

THE SILENT RED CLOAK: WORDLESS INTERPRETATIONS OF A TIMELESS FAIRY TALE

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Abstract

This study focuses on wordless book adaptations of the classic fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood”. For generations, the story has so far been a major component of Children’s Literature, known for its rich symbolism narrative and moral themes. However, in the distinctive format of wordless books, the story transforms, providing young readers with a new perspective and style of reading participation. The absence of text in these types of books necessitates deeper viewer engagement. This article investigates how various artists and authors have reinterpreted the well-known narrative through this silent medium, focusing on narrative reinterpretation and visual storytelling techniques. We explore how the lack of words may heighten the emotional tone of the story and how images can be utilized to portray complicated concepts like innocence or danger. Significantly, the article delves into the visual approaches used in these adaptations, examining how variations in color, line, and composition influence the storytelling. The use of space, perspective, and sequencing in the images is also explored, focusing on how these determine the reader’s view of the story and its characters. Furthermore, the article discusses how the lack of text encourages readers to actively connect with the narrative in a non-traditional way. From our results, it is evident that wordless book adaptations of “Little Red Riding Hood” provide an innovative approach to retelling the classic tale, demonstrating its remarkable adaptability. These adaptations invite a deeper exploration of how the fairy tale functions and why it endures, highlighting the participatory nature of wordless storytelling. They suggest that stories are living entities, constantly evolving through the interpretations of their audiences.

Keywords: wordless book, Little Red Riding Hood, adaption, visual storytelling, Children’s Literature

1. INTRODUCTION

“Little Red Riding Hood” stands as one of the most enduring and widely adapted fairy tales (Beckett 2002, p. xv [1]), its origins deeply rooted in Europe’s oral storytelling traditions. The tale has evolved through various cultures and epochs, reflecting the societal values of each period. The first literary version was penned by Charles Perrault in 1697 under the title “Le Petit Chaperon Rouge” in France. Perrault introduced iconic elements such as the red hood and concluded with a moral cautioning young girls about the deceit of strangers, framing the tale as a cautionary narrative centered on innocence and vulnerability. In the 19th century, the Brothers Grimm presented two German versions of “Little Red Riding Hood” based on tales by Jeanette and Marie Hassenpflug. The first version, titled “Rotkäppchen”, was included in their 1812 collection *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, featuring a huntsman who saves Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother. The Grimms continued to refine the story, with their final 1857 version replacing the huntsman with a woodcutter. Thus, the evolution of “Little Red Riding Hood” from Perrault to the Grimms showcases a transition from a purely cautionary tale to one that also incorporates elements of hope and salvation.

Each retelling and adaptation of “Little Red Riding Hood” has reflected the social norms and cultural values of its time, making the tale a rich subject for analysis in terms of its evolution and the different messages it has conveyed through the ages. These historical versions set the stage for modern adaptations, which continue to explore new dimensions of the story, including those that challenge traditional narratives or those that utilize new mediums, such as wordless picture books. This study focuses on how these modern adaptations, in particular wordless books, reinterpret the classic fairy tale through visual storytelling techniques, offering a new perspective on the timeless themes of “Little Red Riding Hood”.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Adaptation is an artistic process that breathes new life into stories, allowing them to transcend their original formats to explore and thrive in new mediums. Whether it's transforming a book into a movie, adapting a poem into a stage play, or portraying historical events through a graphic novel, adaptations enable narratives to evolve and resonate with diverse audiences. Linda Hutcheon's book, "A Theory of Adaptation" (2006), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the adaptive process across various media. Hutcheon argues that adaptations are not merely derivative works but are "deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations of prior works" (Hutcheon 2006, p. xiv [2]). Soula Ekonomidou supports this view, stating that contemporary literary theorists commonly accept that secondary works go beyond mere imitation, constituting new works that "add to, supplement, renew, or even subvert the originals" (Ekonomidou 2011, p. 9 [3]). Undoubtedly, the process of adaptation serves multiple purposes: it can revive interest in forgotten tales, introduce classic themes to new generations, or provide a platform for alternate interpretations that challenge the original narrative's perspective. By altering the form or setting of a story, adaptations have the power to highlight different aspects of the narrative, explore its themes in innovative ways, or critique its underlying assumptions. This dynamic interaction between the old and the new, the original and the adapted, the hypotext and the hypertext (Genette 1997, p. 5 [4]) keeps stories vibrant and engaging for audiences who might not otherwise encounter them.

