

METAMORPHOSIS IN RED

by

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May, 2019

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Folk and fairy tales have been told for centuries and they remain a mainstay in children's literature. When they were first written down, the tales included startling episodes of mistreatment of women, including sexual assault, oppression and violence. Though these stories have become sanitized over time, they still contain vestiges of the original written injustices. As a child, being read these narratives normalized this conduct and even as an adult, the stories continued to seem benign. Examining these tales more closely, especially the original versions, allows us to question the behaviors in the stories and related episodes in today's world.

My thesis exhibition examines the well-known folk tale *Little Red Riding Hood*. Textiles, wall hangings, enameled wearable art, and a setting of handmade and found objects recreate emotions and themes from the tale. As they enter the installation, I ask the viewers to consider the challenges the girl protagonist faces through the various historical versions of the story. The exhibit culminates with my interpretation of the story's ending, a shift from the traditional views of *Little Red Riding Hood*.

METAMORPHOSIS IN RED

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the School of Art and Design

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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by

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DEDICATION

This thesis work is dedicated to my parents,

George R. Lang,

who was always tinkering in his basement workshop,

and

Lucille B. Lang,

who taught me how to sew my clothes and knit my sweaters.

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INTRODUCTION

“Read me a story,” implores the tousle-headed youngster as bedtime approaches. Dutifully a tale is told, putting the child to sleep while the story enters into their imagination. Folk tales and fairy tales are part of that storytelling tradition, to entertain but also to teach lessons and give warnings. These stories became a mainstay of children’s literature in the nineteenth century and continue to be told today. A careful reading of the original versions written down hundreds of years ago relate occurrences of oppression, mistreatment and violence, especially involving women. As children, these behaviors appear normal, and that attitude continues into adulthood. In my thesis I have chosen to study one of these classic tales, *Little Red Riding Hood*.

My MFA exhibit considers the mistreatment of the protagonist and the violence toward her in the original literary works by Charles Perrault in 1697 and Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm in 1812. The issues that are brought up by examining the story remain timely when considering the recent public viewing of Donald Trump’s “Access Hollywood” tape, the #metoo movement and the Brett Kavanaugh hearings. Using a variety of media and techniques in the exhibit allows the viewer to perceive the themes brought up by *Little Red Riding Hood* through their own experiences. The exhibit culminates in a modern view with a final transformation bringing together two contrasting elements, the naiveté and trust of Little Red Riding Hood and the aggressiveness and passion of the wolf.

CHAPTER 1

Little Red Riding Hood: The Beginning & Little Red Riding Hood: Arrival

Installation art “refers to a dedicated space in which one artistic vision or aura is at work ... [in which] the artist has created an arrangement that is an integrated, cohesive, carefully contrived whole” (Rosenthal 26). Though the cave paintings at Lascaux, France could be considered an installation (Rosenthal 23), modern installation art is a relatively new genre beginning in the 1920’s with experimentation by Dadaists, Russian constructivists and the De



Figure 1. *Little Red Riding Hood: The Beginning*, 48" x 84", Handwoven linen and hand-dyed wool, embroidery cotton thread.

Stijl group in Holland (Rosenthal 35). At the First International Dada Fair in Berlin in 1920, the artists exhibited mixed media objects such as posters and 3-dimensional objects from floor to ceiling, creating a unique collage-type world for the viewer (Rosenthal 36). Like the Lascaux cave paintings, installation art may be site specific and not transportable (Rosenthal 28). The Dadaists treated their installations as moveable from various galleries or viewing sites in what Rosenthal calls a “filled-space installation” (28). Rosenthal further categorizes filled space installations as “enchancements” in which the artist transforms the space into an imaginative surreal space (33) or

“impersonations” in which the site is transformed into a real situation or elaborates on a life situation (47).

To bring the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* to the art gallery, I’ve chosen to include my work as part of an installation with elements of enchantment. The viewer’s experience begins at the entrance of the space. *Little Red Riding Hood: The Beginning* (see Fig.1) are two woven hangings depicting trees presented on each side of the visitor as they enter the exhibit room. There is evidence that the original oral tradition of *Little Red Riding Hood* was told among women (Orenstein 83) so weaving, as a traditional woman’s craft, is employed in the exhibit. The weaving technique used is called transparency or supplemental weft. It consists of a loosely woven transparent linen fabric that has a design of trees woven into it. To create the design in the weaving, the density in that area is increased by adding a second yarn in the horizontal weft along with the linen thread. A cartoon pattern is placed underneath the linen vertical warp to guide the weaving design (see Fig. 2). My supplemental weft is thin wool that has been dyed a variegated brown to simulate tree bark. Linen and wool were more common than cotton during the time frame of the story’s oral tradition. Suspending the transparency weavings away from the walls by the entrance adds the appearance of depth to the woven trees. A single bright red thread embroidered along one tree line on an inner edge



Figure 2. Weaving transparency with cartoon under warp threads.



Figure 3. *Little Red Riding Hood: The Beginning* (Detail).

represents Little Red Riding Hood entering the woods, like the visitor, and the beginning of the story (see Fig. 3). Pine straw is strewn in the installation's corners to change the room into a forest scene. The woods are an important element to the tale, the setting for the protagonist's journey.

