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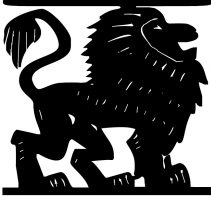
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## Rewriting “Little Red Riding Hood”: Victorian Fairy Tales and Mass-Visual Culture

Laurence Talairach-Vielmas

I want you to know, monsieur, that I’ve been devoured an infinite number of times, and each time it is my fault. There you have it! Four thousand years that I’ve had the same accident, four thousand years that I am revived, four thousand years, by an incredible fatality, I’m going to put myself inevitably in the paws of the wolf. What do you want? I always die very young, and when I return to the world, I only have a vague memory of my previous existences, very vague. . . . Oh, how interesting it would be to write and peruse that *Story of Red Riding Hood in all the centuries*! Monsieur Perrault has sketched but only one chapter. How fortunate is he who will write the others. (Daudet 160)

As Alphonse Daudet’s rewriting of “Little Red Riding Hood” suggests, innocent maidens devoured by hungry wolves have frequently been resuscitated. Of course, Daudet does not merely allude to the literary tradition here, but it is revealing to note that he particularly stresses the little girl’s responsibility and points to Charles Perrault as the writer of a significant chapter in this ongoing story. This detail lays emphasis on one of the most significant aspects of the enduring fairy tale. Indeed, what is particularly of interest in the history of “Little Red Riding Hood” is that the oral and the literary traditions, though conveying very different images of gender relationships, are more often than not interwoven in rewritings of the tale. As Jack Zipes has pointed out, once Perrault had appropriated the story and adapted it for an upper-class audience at the end of the seventeenth century, “it became practically impossible for either oral storytellers or writers not to take into account his version, and thus storytellers and writers became the conveyors of both the oral and literary tradition of this

particular tale” (Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations* 7). This idea is fraught with meaning, for, as Zipes contends, the changes made to the folk tales consisted in transforming “a hopeful oral tale about the initiation of a young girl into a tragic one of violence in which the girl is blamed for her own violation” (Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations* 7). Consequently, rewritings of the tale potentially hovered between showing an innocent young maiden on her journey toward experience and adulthood and staging a young woman fatally punished for stepping off the tracks of proper femininity. As this paper will show, the question of the responsibility of the fairy-tale heroine, commodified as a “red riding hood,” was even more meaningful with the advent of mass visual culture in the second half of the nineteenth century. As exemplified by several rewritings of the tale, Victorian Red Riding Hoods were frequently turned into fashion addicts indulging in their own image the better to seduce—even if sometimes innocently—hungry wolves.

*The History of Little Red Riding Hood’s Commodification:  
Fairy Tales, Materialist Culture, and Disembodiment*

Fairy tales often bring to the fore the issue of woman’s relationship to nature. As the heroines’ initiatory journeys map out young girls’ growth and transformation into women, the tales question the passage from nature to culture. This is particularly the case in “Little Red Riding Hood,” which deals with a little girl who trusts her own nature and indulges in sensual pleasures. The rewritings of “Little Red Riding Hood” over the ages throw into high relief how the transformation of little girls into women undoubtedly worked in tandem with women’s acculturation and control of their natural bodies. The little girl’s acculturation is symbolized by the most relevant motif of the classical fairy tale: the red riding hood. The *chaperon*, Zipes explains, was “a small stylish cap worn by the women of the aristocracy and middle classes in the sixteenth and seventeenth century” (Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations* 75–76) and encapsulates how Perrault stylized the folk tale in order to match the social and aesthetic standards of an upper-class audience. As an upper-class marker, the red riding hood motif codifies the heroine and constructs her as an object. The appearance of the red riding hood motif is an obvious indication of the evolution of the construction of the body in Western society. Zipes contends that the historical evolution of the tale “parallels a development of sexual socialization in Western society” (Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations* 43). The tale highlights the taming of the body and the restraining of natural instincts, since a little girl is punished for indulging in sensuality and must

learn to discipline herself and to keep her instincts in check. As the tale stresses the necessity for the little girl to control her inner nature, it also underscores the importance of physical appearance. The riding hood acts as evidence that the more the little girl's outer appearance is in keeping with the fashion standards of the day, the more the young girl should be able to regulate her nature—or, at least, to cloak it beneath gaudy material. This objectification has constantly been rewritten and even emphasized in the twentieth century, as Little Red Riding Hoods were turned into sex objects—the hood standing for "an iconic sign of the seducer, the femme fatale" (Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations* 8).

Many rewritings of the tale especially stress Little Red Riding Hood's vanity,<sup>1</sup> illuminating how the red riding hood sheds light on the contrast between the heroine's inner nature and outer appearance. As a matter of fact, as the tale brings into play the clash between the natural body and civilized mores and manners, it turns the fashionable cap into a reversed mirror of the little girl's unruly sexuality. Consequently, the construction of the ideal body not as "natural" but as "manufacturable" (Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations* 63) enhances even more the organic urges that the civilizing process aims to discipline and curb. The transformation of the young girl into a commodified woman luring man and provoking her own violation is thus twofold. On the one hand, it shows the standards of comportment that Perrault sought to instill into his fairy tales so as to limit the nature of children. On the other hand, it also suggests that such behavioral standards might be reappropriated and become a means for women to counteract gender roles and male domination. Paradoxically, therefore, as the woman's identity merges with the red cap and becomes commodified as a "red riding hood," Little Red Riding Hood simultaneously appears as an image of lust and desire—not particularly fearing to mate with the wolf.

The clash between the natural body and the construction of the self as image mostly gained significance in the Victorian period, which saw the advent of mass visual culture. Victorian rewritings of fairy tales often bring to the fore images of the body curbed, supervised, regulated—using the fairy tale's widespread emphasis on the body (from metamorphosis to corporal punishment) to convey new meanings regarding the construction of gender identity. Indeed, the rewriting of fairy tales was frequently a means for Victorian writers to tackle the evolution of the construction of the Western bourgeois body, surveyed and controlled. Many heroines of Victorian fairy tales are taught to turn their selves into images and to efface their bodies (see Talairach-Vielmas 33–87). In so doing, they inevitably become cultural objects. As Nancy Armstrong contends: "Cultural objects

tend to lose contact with the material conditions of their production, undergo transformations resembling the commodification process, and assume a form which is disparagingly called ‘the image’ or ‘free-floating images’” (Armstrong 2).

