking down at the wolf. She is intended to be doll-like corresponding to the Victorian image of children, especially young girls, and the colors are bright pastels. But the girl is more than just sweet and virginal.¹⁴ Again she glances seductively at the wolf, ready to accommodate him. Of course, some changes have been made. The wolf comes from the right and is much smaller than the girl. In fact, he looks more like a friendly dog with his left paw raised almost begging to have a bone. His head is tilted, and his tongue forms a smile with his open jaws. The diminution of dog and girl was typical of Victorian illustrations, for upper-class children were considered fragile and sensitive.¹⁵ Their sexuality had to be adorned in a way which might not disturb them. Nevertheless, the innuendoes in this scene are clear.

In the history of *Little Red Riding Hood* illustrations, each nation has cultivated particular characteristics which can be traced in the signifiers of the girl/wolf encounter. Obviously the Doré influence can be found more often in France, where illustrators have expressed a tendency to be more erotic and playful than the German, British, and American artists, who are more restrained and puritanical. For example, another French book which appeared in 1905 (see figure 10) reveals Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf as if they were going on a picnic together. The intimacy is clear: it is almost as if they were one. The girl's flirtatious smile is matched by the friendly gaze of the wolf, who is more like a companion than a stranger. Unlike the doll-like portrayals in America and England, the French illustrations tend to show a more fully-developed young girl, one approaching puberty. Both the girl and the wolf are oblivious of the woods around them. They only have eyes for one another. In my study



Fig. 9: *Friends from Fairyland*, London: Raphael Tuck & Sons, c. 1880. Illustrator: unknown. This book, part of Father Tuck's 'Ever Welcome' Series, was designed in England and printed in Germany. Tuck had offices of distribution in London, Paris, Berlin, New York, and Montreal. The above is typical of Victorian illustrations which often portrayed the girl as seductive innocence.

of the literary texts, I demonstrated that the wolf and the girl were essentially one and the same figure in the minds of the writers, for the little girl is a potential witch with her red hat—witches, evil fairies, and Jews wore red hats in the oral stories which circulated in the late Middle Ages up through the nineteenth century—and the wolf, whose ancestor was the

werewolf, was an accomplice of the devil. The encounter in the woods, a meeting place of witches and the haunting place of werewolves, is an asocial act. The meeting of the eyes (the “I’s”), the touching bodies and linked shadows form an apparent oneness, an agreement. Here the anonymous illustrator softens the erotic nature of the scene which is more striking in Doré’s illustration. Nevertheless, the smile of Little Red Riding Hood is more than just friendly.

Eye contact and knowing smiles are extremely important in the girl/wolf encounter. The gifted illustrator Walter Crane (1845-1915), who, like Doré, left his imprint on future illustrators, raised the wolf on his hind-legs and dressed him in peasant clothes (see figure 11). Crane was by no means the first to elevate and to anthropomorphize the wolf. There



Fig. 10:

Le petit Chaperon Rouge, Paris: Emile Guerin, c. 1905. Illustrator: unknown. Here, as in many illustrations, the girl and wolf are more like companions who exchange knowing looks about the game they are about to play.



Fig. 11: Walter Crane Toy Books, *Little Red Riding Hood*, London: George Routledge, 1870. Illustrator: Walter Crane. Here Crane had the Grimm story adapted to verse, and the caption to this illustration reads: "Out set Riding Hood, so obliging and sweet, / And she met a great Wolf in the wood, / Who began most politely the maiden to greet, / as tender a voice as he could. / He asked to what house she was going and why; / Red Riding Hood answered him all: / He said, "Give my love to your Gran; I will try / At my earliest to call."

were Dutch, French, and German broadsides which depicted the wolf as soldier or farmer by the mid-nineteenth century. Crane was, however, one of the first to present this scene in a toy book with color and strong ink lines emphasizing the intimate nature of the encounter. Here Little Red Riding Hood is in her teens, and with her raised eyebrows and stiff upper lip she is not as seductive as some of her "sisters." Nevertheless,

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she gazes into his eyes which are practically on the same plane as hers while he leans on his cane and addresses her in a friendly way. It is as though he were standing on a corner waiting for her to come by. Here there is a clear separation of the figures emphasized by the straight stick which keeps them apart. Also, in the background we see some woodcutters, the social guardians of morality, who guarantee that the girl and wolf will behave themselves. This is why the eye contact is important, for they



Fig. 12: *Little Red Riding Hood*, New York: Samuel Gabriel Sons, Illustrator: unknown.

must exchange signals. The wolf must know where to go to meet her. He seeks to absorb her in his gaze.