Little Red Riding Hood in its written form has an older oral tradition called *The Grandmother's Tale* (Orenstein 63). During the time of its oral storytelling, the forest contained real threats to travelers. Besides wild animals, outlaws and the fringes of

society inhabited the woods. During the sixteenth century, stories and trials of werewolves were common in France (Orenstein 96). Men were put on trial for crimes such as incest, killing, and cannibalizing children while being transformed into a werewolf. One famous trial recorded in 1590 involved Stubbe Peeter, known as the "Werewolf of Bedburg," who was convicted and tortured to death (Orenstein 87). Versions of *The Grandmother's Tale* use the word "*bzou*" which means werewolf in French. Scholars date the oral tale at least to the time period when the werewolf trials were taking place, over one hundred years before the first written version (Zipes, *Trials* 19). The oral stories were also most common in areas where trials had been held, in the southeast region of France and northern Italy (Zipes, *Trials* 19). In that light, the wolf

encountered by the granddaughter in *The Grandmother's Tale* may be indeed a werewolf, or a neighbor committing atrocities, rather than a wild animal.

Elements in the oral tradition that relate to the later literary tales include a girl traveling through the woods to visit her grandmother and encountering a wolf, the wolf eating the grandmother and disguising himself before the girl arrives and a second encounter between the



Figure 4. *Little Red Riding Hood: Arrival*, 24" x 84", Handwoven linen and hand-dyed wool, embroidery cotton thread.

two. There are a number of characteristics in the oral tradition that are different including the lack of any red clothing on the girl, references to paths of pins and needles, and the girl escaping by tricking the wolf using her own wiles (Zipes, *Trials* 23). The inclusion of sewing terms suggests that *The Grandmother's Tale* was told among groups of adult women, probably seamstresses or during sewing sessions, as entertainment (Orenstein 83). Additionally, the oral tradition includes inadvertent human cannibalism of the grandmother by the granddaughter, a sexual striptease encouraged by the wolf and references to urination and defecation as a means to escape the wolf.

These elements are unrefined comments that would comfortably be told amongst a circle of adult friends (Tatar 23).

Lighting and shadows are important elements of the exhibit that assist in converting a benign clean gallery space into an ominous darkened wood. Besides the set of transparency weavings at the entrance of the exhibit which establishes the forest scene, another set *Little Red Riding Hood: Arrival* (see Fig. 4) hangs within the gallery space. The theme of contrasts and opposites runs through the exhibit, complementing the contrast between the girl protagonist and the wolf. As such, the second set of weavings are the reverse value of the entrance set of weavings, with the denser areas being the background and the trees being the transparent areas. The weaving technique is the same. To signify the lushness of the forest and the growth of the main character, the variegated brown



Figure 5. Shadow on gallery wall from *Little Red Riding Hood: Arrival*.

wool has been over-dyed in green. A red embroidered line, darker now and at an outer edge of one of the weavings, denotes Little Red Riding Hood's passage through the woods and the story. The gallery lighting is dimmed and in the low-ceilinged intimate space, viewers may experience a feeling of apprehension. Strategic spotlighting throws shadows from the woven trees onto the walls increasing this unease (see Fig.5). In this way, visitors may experience Little Red Riding Hood's anxiety walking through the forest, or the unease a modern woman may feel walking

through a darkened park or street. In other areas of the exhibit, red floodlights are used to spotlight where the tale's assault has taken place.

CHAPTER 2

Tempting Innocence & Insidious Danger

There are three pairs of art work along the left wall, each containing a layered paper wall hanging and a wearable enamel piece (see Fig. 6). Each pair explores a separate theme from the early literary *Little Red Riding Hood* stories: innocence, obedience and violence. The two works within a pair express the same theme but the contrast in size and materials between the wall hanging and enamel convey distinct perspectives and engage the viewer differently.



Figure 6: Gallery left wall with *Tempting Innocence*, *Insidious Danger*, *Hidden Constraint*, *Rigid Obedience*, *Lost Innocence (Fallen Shoe)* and *Aftermath*.

The paper wall hangings use an ancient Korean felting technique called *joomchi* (see Fig. 7). Three to ten layers of Korean Hanji mulberry paper are stacked together, wetting the paper



Figure 7: Process of *joomchi* technique: (1) Layers of wet mulberry paper; (2) Checking mulberry paper after agitating one sheet by hand for lace *joomchi* technique; 3) Agitation using bubble wrap.

thoroughly between layers. The stack of papers is then agitated, either with the hands or rolling the stack in textured bubble wrap, until the mulberry fibers join into one thicker and stronger sheet of paper. Upon drying, the paper becomes stiff, but if rubbed between the hands, will become flexible and soft like suede. The process of *joomchi*, like home weaving in Europe, was women's work. Resulting felted fabric was originally used in Korea as clothing material for the peasantry who couldn't afford woven cloth (Chung, 3). Each of the three paper wall hangings in the exhibit showcases a modern technique of working the mulberry paper: making lace out of one sheet of paper, weaving a plaid from mulberry paper strips, and creating holes, or slashes, in the paper felt. By hanging the paper layers away from the wall and from each other, shadows emphasize the techniques and mirror the presence of woven tree shadows on the opposite wall.