As narratives make the transition from text-based storytelling to visual representation, the shift highlights the differences between how stories are told through written words and how they are conveyed through images. This transformation is particularly significant in our visual-centric epoch, where imagery often speaks louder and more universally than text, tapping into the collective consciousness in ways that transcend linguistic barriers. Textual narratives rely on the power of language to evoke images and emotions in the reader's mind, crafting detailed worlds through descriptive text and dialogues. In contrast, visual storytelling communicates directly through imagery -artists use colors, shapes, and compositions to set scenes, develop characters, and evoke emotions without a single spoken or written word. Visual adaptations, and indeed, wordless books, face unique challenges, particularly when transforming narratives that rely heavily on the internal thoughts of characters or the subtle nuances of language that are easily expressed in text but difficult to depict visually. Creators must make critical decisions about which elements of the original story are most effectively translated into visual forms and which might need to be reinterpreted or even omitted to suit the visual medium's strengths.

But what is precisely a book without words? A wordless book, is a book, that "tells a story in a sequence of images, combined with little or no text and develops a particular relationship with their reader, in a way different from what we usually expect from a conventional illustrated book" (Papailia 2022a, p. 23 [5]). The reason is obvious. After the reader is called upon to create a story, through the sequence of images, without the accompaniment of words, it is understood that the whole process of information acquisition takes place through the process of viewing and decoding images. That is why it has been proposed, from time to time, to replace the term reader with that of the "beholder" (Doonan 1993, p. 9 [6]). The above distinction may be justified since the reader's notion is more closely related to the verbal text and implies knowledge of the verbal codes, while the beholder's notion indicates in turn the knowledge of decoding the visual images. Since, therefore, images in a book have a narrative function -which is by no means inferior to their aesthetic function (Asonitis 2001, p. 48 [7])- then the beholder gains an active position as it is called to discover 'deeper meanings' and link them together.

Until recently, the reading of a visual narrative had been established in the consciousness of the world as a simple and unambiguous process, since it was usually argued that reading an image is nothing more than a mere process of recognizing objects, and therefore we all see the same things when we look at images, without the need of some specialized knowledge to understand them. In controversy, Nodelman (1988, pp. 1-22 [8]), in his book "Words about Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books", suggests that the above beliefs are incorrect. The author claims, that images are not more specific and less abstract than words. Although the image, at first glance, is realistic and plausible, it actually contains deduction elements and belongs to a code system acquired by learning visual conventions. Images, like words, require learning their "language" so that the reader can read them and derive meaning (Nikolajeva & Scott 2001, p. 2 [9]). Consequently, images, in a similar way to words, are symbolic

representations, their decoding and their meaning presupposes specific skills, experiences, and reading strategies that their reader has to develop. The viewer in possession of this knowledge will be able to better understand the image and at the same time its obscure sides, because “illustrators of wordless books depend on the ability of the pictures to suggest information they do not actually offer” (Nodelman 1988, p. 187 [10]). This engagement transforms the act of reading from a passive reception of information to an active dialogue between the reader and the visual text. Readers of wordless books bring their personal experiences, emotions, and interpretations to the narrative, making each reading experience unique and personal (Papailia 2022a, p. 420 [11]). Therefore, the absence of text in these adaptations is not a limitation but an invitation for readers to become co-creators of the narrative, blending their insights, creativity and previous knowledge with the creator’s vision.

In conclusion, the evolution from text-based narratives to wordless visual storytelling showcases the adaptability and enduring appeal of storytelling as an art form. As stories are adapted across various forms and media, they engage with audiences in new and meaningful ways, continuing to inspire, entertain, and provoke thought. Whether through the written word or ‘silent’ imagery, the fundamental human connection to storytelling remains strong, underscoring its significance across cultures and through the ages.