Throughout the centuries, the heroines of fairy tales have always been shaped as ideally beautiful princesses, their beauty not only guaranteeing their morality but also enabling them to win a prince, hence securing their wealth. In the Victorian period, fairy tales lay even more stress on their heroines’ beauty. In Christina Rossetti’s fantasy, *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) (a rewriting of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* [1865]), for instance, the little girls’ bodies are obsessively reflected in mirrors, which rob them of their corporeality. The title of Lewis Carroll’s sequel to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), fully posits the importance of the relationship between the little girl’s educational journey and the looking-glass that reflects her image. In fact, Nancy Armstrong has shown the extent to which the little girl’s encounter with tantalizing bottles and cakes luring her to consume them is related to Alice’s regulation of her appetite (nibbling at one side of the mushroom or the other) and control of her image. As I have argued elsewhere, Alice’s journey in *Wonderland* could well be regarded as a journey through consumer culture until she finally becomes commodified as fragile ware as “Lass, handle with care” in *Through the Looking-Glass* (see Talairach-Vielmas 49–65). Alice is, indeed, a good example of the way in which the curbing of Victorian little girls’ or princesses’ nature and their disembodiment were often shown to result from their commodification. The case of “Little Red Riding Hood” is even more telling, since the little girl’s identity merges with and depends upon the clothes she is wearing, enhancing all the better the heroine’s commodification. This may be the reason why many nineteenth-century rewritings emphasized the importance of Little Red Riding Hood’s appearance. In America, Alfred Mills’s 1872 *Red Riding Hood* is a vain little girl who tries to model her body:

Once upon a time there lived a little girl who had such a sweet temper that she seemed to be made of sugar and spice, like the little girl in the nursery rhyme. Her mother was very fond of her, and, in order to set off her beauty, made her a hood out of an old red flannel petticoat, in which she looked very pretty, and all the neighbors, in admiration, called her Little Red Riding-Hood. Now, although she was a very good girl, her school-fellows said that Little Red Riding-Hood had one very naughty little fault, which no girl, little or big, ever had before in any age of the world: she was vain—just a little vain. They even whispered that she had been known to tie two brass ear-rings to her ears with bits of cotton, pretending that her ears had been

*really* pierced; and that more than once she had made up her dress into an unseemly bunch behind, pretending to have a Grecian bend! (Mills 188)

The transformation of the petticoat into a hood is symbolic of the way in which the most significant motif of the fairy tale underscores the transformation of the natural body and the repression of sexuality—turning the little girl into a civilized individual subject to surveillance and discipline, as Michel Foucault has contended in *Discipline and Punish*. But more revealingly perhaps, Mills's emphasis on his Little Riding Hood's obsession with fashion works in tandem with his transposition of the tale into modern society. The fairy realm of the classical fairy tale is then rewritten as the chimerical or *unreal* appearance of reality: the modern world is a place where illusions and delusions prevail, as women use beauty aids to trick beholders. The fact that Mills resorts to the realistic mode is fraught with meaning. Realism proceeds, indeed, not by referring to things "but to visual representations of things" (Armstrong 3). As Roland Barthes has shown, realistic description does not reproduce the real: it weaves codes—just like a tale-teller weaves stories, perhaps (*S/Z* 28).

The rewriting of Perrault's classical fairy tale as a modern tale anchored in nineteenth-century society thus enabled writers to deal with the artificial construction of the female body induced by mass visual culture. Alfred Mills's transposition of Little Red Riding Hood into modern society is no exception. Both Anne Thackeray Ritchie's "Little Red Riding Hood" (1868) and Harriet Louisa Childe-Pemberton's "All My Doing; or Red Riding-Hood Over Again" (1882) are set in Victorian England and the authors particularly stressed the links between their rewritings of the tale and the illusory nature of reality. In both tales, the impact of mass visual culture on the construction of the fairy-tale heroines is of primary importance: the commodified little Red Riding Hoods convey Ritchie's and Childe-Pemberton's discourse on the construction of modern femininity.

*Revamping Red Riding Hood's Desires and Appetite:  
The Case of Anne Thackeray Ritchie*

Anne Thackeray Ritchie (1837–1919) was an essayist, a novelist and a biographer. Most of her essays were initially published in *The Cornhill Magazine*, first edited by her father, as were her novels, short stories, and fairy tales. The latter were collected in *Five Old Friends and a Young Prince* (1868) and *Bluebeard's Keys and Other Stories* (1874). Ritchie was particularly interested in the female literary tradition, as her essays, such as *A Book of Sybils: Mrs. Barbauld, Mrs. Opie, Miss Edgeworth, Miss Austen* (1883), suggest. Most importantly, as underlined in *Toilers*

*and Spinsters, and Other Essays* (1874), Ritchie was much concerned with the social condition of Victorian women and the few choices offered to women outside marriage. Her fiction problematizes the importance of marriage in women's lives. Her tales often contrast the fate of spinsters with that of married women, using spinsters as narrators spinning stories of marriage, as exemplified by her recurrent narrator, Miss Williamson. In fact, neither conformist nor radically feminist, her writings display constant tensions, as Manuela Mourao has convincingly shown (Mourao 2001). Through a "delicate balance" (Mourao 1997, 78), she systematically appears to subscribe to portraits of exemplary women while hinting at women's economic dependence on men.