The three wall hangings are abstract impressions regarding a specific issue while the enameled brooches are small and intimate, hinting at the darker side of the classic children's tale. The narrative depicted on the enameled steel uses traditional underglaze and overglaze techniques (see Fig.8). I used a black underglaze pencil to draw the initial design. Underglaze pencil and paints do not contain silica which makes up the enamel glass. The finish is matte and



Figure 8. Enamel process of drawing and painting: (1) Underglaze pencil drawing; (2) Painting with overglaze; (3) Overglaze black (P-1) used with a nib dip pen.

requires a covering of clear enamel to become glossy. Overglaze paints contain pigment and silica and so add glossy color to the surface. I used Thompson overglaze paints to finish the brooches' design. The enamels are set in sterling silver with elements from the scene fabricated in silver and extending from the frame. The hardness and density of the enamel and metal is a counterpoint to the pliability and airiness of the paper wall hangings and textiles throughout the exhibit.

The first pair encountered along the wall alludes to the first time *The Grandmother's Tale* was interpreted in written form. The author is Charles Perrault, a member of the French bourgeoisie and the French Academy, who attended the court of Louis XIV at Versailles (Orenstein 30). He wrote a number of fairy tales and folk tales from the oral traditions of France under the guise of Mother Goose. They were meant to be entertainments for the court but also to teach moral lessons. His version of *The Grandmother's Tale* published in 1697 is titled *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge (Little Red Cap)* (Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale* 745). A *chaperon* was a type of cap characteristically worn by bourgeoisie young girls and women. Perrault therefore elevates the girl's status from the peasantry implied in the oral tradition, connecting her to his intended audience. It is unclear why Perrault added the color red to the girl's cap though at the time, there were associations to sin, sensuality and the devil (Zipes, *Trial* 26). During the time of Louis XIV, marriages were arranged alliances meant to secure social and financial standing for the involved families. The most valuable asset the young woman could bring to the marriage was her virginity, so it needed to be guarded at all costs (Orenstein 36). Perrault saw girls and women as naive and susceptible to temptation, especially to smooth-talking lotharios. He wrote *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* as a cautionary tale. The protagonist shows no caution or suspicion when meeting the wolf and is easily seduced by him into telling details about her grandmother. At the

cottage, she willingly unclothes and gets into bed with him. Her fate is sealed and she is devoured. In Perrault's moral tale, she doesn't use her wiles to escape and there is no one to rescue her. Perrault makes his point clear with a final verse, explicitly warning girls of wolves, not as ferocious animals or as werewolves, but as handsome "cajoling sweet-talkers who follow

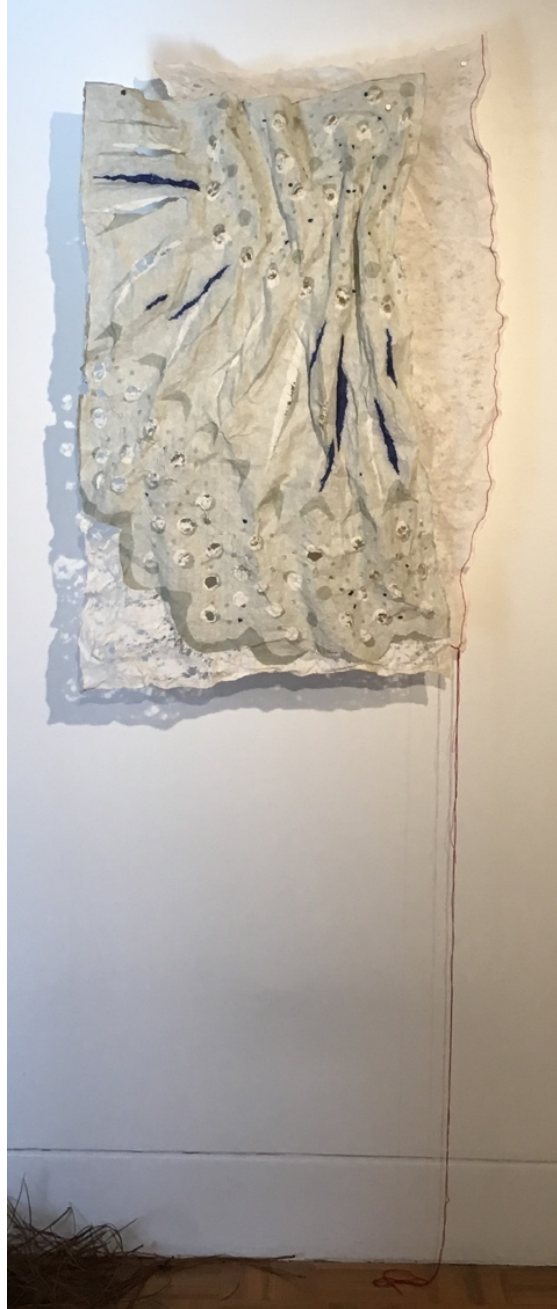


Figure 9: *Tempting Innocence*, 26" x 36", Hanji mulberry paper, embroidery cotton thread.

young ladies right into their homes, right to their bedsides" (Orenstein 37). Gone from the story are any references to sewing, any hints of cannibalism or talk of urination or defecation. The emphasis is on the sexual defilement and subsequent ruin of the girl's reputation and any chance at an advantageous marriage if she doesn't resist the wolf. It is implied that it is the girl's responsibility to protect her virginity and that her clothing, perhaps her red *chaperon*, may be too beguiling.