An American version of the Grimms' tale published in 1939 reflects the continued influence of Crane (see figure 12). The eyes of the young girl and wolf are on the same plane. The figures are separated, but the



Fig. 13: Father Tuck's Fairy Tale Series, *Little Red Riding Hood*, London: Raphael Tuck & Sons, c. 1880. Illustrator: unknown. Designed at the studios in England, the narrative was written by Grace C. Floyd.

wolf leans in an intimate way while the girl gazes straight into his eyes. Dressed in overalls, the wolf is obviously an American farmer, and the apple-pie complexion of the girl suggests the sweetness of innocent American girls, who use their innocence as a means of seduction.

Innocence and naiveté are generally associated with coyness and stu-

pidity by male illustrators. For instance, another Father Tuck illustration (see figure 13) reflects a characteristic male attitude toward women. Although the wolf is only saying “good morning” to the girl, she acts as if she were being propositioned. With her index finger in her mouth and her eyes rolled to the right, she gives the impression of a coquette playing hard to get. Unlike most depictions of this scene, this one shows her facing the viewers while cocking her head toward the wolf. Though she is apparently avoiding eye contact with the wolf, she is also enticing him. The wolf is a debonair gentleman with top hat and cane, and there is something comical about his appearance in the woods. His courteous and stately manner is in contrast to the naiveté of the little girl. One is compelled to ask who is pretending more, the wolf or the girl? Who is leading whom on?

Johnny Gruelle’s depiction of the same type of naive lass is somewhat different (see figure 14), but not much. Famous as the creator of Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy, Gruelle illustrated the complete Grimms’ fairy tales in a most unusual manner. Here Little Red Riding Hood plays again at being dumb, while the chevalier wolf makes his intentions obvious by licking his chops. Characteristic of American illustrations in the twentieth century, and to a certain extent of most traditional ones in Europe after World War I (see figure 15), there is a tendency to make Little Red Riding Hood more babylike and infantile and to suggest the comical side of encounter, as though it were all in good clean fun because we know how it will turn out in the end, that is, if we believe the Brothers Grimm, whose version is the most prevalent in the world.

More typical than Gruelle’s illustration which still has a strong hint of the erotic in the meeting of the girl/wolf is the prudish illustration by Hilda Miloche and Wilma Kane (see figure 16). The girl appears to be impressed by the polite manners of the wolf, whose top hat recalls the Father Tuck illustration. The girl and wolf have been “desexed” in true Walt Disney fashion. As usual, the wolf is without genitals, and the apple-cheeked girl is more like a kewpie doll than a real living person. The eye contact remains, and the girl is apparently interested in what the wolf has to say. But, as in all the illustrations, it is what is unsaid that is best understood by the viewer/reader. The words and images stimulate the imagination, refer to notions and concepts, rules and conventions, and preconditioned thoughts about sexual behavior and sex roles.

The history of the pictures which illustrate the traditional versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* by Perrault and the Brothers Grimm reveal a kind

Fig. 14:



Grimm's Fairy Tales, Translated by Margaret Hunt, New York: Cupples & Leon, 1914. Illustration: John B. Gruelle.

of cleansing process, a gradual censorization, which is geared to eliminate the sexual connotations of the tales. Whereas the experimental storytellers and illustrators have consciously highlighted the notion of rape to parody and criticize it from different points of view, the conservative re-tellers and illustrators of the Perrault and Grimm narratives want to avoid the issue. Intimacy, seduction, and violation are made comical so as not to upset the delicate sensitivity of young readers and the keen sense of propriety of their watchdog parents. For the most part the wolf will be fully dressed (see figure 15) and caricatured, even to the point of appearing as naive and stupid as the little girl. He is not allowed to eat the grandmother who either hides in a closet or runs into town. Nor is he allowed to put his paws on Little Red Riding Hood, who is invariably saved by a father/hunter. Nevertheless, the implications of the signals remain. It is the dumb girl who causes a "near rape." Men are natural victims of temptation, as the Adam and Eve myth suggested long ago, and generally will behave if fed and clothed properly. Only the domesti-

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Fig. 15: *The Story of Little Red Riding Hood*. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Corporation, 1968. Illustrations from *Classic Fairy Tales*, a series of films produced by Encyclopedia Britannica Films, Inc. Large Corporations such as Walt Disney generally package their fairy-tale productions to obtain maximum profit. Thus the narrative will be simultaneously made into a film, record, picture book, coloring book, poster, and toy.

cated models of mother and father are worth emulating—those strongly structured, well-composed, self-confident figures of law and order.

