

Girl – Wolf Relationships in Film Adaptations of Little Red Riding Hood

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Abstract: Many folk and fairy tales were retold in new media form. Little Red Riding Hood, a story of the girl and her opponent male, the wolf, has gained popularity from viewers as it was often selected to be reinterpreted and reproduced in film adaptations. Once the tale was remade, audience could expect to see whether film directors would present a new perspective on the girl and the wolf. In this paper, the authors investigate the different relationships between the girl and the wolf as portrayed in film adaptations of Little Red Riding Hood. The analysis was based on five film adaptations: *The Company of Wolves* (1984), *Freeway* (1996), *Red: Werewolf Hunter* (2010), *Red Riding Hood* (2011), and *Into the Woods* (2014). The results of this study indicated that the films depicted the girl and the wolf in different relationships including kinship, lovers, and opponents. Among these portrayals, we could see role change in the main characters, especially the interpretations of the girl through cinematic techniques which underlined how the young girl strived from stereotypical role of the victim to an unconventional young girl recognizing her power to negotiate with and rebel against the threatening male.

Keywords: Little Red Riding Hood, Film, Adaptations, Relationships

Introduction

Many people used to listen to the Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale when they were young. In the former times, Little Red Riding Hood was oral literature. After that there were tale collectors who collected the oral literature of Little Red Riding Hood and the oral literature of Little Red Riding Hood since then have become printed materials in many versions. The plot of Little Red Riding Hood is interesting, so the tale is very popular, and the Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale has often been adapted into a wide variety of media, for example, picture books, short stories, comics, animations and films.

The story concerns Little Red Riding Hood, a lovely girl who lived with her mother in a village. Her grandmother made little red hood for her, so everybody called her Little Red Riding Hood. One day her mother told Little Red Riding Hood to fetch a cake and little pot of butter for her ill grandmother who lived in the other village. When Little Red Riding Hood went into the wood, she met a wolf. The tricky wolf told Little Red Riding Hood should gather beautiful flowers for her ill grandmother. She believed him and entertained herself by gathering nuts, running after butterflies, and gathering bouquets of flowers, while the wolf ran as fast as he could to the grandmother's house. When he arrived at the grandmother's house, he ate the grandmother and got into the grandmother's bed. When Little Red Riding Hood arrived at the house, she felt strange but she came inside the house. Suddenly, the wolf swallowed Little Red Riding Hood. The most famous versions of Little Red Riding Hood are Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm versions.

The two versions are similar that they have the same in the beginning of the story and the setting. Both of two versions begin by introducing Little Red Riding Hood and involve the same places which are the village, the wood and the grandmother's house. On the other hand, the two versions are differences in the middle of the story, the end of the story, and the characters. In the middle of the story the first version, her mother tells Little Red Riding Hood to go to her grandmother's house to bring a cake and little pot of butter for her. Little girl sees a wolf in the wood and they talk to each other. Then the wolf comes to the grandmother's house and pretends to

be little girl. The grandmother is eaten by him. However, the Grimms' version, little girl follows his mother that she orders to bring a piece of cake and a bottle of wine for her weak grandmother. Her mother emphasizes little girl does not leave the path. When she walks to the wood, she sees a wolf. He asks her where she is going to and plans to eat her by advice her to see beautiful flowers. The wolf quickly goes to the grandmother's house and eats her. Then he eats little girl too. The huntsman helps a child and grandmother. Little girl brings heavy stones to fill the wolf's body and he dies. Little girl promises to herself that she will obey her mother and she never leave the path. Then another wolf speaks to her and wants her to leave the path, but she takes care of herself and goes straight to the grandmother's house. Little girl plans with her grandmother for kill this wolf by boiling sausage, the wolf smells it, slides out off the roof, falls into the trough and drowns. In the end of the story the first version, the grandmother and little girl are eaten by the wolf. However, the Grimms' version ends by other wolf dies and little girl returns home happily and safely. About characters, there are Little Red Riding Hood, her mother, her grandmother, a wolf, and woodcutters in the first version. In contrast, there are Little Red Riding Hood, her mother, her grandmother, a wolf, a huntsman and another wolf in the second version.

