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 **UCLPRESS**

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Sarah Bonner

In recent years contemporary artists have been appropriating and re-inventing traditional fairy tales. Subverting and interrogating received meanings, artists are challenging the traditional parameters of tales which convey ideas of gender role and racial identity. The fairy tale is being translated from literary text into visual culture. The artists recoding the tales address shifts in cultural attitude, engaging predominantly with issues of identity and discrimination. In this paper I examine the visual development of “Little Red Riding Hood,” investigating the manner in which the literary tale has been adopted by contemporary artists, how the visual responds to the textual, and cultural attitudes embedded in reiterations of the tale.

Critical literature dedicated to the field of fairy tale study is extensive, drawing its interpretive framework from historical and ideological discourses. Jack Zipes employs a socio-historical model for analysing the development and significance of the tales. Writing from a Marxist viewpoint, he argues that fairy tales embody the shifting cultural codes of history and, as such, they can be interpreted as records of social production. Zipes holds that the genre is as relevant to contemporary culture as it was for pre-literate society, especially in terms of gender politics and identity construction. His analysis of the illustrations of “Little Red Riding Hood” provides a sound basis for continuing research into visual representations of the tale. Where Zipes comments on the ideologies conveyed by fairy tales, Catherine Orenstein explores the historical and cultural meanings of “Little Red Riding Hood,”—its broad cultural incidences from cartoons and pornography to films and advertising, focusing closely on the construction and interpretation of gender. Bruno Bettelheim, a Freudian psychoanalyst of the genre, suggested that fairy tales were instrumental in developing children’s identity. For Bettelheim, children were able to locate in the text answers to their own trials and tribulations. Psychoanalysis constitutes significant research in this field, but it operates a closed system preferring universalities over individualities. Freud’s patriarchal meta-narrative favours boys’ development rather than girls’, and tends to ignore subjectivity as a whole in childhood development. Bettelheim’s assertions have been scrutinized by contemporary artists, who subordinate the prescriptions and constraints of fairy tale psychoanalysis to the interpretive freedom of narrative analysis—in particular, Roland Barthes’ conception of the relationship between text and image. These critical commentaries express the ubiquity of the tale in popular culture, emphasising its continued relevance on an individual and social level.

Although the critics mentioned above have informed my understanding of “Little Red Riding Hood,” my main aim here is to examine how contemporary artists are appropriating the tale and to what end. The text and image are intimately related, yet I propose that the image contains qualities that release interpretation from the strictures of tradition, making them more relevant and immediate in contemporary society. “Little Red Riding Hood” has sustained continued analysis and appropriation

making it a forum for interrogation. References to the tale are abundant, indicating its presence in our cultural unconscious, and Maria Tatar identifies the tale as a place to “work through anxieties about gender, identity, sexuality and violence” (Orenstein i). In her 2002 study *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked*, Catherine Orenstein claims that the tale “embodies complex and fundamental human concerns” (8).

[Red Riding Hood’s] tale speaks to enduring themes of family, morality, growing up, growing old, of lighting out into the world, and of the relationships between the sexes. It brings together archetypal opposites, through which it explores the boundaries of culture, class, and especially, what it means to be a man or a woman. The girl and the wolf inhabit a place, call it the forest or call it the human psyche, where the spectrum of human sagas converges and where their social and cultural meanings play out.

Orenstein’s observation highlights the relevance and endurance of the tale, and despite undergoing a succession of interpretations, it remains recognisable through the repeated use of specific tropes, namely the red hood and the wolf.