Rather than concentrating on the red cap, *Tempting Innocence* (see Fig. 9) suggests another bit of girl's clothing that may be considered provocative, her petticoat. The wall hanging layers include a heavier cut piece, shaped while drying to appear as folds of a petticoat fabric, overlaying a finer lace-patterned sheet of paper. As the single sheet of paper is agitated by hand, small openings are created, giving the paper a lacy texture. *Tempting*

Innocence relates to the sexual tension of the edge of a petticoat being seen peeking out from clothing. The petticoat may be too enticing to men, making a woman culpable of instigating a sexual assault. As Zipes discusses the viewpoint of women and men in Perrault's story and accompanying illustrations, "... women want men to rape them; men are powerful but weak beasts who cannot help themselves when tempted by alluring female creatures" (Zipes, *Trials* 358). The embroidered red line along the lace edge again brings



Figure 10: *Insidious Danger*, 2" x 3", Enameled steel, underglaze pencil, overglaze paint, sterling silver.

the girl protagonist into the scene and portends the danger she is in, as well as her future assault and demise. *Tempting Innocence* is accompanied by *Insidious Danger* (see Fig. 10). The brooch portrays a scene of a partial face, cut off as if looking through a peephole. It is not quite human but not quite wolf; perhaps it is the smooth-talking seducer that the character Le Petit Chaperon Rouge fatefully encounters. The creature appears benign but the fur-like hair sprouting from the face and the frame is reminiscent of a human changing into a werewolf and foreshadows the physical violence coming ahead.

CHAPTER 3

Rigid Obedience & Hidden Constraint

The most popular version of the tale, *Little Red Cap* first published by the German brothers Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm in 1812 (Grimm, *Complete Fairy Tales* 93) is represented by the middle pair of works. Perrault took aspects of the many oral versions he was exposed to and wrote his unique story for a specific moral lesson, deleting and adding details to suit his needs. The Grimm brothers, both scholars interested in German grammar and lexicography, began collecting folk tales and fairy tales to identify a unifying German national culture. Though the impression the Grimm brothers gave was that the tales they wrote down were from a “pure” Germanic peasantry, this wasn’t the case. Rather than going out into the countryside and collecting stories from rural areas themselves, they relied on fellow middle-class friends and villagers to relate oral folk tales they had heard as children. Two sisters, Jeanette and Marie Hassenpflug, who had French Huguenot connections were the sources for *Little Red Cap* (Zipes, *Brothers Grimm* 29). Though the Grimm brothers stated they wrote down their narratives as related to them, they frequently adjusted the story to make it more palatable for their reading public (Zipes, *Brothers Grimm* 31). Their initial publication of two-hundred fifty tales over two volumes (in 1812 and 1816) was meant to be a scholarly presentation of German folklore, heavily annotated and without illustrations. These volumes were not successful and they soon realized that the growing genre of children’s literature was more profitable. The Grimm brothers ultimately had seven publications of their folk tales and fairy tales, the last being in 1857. The most popular edition was a volume of fifty-five illustrated tales specifically tailored to children.

For the Grimm brothers, these tales were meant to be educational, training children to behave appropriately in a conservative, Protestant Christian, and strictly patriarchal society.

During this time in Germany, there was a growing middle class that believed in controlling excessive and natural impulses (Orenstein 55). In *Little Red Cap*, the Grimm brothers addressed these concerns. Overt sexual commentary, such as disrobing, was omitted as was any hint of cannibalism, an affront to Christian sensibilities. The character Little Red Cap was turned into a spoilt and vain girl with her grandmother making her a red hat that she loved so much, she had to wear it everywhere. The Grimm brothers explain clearly what is expected from Little Red Cap when her mother admonishes her to not talk to strangers, to stay on the straight pathway without veering off and to go immediately to grandmother's house. It is a stern warning to a young girl to oppress any urges for carefree pleasure. Obedience in children and women was a highly regarded virtue during the time period of the Grimm brothers (Zipes, *Complete Fairy Tales* xxxii). Little Red Cap disobeys. She doesn't realize the danger she is in when she talks to the wolf, often associated with Satan in Christianity. She follows the temptation of wandering into the woods, dawdling by picking wild flowers and indulging herself in the pleasure of nature. As a consequence, both her grandmother and she are eaten by the wolf. Unlike Perrault, who ends his story with that grizzly fate, the Grimm brothers allow for a saving grace with a strong paternal huntsman happening upon the scene and rescuing both Little Red Cap and the grandmother. Little Red Cap doesn't have the wits to save herself but is portrayed as a helpless young girl who needs a patriarchal figure to rescue her. In a male-dominated society, Zipes writes "a girl [or woman] receives her identity through a man, and that without male protection she will destroy herself and reap chaos in the world outside" (Zipes, *Trials* 356). The wolf, or the Devil, is defeated in the end and Little Red Cap states she has learned her lesson, saying to herself, "Never again will you stray from the path by yourself and go into the forest when your mother has forbidden it" (Grimm, *Original Complete* 87).

Rigid Obedience and *Hidden Constraint* reflect society's desire to oppress natural impulses especially in girls and women with the idea they are emotional, weak and need to be overseen. In *Rigid Obedience* (see Fig. 11) the weaving of mulberry paper strips in a conventional plain weave of under-one-over-one pattern expresses inflexible control. The pattern is reminiscent of the grating on windows that bar escape. Meanderings of thread and paper yarn represent the occasional slip up against such inflexibility. Colors in the weaving are muted shades of browns, dark reds, greens and blues reflective of the toning down of emotions and impulses in a conservative time period. The touches of exuberance are brighter colors of red and white indicating emotional spontaneity.