Ritchie frequently visited Paris and was partly educated there by her grandparents. She also often used Paris and London as backdrops to her rewritings of classical fairy tales that were aimed at an adult audience. In her "Little Red Riding Hood" (1868)<sup>2</sup> the narrator, Miss Williamson, and H., her sister-in-law, are in Paris. At the end of the day, they long for a little quiet and silence "after the noise of the machines thundering all day in the Great Exhibition of the Champ de Mars" (Ritchie 155). Ritchie's revisiting of "Little Red Riding Hood" overtly aims to revamp Perrault's tale (a reference to Perrault appears at the beginning). She launches her tale with a description of Rémy de la Louvière—her wolf—and Little Red Riding Hood in her "fairy palace . . . lovely to look upon, enchanted; a palace of art, with galleries, and terraces, and belvederes, and orange-flowers scenting the air, and fragrant blossoms falling in snow-showers, and fountains of life murmuring and turning marble to gold as they flowed" (155)—while Miss Williamson and H. are just coming back from the Great Exhibition. Compared to the Palace of Art and Industry, Little Red Riding Hood's house (a hotel in which she is staying for a month) indicates the links between the marvelous and fairy-like and a modern culture grounded in illusions and the deceptive nature of reality. However, Ritchie revisits "Little Red Riding Hood" so as to bring to light her heroine's nature more than to efface it, the heroine contrasting, therefore, with her modern society.

Great Exhibitions recurrently appeared in Ritchie's fairy tales as symbols of the modern world. Moreover, the 1851 London Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace was often compared to fairyland. When Queen Victoria, who was privately dubbed "the Faery" by her favorite Prime Minister, Disraeli (Lambourne 53), entered the Crystal Palace for the first time, the place, she claimed, "had quite the effect of fairyland" (Gere 64), all the more so because a tableau of fairies representing "Art, Science, Concord, Progress, Peace, Wealth, Health, Success, Happiness, Industry and Plenty" appeared at the entrance (Lambourne 51–52). Significantly, the

Great Exhibitions epitomized the advent of mass visual culture. In Paris or London, they showed how nature could be tamed and safely encased, turning the world into a showroom and transforming the exhibited objects into images. In fact, the displayed objects, thus disembodied, intimated the illusory nature of reality.

Many nineteenth-century fairy tales featured the Paris or London Great Exhibitions in order to underline the jarring contrast between the world of fairies and the industrial world. The aim of such fairy tales was mostly to shed light on the disenchanting experience of modernity and progress.<sup>3</sup> Other rewritings also aimed at foregrounding the immateriality of the modern world in which, in Roland Barthes's words, "everything is turned into images: only images exist and are produced and are consumed" (Barthes *Camera Lucida*, 119).<sup>4</sup> As already mentioned, Ritchie often used Great Exhibitions as symbolical events and places in her rewritings of fairy tales. However, in "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Cinderella," Ritchie paradoxically uses the epitome of artificiality and modern disembodiment to stage feminine desire. In so doing, Ritchie thus counteracts the turning of her heroines into images, thereby subverting the discourse purveyed by the classical fairy tales regarding the urge for upper-middle class women to efface their bodies and curb their "nature." In "Cinderella," the Crystal Palace and glasshouses (which enable the maturation of pumpkins) are constructed as magical places: the glass motif serves Ritchie to show the marvelous transformation of the heroine from a "natural" woman to one of the marvelous commodities displayed at the Crystal Palace. As a matter of fact, before the heroine meets Prince Charming at the Crystal Palace, she goes shopping with her godmother. Thus, the giant crystal building comes to illustrate the narrative's preoccupation with female aestheticization, taking part in the heroine's visual metamorphosis and in her construction as a prototypical princess likely to attract the prince's attention: the glasshouse functions as the magic place where the prince and princess meet and fall in love, and where the princess exhibits her series of brand new dresses and accessories.<sup>5</sup> Surprisingly, however, although the tale aligns the heroine's acculturation with the turning of her body into a series of accessories, it eventually uses the Crystal Palace to represent the heroine's soaring desire, mirroring female passion through the lens of Victorian consumer culture: indeed, Cinderella fully enjoys the teasing of her senses induced by the profusion of objects on display, and the ball at the Crystal Palace eventually paves the way for the young woman's (physical) union with her prince.

Ritchie's play upon women's nature and desire is prolonged in her "Little Red Riding Hood." Though Perrault's classical fairy tale does not feature

a marriage at the closure of the narrative, Ritchie's rewriting foregrounds the significance of marriage for women and the equation between women and commodities—women being literally sold in marriage. Because the literary fairy tale is a genre hinged upon marriage that highlights the civilizing process—teaching women to remain in their “sphere” and to wait passively for their prince—the reworking of fairy tales provides interesting literary material for Ritchie to probe gender construction and feminine identity. In “Little Red Riding Hood,” Rémy de la Louvière has lost his money at gambling and wants to marry his cousin, Patty, who is to inherit their grandmother's fortune. But Rémy falls in love with his cousin, forgetting “all about his speculation” and forgetting “his part of wolf altogether” (186). Yet, Patty's parents separate the lovers. As a consequence, the revision of the fairy tale becomes a means of mapping out the young girl's passion. Ritchie's play on the tale's motifs serves to foreground the gap between Patty's instincts for pleasure (often rendered through allusions to food) and her society's demand that she control her body. In the first part of the story, Patty is depicted as a young woman giving way to her appetite:

Patty sulked like her father, and ate her bread and jam without speaking a word. There was no great harm done, Mrs. Maynard thought, as she kept her daughter supplied. She herself had been so disturbed and overcome by the stormy events of the day that she could not eat. She made the mistake that many elders have made before her: they mistake physical for mental disturbance; poor well-hacked bodies that have been jolted, shaken, patched and mended, and strained in half-a-dozen places, are easily affected by the passing jars of the moment: they suffer and lose their appetite, and get aches directly which take away much sense of the mental inquietude which brought the disturbance about. Young healthy creatures like Patty can eat a good dinner and feel keen pain and hide it, and chatter on scarcely conscious of their own heroism. (Ritchie 195)