“Little Red Riding Hood” has undergone progressive development, yet is known mainly from two literary sources: the 1697 version by Charles Perrault (1628-1703) contained in his collection *Contes du temps passé* (*Tales of Olden Times*), published under his son’s name Pierre Darmancourt; and the collection by Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) Grimm *Die Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children’s and Household Tales*), first published in 1812. The basics of the narrative are familiar: Little Red Riding Hood is sent by her mother to her grandmother’s house with a basket of goodies; her mother warns her not to stray from the path nor dally on the journey. In the woods, Red Riding Hood meets the wolf who finds out where she is going and races off to beat her there and the girl continues on her journey. Arriving first at grandmother’s house the wolf eats the woman and dons her clothes to fool Red Riding Hood. When the girl arrives at the house the wolf continues his deception with the ultimate intention to eat the girl. The famous repartee ensues until—“Grandmother dear, what big teeth you have!” “The better to eat you with!” (Perrault 28)—and Red Riding Hood’s fate is sealed. Whether the girl is eaten (as Perrault would have it) or is eaten but saved (according to the Grimms), the message is one of obedience and punishment. In response to feminist accusations of the tale being “an unfortunate source of negative stereotypes” (Stone 229), recent versions of the tale illustrate empowerment and complicity. A comedic interpretation of such empowerment can be found in Roald Dahl’s “Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf;” when under threat from the wolf, “the small girl smiles. One eyelid flickers. / She whips a pistol from her knickers. / She aims it at the creature’s head / And *bang bang bang*, she shoots him dead” (40).

The visual fairy tale has developed extensively in the twentieth century through advances in film and animation technologies. Improved technology has also led to

wider dissemination of the fairy tale. The language and motifs of the tales are internalised within the culture, rendering fairy tales sophisticated communications devices that influence consumer trends, lifestyle choices and gender models. The translation from text to image relies on the repeated use of tropes particular to “Little Red Riding Hood.” The presence of the wolf and red hood is sufficient to identify the tale to the reader/viewer. Where the written text demands an investment of time and offers an accumulated meaning, the image, in contrast, imposes a direct communication: the presence of a red hood immediately identifies the tale to our cultural unconscious. The simplicity of these motifs belies the complex history and interpretation that lend the tale its meaning; and despite changing historical contexts, these tropes endure. One effect of fairy tales’ adoption by visual media is that their significance is underestimated: they are rendered invisible by their very ubiquity.

The visual aspect of the literary fairy tale began with the inclusion of illustrations printed alongside the text. At this juncture a visual language was introduced to the tales. The broad print dissemination ensured the association and consumption of the accompanying image, effectively creating a visual language, a series of motifs immediately recognisable to the viewer. The illustrator’s selection of significant scenes has served to internalise the images in a collective unconscious to the extent that the images can exist without the text as reference. Jack Zipes has written extensively on the fairy tale genre and has published a volume dedicated to the development of “Little Red Riding Hood,” examining the processes of appropriation and change over the last three hundred years.^[1] Zipes tracks progressive versions from Perrault’s new literary version of 1697 to contemporary reworkings of the tale.^[2] He also examines the illustrations accompanying the tale. A chronological assessment shows the wolf’s changing character: an early illustration by Gustav Doré of 1862 shows a realistic representation of the animal, while late nineteenth-century versions render the wolf more dandified, “civilised” in a jacket and standing on his hind legs. Other depictions show the wolf as a harmless and friendly dog, and mid twentieth-century images render the meeting cartoon-like. By adhering closely to the text of specific plot events, the visual image can communicate immediately and directly with the audience, often working on a subconscious level and internalising the texts’ moralistic or gendered messages.

Through these illustrations the fairy tale can be reduced to a series of key scenes: the departure of Little Red Riding Hood with appropriate finger-wagging from her mother; the meeting with the wolf in the woods; the wolf in grandmother disguise; and the discourse between the girl and the wolf. Each image is so strongly attached to the text that the meaning is implicit, even enhanced by direct way in which images communicate with the viewer. The familiarity of the fairy tale fundamentally underpins this visual recognition, as the illustration relies on the text and reinforces its meaning. The image sequence delivers the story, relying on the internalised tale and the strength of the symbolism embodied by the text—thus, Little Red Riding Hood, the wolf, and the red cape all confirm the tale to the reader/viewer.