3. WORDLESS INTERPRETATIONS OF LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

In the late 1950s, Swiss artist Warja Lavater (1913-2007) experimented with shapes, colors, and forms, creating visual narratives she called “pictograms” -a series of symbols that convey meaning through their form and arrangement on the page (Papailia 2022b [12]). She used a visual code, a visual language, structured in such a way as to convey meaning. Her books are characterized by Beckett (2012, pp. 45-46 [13]) as “Folded Stories”, because they are accordion books that retell classic fairy tales through a sequential arrangement of images, offering readers a great degree of interpretive freedom. Lavater thus established a new reading protocol that requires the readers’ active engagement and interaction with the book, both sensory and interpretive. Her work drew attention to the concept of a book as both an art object and an experimental visual narrative (Papailia 2022a, p. 28 [14]). In 1965, Lavater published a series initially consisting of five books in collaboration with Adrien Maeght publishing house. Drawing from the rich tapestry of folk tales, such as those by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, Lavater chose classic stories like “Blanche Neige” (Snow White) (Lavater 1974 [15]), “Cendrillon” (Cinderella) (Lavater 1976 [16]) or “La Belle au Bois Dormant” (Sleeping Beauty) (Lavater 1982 [17]) to reinterpret in her distinctive style. In “Le Petit Chaperon Rouge” (Little Red Riding Hood) (Lavater 1965 [18]) (Fig.1.), Lavater’s organization of visual symbols on the page served a synthetic function, shaping a specific perception of the visual text and determining the level of the recipient’s engagement.



Fig. 1. *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*

Source: Lavater, W 1965, *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*, Maeght éditeur, Paris.

In analyzing her images, semiotic analysis is fundamental, positioning the reader/viewer as a person who, like a semiotician (Nodelman 1999, p. 79 [19]), is called to decode the symbols and conventions.

Lavater employed geometric shapes and a strategic use of color to convey characters and key elements of the story. For instance, circles stand for many elements in Lavater's book. The red circle represents Little Red Riding Hood, with the red color evoking her iconic hood. Green circles represent the forest, providing a natural backdrop to the story. The yellow circle stands for the mother, contrasting Little Red Riding Hood's red and symbolizing safety and warmth. The blue circle represents the grandmother, a symbol of comfort and security. The black circle stands for the wolf, with the color black suggesting danger, menace and threat and the brown circle denotes the hunter, representing protection and rescue. In analyzing Lavater's images, semiotic analysis is crucial. Each shape and color hold specific meaning, transforming the reader into an active participant in the storytelling process. The spatial arrangement of symbols on each page conveys movement and action. For example, the proximity of the red circle (Little Red Riding Hood) to the black circle (the wolf) can indicate a moment of confrontation. This method allows readers to read the story through the visual progression of symbols. The abstract nature of the symbols provides interpretive freedom, as each reader may perceive and interpret the interactions between symbols differently, adding a personal dimension to the story. The sequential imagery of the accordion book format allows the narrative to unfold in a continuous visual sequence. This physical format also engages the reader's senses, creating a tactile and visual connection to the narrative. By eschewing traditional text in favor of pictograms, Lavater pushes the boundaries of how stories can be told and experienced. The book itself becomes an art object, with its design and structure integral to the visual storytelling.