Ironically, the portrayals of the wolf and the girl were more erotic and sensual in the nineteenth-century and early part of the twentieth century than they are today. Michel Foucault has suggested that the Victorians were more obsessed and interested in sex than we believe.¹⁶ That is, given the proliferation of discourses around sexuality which began in the nineteenth century, Foucault calls into question the very notion of repression. Certainly, in the case of *Little Red Riding Hood*, writers and illustrators were not afraid to make sex the major subject of their discourses. Historically speaking the traditional nineteenth-century depictions of the girl/wolf encounter bear out Foucault's assertions: they reveal a deep longing for sexual satisfaction, a pursuit of natural inclinations against conformity

Fig. 16: *The Gingerbread Boy, Little Red Riding Hood, and the House that Jack Built*, Racine, Wisconsin: Whitman, 1945. Illustrators: Hilda Miloche and Wilma Kane.



to a social code. The bodies of girl and wolf are closer, more intimate, more lifelike than images which originate after World War II. In fact, twentieth-century images are marked by a growing alienation: the girl and wolf keep more distance; they are afraid of sex and their bodies; they are clean and sterile, more like wooden cartoon figures or advertising props for good housekeeping.

All this is not to say that nineteenth-century Europeans and Americans were more emancipated in their sexual attitudes than contemporary Europeans and Americans. Rather, it seems to me that the growing rationalization of society and increased division of labor and more subtle forms of discipline and punishment first generated and intensified discussion about the body and sexuality in the nineteenth century. The question concerned control and use of the body, the instrumentalization for greater productivity, domination of inner and outer nature within the prescriptions of capitalist industrialization and the Protestant ethos. Thus, rules for sexual conduct and the definition of sexual roles had to be established firmly in the minds of children and adults. Since the enjoyment of extramarital sex could interfere with production and schooling in the nineteenth century, the sexual act, which had already been more or less equated with sin by the Church, had to be repeatedly associated with irresponsibility, chaos, and violation. Such a process had already begun in an organized way in the late Middle Ages, and the Perrault text was an outcome of such male rationalization of Christian thought. In the male imagination it was the woman who was devious, sinful, and subversive; her sexual appetite interfered with male institutionalized relations; she was an instigator, in league with the devil, that is, with wolves or male heretics, who represented sexual play, amusement, gathering flowers in the woods. So, by the nineteenth century Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf had become primarily responsible for the violation of bodies, for chaos, disorder, and sin. At the same time, there is an undercurrent in the images of the nineteenth century of a secret longing by the male illustrators to become part of a union of girl/wolf, to enjoy the bodies, to celebrate the eye contact. Since the encounter is the central scene in the chain of signification illustrating the texts, the illustrator could express his/her contradictory desire.

The illustrators of fairy-tale books in the nineteenth century were also influenced by market conditions. As it became cheaper to produce illustrated books, broadsides, chapbooks, penny books, and toy books, children became more a target audience—and these were also children who began to have more leisure time and were becoming better educated in all social classes. By the turn of the century, publishers sought mainly profit from

this new market, and production for children—which meant production for the adult surveyers of children—demanded that the producers pay respect to decent taste and sexual codes, at least in outward form. If *Little Red Riding Hood* was to be marketed in France, Germany, America, Canada, and England as Raphael Tuck and Sons did, then she had to entice buyers by subscribing to male notions of sexual seduction, rape, punishment, and salvation.

As I have already remarked, the major change during the twentieth century, if one can call it a real change, has been marked by increased sanitization and standardization of the text and pictures. International conglomerates have worked together since 1945 to package *Red Riding Hood* as standard commodity to bring profits and to convey male notions about sexuality, specifically about the violation of the body for which women are deemed responsible. The nationality or sex of the illustrator no longer plays a major role since the deviation from the normal “desexed” girl and wolf will not be tolerated. For example, the Golden Book publishers, which circulate *Red Riding Hood* in the thousands throughout the United States in supermarkets, drugstores, candystores, and bookstores, have transformed *Little Red Riding Hood* into a sterile tale of chastity.¹⁷ The discourse about the body reflects a greater fear of and alienation from the body than ever before. Unlike the Victorians, we are no longer sexually curious, rather sexually controlled and defensive. The nonviolence depicted in the illustrations continues to violate minds with implicit messages about the stupidity and culpability of little girls. For instance, the Walt Disney Corporation and Peter Pan Company have produced a record set with text and pictures for little boys and girls to follow the story with music.¹⁸ Naturally, they have cleaned up the act and reduced the girl’s incrimination so that the tale has become insipid, totally devoid of erotic tension. Yet, the girl is made to feel that she has done something wrong. *She* is the one who should not talk to strangers. Better to be catatonic than to be adventurous. Control is of essence today.