From the famous versions of Little Red Riding Hood, the oral literature has become written works and films. It is interesting in the films of Little Red Riding Hood because there are interpretations and adaptations of producers. Learning Children's and Young Adult Literature subject places importance on young people characters, and there are many issues to be studied and analyzed including interesting point of view in modern adaptations. It reflects that as time passes people always appreciate tales in modern version. Since 1697 until now there are 24 film adaptations, so the researcher is interested in studying film adaptations of Little Red Riding Hood, especially how Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf are portrayed. The following are film adaptations from 1950 to present: *Little Red Riding Hood* (1960), *Little Red Riding Hood and Her Friends/ Little Red Riding Hood and Her Three Friends* (1961), *Little Red Riding Hood and the Monsters* (1962), *The Dangerous Christmas of Red Riding Hood* (1965), *About Red Hat* (1977), *The Company of Wolves* (1984), *The Red Spectacles* (1987), *The Trial of Red Riding Hood* (1992), *Freeway* (1996), *Little Red Riding Hood* (1997), *Black XXX-Mas* (1999), *Falsehood* (2001), *Red Riding Hood* (2003), *A Wicked Tale* (2005), *Hoodwicked* (2005), *Hard Candy* (2005), *Red Riding Hood* (2006), *Big Bad Wolves* (2006), *Trick r Treat* (2007), *Enchanted* (2007), *A Take of Little Red Riding Hood* (2009), *Red: Werewolf Hunter* (2010), *Red Riding Hood* (2011), *Into the Woods* (2014). From 24 film adaptations of Little Red Riding Hood, the five versions are selected: *The Company of Wolves* (1984), *Freeway* (1996), *Red: Werewolf Hunter* (2010), *Red Riding Hood* (2011), *Into the Woods* (2014).

The results of the content analysis and implied meanings of relationship between Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf will benefit for learners/audience in that they will understand more when seeing the film adaptations.

About Little Red Riding Hood

Little Red Riding Hood is the classic literary. As Glenn H. Miller says, "You might think of the Bible or Shakespeare, since they are the two most widely owned masterworks of Western literature. But, as novelist A.S. Byatt notes, "Grimms' Fairy Tales," which contains the popular "Little Red Riding Hood," is probably third" (2008). The most famous versions of Little Red Riding Hood are Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm versions.

Many scholars studied Little Red Riding Hood through various perspectives. Jack Zipes (2001) informed that it is unclear that Perrault knew "The Story of Grandmother" but it is clear that he must have known some version like "The Story of Grandmother" and transformed it into "Little Red Riding Hood" in his version. Then Perrault's version and the oral folk version became popular in eighteenth century. Perrault's version was translated into three languages: English, Germany, and Russian. In 1800, Ludwig Tieck published his tale "Life and Death of Little Red Cap" and he was the first person who introduce a hunter into the tale for save Red Cap's life. After that, the Brothers Grimm published his tale by following Ludwig Tieck's example and added second part for show that the grandmother and Little Red Cap learned the lesson.

Martin Hallett and Barbara Karasek (1985) stated that Perrault was a pioneer who transformed “Little Red Riding Hood” from an oral to literary form, and Charles Perrault was a novel amusement for the royal court of Louis XIV. However, The Brothers Grimm saw the folktales as a vital source of their cultural heritage and the Grimms’ version added happy ending and there were the woodcutter who introduce for rescue the helpless females. The Grimms’ version is the most balanced in the modern eyes.

In literary interpretation, Maria Tatar (1999) stated that Perrault’s version has no idea about it is dangerous to stop and listen to wolves and Little Red Riding Hood behaves the fatal error when she was gathering nuts, chasing butterflies, and picking flowers. Moreover, Maria Tatar agreed Bruno Bettelheim’s idea of literary interpretation that Bruno Bettelheim declares that the girl must be stupid or she wants to be seduced. In Perrault’s view, he transformed the naïve and attractive young girl who is induced to ignore Mother’s warnings and enjoy herself into a fallen woman. Mostly in Maria Tatar criticism of a wolf, a wolf represents a male with his negative role against female character. Maria’s work reviewed the other scholars’ ideas that are similar to her criticism of a wolf such as sexual connotation can occur in storytelling, if folk tellers want to add it in the story. Moreover, Maria mentioned to Erich Fromm and Susan Brownmiller about an eternal battle of the sexes.