To bring the discussion into contemporary reality, Sonia Chaîne and Adrien Pichelin have followed Lavater's example with "pictograms" and retold fairy tales solely through the coding of visual symbols. Their approach is fully aligned with the theoretical work of Molly Bang (2016 [120]) in her book "Picture This: How Pictures Work", where she highlights the power of simple geometric designs and a selected color palette, noting that they can be used to tell a story, convey emotions, and guide the viewer's attention through their synthetic arrangement and the interaction of elements (Sidiropoulou & Papailia 2023, p. 410 [21]). These design elements, although they may appear simplistic, have the potential to lead the reader to a multi-layered reading experience while simultaneously shaping the core of visual storytelling. Similarly, in the works of Chaîne and Pichelin, the shapes and colors used are not randomly selected -each element is carefully organized to set the story's "narrative trajectory" in motion. The result is a complex mosaic of visual elements that come together to tell a story (Hamaide-Jager 2019, pp. 40-61 [22]) overcoming the barriers that written language might impose (Sidiropoulou & Papailia 2023, p. 410 [23]). "Raconte à ta façon...Le petit Chaperon Rouge" (Tell it your way...Little Red Riding Hood) (Chaîne & Pichelin 2016 [24]) (Fig.2.) is the first book in their series. In the book, no text is used within the main pages; instead, it appears only in the paratextual elements.



Fig. 2. *Le petit Chaperon Rouge*

Source: Chaîne, S & Pichelin, A 2016, *Raconte à ta façon...Le petit Chaperon Rouge*, Flammarion Jeunesse, Paris.

A bookmark is introduced within the pages, presenting the characters and objects represented by pictograms. In the story there are nine elements represented through various shapes and colors: five for the characters, two for objects, and two for the setting. The characters are depicted by triangles (red for Little Red Riding Hood, blue for the mother, purple for the grandmother, and brown for the hunter), while the wolf is represented by the shape of a pair of scissors. Additionally, the background elements and objects are primarily illustrated with angular shapes (e.g. a brown rectangle for the bed and a green square for the forest), and the stones are depicted using circular shapes. On the back of the bookmark, readers are provided with a simplified version of the Grimm brothers' story of Little Red Riding Hood, summarized in a few sentences -specifically, in thirty-two points. These points correspond to the thirty-two pages of the book. The bookmark serves as a key to understanding the visual symbols, guiding the reader through the narrative. This structure ensures that readers can follow the progression of the story while also enjoying the freedom to interpret the visual elements in their own way.

After Warja Lavater's pioneering work with wordless adaptation of "Little Red Riding Hood" using pictograms in the late 1950s, other creators of children's books have continued to explore and expand upon this wordless experimentation. One notable example is John Goodall's (1988 [25]) adaption of "Little Red Riding Hood" (Fig.3.).

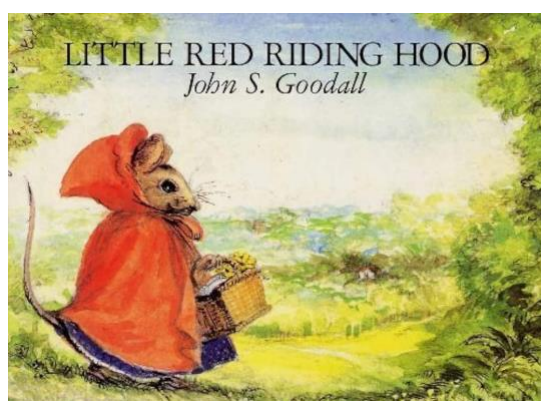


Fig. 3. *Little Red Riding Hood*

Source: Goodall, J S 1988, *Little Red Riding Hood*, André Deutsch, London.

John Goodall, renowned for his wordless picturebooks, creatively adapts the classic tale by depicting all the characters as animals. Little Red Riding Hood, her mother, and her grandmother are depicted as brown mice. The huntsman, crucial to the story's resolution, is portrayed as a formidable bear, while the wolf retains its classic, fearsome identity as a wolf. The animals in the story are given anthropomorphic qualities, closely mirroring their human counterparts in size and demeanor. Goodall's attention to detail in the attire of his anthropomorphic characters brings an extra layer in conveying their identities. Little Red Riding Hood is instantly recognizable by her iconic red hood and cloak, which stand out vividly against the natural tones of the forest. The mother mouse is dressed in a light blue dress with delicate floral patterns adorned and the grandmother mouse wears a white nightgown and cap. The hunter is represented as a bear, depicted in rugged attire suitable for his role. His sturdy appearance, complete with a warm coat and boots, along with an axe slung over his shoulder, highlights his strength and readiness to protect. The wolf is depicted in elaborate Victorian attire, adding a layer of sophisticated yet sinister charm to his character. He wears a tall, black top hat that evokes an air of aristocratic elegance and sophistication, symbolizing the high society of the Victorian era. His red tailcoat, buttoned and snugly fitting, stands out boldly. The tailcoat's vibrant color is a subtle nod to danger, aligning with his predatory role in the narrative. Beneath the tailcoat, the wolf sports a yellow waistcoat adorned with intricate patterns. His black cravat, a common Victorian accessory, ties around his neck, contrasting sharply with the lighter waistcoat and drawing attention to his face. His trousers are light-colored, fitting snugly and tucked into knee-high boots. The ensemble is completed with a walking cane, a typical