Despite the strength of these images, however, the illustrations are rarely viewed separately from the text. The relationship between the textual and visual is intimate and reciprocal. Until recently these illustrations have been the only images associated with a particular narrative. Recently, however, visual references to the tales have saturated contemporary culture. The Chanel No.5 fragrance advertising campaign of 1998 presents Estella Warren dressed as a movie starlet complete with red satin cape sneaking out for the night in Paris, leaving a subdued and tamed wolf. The idea of Little Red Riding Hood deviating from the straight and narrow is picked up in this campaign: she is cast as sexy and knowing, surpassing even the sly wolf. Representing the male, this wolf has been castrated of his traditional power, succumbing to the prowess embodied by the girl's sexuality (enhanced, of course, by the potency of Chanel No.5). The motifs of the tale are active despite the distortions made to the traditional formulation.^[3] The language of fairy tales lends itself ideally to visual representation.

Print dissemination and broad televisual coverage have ensured the internalisation of the texts, serving to fix the meaning of the image. This fixed meaning was of particular interest to French philosopher Roland Barthes. In *The Rhetoric of the Image* he analyses the role of text as a method of *anchoring* possible meanings: Barthes suggests that the linguistic message is used "to counter the terror of uncertain signs" (39) found in images. Through selected illustrations, the fairy tale is reduced to a series of images depicting key points in the traditional narrative, such as Doré's illustration of the showdown between the girl and the wolf. For Barthes, Doré's depiction of Red Riding Hood in bed with the wolf could have any number of interpretations, not least the potential sexual relationship between the pair. The text, according to his theory, counters the *terror* of this image by qualifying its meaning, establishing a specific reading for this depiction. Each image is strongly attached to the text and the meaning understood because it is linked to a known narrative. Without this anchoring, anxiety is embedded in images that are physically independent of text. It is precisely this situation of image without text that contemporary artists exploit in their engagement with fairy tales. Barthes discusses the image absent of text, stating in a footnote that "images without words can certainly be found in certain cartoons, but by way of a paradox; the absence of words always covers an enigmatic intention" (38). The absence of words enables artists to challenge prescribed meanings. 'Enigmatic intention' provides a textual loophole, allowing artists to use fairy tales, unrestricted by specific textual direction, yet retaining a textual memory through the use of familiar tropes. As repositories of identity conventions, the fairy tale, in this case "Little Red Riding Hood," offers a forum that artists can use in order to critique shifts in cultural attitude. Barthes' *anxiety* of a non-textualised image renews the conscious reception of the tale and activates the potential for change.

Taking the traditional fairy tale, artists are reviewing and re-inventing the tales in both parody and critique. Gérard Rancinan, Paula Rego and Kiki Smith have all produced significant bodies of work referencing fairy tales, and all respond

subversively to recent cultural pressures, particularly in relation to identity construction. In their work on “Little Red Riding Hood,” a dialogue about identity and discrimination engages viewers, challenging their experience of fairy tales and introducing cultural revelations. Rancinan’s interpretation of “Little Red Riding Hood” [Figure 1] engages with the literary tale and subverts its meaning. Surrounded by blood-spattered hanging sheets and dangling from a hook, Red Riding Hood is cast as a cross-dressing male ballet dancer watched by a wolf behind bars. The traditional tale echoes through the motifs, and Rancinan, through selection and inversion (female cast male, wild animal caged) renders meaning ambiguous. Referencing the violence of to this tale, Rancinan upsets the formulaic and saccharine fairy tales as offered by Disney. Rendered like a crime scene, Rancinan’s image abandons the forest and suspends the ominous relationship between Red Riding Hood and the wolf against a backdrop of polythene sheeting. Barthes’ anxiety returns as questions outnumber answers.