Ritchie's description of heroism is far removed from women's prescribed repression and silent suffering. On the contrary, Ritchie seems to use the fairy tale in order to show the necessity for women not to deny their instincts for pleasure, as the reference to food exemplifies here, and her twists to the fairy tale further this argument. Patty is “heedless,” “impulsive” (198), an “Undine-like” creature (195). As suggested by the reference to the mythical creature, her relationship with nature must be controlled and bridled. The transformation of the young girl and her acculturation is performed through clothes, as in the classical fairy tale. When the time comes for her annual visit to her grandmother's, Patty is artificially transformed by her grandmother who firmly believes marriage to be vital to women: “All manner of relics were produced out of the old lady's an-

cient stores to adorn Miss Patty's crisp locks and little round white throat and wrists; small medallions were hung round her neck, brooches and laces pinned on, ribbons tied and muslins measured" (196). Patty is even given her mother's pearls. Interestingly, her mother's conflation of her daughter's body with wealth both heightens Patty's commodification and ominously hints at the theft of her jewel—her rape—as metaphorized in the classical fairy tale. Then her grandmother sends for the first modiste in the town and orders "a scarlet 'capeline'"—such as ladies wear by the sea-side—a pretty frilled, quilted, laced, and braided scarlet hood, close round the cheeks and tied up to the chin" (197). The red bonnet which, according to her father, makes Patty "too conspicuous" (199), marks her transformation into a commodity: Ritchie's Red Ridinghood is transported to the capital to be seen.

In the classical fairy tale, the transformation of the little girl into an object of the gaze through the riding hood testifies to her need to regulate her nature. Here, Patty's appetite is heightened as she travels to the capital and "dine[s] off delicious little dishes with sauces, with white bread and butter to eat between the courses" (199). The significance of food is developed in the tale, as Patty's mother and her attached attendant imagine dishes to carry by train to the "starving" grandmother (201). In fact, Patty's physical transformation and the stress on her appetite mark her sexual maturation, foreshadowing her meeting—and mating—with the wolf. It is at the theater, where she sees a play, "a grand fairy piece—where a fustian peasant maiden was turned into a satin princess in a flash of music and electric light" (199), that she notices Rémy again, just as the satin princess is re-transformed. The site Ritchie chooses for the scene (a theatre) has a view to illuminating the heroine's (sexual) maturation: the heroine, commodified as a Little Red Ridinghood, is now ripe enough to be displayed on a stage and constructed as an object of male desire. The transformation staged in the embedded fairy play mirrors Patty's, while Rémy metamorphoses into a wolf "ready to eat [Patty] up" (200).

In fact, if the wolf has schemed to seduce and abandon Patty to avenge himself, Rémy's trap enables Ritchie to debunk romantic meetings. Her hero is "smiling, handsome, irresistible, trying to make a sentimental scene out of a chance meeting" (206). Though Patty "set[s] her teeth and look[s] quite fierce at Rémy" (207–8), her brief wildness but serves to hint at her lack of restraint and foretell the confession of her love for her cousin. Ironically, her openness transforms Rémy, who is "only half a wolf after all—a sheep in wolf's clothing" (208). Rémy takes off his wolf's "skin" (208) and confesses his love too. They then decide to ask their grandmother to help them get married, taking two different paths to reach Madame

Capuchon's house for fear that people may recognize Patty's red hood. Revealingly, Ritchie completely rewrites the meeting between the little girl and the wolf disguised as her grandmother: this time, the grandmother is the wolf, she speaks "hoarsely" (219) because of her cold, smells butter in Patty's basket, asks for her spectacles "the better to see" Patty (220), while her ivory teeth, kept in a box, fall on the floor. As an embodiment of the conservative ideology that literally eats up little girls by demanding that they suppress their desires and appetites, Ritchie's wolf effectively revamps Perrault's. Ironically, Patty's nervousness is not due to her fear of the wolf but to Rémy's absence, as she waits for him to tell the truth to Madame Capuchon. Rémy, meanwhile is "devouring the remains" of a pie (224) in the dining room.

Ritchie's rewriting thus disrupts expectations: her heroine's spontaneous behavior wins her a prince whose "good appetite should imply a good conscience" (225). Passionate reactions and uncontrolled emotions replace the classical fairy tale's physical violence. Patty does not "want to hide *anything*" (220) and bursts into tears. Her passionate outburst causes her to knock over a box on the table containing her grandmother's teeth. If farcical, the detail is nonetheless revelatory. Not only does it reshuffle roles, bestowing the part of the villain on the grandmother, but it overturns the tale's socializing discourse. Though Patty eventually loses her money (Rémy finally becomes heir for "a girl does not want money like a man" [224])—and her virginity—the displacement of the rape motif stands as a symbolic representation of the loss of her sexuality. If Ritchie's fairy tales often foreground the importance of appearances and modern fashion,<sup>6</sup> here, trusting nature pays more than decking oneself in fashionable red clothes, and Patty's innocence, if it costs her her inheritance, enables her to marry the wolf. Like Ritchie, Childe-Pemberton revises Perrault's classical fairy tale though transposing the narrative into Victorian reality. As she rewrites the fairy tale as a realistic narrative, Childe-Pemberton engages with the deceptive appearance of everyday reality, at a time when smooth appearances and visual codes defined individual identity, effacing the body as the basis of truth.

#### *Reading the Wild Body: The Case of Harriet Louisa Childe-Pemberton*

Harriet Louisa Childe-Pemberton was a late-Victorian writer whose tales for children were regarded as didactic and in line with Christian principles. Her revamping of fairy tales, as exemplified by *The Fairy Tales of Every Day* (1882), further emphasizes the moral stance of classical fairy tales by cancelling magic from the narrative. Childe-Pemberton's "All My Doing; or

*Red Riding-Hood Over Again*" opens in a nursery, where bourgeois little girls are educated. The narrator's niece, Margery, denounces "*Little Red Riding Hood*" for being "too unlikely" (Childe-Pemberton 211), leading the narrative to explore the relationship between fairy tales and reality: "We don't meet with wolves now, you see, and if we did, we couldn't talk to them" (211). Yet, as the narrator makes explicit, reading and decoding meaning in fairy tales trains little girls to read and decode reality. The fairy-tale motifs function as a reflection of the codes defining reality. The laying bare of the fairy-tale discourse suggests that the world is legible. Still, as the narrator implies throughout the tale, if reality is a series of images, these images may be deceptive. Of course, the transposition of the tale into Victorian reality uncovers the moralistic discourse of the fairy tale. But as the narrator starts telling her story so that Margery may "read the meaning of the tale of *Red Riding-Hood*" (213), the "true story" (213) aims less at revealing the discourse hidden beneath the fairy tale than at disclosing the way reality itself is encoded and needs to be deciphered.