accessory for Victorian gentlemen, further enhancing his deceptive civility. This Victorian ensemble adds a historical whimsy to the story, making him a sophisticated yet menacing figure, perfectly capturing the essence of the antagonist in Goodall's retelling of the classic tale. Goodall also includes a variety of secondary characters and background details that add depth and richness to the story. Other animals in the forest, such as birds and small woodland creatures, are often depicted with subtle human traits. For instance, a frog in a tuxedo gallantly helps Little Red Riding Hood across the steppingstones of a stream, adding a touch of formality to his character. A tiny squirrel, first seen perched on a branch above Little Red Riding Hood, later appears on a human scale. Donning a waistcoat reminiscent of the white rabbit from "Alice in Wonderland", the squirrel points insistently at a pocket watch, signaling that she is late and urging her to hurry along (Beckett 2002, p. 31 [26]). John Goodall's adaptation of "Little Red Riding Hood" carefully balances the classic tale's essential elements with the need to make it appropriate for younger audiences. By choosing to have Little Red Riding Hood rescued before she is devoured, Goodall aligns his work with many contemporary, sanitized versions of traditional fairy tales aimed at children. Despite this adjustment, Goodall does not entirely eliminate the story's inherent darkness. The blood-stained axe wielded by the bear woodcutter, symbolizing both violence and salvation, remains a prominent visual element throughout the narrative. In Goodall's version, the ending deviates from the Grimms Brothers tale. Instead of concluding with a simple rescue and return to normalcy, Goodall introduces a heartwarming and somewhat romantic twist (Beckett 2002, pp. 31-32 [27]). The final scene depicts the bear woodcutter having tea with Little Red Riding Hood and her mother. Goodall's use of full and half-page illustrations that blend cleverly into each other further enhances the storytelling. The alternation between full pages and half-pages that conceal surprises engages the reader actively, fostering a sense of discovery and anticipation. Worth mentioning is that by introducing the word "HELP!" in a speech bubble (twice), Goodall effectively breaks the silence of the wordless narrative at a critical moment, underscoring the urgency and desperation of the situation.

In 2003, a notable book titled "A Forest for Thirteen" was published, featuring contributions from thirteen illustrators who are members of the Circle of Greek Children's Book. Each illustrator contributed their own short stories. Among them, Fotini Stefanidi (2003 [28]) retells the tale of Little Red Riding Hood (Fig.4.) using only eight successive small images, employing the "prépsos" technique, as an illustration method, traditionally used in embroidery, to narrate the story through sequential images akin to comic panels (McCloud 1994, p. 9 [29]).



Fig. 4. Little Red Riding Hood

Source: Stefanidi, F 2003, 'Little Red Riding Hood', in N Andrikopoulos, F Vakali-Syrogianopoulou, L Varvarousi, X Dimos, N Kapatsoulia, E Mela, Z Mela-Flourou, D Oronti, V Papatsarouchas, D Parisis, M Pelonis, F Stefanidi & V Psaraki (ed.), *A Forest for Thirteen*, Circle of Greek Children's Book, Hellenic Letters, Athens.