*Figure 1. Gérard Rancinan. Little Red Riding Hood, 2003.
100w x 80h cms, unsigned artist's print. ©Gerard Rancinan.
Courtesy the artist.*

The themes of ambiguity and violence emerge also in Paula Rego’s *Little Red Riding Hood Suite* (2003), where they are rooted directly in the tale itself. Rego often appropriates fairy tales in her work, and “Snow White” and “Pinocchio” have both featured in a number of endeavours. Bent on the subversion accepted power relations, Rego’s work reshapes fairy tales toward redressing gender and societal

inequalities. In her *Little Red Riding Hood Suite* [Figures 2-7] she undermines the tale proper by relying on its endurance and familiarity. Instead of the wolf eating the girl and the woodcutter saving the day, Rego engineers an alternative tale that responds to current ideas of role and status in society. The suite comprises six images and is executed in pastels; the detail is contained in the characters rather than the surroundings. This device serves to focus the viewer's attention on the cast, playing on the motifs of the tale fixed neither to time nor place. The deliberately stark grounds activate a fluid positioning of the tale: whether in the nineteenth or twenty-first century, the relationships between cast members are central to Rego's understanding of the tale. The first image we come across is Little Red Riding Hood and her mother embracing, while the grandmother looks on in the background [Figure 2]. Red Riding Hood is properly introduced in the second image as she embarks on her journey [Figure 3]. Complete with red hood and matching nail varnish, she is seen crouching down, turning as if she has been disturbed. Enter the wolf [Figure 4]. Here Rego opts to make the beast human rather than anthropomorphise the wolf as illustrators have done. The wolf a man, standing and dressed in a dated and effeminate exercise outfit, complete with sweatband. Rego has posed the wolf with hands on hips yet he is unbalanced with legs crossed. Despite his wild and unkempt appearance, his prowess is negated by his exaggerated stance and attire. In this piece the wolf imposes no threat or beastly presence, a quality that is carried over into the next image where he is disguised as Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother [Figure 5]. The girl is positioned, albeit obediently, by his/her feet but with arms crossed and an expression of scepticism as he "chats her up." Here Little Red Riding Hood looks to be in control of the situation, bored but allowing the wolf to play out his role. In the next image, however, it becomes apparent that the wolf has in fact succeeded in eating the girl, as he is found, stomach distended, lying on the red coat [Figure 6]. The scene shows Little Red Riding Hood's mother prodding his stomach with a pitch fork in revenge. In the final image of the series it is revealed that the mother has triumphed over the wolf as she poses sporting a new wolf skin muffler [Figure 7].



Figure 2. Paula Rego. Happy Family-Mother, Red Riding Hood and Grandmother, 2003. Copyright the artist, photography courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art (London) Ltd.; Figure 3. Paula Rego. Little Red Riding Hood on the Edge, 2003. ©Paula Rego.



Figure 4. Paula Rego. The Wolf, 2003;
Figure 5. Paula Rego. The Wolf Chats Up Red Riding Hood, 2003. ©Paula Rego.



Figure 6. Paula Rego. Mother Takes Revenge, 2003;
Figure 7. Paula Rego. Mother Wears the Wolf's Pelt, 2003. ©Paula Rego.

In this series Rego adheres to the plot laid down by Perrault, sacrificing the girl to the wolf, but rejects the ending devised by the Grimms whereby the girl and grandmother survive. The artist inverts the traditional tale by activating the role of the mother. A psychoanalytical reading of the tale comments on the mother's agency, or lack thereof. Bruno Bettelheim suggests that in the literary tale the mother is