In fact, the narrator tells her niece her own story. Her misfortune, probably resulting from her parents' chaotic way of educating her, is very much connected with the modern world. The prevailing disorder in the household (everybody is "always in a hurry" [215]) mirrors the hectic rhythm of modern urban society. The fairy tale hints at the development of means of transport (the train, the underground, the tramway), which shifted people faster and faster from place to place, as if by magic. People are always on the move, paving the way for Childe-Pemberton's modern *Red Riding Hood*'s journey to her grandmother's by train. Moreover, when she describes her father, who has no time to sit but has his tea standing, "like the Hatter in '*Alice in Wonderland*'" (214), the intertextual vignette constructs the modern world as a *Wonderland* ruled by arbitrary laws, which the narrator cannot grasp. The arbitrary conventions that Childe-Pemberton alludes to are thus the bourgeois mores and manners that Lewis Carroll's fantasy, as well as her rewriting, are meant to teach their heroines to abide by. In this way, both the frame-narrative and the beginning of the narrator's tale emphasize the idea that reality is legible. This implies that the world is made up of codes, which little girls must learn to crack. The fairy-tale genre is, therefore, a very efficient way of representing reality: since the classical fairy tale was for Perrault and his followers a means of internalizing social norms and naturalizing bourgeois mores and manners, it framed the world as a set of codes and rules defining the middle classes. Transposed into Victorian reality, these codes become visual codes and may be deceptive, as Childe-Pemberton's *Red Riding Hood* is about to learn: they are, in fact, empty codes, easily appropriated by wolves in gentlemen's clothing.

Because “Little Red Riding Hood” defines bourgeois femininity by fusing the little girl with her riding hood, as mentioned above, the tale is branded by upper middle-class preoccupations. From the beginning of her story, Childe-Pemberton’s narrator underlines the extent to which the rhythm of the world is linked to mass production: she uses fashion and taste to define the middle classes and to illustrate the tempo of society—its frantic rhythm being paralleled with the evanescence of fashion:

My story, said I, is of more than twenty years ago, at a time when the fashions in dress were just the reverse of what they are now, when crinolines could hardly be worn large enough, when the pork-pie hat was the rage, and when, instead of sage-greens, the peacock-blues, and rhubarb-reds of the present day, bright scarlet, crude violet, and two new colours called mauve and magenta, found favour in the eyes of those who pretended to taste in the matter of dress.

Amongst these I, who had just grown up, took my place, of course. I wore red stockings, and a violet dress, and a scarlet cloak, and nobody ever thought, as they would now, of calling my taste vulgar. What I must have looked like you can very well imagine. . . . (213)

Time is measured through fashion. The heroine, whose identity hinges upon an accumulation of accessories, is shown to belong to the middle class through her commodification: she takes her place, as if on display among other objects. More significantly still, the allusion to taste and the suggestion that we could very well imagine what she looked like constructs her as an aesthetic representation of the Victorian ideal—as an image that matches the visual stereotypes of the period. The description of her cloak furthers the significance of mass reproduction in the construction of the feminine ideal:

That scarlet cloak in particular was my great pride. Cloaks at that time were made in a particular shape, a sort of double cloak, the upper one being shorter than the under, and drawn in at the waist with a rosette—Connemara cloaks I think there were called; and though I am quite ready to admit that the fashions of that date were for the most part hideous and tasteless, the Connemara cloaks were by no means ugly or unbecoming.

There were made in all colours. . . . Trotting about in this cloak, with a pair of red stockings, just showing above laced boots, the smallest of small black hats on my head, and my hair drawn back into a chenille net—such was the monstrous fashion of the moment—I must have looked not very unlike Red Riding-Hood herself. . . . (214)

The beautiful results from mass reproduction. As her identity depends upon mass-produced accessories that function as so many visual codes, the narrator *literally* appears as a reproduction of Little Red Riding Hood. Moreover, she is eager to visit her grandmother, who will “make [her]

presents of new dresses and hats" (216), and prepares her journey to her grandmother's through many shopping expeditions. Her mother's advice before she leaves home consists, therefore, in suggesting that she care less about her dresses and amusements, and in advising her not to talk to strangers. The two recommendations subtly set side by side the theme of appearances with the motif of the wolf, thereby suggesting that the little girl's rape may result from her excessive commodification. When she gets to the station, furthermore, she is wearing her Connemara cloak. The use of passive forms reinforces her objectification, paving the way for her "violation": "I was hurried from platform to platform, hustled into a carriage, . . . and was steaming out of the station before I knew I had even got my hand-bag and my umbrella safe" (219). The motif of the train, the thematics of speed, as well as the merging of the heroine and the engine ("steaming") revamps Little Red Riding Hood's journey through the forest. The modern rewriting suggests that young girls should not walk off the tracks of proper femininity—literally. The association of the train with transgression was very frequently used in the Victorian period.<sup>7</sup> As a symbol of British modernity and progress, the train symbolizes the disruption of temporal and spatial boundaries (it shrinks distances and reduces time by transporting passengers far away at full speed), and easily metaphorizes the breaking of moral boundaries. The appearance of Childe-Pemberton's "wolf" on the train is thus not coincidental.