Hidden Constraint (see Fig. 12) displays a partial



Figure 11. *Rigid Obedience*, 28" x 42", Hanji mulberry paper, cotton thread.

view of a laced-up corset. Corsets throughout history were used to shape the female body to



Figure 12. *Hidden Constraint*, 2" x 3.5", Enameled steel, underglaze pencil, overglaze paint, sterling silver.

society's standards of beauty and desire. Colors remain muted and controlled. The corset represented here is from the 1810s, the time period the Grimm brothers first published *Little Red Cap* (Doyle 101). It predates the later, more extreme corsets which formed an hourglass figure and instead, is meant to push up the bosom and smooth out the rest of the figure (Doyle 102). Though *Little Red Cap* may not have worn a corset, it was a common undergarment for women in that era and is a symbol of the dominance of a patriarchal society over women.

CHAPTER 4

Aftermath & Lost Innocence (Fallen Shoe)

In both Perrault's and the Grimm brothers' stories, there is a great deal of violence when the wolf devours and kills the grandmother and granddaughter. There is no mention of the



Figure 13. *Aftermath*, 28" x 50", Hanji mulberry paper, cotton thread and yarn.

struggle, the sounds and the blood that would accompany those actions. The third wall grouping brings forward the violence and uncontrolled emotion in the grisly account with the color red prominent. In *Aftermath* (see Fig. 13), slashes of wolf claws that would have torn the girl's cape and flesh are mimicked in the mulberry paper. To create the series of large openings in the top layer, full sheets of mulberry paper are first felted together. Multiple long razor cuts are then made and the piece felted again, causing the slits to pull apart. The red signifies the cape and the blood hemorrhaging from flesh during the attack. Loops of red yarn at the bottom of the piece illustrate dripping blood. *Lost Innocence (Fallen Shoe)* (see Fig. 14) shows a girl's lone shoe as if cast off in the midst of a violent struggle with no sign of the shoe's

mate. In the background are small decals fired into the enamel, suggestive of wallpaper from grandmother's cottage.

An inspiration for these two pieces and the concept of the exhibit is the work of contemporary American artist Natalie Gwen Frank (1980 -). She is predominantly a painter whose large figurative paintings deal with sex, gender and power ("*Natalie Frank*"). In 2015

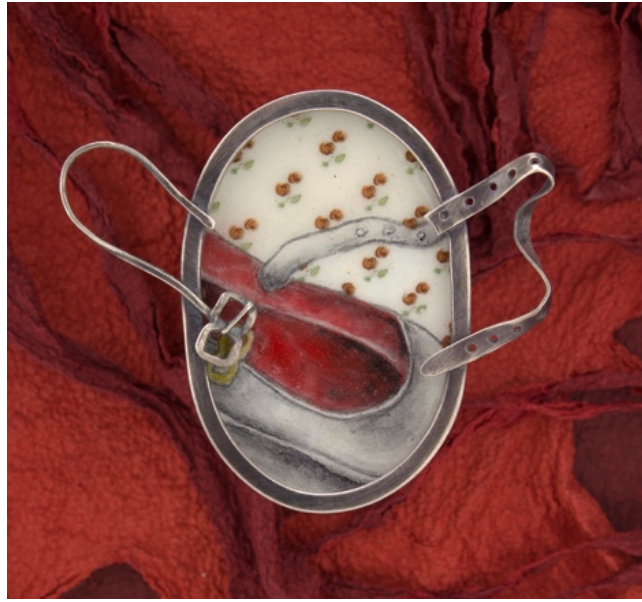


Figure 14. *Lost Innocence (Fallen Shoe)*, 3" x 3", Enameled steel, underglaze pencil, overglaze paint, vintage ceramic decals.

she published a book named *Tales of the Brothers Grimm* that includes thirty-six original Grimm brothers' stories illustrated with her gouache and chalk pastel work. Her graphics are totally



Figure 15. Natalie Frank, *Little Red Cap I*, 2011 - 2014. Larkin, Daniel. "Reclaiming the Lost Feminism of Fairy Tales." *Hyperallergic*, 29 June 2015, hyperallergic.com/217202/reclaiming-the-lost-feminism-of-fairy-tales/.

different than pictures historically used to accompany fairy tales and folk tales. She flaunts the sexuality and violence of the stories using bold, garish colors and dynamic lines to depict aggressive figures and surrealistic imagery. One of the illustrations for *Little Red Cap* shows the backside of the girl, painted red, naked in front of grandma's bed. The wolf in disguise lounges in the bed, his testicles peeking out from grandma's nightgown (Larkin) (see Fig. 15). The frenetic energy of Frank's work and unabashed look at the sexuality and violence of the Grimm brothers' writings are elements mimicked in *Aftermath* and the exhibit.

CHAPTER 5

The Scene of the Crime



Figure 16. *The Scene of the Crime*, 10' x 8', Artist handmade objects: Handwoven linen nightcap, hand-sewn and hand-dyed linen chemise, digital weaving in handmade and antiqued frame, crocheted bed throw. Found objects: Antique rope bed, antique rocker, wool rug, vintage family linens and quilt, chamber pot, Little Red Riding Hood teapot, tea cups, candlestick and beeswax candle, *Little Red Riding Hood* books from 1920s and 1930s.