represented both as herself and as the grandmother, which effectively renders the figure absent or invalid. Red Riding Hood acts alone throughout the tale without the authority of the mother figure. For Bettelheim the girl is sexualised by the (grand)mother with the gift of the red hood. The girl's journey is conflicted with a duality of obedience and seduction: the gift of the hood is really the gift of sexual maturity. According to Bettelheim "[w]hether it is Mother or Grandmother—this mother once removed—it is fatal for the young girl if this older woman abdicates her own attractiveness to males and transfers it to the daughter by giving her a too attractive red cloak" (173). Thus a psychoanalytical reading of Perrault sexualises the girl, but to some extent the Grimm version alleviates the anxiety of Red Riding Hood's predicament by the inclusion of the father figure, embodied by the male rescuer. With this reading the sexualising of the girl is initiated through seduction and consumption, but is incomplete due to parental intervention and the escape from the wolf's belly. A feminist re-reading of this version of the tale recognises the gender oppressive message that ascribes to females positions of weakness. This is signified by the idea of the mother abandoning the girl to the woods, the grandmother's impotence through age/illness, and the ultimate rescue by the adult male. Rego's interpretation, told from the mother's point of view, thus challenges the psychoanalytical readings and empowers the female figure.

The suite plays with the traditional process of illustrating the tales: the artist has selected the plot indicators from the revised tale and has created a series of scenes akin to theatre. The images are spare and the characters occupy an empty stage. Rego has exploited the capacity of the tale to tell itself without relying on extra descriptive material. She relies on the audience to be able to read the text through the images, and the viewer is comforted by recognising the story as it unfolds. Yet the subversion occurs in the finale when Rego offers two endings, one in which the mother overcomes the wolf/male in an act of revenge, without the intervention of a male rescuer; or an alternative reading, where the mother overcomes both the beast as male *and* the girl as youth. For Rego, the absence of the daughter means the mother's individual identity is asserted as present, rather than the traditional position of absence. In the final scene the mother is dressed in red with her own version of a red hood and the addition of the wolf skin muffler, reinforcing the message, contrary to psychoanalytical fairy tale interpretation, that age itself conveys knowledge, strength and cunning, ensuring the survival of the fittest.

While Rego provides an alternative version to the "Little Red Riding Hood" tale, retaining the basic plot formulation and cast as established by the literary tradition. In contrast, Kiki Smith transcends the parameters of the literary tradition, projecting the tale beyond the familiar ending and instigating a parallel reading of the events. By appropriating the protagonists of the traditional text, Smith interrogates her characters, specifically Red Riding Hood and the wolf, examining their identity, role and relationship. Her installation and sculptural work responds to the traditional literary text whilst taking inspiration from recent literary subversions of the tale that

promote the complicity of the girl and wolf, in a cultural climate that is concerned with alienation and difference.

The artist's overarching concern here is the lynch pin relationship between the girl and the wolf. This relationship has invited much scrutiny from the authors themselves, readers, illustrators and critics. As the tale develops, the relationship between the girl and wolf evolves; their initial encounter has been described as friendly, threatening, flirtatious, and sexual. Zipes argues that the relationship between the girl and wolf is based on rape and violence. He attributes this to the patriarchal societies that witnessed the genesis of the genre's literary form, specifically the versions of Perrault and the Grimms. The cultural context is essential in the reading of this tale, affecting the authors' description, the reading and the visual imaging of the relationship. Yet every perceived meaning of the tale is hinged on the initial encounter of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf, which then informs the subsequent events that take place. Gender roles are conveyed at this point: the wolf is always cast as male and the seducer, Little Red Riding Hood is at once the innocent girl, the *femme fatale* and the inevitable fallen woman. Recent visual responses to the tale have focused on this relationship, exploring the textual manifestations of the girl and wolf.