Ultimately, the male fantasies of Perrault and the Brothers Grimm can be traced to their socially induced desire and need for control—control of women, control of their own sexual libido, control of their fear of women and loss of virility. That their controlling interests are still reinforced and influential through variant texts and illustrations of *Little Red Riding Hood* in society today is an indication that we are still witnessing an antagonistic struggle of the sexes in all forms of socialization, in which men are still trying to dominate women. In one of the major theoretical books to deal with male fantasies in the last fifty years, Klaus Theweleit has remarked: “The apparent rearing of children to become chaste achieves its opposite

by creating a stored-up lecherousness, the installation of an unfulfilled deed as a permanent condition. The boy is sexualized. His need is directed toward woman, it is supposed to be directed right toward the woman. All images, hopes, wishes, plans, which the growing boy has, are supposed to come together, to be concentrated and fixed on the conquest of this one object—the woman, and this object woman is represented in codified form by a woman of the family.

The growing boy is trained along these lines and during puberty is trained to structure his whole existence almost insanely according to a fictitious before/after scheme: “After I have first had a woman for just once, *the* woman, then . . .” Decisive here is this ‘then’ which appears to stand for everything: then the guilt will disappear, the fears, the insecurities, the feelings of inferiority, then life will begin, I’ll be strong, I’ll be able to conquer the father or leave him, my talents will unfold; SHE will belong to me and I’ll protect her . . .

The ‘meaning of life’ is produced from this longed-for salvation, and, since it does not occur, since salvation stems from a false direction of the wish, the crucial question about the meaning of life (thought of as being able to be accomplished in *one* act) does not stop.¹⁹

In endeavoring to comprehend how unresolved sexual needs contributed to the development of a fascist mentality and male brutality in Germany, Theweleit touches on fundamental questions regarding male upbringing and male fantasies in western society, which are connected to the fairy tale about Little Red Riding Hood and its reception. What is played out in the narrative of Little Red Riding Hood is the deep longing of males to possess their own bodies/mothers/sisters, to touch the wild unformed urges in themselves, to possess them—and then, the frustration which comes from the realization that the desire cannot be fulfilled. The frustration often leads to an act of violence, an insistence that the desire be fulfilled at all costs. Here the notions of Jacques Lacan about masculine and feminine sexuality can be further helpful in explaining the psychological signification of the girl/wolf constellation.²⁰ As is well known, Lacan attributed a great deal of importance to the gaze in the development of human sexuality. For him, seeing is desire, and the eye functions as a kind of phallus. However, the eye cannot clearly see its object of desire, and in the case of male desire, the female object of desire is an illusion created by the male unconscious. Or, in other words, the male desire for woman expressed in the gaze is autoerotic and involves the male’s desire to have his own identity reconfirmed in a mirror image. As Larysa Mykyta explains in her essay entitled “Lacan, Literature, and the Look,”

the sexual triumph of the male passes through the eye, through the contem-

plation of the woman. Seeing the woman ensures the satisfaction of wanting to be seen, of having one's desire recognized, and thus comes back to the original aim of the scopic drive. Woman is repressed as subject and desired as object in order to efface the gaze of the Other, the gaze that would destroy the illusion of reciprocity and oneness that the process of seeing usually supports. The female object does not look, does not have its own point of view; rather it is erected as an image of the phallus sustaining male desires.²¹

In the case of the Red Riding Hood illustrations and the classical texts by Perrault and the Grimms, the girl in the encounter with the wolf gazes but really does not gaze, for she is the *image* of male desire. She is projected by the authors Perrault and Grimm and generally by male illustrators as an object without a will of her own. The gaze of the wolf will consume her and is intended to dominate and eliminate her. The gaze of the wolf is a phallic mode of interpreting the world and is an attempt to gain what is lacking through imposition and force. Thus, the positioning of the wolf involves a movement toward convincing the girl that he is what she wants, and her role is basically one intended to mirror his desire. In such an inscribed and prescribed male discourse, the feminine other has no choice. Her identity will be violated and fully absorbed by male desire either as wolf or gameskeeper.

If *Little Red Riding Hood*, the text as well as the key illustration, is seen in the light of Lacan's psychoanalytic theories as a conservative male fantasy conditioned by social-cultural conventions, then the fairy tale as a whole does little to reduce the possibility for violence and brutality in our society. If anything, it perpetuates sexual notions which contribute to our frustration and aggressiveness. As long as we are encouraged to point our finger at Little Red Riding Hood as willing conspirator in her own downfall and assign male guardians of law and order to kill the wolf, our minds and bodies will be prevented from grasping the fundamental issues of sexuality at stake in the story and in our lives.