The eight successive images Stefanidi uses are rich in detail, capturing the essence of the story by the Brothers Grimm, without the need for words. The first image introduces Little Red Riding Hood with her mother, preparing her basket for the visit to her grandmother's house. This sets the stage for the familiar tale. The subsequent images depict her journey through the forest, her encounter with the wolf, and the pivotal moments of the narrative, such as the wolf's arrival at the grandmother's house, the visible alarm and fear on the grandmother's face, the transition from Little Red Riding Hood knocking on the door to being swallowed by the wolf, and then to the joyous reunion with her grandmother and the hunter. Each image is carefully crafted to convey a significant moment in the story, ensuring that the narrative flows smoothly from one scene to another. An interesting aspect of Stefanidi's storytelling is the use of small gaps between the images, which invites the reader to engage actively with the narrative. For instance, in one panel the reader/viewer sees Little Red Riding Hood knocking on the door. In the next, she is being devoured by the wolf, and in the following panel, she is shown hugging the huntsman while her grandmother emerges from the wolf's belly. These narrative leaps are significant as they compel the reader/viewer to fill in the gaps (Iser 1978, p. 167 [30]), thereby participating in the storytelling process. This method encourages an interactive reading experience, where the viewer's imagination is actively involved in connecting the dots between scenes, making Stefanidi's adaptation both engaging and immersive.

"Petits Chaperons Loups" by Christian Bruel and Nicole Claveloux (2007 [31]) is another innovative and interactive children's book, with an intriguing title, which reimagines the classic tale of "Little Red Riding Hood" by playing with its traditional characters in surprising ways. This book is structured with two facing booklets (Fig.5.), each offering different scenarios depending on the page combination, thus creating a multitude of narratives that challenge conventional stereotypes. The book utilizes the "French door" binding technique, which presents two parallel yet contrasting stories on facing pages, with one titled "Chaperons" and the other "Loups". This format enriches the narrative and engages young readers in an active storytelling process, requiring them to participate in the creation of the narrative (Beckett 2012, p. 99 [32]).

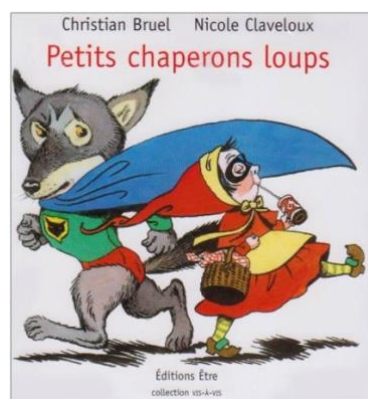


Fig. 5. *Petits Chaperons Loups*

Source: Bruel, C & Claveloux, N 2007, *Petits Chaperons Loups*, Éditions Être, Paris.

Each page of the two booklets can be turned separately or simultaneously, in order or randomly, allowing readers to focus on the double spreads of one booklet or mix and match scenes from both. This flexibility in narrative progression enhances the book's appeal and allows for repeated readings, with new insights and interpretations emerging each time. One side of each booklet features a vibrant color illustration, while the other side contains a small pen and ink drawing, both set against stark white backgrounds. A central theme of "Petits Chaperons Loups" is the subversion of traditional stereotypes. By presenting Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf in various disguises and roles -such as a wolf dressed as Little Red Riding Hood, baby, or magician, and Little Red Riding Hood disguised as a wolf, nurse, or photographer -the book breaks down the typical roles these characters represent. This playful subversion invites

readers to question and rethink their preconceived notions about these traditional fairy tale characters. The fluidity of identity and transformation is vividly explored through the book's creative use of disguises and roles, suggesting that identity is not fixed but can be playful and multifaceted.

Another wordless adaptation of the famous fairy tale, is titled as "Rosetta" by Muñiz (2009 [33]). Derived from the Italian word for a small rose, this book is filled with vibrant pop-ups and interactive elements. (Fig.6.).