Smith appears to reject the relationship based on violence and sex; instead she explores the idea of difference, discrimination and the resulting complicity. In her work the girl and wolf join together and eventually become each other. Both can be classed as *other* in comparison to the dominant human male; this position of difference in turn engenders discrimination. Smith highlights the idea that the pair are more similar than different, that imposed textual categories of primitive/civilised, animal/human, male/female are misleading as opposites and are actually intrinsic to each other. The rejection of these opposites can be seen in the identity trauma that is at the core of her work; a 'no-mans-land' in terms of identity and belonging. *Daughter* (1999) is a four foot high sculpture of a girl wearing the tell-tale red cape and hood [Figure 8]. Despite the fact that she is immediately identifiable as Little Red Riding Hood, there remains an uncertainty as her face sprouts hair suggesting a morphing bestiality, invoking both the werewolf myth and the freakish bearded lady of the circus arena. In this work Smith undermines the clear cut definitions of wolf and girl as given in the literary tale, instead inviting the possibility of duality.



Figure 8. Kiki Smith. *Daughter*, 1999
Nepal paper, bubble wrap, methyl cellulose and hair
48 x 15 x 10" (121.9 x 38.1 x 25.4 cm)
© Kiki Smith, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York
Photo By: Ellen Page Wilson/Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York

By her difference *Daughter* is made a spectacle as something other. The viewer is challenged to accommodate and reconcile what we know of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf. The opposites of predator and prey embodied in *Daughter* force the viewer to review their experience of the tale and, to an extent, themselves, recognising the equal presence of innocence and malignance. In this work the artist imagines that Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf have come together as outcasts and given birth to *Daughter*. Helaine Posner suggests that “their improbable offspring becomes the embodiment of male, female, and animal characteristics, the unique progeny of disparate beings” (10). In *Daughter* unification is found to challenge the parameters of good and evil predicated in the traditional Grimm tale.

Continuing with the theme of girl and wolf joined by difference, Smith’s *Gang of Girls and Pack of Wolves* (1999) explores the companionship of the two and their inevitable complicity [Figure 9]. The work is composed of a series of paintings on glass measuring almost fifty feet in length, and depicts images of girls and wolves collaborating as outcasts. In this work Smith combines “Little Red Riding Hood” with analysis of Saint Genevieve, the patron saint of Paris. Genevieve, a poor shepherd’s daughter, is identified by her company of wolves and lambs living harmoniously and thus symbolising her “virtue and gentility” (Weitman 27). *Gang of Girls and Pack of Wolves* is significant for its depiction of acceptance and tolerance: the artist offers a message of inclusion rather than discrimination. Smith critiques the social codes of difference that reinforce marginalisation and perpetuate the fear and threat of otherness, a notion that has particular resonance in race and class debates.



Figure 9. Kiki Smith. *Gang of Girls and Pack of Wolves*, 1999

Fired paint on glass with brass and lead

69-3/8 x 53-3/4 " (176.2 x 136.5 cm), 12 glass sheets, each installation dimensions variable

©Kiki Smith, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York

Photo By: Ellen Page Wilson/Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York

The symbiotic partnership shown in *Gang of Girls and Pack of Wolves* reaches a fully metamorphosed state in Smith's work *Rapture* (2001) [Figure 10]. In this bronze sculpture we are witness to the life-size event of a woman stepping out of a wolf's belly, emerging as if born of the beast. Returning to the symbolism of "Little Red Riding Hood" it is inevitable that we make the link here: the wolf is present and although the girl and hood are absent, the event of a woman being released from the belly of a wolf recalls the Grimm tale, where the woodcutter saves the girl and her grandmother from the stomach of the wolf. Just as Smith projects the tale of "Little Red Riding Hood" in *Daughter*, *Rapture* extends the Grimm version to suggest that the girl's consumption is symbolic of initial sexual experience and maturation. Zipes identifies the themes of sexuality and violence as intrinsic to the tale, from the meeting in the woods to the wolf's consuming of the girl. In *Rapture*, Smith explores this idea, revising the release of girl and grandmother from the wolf's stomach whilst referencing this interpretation in the title of the piece. Traditionally the crime of *rapt* meant forceful abduction or seduction, and by the same root come the words rape and rapture (Orenstein 150). "Little Red Riding Hood" has been received as symbolic of sexual initiation and the etymological root of the word rapture introduces the sexual violence found in the literary versions of the tale. Susan Brownmiller suggests that "Red Riding Hood is a parable of rape" (Zipes 1993:232), yet in Smith's *Rapture* the meaning is ambiguous: sex and rebirth are implicit, but equally so are the violence of killing, sacrifice, or metamorphosis.