Prominent in the exhibit is *The Scene of the Crime* (see Fig. 16), an installation that is meant to evoke the violence that occurred in grandma's cottage. The British artist Tracey Emin (1963 -) and her piece *My Bed* (1998) (see Fig. 17) is one inspiration for this portion of the exhibit. Emin's piece displays the actual bed in which she slept in for four days when she was dealing with severe depression (Tate Shots). The sheets are disheveled and the bed is surrounded by empty alcohol bottles, cigarette butts, bloodied panties, used condoms, slippers and

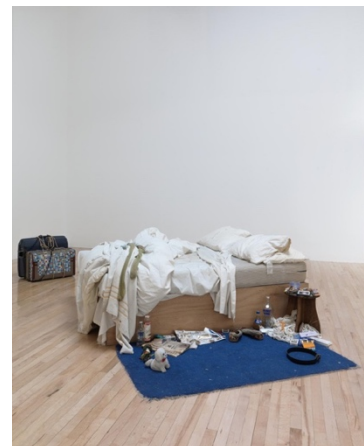


Figure 17. Tracey Emin, *My Bed*, 1998. Tate. "Tracey Emin Born 1963." Tate, www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/tracey-emin-2590.

rubbish. It is a commentary on life as a modern single woman. *The Scene of the Crime* is my interpretation of a nineteenth century peasant German home, relating to the Grimm brothers' version of the tale and the time period they were actively writing *Little Red Cap*.

Referring to the exhibit's installation as a crime scene, another inspiration artist is Frances Glessner Lee (1878 -1962) and her work *The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death* made in the 1940's (Cooley) (see Fig.

18). Lee was the heiress to the International Harvester fortune. She did not have a formal education but was taught at home by tutors and instructed in a variety of women's domestic arts including small-scale model building. She became interested in crime during her forties and was able



Figure 18. Lee, Frances Glessner, 3 Room Dwelling from *The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death*, 1940s. Stamp, Jimmy. "How a Chicago Heiress Trained Homicide Detectives With an Unusual Tool: Dollhouses." Smithsonian.com, Smithsonian Institution, 6 Mar. 2014, www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/murder-miniature-nutshell-studies-unexplained-death-180949943/.

to establish a department of legal medicine at Harvard Medical School in the 1930s with the aim of training medical examiners. As a training aid for policemen in how to examine an area for clues and process crime scenes, she used her domestic arts skills to make detailed crime scene dioramas with a scale of 1" to 1'. She made twenty dioramas that continue to be used by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in Baltimore, Maryland ("Murder Is Her Hobby").

In the installation *The Scene of the Crime*, details are included that allude to the violent act that has occurred in the room. *The Scene of the Crime* is a combination of handmade items that I created and found objects (see Fig. 19). A found antique rope bed with a hay mattress is the centerpiece, with more hay scattered under the bed. Vintage bedding is disarrayed and



Figure 19. *The Scene of the Crime* (B&W with hand-made items in color: Linen chemise, Maple end table, Digital weaving with antiqued frame, Crocheted bed throw, Grandma's nightcap).

Grandma's iconic nightcap hangs from one of the bedposts. I sewed the nightcap using hand-woven linen patterned fabric. Tossed on the bed's comforter is a crocheted throw titled *Grimm Encounter* (see Fig. 20). The technique, filet crochet, allows one to crochet a picture and words into a piece. The scene depicted shows opposing profiles, with a woman's outline facing outward



Figure 20. *Grimm Encounter*, 24" x 60", Hand-dyed cotton crochet thread.

to the left connecting to the wolf's silhouette facing outward to the right. In between the two profiles are the words "Grimm Encounter," a reference to the Grimm brothers' tale and the fatal meeting in the story between Little

Red Cap and the wolf. Completing the installation are other found objects: an antique rocker, a floral wool rug, and a variety of twentieth-century memorabilia from the story. The scene is

disordered with a candlestick knocked down and a tea cup broken on the floor along with a scattered handkerchief and an opened book of *Little Red Riding Hood* from 1934 showing the wolf in disguise waiting for his next victim in Grandma's bed (see Fig. 21). I constructed the end table in solid maple, mimicking the unique posts of the rope bed in the turned legs. A hand-sewn linen chemise is flung on the rocker, another clue in the crime scene. It has been dyed red on the bottom edge, illustrating its title *Stained with Blood* (see Fig. 22).

Hanging on the back wall is the framed digital



Figure 21. *The Scene of the Crime* (Detail)
Handmade maple end table with found objects including Little Red Riding Hood teapot, *Little Red Riding Hood* books from 1920s and 1930s and broken teacup.



Figure 22. *Stained with Blood* (Displayed in *The Scene of the Crime*), 30" x 48", Hand-dyed linen with handmade crocheted edging, cotton crochet thread, ribbon.

weaving *In Bed with the Wolf* (*Views of Gustave Doré's 1883 Woodcut*) (see Fig. 23). Across the textile are three woven repeats of Gustave Doré's 1883 woodcut illustrating the story's protagonist with her eyes transfixed on the wolf as they lay in bed together. Digital weaving allows a weaver to use a photograph, or in this case a photo of a woodcut image, and manipulate the image in Photoshop into areas with black, white and multiple values of gray. These color sections can then be assigned different weave structures which mimic the different values. In this weaving three different sets of



Figure 23. *In Bed with the Wolf* (Views of Gustave Doré's 1883 woodcut), 11" x 45", Cotton thread, handmade distressed pine wood frame.

weaving structures were selected giving three different perspectives to the woodcut, similar to three different views of a story. The Photoshop file is interfaced with a TC-2 computerized weaving loom that selects which black, vertical warp threads need to be raised as the weaver throws by hand the white, horizontal weft threads (see Fig. 24). I made the weaving's custom frame, antiquing it to place the modern digital weaving into the Grimm brothers' time period. An embroidered red thread hugs the outline of the granddaughter in one of the views and then trails off to the rope bed, connecting the story's violent episode foreshadowed in the digital weaving to the installation's bed. Besides the red thread, the bed and digital weaving are connected by the color of red lighting flooding the scene. Though the time period of the exhibit installation is in the nineteenth century, the addition of a weaving that utilizes a modern technique suggests the timelessness of crimes against women and their reoccurrence in current times.