The narrator, tired of reading her book and of looking out of the window, wants "to vary the monotony of the journey" and welcomes the "new fellow-traveller as a variety" (220). The term *variety* calls to mind Victorian taxonomies and the era's obsession with classifying beings and species according to particular body signs, which scientists claimed they could read so as to range beings along the evolutionary chain. This idea is developed further when the narrator attempts to read the stranger:

He was a small man, rather unusually small, and of an age that it was impossible to guess at; he might have been anything from thirty to five-and-forty, or even fifty, for he had a sort of fair hair that, if it has any gray in it, blends both together till the gray becomes indistinguishable, and he had light invisible eyebrows and a very light moustache and "imperial," that imparted a certain indefiniteness to his whole physiognomy. Then he had a habit of screwing up his eyes till it was impossible to guess whether the lines at their corners were due to advancing age or were merely the result of trick. . . . He was a very dapper little man, too; he was dressed in a neat grey overcoat, and carried a plaid rug, which he spread over his knees when he had settled himself in the carriage. Altogether, I rather liked his looks, and certainly I have had many companions since sitting on the seat opposite me whose aspect was not nearly so pleasant nor their manners so good. I was particularly struck by his manners. (220)

The reference to physiognomy<sup>8</sup> and the narrator's endeavor to read the stranger's face anchors the rewriting in Victorian England. The allusion to the pseudo-science of physiognomy, whose popularity soared with the development of photography, brings into play the transformation of individuals into sets of shared codes with "images [usurping] the position of the individual body as the basis of legibility" (Armstrong 19).<sup>9</sup> In so doing, it stresses the delusive appearance of reality. For the narrator cannot successfully analyze the stranger. The color of his hair is "indistinguishable," his eyebrows "invisible"; the man's identity is "impossible to guess" as his face has "a certain indefiniteness." Childe-Pemberton's choice of a wolf whose features conceal his wildness is significant; it points to the development of sexual socialization in Western society, as argued above, and the effacement of the natural body through repression and discipline. Simultaneously, it shows how the urge toward disembodiment worked in tandem with the transformation of individuals into sets of visual codes—in other words, images. There is no wildness, no depth, in Childe-Pemberton's wolf, who remains dangerous, however, precisely because he cannot be read. The narrator can only trust the stranger as a gentleman through his manners, which typify his belonging to the upper middle classes (he cannot be a "low ruffian" as she believes thieves to be [237]), that is, another set of codes shared by a particular social class. Childe-Pemberton's concealment of the identity of the wolf in her rewriting of "Little Red Riding Hood" is hence highly modern. The rewriting of the fairy tale enables her to bring to light the dangers of consumer culture, where anybody can pass for anybody and where bodies vanish beneath visual codes. Interestingly, the wolf, concealed behind the aspect of a gentleman, may thus be seen as a reflection of the young woman, who artificially constructs her self through fashion accessories. Both are artifacts—products of mass reproduction.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the issue of the dangers of mass reproduction is furthered by the fact that the stranger claims to be an artist, and is therefore involved in reproducing reality. As a consequence, Childe-Pemberton's wolf appears as a gentleman because the gentleman, the tale intimates, is a reproducible model. He lures Pussy, moreover, because the heroine associates this reproducible model with good taste. This detail is significant, since the rewriting of the classical fairy tales pivots around bourgeois aesthetic ideals and links the little girl's idea of taste to her deception.

In fact, the story reworks "Little Red Riding Hood" by exchanging physical violence for theft, thereby emphasizing the importance of wealth in the construction of the Victorian bourgeoisie. The narrator naively lets the wolf into her grandmother's house to have a look at and to reproduce

the carving over the chimney piece and the molded ceiling. It is interesting to notice that the works of art the stranger wants to have a look at are carvings and moldings—three-dimensional artworks that he wants to paint, thereby turning them into two-dimensional images. More revealingly, perhaps, when the narrator finds him outside the shrubbery, the wolf is sketching "a picturesque bit of land" (229). The idea of landscaping and reproducing nature once again links the wolf to the transformation of nature into an artificial image, a copy of the real. The picturesque site is not just meant to stage erotic desire and to act as a foil to the domesticated nature of the gardens or the civilized realm of the home. The term *picturesque* also implies its capacity to be reproduced as an image: the "guarantee of picturesqueness was the reproducibility inherent in that information rather than the sensitivity and talent of the individual who observed and copied it" (Armstrong 44). As it turned natural beauty into semiotic codes, the picturesque aesthetic shifted the value from objects to images. In so doing, Armstrong argues, it paved the way for realism, whose main principle lies in the recognition of visual standards and is defined as a series of images, "the conventional images that make the world deceptively familiar" (71). The allusion to the picturesque and the way it entailed aesthetic responses to nature is highly significant in Childe-Pemberton's rewriting of "Little Red Riding Hood," since the classical fairy tale revolves around responses to the natural body. By turning the wolf into an artist and setting the encounter on a picturesque bit of land, Childe-Pemberton's meeting between Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf is rendered as a visual experience—the visual pleasure displacing erotic desire. Thus, the rewriting aestheticizes sensations, making the wolf respond not to the young girl's erotic power but to the picturesque landscape's roughness and aesthetic value. By effacing Little Red Riding Hood's body (the narrator never fears physical danger, though she meets the stranger three times) and staging the metamorphosis of British culture into a realm of images where truth resides on the surface (note how the narrator's family loathes secrets), the tale thus exchanges the sexual for the visual.

Ironically, the narrator also visits the picturesque grounds with her suitor, Herbert, wearing her red cloak and picking some flowers. Herbert then tells her that the stranger's choice of mid-day to sketch suggests he is not a true artist: "at mid-day the sun is just over one's head . . . and there are no lights or shadows. No true artist would ever choose such a time for making a picture" (234). However, Herbert's remark emphasizes even more the idea that the setting functions as an image, flattened by the lack of light or shadow. The wolf appears as "a genuine lover of artistic beauties" (230)—that is, of reproducible objects whose value resides

in their image. Hence his turning his interest on the house—"a perfect specimen of its style" (230). The house exemplifies bourgeois taste, once again, based upon reproducibility, not uniqueness. Pictures, mirrors, and china are collected as "pleasant things to look at" (226), and the house attracts many visitors for its "artistic beauties" (227)—more than for the inhabitant. When the grandmother leaves Little Red Riding Hood alone at home, the narrator "presiding over the teapot" (228) and embodying the Victorian ideal, is just another commodity. In the house, the wolf's big eyes are wide open, staring at the costly commodities from several points of view. Childe-Pemberton's symbolic play upon the open house displaying its precious jewels foreshadows the ultimate theft, the responsibility for which lies "at her door" (239). However, the merging of the female body and the house is not so much a displacement as an effacement of sexuality thoroughly in keeping with British capitalist culture: the value of Little Red Riding Hood is economic, just as the loss will be monetary—propriety has become property.