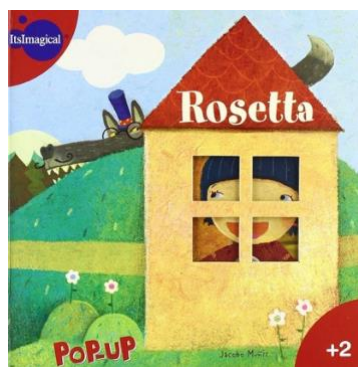


Fig. 6. Rosetta

Source: Muñiz, J 2009, *Rosetta*, ItsImagical, Spain.

The pop-ups are particularly impressive, adding a three-dimensional aspect that brings the story to life. For instance, one of the most dramatic pop-ups is the scene where the wolf is about to devour Little Red Riding Hood. The wolf literally leaps out of the book, with its jaws snapping menacingly close to the reader. "Rosetta" stands out for its ability to merge visual storytelling with physical interaction. The dynamic nature of the pop-ups and the absence of fixed text create a flexible narrative structure that can be molded by the readers' interpretations and creativity. This format is highly effective in drawing children into the story, making them active participants rather than passive listeners.

Pedro Perles reimagines the classic "Little Red Riding Hood" in "Caperucita Roja" (Perles 2010 [34]), a wordless book, through dark, eerie illustrations predominantly in black, white, and red, which captures the essence of Charles Perrault's tale while adding a unique, gothic touch. The cover of the book features the wolf's dark, menacing legs dominating the frame (Fig.7.). The minimalist design, with its stark contrast between the dark fur and the clean white background, draws the viewer's focus directly to the red shoe, that the wolf wears.



Fig. 7. Caperucita Roja

Source: Perles, P 2010, *Caperucita Roja*, Editorial M1C, Spain.

Perles' adaptation utilizes various perspectives and dynamic compositions to convey the visual storyline. The sequences of images are meticulously crafted to build tension and drama, shifting between close-ups and wide shots. These scenes often feature distorted scales, adding a surreal and somewhat nightmarish quality to the tale, and effectively conveying the psychological and emotional states of the characters. The interplay between light and shadow is a recurring motif, symbolizing the struggle between good and evil, safety and danger. The path that Little Red Riding Hood takes through the forest is visually depicted in a winding, almost labyrinthine manner, depicting her journey and the impending encounter with the wolf. The fluidity of the lines and the positioning of elements guide the reader's/viewer's eye through the narrative, maintaining engagement and continuity. In the climactic scenes, the images become even more intense. In one image, the wolf is shown circling the grandmother's house with his dark form contrasted against a muted blue background. Another striking image depicts the wolf's encounter with the grandmother. The composition is almost abstract, with the wolf's eyes and teeth dominating the frame, creating a sense of claustrophobia and fear. When Little Red Riding Hood confronting the wolf, her small figure standing defiantly against his towering form. The familiar dialogue from the original tale is implied through the illustrations. For example, when Little Red Riding Hood inquires about the large size of his ears, she is depicted inside the wolf's ear; when she asks about his big nose, she appears on his snout. In this wordless adaptation, the wolf devours Little Red Riding Hood after her final question about his large mouth. As she falls into the wolf's enormous mouth, one of her shoes drops outside, a poignant detail reflected on the book's cover. The final spreads depict the enormous figure of the wolf with a window in his stomach, through which the terrified Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother are visible, highlighting their entrapment. Outside, people scream and hold their heads in despair, amplifying the sense of horror and urgency. The wolf then disappears into the forest, leaving the red shoe lying on the ground, a silent testament to the tragedy that has unfolded.