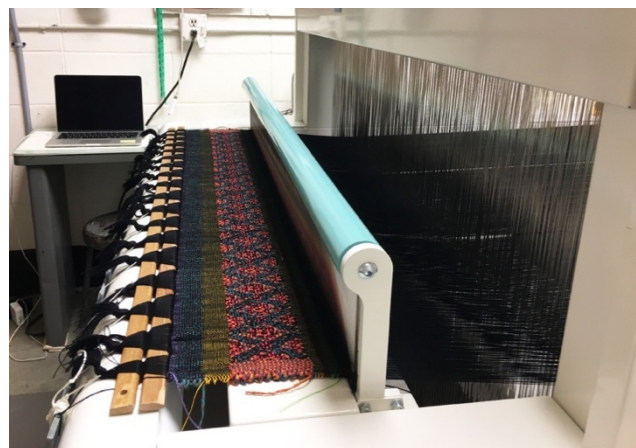


Figure 24. TC-2 computerized weaving loom with black cotton warp threads.

CHAPTER 6

Coming into Being & My Wolf's Eye

Since the publication by the Grimm brothers of *Little Red Cap*, there have been numerous adaptations based on the tale. In England, and then the United States of America, the story became *Little Red Riding Hood* most likely due to the popularity of hooded red capes which were worn by women living in the English countryside in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Orenstein 57). Melodramatic plays and poems were popular following the Grimm brothers' publications when the story reached England and the States. In the twentieth century, the tables were turned in the tale and Little Red Riding Hood began to successfully deal with the wolf. James Thurber (1894 -1961) wrote a short story *The Little Girl and the Wolf* in 1939 which starts like the Grimm brothers' tale but has a different ending. Little Red Riding Hood enters her grandmother's cottage and immediately recognizes that the wolf in bed, dressed in a nightgown and nightcap, is not her grandmother. Her response is to "[take] an automatic out of her basket and [shoot] the wolf dead. (Moral: It is not so easy to fool little girls nowadays as it used to be)" (Zipes, *Trials* 229).

During the twentieth century Little Red Riding Hood became overtly sexualized. In 1943 Tex Avery (1908 -1980), an animator and cartoonist, made a spin-off of *Little Red Riding Hood*, a cartoon he titled *Red Hot Riding Hood* (Gibson). In this version, Little Red Riding Hood is an adult nightclub singer and the wolf, dressed in a tuxedo, makes wolf whistles at the sexy bombshell. Red Hot Riding Hood rejects the wolf's advances but the grandmother makes her own advances on the wolf, scaring him away. Sexualization of Little Red Riding Hood continues today. Modern Halloween costumes of the character include short red hooded capes, revealing mini-skirts, laced bustiers and tall black boots along with demure peasant dresses accompanied

by red capes and baskets. The contrast in Halloween costumes mirrors the opposing views of women in today's society and the position women's clothing plays in highlighting seduction or modesty.

Sexuality or passion may be an element of the wolf's temperament but there are other facets such as determination and intelligence. A number of mid-twentieth century feminist authors such as Angela Carter (1940 -1992) desired to meld aspects of the human and wolf in their version of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Carter wrote a number of stories based on Grimm's folk tales published in her book *The Bloody Chamber* in 1979. They present a darker modern adaptation to folklore. For her adaptation of *Little Red Riding Hood*, she reaches back to the oral tradition and the idea of werewolves as integrating human and wolf aspects. Her story *The Company of Wolves* has the maiden protagonist encountering a handsome young hunter in the woods. His actions are the same as the wolf's, devouring the grandmother and waiting for the girl at the cottage. The description of him has aspects of a human man but with lice infested hair, glaring eyes and salivating mouth. At the cottage, the maiden doesn't flinch when confronted by this wolf-like man and readily joins the werewolf, "sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf" (Carter 152).

Another artist that plays with the relationship between woman and wolf is German-born American mixed media contemporary artist Kiki Smith (1954 -). She often uses the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* as a vehicle to express her views on sex, birth and regeneration ("*Whitney to*



Figure 25. *Smith, Kiki, Lying with the Wolf*, 2001.
"Kiki Smith, Lying with the Wolf." Khan Academy,
Khan Academy,
www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/global-contemporary/a/kiki-smith-lying-with-the-wolf.

Present Kiki Smith”). Two of her works from 2001 are 6' x 7' drawings titled *Lying with the Wolf* (see Fig. 25) and *Wearing the Skin*. They depict peaceful scenes of a naked girl and a wolf lying in bed. The similarly large drawing *Born* shows grandma and Little Red Riding Hood stepping out of the wolf's cut abdomen. Smith started using Little Red Riding Hood as a motif in 1999 when she created her child-size mixed media sculpture *Daughter* with paper, cloth and hair



Figure 26. Smith, Kiki, *Daughter*, 1999. Millington, Ruth. “Artists in Focus/ 7 Contemporary Artists Disturbing the Dark Side of Fairy Tales.” *Ruth Millington*, 6 July 2018, ruthmillington.co.uk/.



