



Dress Codes and Gender Roles in Little Red Riding Hood

By Henrik Petersen

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Seminar paper from the year 2010 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 2 (10 auf der dänischen Skala), University of Southern Denmark (Institut for Litteratur, Kultur og Medier), language: English, abstract: Little Red Riding Hood has never enjoyed an easy life. During the last three centuries, generations of male narrators and moralistic Victorian authors of both sexes have changed the once straightforward and clever peasant girl, who was capable of taking care of herself and outsmarting a seducing wolf by her own wit, into a passive heroine controlled by others to suit the traditional (male) view of how "nice girls" ought to behave. In hundreds of adaptations, writers of children's literature repeatedly let the young girl pay for her irresponsibility and her reckless talking to strangers. Red Riding Hood was sent into the forest to be gobbled up or raped by the wicked wolf over and over again. Generations of writers never hesitated to blame the girl for her misfortune. Since Charles Perrault first published the tale of Little Red Riding Hood in 1697, her tragedy normally has been considered her own fault. If she had only listened to her mother's advice, gone straight to her grandmother's house and had not talked to the wolf, nothing would have happened to her. Until the beginning of the 20th century, that seems to have been the common attitude amongst fairy tale writers towards young girls. Despite the fact that many narrators were women, modern fairy tale tradition had been totally bourgeoisified by the turn of the century. Female Victorian writers adopted and continued the manipulation of gender roles that had been initiated by educated middle-class narrators in France and Germany. In that process, the young girl who did so well in old French folk tradition vanished. Popular culture changed the simple and witty peasant girl, who brought her grandmother milk and bread, who did not give up, but took action and tricked t

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