

A second gaze at Little Red Riding Hood's trials and tribulations.

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

Jack Zipes

The Lion and the Unicorn

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**In lieu of** an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

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

*Jack Zipes (bio)*

In my book *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*,<sup>1</sup> 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 socio-psychological 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.<sup>2</sup>

daughter: **[End Page 78]**

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

So the little girl departed. At the cross way 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..."

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The Story of Grandmother

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



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