Notes

¹ The subtitle is: *Versions of the Tale in Sociocultural Context* (South Hadley: Bergin & Garvey, 1983 and London: Heinemann, 1983).

² Cf. Dorothy R. Thelander, "Mother Goose and Her Goslings: The France of Louis XIV as Seen through the Fairy Tale," *The Journal of Modern History*, 54 (September, 1982), 467-496 and the chapter "Setting Standards for Civilization through Fairy Tales," in my book *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (New York: Wildman, 1983 and London: Heinemann, 1983), pp. 13-44.

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³ *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, pp. 5-6. See also Paul Delarue, "Les contes merveilleux de Perrault et la tradition populaire," *Bulletin folklorique de l'Île-de-France* (1951), 221-228, 251-260, 283-291; (1953), 511-571.

⁴ See Yvonne Verdier, "Grands-mères, si vous saviez: le Petit Chaperon Rouge dans la tradition orale," *Cahiers de littérature orale*, 4 (1978), 17-55.

⁵ There are numerous theories about the *chaperon rouge*. One of the more interesting theses is to be found in Hans I. Siepe's article "Rotkäppchen einmal anders. Ein Märchen für den Französischunterricht," *Der fremdsprachliche Unterricht*, 65 (1983), 1-9. Siepe suggests that the term "grand chaperon" designated an older woman who was supposed to escort young girls from the upper classes as chaperon in the English sense of the word. The fact that Little Red Riding Hood only is a "little chaperon," indicates that she did not have enough protection. Whatever the case may be, the chaperon transforms the peasant girl into a bourgeois type and the color red, which may indeed suggest menstruation, was a clear symbol of her sin.

⁶ *The Forgotten Language* (New York: Grove Press, 1957), p. 241.

⁷ *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1976), pp. 181.

⁸ *Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Bantam, 1976), pp. 343-44.

⁹ See David Bland, *A History of Book Illustration* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), and Percy Muir, *Victorian Illustrated Books* (London: Batsford, 1971).

¹⁰ Cf. *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. This book contains over seventy different types of Little Red Riding Hood illustrations.

¹¹ (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. 47. See also John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Harmondsworth, 1972).

¹² I have purposely taken this quotation from a recent book which has had seven printings since 1961. *Perrault's Complete Fairy Tales*, translated from the French by A.E. Johnson and others (Harmondsworth: Kestrel/Penguin, 1982), p. 77. Illustrations by W. Heath Robinson.

¹³ In America they have been reprinted since 1969 in *Perrault's Fairy Tales* (New York: Dover, 1969). Since the Dover books are inexpensive, the illustrations are easily accessible to the public. Also, Dover is not the only publisher to have made use of the Doré illustrations.

¹⁴ Cf. Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967).

¹⁵ Cf. Marion Lochhead, *Their First Ten Years: Victorian Childhood* (London: John Murray, 1956).

¹⁶ *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), p. 49. "We must therefore abandon the hypothesis that modern industrial societies ushered in an age of increased sexual repression. We have not only witnessed a visible explosion of unorthodox sexualities, but—and this is the important point—a deployment quite different from the law, even if it is locally dependent on procedures of prohibition, has ensured, through a network of interconnecting mechanisms, the proliferation of specific pleasures and the multiplication of disparate sexualities. It is said that no society has been more prudish (Foucault is referring to Victorian society, J.Z.); never have the agencies of power taken such care to feign ignorance of the thing they prohibited, as if they were determined to have nothing to do with it. But it is the opposite that has become apparent, at least after a general review of the facts: never have there existed more centers of power; never more attention manifested and verbalized; never more circular contacts and linkages; never more sites where the intensity of pleasures and the persistency of power catch hold, only to spread elsewhere."

¹⁷ The same development can be traced in other western countries. Cf. the Ladybird Easy Reading Books in England. In particular, see *Little Red Riding Hood*, retold by Vera Southgate with illustrations by Eric Winter (Loughborough: Ladybird Books, 1972).

¹⁸ The cassette industry has also had a great impact on the market. See *Little Red Riding Hood. Six More Favorite Stories Played by the Robin Lucas Children's Theatre*, London: BiBi Music, BBM82.

¹⁹ *Männer Phantasien* (Frankfurt am Main: Roter Stern, 1977), pp. 478-79.

²⁰ See Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1983).

²¹ *Substance*, 39 (1983), 54.