Figure 27. *Coming into Being*, 50" x 50" x 65", Linen (hand-dyed, handmade into chenille), screen printed & hand-dyed silk charmeuse, cotton crochet thread.

(see Fig. 26). The girl may be the daughter of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf as she appears to be transforming into a werewolf with the placement of hair on her face (Palma). An accompanying soundtrack of growls completes the transformation. In all of these works Smith represents Little Red Riding Hood not as a victim but as an equal partner to the wolf or as an emerging figure that has grown from the relationship.

It is with this in mind that the last piece of the exhibit *Coming into*

Being (see Fig. 27) is presented. Little Red Riding Hood is not a victim of sexual predation or a helpless, disobedient spoilt child, but has grown with a wolf's characteristics including strength and independence. The piece is a red hooded cape like the one Little Red Riding Hood wears, but it is made with four layers of linen. The inner layer is hand-dyed red showing passion and power peeking through the wolf-like outer colors of tan, gray and charcoal. The four layers have been made into chenille by sewing parallel lines



Figure 28. *Coming into Being* (Detail of linen chenille).



Figure 29. *Coming into Being* (Detail of screen-printed silk charmeuse and cotton crocheted edging).

of stitching

through all four layers. The outer three layers are cut in between the stitching lines, and finally the fabric is then machine washed and dried to fray the exposed edges (see Fig. 28). The chenille technique's ragged edges make the cape more like an animal's pelt.

Inside, the lining of the cape is hand-dyed gray soft silk charmeuse. Images of fig leaves were screen printed on the material in transparent green, referring to regrowth of nature and sexuality. A red hand-

crocheted edging refers back to the original oral tale

of women's crafts and adds a touch of fragility (see Fig. 29). The length, fullness and weight of the cape make a statement of strength enveloping a woman's figure. It is an empowerment cape.

Besides the fur, wolf features are added by the enamel brooch that closes the hood. *My Wolf's Eye* shows a close-up of a wolf's eye peering through sterling silver leaves (see Fig. 30). It is in the style of the other exhibition brooches, thereby giving a nod to previous narratives of *Little Red Riding Hood*. The final two weaving transparencies



Figure 30. *My Wolf's Eye*, 4" x 3.5", Enameled steel, underglaze pencil, overglaze paint, sterling silver.

of the woods, *Little Red Riding Hood*:

Arrival, flank the cape placing it at the conclusion of the folk tale (see Fig. 31). Little Red Riding Hood's metamorphosis into a creature with human and wolf tendencies is complete.



Figure 31. *Coming into Being* flanked by *Little Red Riding Hood: Arrival*.

CONCLUSION

The story of *Little Red Riding Hood* and the perceptions of the protagonist has changed through time. It started in the oral tradition hundreds of years ago as a tale told by women to other adults as entertainment. Related during a time when the belief in werewolves existed, the wolf was a real threat to the girl walking through the woods. In the oral tradition of *The Grandmother's Tale*, she is portrayed as resourceful and successfully escapes the danger by using her cunning. When the tale is first written down, the male author, Charles Perrault, uses it as a means to admonish young girls to protect their virginity from unscrupulous, seductive “wolves.” His warning is to not be provocative in their dress or manners; the result of being too tempting was to be devoured. A little over a hundred years later, Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm wrote the tale in a different environment that was conservative, Protestant Christian, and strongly patriarchal. Their *Little Red Cap* was educational with the emphasis on obedience and control of emotional impulses. The character Little Red Cap succumbs to the Satan-like wolf's temptations resulting in the swallowing of both her grandmother and she. The appearance of a strong fatherly huntsman who kills the wolf and delivers both victims alive allows for Little Red Cap's redemption. In the last century there has been variations of the Grimm brothers' tale, playing on the protagonist's independent streak and allowing her to kill the wolf or to express her sexual allure. Many feminist writers and artists beginning in the 1970's took their inspiration from the older oral version of the tale. They often brought together the passive qualities of the granddaughter and the aggressive passionate aspects of the wolf.

My thesis exhibit allows the viewer to enter the world of *Little Red Riding Hood*. The atmosphere created with lighting and towering shadows in the gallery suggests the apprehension

our protagonist would feel walking through the forest. The artwork and installation created for this exhibition are all used to explore themes from the historical folk tales of victimization, obedience, oppression, and violence toward women. The Grimm brothers' *Little Red Cap* remains the basis for the tale told to children today and the issues raised from the early written tales persist in the modern world. This folk tale is a vehicle to bring awareness to the underlying injustices women face in the present and the intransigence of misogynistic attitudes women suffer currently in their lives. In that light, my exhibit illustrates a contemporary woman's life experiences: walking through a darkened street, worrying whether her clothing is too provocative, and following safety instructions to avoid getting into dangerous situations.

Little Red Riding Hood started as a woman's tale with a clever and capable heroine. Male authors altered the plot so that the lecherous wolf who devours the girl protagonist and the rescuing huntsman who saves her became the dominant characters. These commanding male roles were accepted in the patriarchal societies of King Louis XIV in France and of nineteenth century in Germany. They continue to be accepted today. As a response to this view of *Little Red Riding Hood*, my exhibit culminates in a final transformation of the title character. Bringing together two contrasting elements, the innocence and naiveté of Little Red Riding Hood and the strength and passion of the wolf, she has become empowered. It is a return to the narrative's oral tradition in which women told the tale and the protagonist now has control of her own story.

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