The Movies: Girl-Wolf relationships

The five selected films provide interesting perspectives on how Little Red Riding Hood deals with the wolf in different relationships. In the three adaptations which are *The Company of Wolves* (1984), *Freeway* (1996), and *Into the Woods* (2014). These movies show the child - stranger relationship. On the other hand, *Red Riding Hood* (2011) and *Red: Werewolf Hunter* (2010) present father – daughter relationship, lover relationship respectively. The filmmakers make these movies to present new interpretations of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf.

Kinship relationships

Red Riding Hood (2011) presents the new role of the wolf that is father who takes care of family and the daughter who is Valerie (Little Red Riding Hood). Her father tries to convince her to be a wolf same him but she does not want to be a wolf. Finally, her father tries to bite her but her boyfriend kills her father and her boyfriend was bitten. Although the wolf in the movie is the Little Red Riding Hood’s father, the wolf is always a bad wolf. The movie shows more perspectives about the wolf’s character but finally society cannot accept the wolf to be a human or to be alive.

Into the Woods (2014) is a movie which presents outcast child and silly wolf relationship. This movie reflects the problem of society. Little Red Riding Hood is an orphan who takes care of her grandmother by begging for foods and stealing. Because Little Red Riding Hood does not have anybody give her warmth, so she does like that. The child is intelligent and must survive in the world. It causes the audiences cannot see that child is innocent. The wolf in this movie is reduced scary role, so the child cannot fear him. There is folk tale more than fairy tale in the movie “*Into the Woods* (2014)” because this movie shows possible story and folk tale transmitted from generation to generation. Moreover, the wood is a limbo because at first perception, the wood seems dangerous, but it is not. It creates shadowy, mysterious atmosphere. Limbo also reveals the wickedness of adult characters since the movie shows their dark side when they are enclosed in or surrounded by the wood.

Lover relationships

Red Riding Hood (2011) presents the new role of the wolf that is father who takes care of family and the daughter who is Valerie (Little Red Riding Hood). Her father tries to convince her to be a wolf same him but she does not want to be a wolf. Finally, her father tries to bite her but her boyfriend kills her father and her boyfriend was bitten. Although the wolf in the movie is the Little Red Riding Hood’s father, the wolf is always

a bad wolf. The movie shows more perspectives about the wolf's character but finally society cannot accept the wolf to be a human or to be alive.

Opponents relationships

The Company of Wolves (1984) presents young girl and attractive wolf relationship. In this movie, the granny is very important character. Granny always warns Rosaleen (Little Red Riding Hood) to beware of men whose eyebrows meet. Moreover, the Granny said that "a wolf is sometimes much more than he seems". It shows that "he" is not only the wolf, but also means a male. In the scene that Rosaleen is in the granny's house. She sees only the huntsman but does not see the granny. She knows that he must kill the granny because she sees the white hair of her granny in the fireplace. Rosaleen holds the gun to and shoots the huntsman, so he becomes a wolf. The gun is a symbol of adulthood. When Rosaleen holds the gun, it shows that she abandons innocent world. This movie shows puberty period of young girl. Moreover, the movie shows fertile children who learn the role of young girls in their society.

Lastly, the movie *Freeway* (1996) presents an abused child and a serial killer. This movie also presents many problems of society in nowadays such as drug addiction, illegal prostitution, sexual abusing, and crime. Vanessa (Little Red Riding Hood) is a girl who suffers from her family that cannot take care of herself in a good way. Her father is taken to jail and her mother addicts drug and is a prostitute. Then she is taken to jail too. Vanessa (Little red Riding Hood) sexually abused by her stepfather. Moreover, she nearly is killed by Bob (the wolf). However, in the end Vanessa killed Bob.

Conclusion

In the selected film adaptations of Little Red Riding Hood, the wolves are always negative. In addition, the movies show how Little Red Riding Hood survives from bad intentions in critical situations with her strong mind. Although a few movies show positive relationships between the wolf and the girl, there is always the stigmatic wolf or "the big bad wolf".

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