

✿ Prologue: Framing Little Red Riding Hood ✿

IN 1989, ALAN DUNDES, the renowned folklorist, published *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook* with ten different essays exemplifying different approaches to the folk narrative that gave rise to the literary tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*. His concluding essay, "Interpreting 'Little Red Riding Hood' Psychoanalytically,"¹ is a masterful summary of the immense scholarship that has sought to explain why we continually retell the adventures of Little Red Riding Hood, and it is also a powerful argument for using psychoanalysis in folklore research. However, since Dundes is concerned primarily with opening the eyes of folklorists to the multi-faceted aspects of the tale and its underlying sexual meanings, he sets a frame for understanding the tale that still needs modification, if we are going to grasp how an oral tale of the 17th century was transformed into a literary tale of rape and violence.

In fact, Dundes obfuscates the issue of both narrative and sexual violence because of his interest in infantile fantasy. Yet, there is a way of framing the origins of *Little Red Riding Hood* in which the theme of literary appropriation and sexual initiation can be linked to rape that, I believe, takes precedence over questions of infantile sexuality. It may not be the only way to frame the story of Little Red Riding Hood, but I want to use Dundes's provocative essay to clarify why it is still important to keep the frame of violence in studying the social history of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Otherwise, "her" history as female object will continue to be violated in the name of a scholarship dominated by men.

Dundes argues that neither folklorists nor psychoanalysts are aware of the possible Asian cognates of *Little Red Riding Hood*, and therefore, their interpretations of the tale have been misleading if not myopic. Using the research of the sinologist and sociologist Wolfram Eberhard, Dundes shows that there is an oral tale type

FROM: The TRIALS + TRIBULATIONS
OF LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

Jack Zipes

✿ Preface ✿

IN 1983, WHEN *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* first appeared, it caused a great deal of commotion because my study was based on the premise that literary fairy tales were consciously cultivated and employed in 17th-century France to reinforce the regulation of sexuality in modern Europe. I also tried to demonstrate that the discourse on manners and gender roles in fairy tales has contributed more to the creation of our present-day social norms than we realize. A tale like *Little Red Riding Hood* was my case in point. Its unique history can reveal to what extent the boundaries of our existence have evolved from male phantasy and sexual struggle for domination. As part of our common heritage, the tale and its reception through history indicate the hidden power of the commonplace that we neglect or tend to repress. My book was an attempt to recall a repressed history in the hope that we will explore alternatives for the future.

To my surprise, the heated debate about the destiny and identity of Little Red Riding Hood has continued during the last ten years, brought on in part by my own study, but also because, I believe, the issue of rape and violence in our society has taken on immense proportions. [It is because rape and violence are at the core of the history of *Little Red Riding Hood* that it is the most widespread and notorious fairy tale in the Western world, if not in the entire world.]

The revised edition of *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* is an endeavor to strengthen and refine my argument, and it provides me with an opportunity to re-enter the debate about the significance of this fairy tale and fairy tales in general. I do not intend now to present the definitive history of *Little Red Riding Hood* or bring about closure to the debate about the girl's fate. After all, there is no end to her story: even though Little Red Riding Hood is constantly mutilated by the wolf and dies, she is always

reincarnated in some retold form to mark shifts in our attitudes toward gender formation, sexuality, and the use of power. My intention is to reflect once again upon the cultural and political significance of Red Riding Hood's continual reappearance.

In the present edition of *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* I have included seven new versions. Alphonse Daudet's dramatic skit, *The Romance of Red Riding Hood* (1862), is a brilliant interpretation of the underlying sexual connotations of the tale, and it is a rare work that most critics, even specialists of French literature, have never read or appreciated. Pierre Cami's *Little Green Riding Hood* (1917) is a hilarious burlesque that recaptures the original emancipatory impetus of the folk tradition through word play. Olga Broumas's poem "Little Red Riding Hood" (1977) is an incisive answer to Anne Sexton and one of the first lesbian reappropriations of the literary tradition. Tanith Lee's gothic narrative, *Wolf-land* (1983), reflects the outrage that many women feel about the violence that the protagonist of *Little Red Riding Hood* experienced and continues to experience. Anne Sharpe's *Not So Little Red Riding Hood* (1985) develops an innovative narrative strategy to suggest ways in which women can protect themselves from exploitation. Gwen Strauss's poem "The Waiting Wolf" (1990) is a highly sophisticated analysis of the manner in which men rationalize their urge to victimize women. And finally, Sally Miller Gearhart's remarkable tale, *Roja and Leopold* (1990), is a carnivalesque revision of the traditional *Red Riding Hood* tale that turns all the characters inside out and speaks out in the name of animal and gay/lesbian rights.

It is not by chance that most of the new and experimental versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* since 1983 have been written by women and are feminist. The confrontations and situations that women experience in our society have compelled them to reflect upon the initial encounter between wolf and girl that they may have heard, read, or seen as children. I shall have more to say about Little Red Riding Hood and our "rape culture" in the prologue, "Framing Little Red Riding Hood," and in the epilogue, "Re-Framing and Reviewing Little Red Riding Hood." Both have been added to this revised edition. The essay, "Re-Framing and Reviewing Little Red Riding Hood," was originally printed in my book *Don't Bet on the Prince* as "A Second Gaze at Little Red Riding Hood," and I have thoroughly revised it to include recent research on the history of the tale and fairy-tale illustrations. Finally, all the bibliographies and references have been updated to 1993 in an

effort to provide readers with the latest news about Red Riding Hood's moves. Otherwise, my original social history, that is, "The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood," has not been changed, since I still believe in this version of the literary narrative's history, and all that has happened since 1983 appears to confirm my views.

Once again I want to thank the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for awarding me a summer research grant in 1980, which helped make this book possible. I also want to express my gratitude to Merrilan Edwards, Don Biddison, Jessica Brown, and the rest of the Golda Meir interlibrary loan department of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, who were most generous in providing me with assistance and invaluable material. In the preparation of the first edition I profited from the fine suggestions and editorial assistance of Jeanne Juster and Jenna Schulman, who were working for Bergin and Garvey at that time. In the production of the revised edition, I have benefited from the expertise of Stewart Cauley, Michael Esposito, and Mary Neal Meador. My daughter Hanna has afforded me the pleasure of her many new insights about Little Red Riding Hood through her re-enacting and re-defining the role in my study, and my wife, Carol Dines, has thoroughly grounded my insights by editing the new sections and translations of the book. Of course, Bill Germano is always on the scene somewhere, and I am most grateful that he was willing to guide and support the revised edition of this anthology.

If it had not been for *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, I would never have met Angela Carter, and over the last ten years until her untimely death in 1992, she not only encouraged me to develop some of my fairy-tale projects, but she also made immense contributions in revising the entire genre and the manner in which we look at fairy tales today. It was somewhat fortuitous that, before I actually became acquainted with Angela Carter, I had written this book in her spirit, and it is now reappearing as a gesture to keep her spirit alive.