As suggested, Childe-Pemberton's rewriting of "Little Red Riding Hood" revolves around the dangers of appearances and is anchored in consumer culture. Just like the heroine, who fashions herself artificially, the wolf conceals his wildness beneath manners and clothes—visual codes typifying the gentleman. In the same way, the revision reduces the tale's physical violence (the devouring of Little Red Riding Hood) to a set of metaphors—empty figures of speech that enhance all the more the effacement of the body and sexuality. Indeed, though the narrator has a slight physical contact with the wolf on the train (a "very slight jolt" (222) when the stranger stands behind her and helps her lift her things down), the heroine's violation of her mother's prohibition is represented through metaphors: she goes off the tracks by speaking to the stranger on the train; she does not realize that he should have put his bag in the net over his head (and not hers) on the train, thereby walking into his net; she experiences the cost of disobedience literally (her purse is stolen at the station on market day; his trespassing on her private grounds is a violation of property; the final theft replaces the rape). Thus, not only is Little Red Riding Hood disembodied and turned into a commodity, but she is even more effaced by figures of speech—such as her being a "madcap" and being "hoodwinked" (236) by a thief—which enhance her construction as an image.

What is interesting to note, however, is that the narrator never really wears her red cloak. The most significant moment when she wears it is when she visits the "gorsty piece" (228) with Herbert (the "real" gentleman) and picks some flowers. Her cloak is laid aside on the train and left

in her grandmother's sitting room on the night of the theft. She catches her foot in it and falls when she hears her grandmother scream. Paradoxically, the scarlet cloak is associated with her disorderly nature ("I often left my things in grandmamma's sitting-room, and she was much too indulgent and good-natured ever to rebuke me for untidiness or forgetfulness" [235]) and finally linked to the crime: unlike the classical fairy tale, in which the wolf puts on the grandmother's clothes, here, the grandmother sees the wolf with Pussy's scarlet cloak on his head and mistakes the thief for her granddaughter. The conflation of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf is a means of staging the young girl's participation in the crime—her self-induced rape and murder, to follow Zipes's analysis of Perrault's version: the narrator is "the accomplice of his crimes" (242). But the changes in the scenario may also be read as ambiguous. The hunter (the narrator's suitor) does not kill the wolf, as in the Brothers Grimm's version, for instance, but is shot in the leg and remains a cripple, abandoning his career in the army. Moreover, the awareness of her guilt liberates Pussy's "fierceness," turning the pussy into a wild beast; the innocent maiden becomes an amateur detective, bent on incriminating the man who "traded on" her heedlessness:

[From] that moment I resolved that it should be *my* business to collect every scrap of evidence I could against the burglars, more particularly against the one who had once been my travelling companion. I felt almost fierce as I made this resolve. After all, he, and he only, was the real cause of my grandmother's illness and Herbert's wound. If she died, or if he was lame for life, the wrong would lie at that man's door. . . . If I could bring him to justice I would, and not for this night's work only, but for my stolen purse three months ago. For that he *had* stolen it I was now unalterably convinced, my conviction being all the stronger that I had hitherto been so slow to open my eyes. People will more readily forgive a direct injury than they will forgive being hoodwinked and deceived and bamboozled; and what lent such a very decided fierceness to my feelings against this man was, not only that he had tried to steal, and done his best to take life, but that he had made a tool of *me*, that he had inspired me with confidence and belief in his perfect honesty, that he had contrived out of my very simplicity to make *me* the accomplice of his crimes! (242) (emphasis in original)

Once again the hints at the world of trade and capitalism ("business," "traded on") align the crime with consumer culture. Yet, the narrator's active part in the investigation shifts the blame to the thief. She searches the house for any missing property, using her senses to carry out the investigation—thus not denying them, as the classical fairy tale demands. She understands how the burglars entered the house, why the stranger had drawn the hood of her cloak over his head, and eventually identifies him in court:

I swore to his being the same who had rushed past me down the passage, the same whom I had found sketching on the “gorsty piece,” the same who had travelled in the railway carriage with me on the day when my pocket was picked. Oh, yes, you may be sure I didn’t omit to mention that, and I remember so well as I made the statement there was quite a sensation throughout the court! (244)

The association of the trial with “sensation” recalls Herbert’s mentioning of sensational trials related to housebreaking, which made the narrator feel “hot and cold” (235). This time, however, Pussy is not subjected to sensations she cannot control: she creates them.

In this way, though Little Red Riding Hood’s punishment is rendered through a public trial and a judgment, she is not the guilty party. Furthermore, the violated body is, in a way, male, since her suitor has been shot in the leg and compelled to stay at home. The robbery is thus no metaphor of rape (in the Brothers Grimm’s “Robber Bridegroom” robbers are associated with the cutting up and eating of women’s bodies, for example). Little Red Riding Hood’s punishment is ambiguous too: the heroine is not rewarded by marriage, but marrying a lame husband would have sounded much more like a punishment. Moreover, she has hardly learned to discipline herself: she becomes, on the contrary, as wild as the wolf so that he may be sentenced to penal servitude for life. Zipes’s contention that Childe-Pemberton’s rewriting, just like Anne Thackeray Ritchie’s, are “examples of the manner in which women writers of the nineteenth century contributed to their own oppression and circumscription” is, hence, arguable (Zipes, *Trials and Tribulations* 48). Childe-Pemberton’s writing for an evangelical publishing house may have compelled her to stress the moral discourse of the tale through her realistic revision of “Little Red Riding Hood,” but subversive aspects remain, perhaps suggesting that modern Little Red Riding Hoods may have a dash of wildness in them.