Figure 10. Kiki Smith. Rapture
Bronze 67-1/4" x 62" x 26-1/4" (170.8 cm x 157.5 cm x 66.7 cm)
©Kiki Smith, Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York
Photo By: Richard-Max Tremblay/Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York

The three artists addressed above deal with the fairy tale in different ways. Rancinan and Rego both deal with gender and violence in their images. Rancinan's blood-spattered sheeting is an obvious reference, whereas Rego only alludes to violence in the last image where the mother sports a new wolf skin muffler having killed the wolf herself (relating her to Dahl's gun-toting heroine). Rancinan and Rego also adopt a theatrical presentation: Rego uses this method to confirm the tale to the audience via familiar scenes and motifs. Rancinan, in contrast, confounds interpretation with his scene of grace and horror. Predominantly referencing gender, Rego redirects the traditional tale's focus to the mother, and Rancinan acts in dissent by casting the girl as an adult male. For Rancinan sexuality is questioned by his depiction of a transvestite Red Riding Hood, a concession, perhaps, to the implicit deviant sexualised coupling of the girl and the wolf in the traditional tale. In contrast, Smith's appropriation of the tale diffuses notions of violence and, to an extent, the assertion of particular gendered roles. Smith projects beyond the confines of the tale and explores possibilities of difference. The main theme in her work is the complicity between the girl and the wolf: at times they are joined as one, elsewhere they are comfortable companions. Gender distinction is either undone or left open in Smith's pieces: *Rapture* may represent the sexual woman released from the wolf's belly, or alternatively present the metamorphosis of the wolf into woman. Where Rego is indebted to the Grimm tale, Smith is more closely related to the feminist writing of Angela Carter. Unlike Rancinan, Smith removes overt references of violence from her work; instead her focus is on alienation, questioning what makes difference.

Where Rego subverts from within the familiar tale, Smith extends beyond the established parameters, and Rancinan inverts the conformity of gender and power from the traditional tales. All three artists have variously utilised "Little Red Riding

Hood” to explore and revise the narrative, to undermine ideas of gender conventions or interrogate changing attitudes of identity and discrimination. These artists challenge the parameters of the traditional texts, favouring recent literary revisions and their potential for change. As the fairy tales convey ideologies of identity, the artists employ them to penetrate, subvert and change the traditional values they represent. To visualise the fairy tale is to recognise the potential for change in keeping with today’s morality and value expectations. Fairy tales are re-used for their didactic value to illustrate and record shifts in cultural attitude.

And they all lived happily ever after? Little Red Riding Hood’s story is embedded in our cultural unconscious, and its endurance signifies its continuing relevance and interest to artists, critics and audiences of popular culture. The potential for change embodied in the fairy tale is recognised by artists who add their interpretation to a heritage of adjustment. Appropriated into visual culture, the fairy tale reaches a far wider audience than the literary text. The artists cited here consciously subvert the traditional literature, utilising a visual format to analyse contemporary societal mores.

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Notes

[1] Zipes, Jack. *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. London: Routledge, 1993.

[2] There is evidence of the Red Riding Hood tale type pre-dating Perrault's literary version. Research has been made into the tale development in the middle ages, see particularly Ziolkowski, J. M. "A Fairy Tale from before Fairy Tales: Egbert of Leige's 'De puella a lupellis seruata' and the Medieval Background of 'Little Red Riding Hood'." *Speculum* 67, no. 3 (1992): 549-75.

[3] The distortions are just that, however. The campaign seems to invert the traditional tale apparently empowering the female, yet her dress and attitude cast her as a male fantasy – sex appeal is reduced to market value.