Through their adaptations of fairy tales to Victorian reality, Ritchie and Childe-Pemberton revisit “the tiresome clichés of reality” that, Maria Tatar underlines, are reworked in fairy tales through “the shift from the figurative meaning of words to the things that those words designate” (Tatar 80, 79).<sup>11</sup> Here, metaphors are not literalized; they are foregrounded as plain and disappointing figures of speech in order to underline how the fairy-like aspect of reality results from the impact of mass visual culture. The metaphors partake, indeed, of the proliferation of images and the illusory nature of the world. As this paper has shown, Ritchie’s and Childe-Pemberton’s rewritings of “Little Red Riding Hood” offer modern heroines whose “nature” has not been tamed nor effaced by lay-

ers of clothes. In spite of being identified as Victorian "Little Red Riding Hoods," Ritchie's and Childe-Pemberton's heroines exemplify how women may cloak their nature under riding hoods without completely surrendering to the demands of culture. The choice of "Little Red Riding Hood" is therefore a significant example of how fairy tales may be reinvested with meaning over the ages. Indeed, if fairy tales, by being constantly rewritten—reproduced—are inevitably caught up in the culture industries and become cultural objects, "acquir[ing] the appearance of universality as they pass into mass-mediating culture" (Armstrong 2) and appearing as a series of codes, stereotypes, dead metaphors, the rewriting of fairy tales enabled these women writers to deal with their society's transformation into an illusory world and to reconsider the construction and definition of women that bourgeois culture praised.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Walter de la Mare's "Little Red Riding Hood" (1927) is a case in point. His Red Riding Hood is "happy for hours together with nothing but a comb and a glass" and when she comes out of the wolf's stomach, the first thing she does is "to run off to the looking-glass and comb out her yellow curls and uncrumple her hood" (de la Mare 214).

<sup>2</sup> The tale was first published in the *Cornhill Magazine* 16 (Oct. 1867), 440–73, then reprinted in *Five Old Friends and a Young Prince* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1868), 151–225. All further references to this edition will be given parenthetically in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Dickens's famous description of the Great Exhibition as a fairyland is a significant instance: "The magician is right; but as Beauty's chamber was guarded by griffins, and all enchanted castles are defended by dragons, so is Fairyland guarded by gnomes; blue, and uncompromising. One occupies the little crypt on either side of the door by which visitors are admitted to Fairyland in Crystal. To judge from the costumes of these gnomes you would take them to be plain constables of the Metropolitan Police; but, my word for it, they have all the gnomical etceteras beneath their uniform and oilskin. The entrance to Fairyland is

not effected by rubbing a lamp, or clapping the hands three times, or by exclaiming 'Open Sesame'; but, as a concession to the non-magical tendencies of some of the visitors, a commutation is accepted in the shape of five shillings current money of the realm" (Dickens 313).

<sup>4</sup> Hans Christian Andersen's "The Dryad" (1869) exemplifies this idea. The tale was written a few months before Ritchie's "Little Red Riding Hood" and may have influenced Ritchie, as she refers several times to sylphs living in every tree in the forest. The narrative relates a dryad's wish to see the 1867 Paris Great Exhibition, "the great and wonderful time of Fairy-Tale" (Andersen 296). Not only does the fairy tale link progress with the world of magic, but it associates as well the modern urban world with feminine desire. As if by magic, "the city of enchantment" (Andersen 239) turns poor young girls into wealthy and elegant duchesses. Paradoxically enough, the world of art and industry is rendered through natural metaphors: the Exhibition is short-lived; the Palace grows up with the spring and vanishes at fall. The world, miniaturized in the Palace, literally becomes a fairy world, as every country is downsized to a single room. Simultaneously, the visitors can travel the world in a day: in this way, the place encapsulates the modern changes of rhythm and the hectic pace of modern society—miles away from the slow cycles of nature. Modernity is however ultimately equated with transience: the Dryad, who wished to see the Great Exhibition, is doomed to die, once she has tasted the illusory nature of reality. Unlike Ritchie, however, who uses the modern building to epitomize her heroine's soaring desire, Andersen's tale used the Great Exhibition to stress the taming of the Dryad's "nature."

<sup>5</sup> Female visitors of the Crystal Palace were seen as commodities as well. An article published in *The Cornhill Magazine* in 1862 underlined this idea: "It is this which makes our Mayday show of fair women (far nobler and more beautiful than everything in the Exhibition beside) so proud a sight for us. In no country of the world could you find—no, not so much beauty" ("At the Great Exhibition" 666).

<sup>6</sup> In "Bluebeard's Keys," Mrs. De Travers believes it is her duty to remain "in the fashionable whirlpool" for her two daughters. Ritchie, "Bluebeard's Keys" in *Bluebeard's Keys and Other Stories*, 1–118.

<sup>7</sup> To mention but two significant examples, it appears in the sensation novels of the 1860s, for instance in Rhoda Broughton's *Not Wisely but Too Well* (1867), in which the heroine twice attempts to elope with her lover (a married man) by train, or in Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1861), in which the adulterous heroine is disfigured in a train crash and loses her illegitimate baby, which enables her to return to England and work unrecognized as a governess to her own children.

<sup>8</sup>The pseudoscience of physiognomy was grounded on the premise that the human and animal kingdoms shared features whereby animals' temperamental features could exemplify man's. In the 1850s, the technological innovation of photography clearly marked the era of physiognomy and other (pseudo) sciences focused on reading and categorizing the human body: attempts to trace the close links between man and animal underpinned scientific explorations of human character traits.

<sup>9</sup>Armstrong deals here with Alphonse Bertillon and Francis Galton's attempts at reading the criminal body.

<sup>10</sup>The comparison is also prolonged through the narrator's name "Pussy": as Childe-Pemberton aligns her heroine with a cat, thereby enhancing the woman's "nature," her tamed version of the wolf fuses girl and wolf even more.

<sup>11</sup>Though Tatar regards fairy tales as representations of psychic processes, their play on language illustrating "the mental universe of childhood" (Tatar 80), her formulation is illuminating.

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