Mario Ramos' (2010 [35]) "Le code de la route" offers a contemporary and visually compelling retelling of the classic fairy tale Little Red Riding Hood. This wordless adaptation reimagines Little Red Riding Hood navigating a forest road on her red bicycle, transforming her into a modern girl. The visual narrative begins with her mother, dressed in black, waving goodbye with a white handkerchief, setting the stage for a journey that blends traditional elements with contemporary themes. Ramos employs an episodic structure, where each double-page spread introduces new scenarios through traffic warning signs featuring various fairy tale characters. These signs act as visual transitions, guiding the reader through the story. For example, the first sign depicts the three bears from Goldilocks, followed by a scene where the bears ride bicycles through the forest. The pattern continues with characters such as Tom Thumb, who scatters pebbles along the path, and Don Quixote, who rides his horse and chases a little rabbit. The episodic format enriches the wordless narrative, adding layers of humor and engagement that captivate readers of all ages. Ramos' illustrative style is characterized by vibrant colors and dynamic compositions. The visual storytelling is enhanced by meticulous attention to detail, particularly in the traffic signs that introduce each episode. The traffic signs, in particular, act as a metatextual commentary on the story's progression, reminding readers of the original fairy tale characters while placing them in modern-day scenarios. One notable example is the depiction of the three little pigs, who are introduced through a traffic sign warning of pigs ahead. This sign leads to a scene where the three pigs are shown riding skateboards through the forest. This modern twist on the traditional characters blends the fantastical with the realistic in a humorous way. Humor plays a significant role in Ramos' adaptation, with characters often depicted in exaggerated and comical situations. The Big Bad Wolf, for instance, is humorously portrayed as a giant on roller skates, crashing into a tree. This subversion of the traditional menacing image of the wolf adds a layer of satire, challenging readers' expectations and providing a fresh perspective on the story. The humor engages and encourages readers to see familiar characters in new, unexpected ways. This subversive humor also functions as a form of social commentary, subtly critiquing the simplistic moral binaries often found in traditional fairy tales. The final scenes of the book offer a satisfying resolution, with Little Red Riding Hood arriving at her grandmother's house. The bicycle parked outside and the view of the grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood through the window symbolize the completion of her journey and the safety of home. This resolution ties together the narrative threads, providing a sense of closure and fulfillment.

The endpapers of the book under examination enhance the narrative depth by featuring detailed traffic signs adorned with various fairy tale characters not encountered in the main story. These characters include for example, Pinocchio, Frog Prince, Little Prince, Puss in Boots, Ugly Duckling, Bluebeard, Fox and the Crow. This clever use of endpapers expands the narrative universe and invites readers to imagine further adventures beyond the book's pages. The back cover of "Le code de la route" (Fig.8.) features a single traffic warning sign with Little Red Riding Hood herself. This wordless element acts as a summary of the book, emphasizing the theme of the journey and the integration of traditional characters into new, modern settings.



Fig. 8. *Le code de la route*

Source: Ramos, M 2010, *Le code de la route*, L' école des loisirs, Paris.

Adolfo Serra's wordless adaptation of "Little Red Riding Hood" in the book entitled "Caperucita Roja" (Serra 2011 [36]), has a minimalist cover, featuring sparse trees and a diminutive figure of Little Red Riding Hood, and immediately evokes a sense of isolation and vulnerability (Fig.9.).

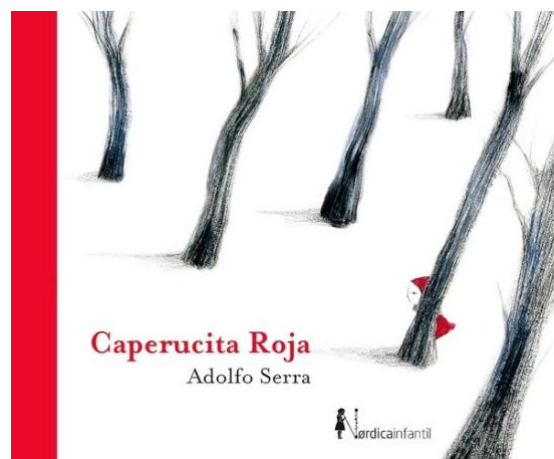


Fig. 9. *Caperucita Roja*

Source: Serra, A 2011, *Caperucita Roja*, Narval Editores, Madrid.

In the initial image, a house with a winding path seamlessly transitions into the tail of the wolf. As Little Red Riding Hood journeys through the forest, her red hood stands in stark contrast against the pale background and dark trees, creating a visual dichotomy between innocence and danger. The depiction of the wolf as an integral part of the environment, with his body forming the forest, reinforces the notion

that danger is an intrinsic part of our surroundings. One of the most dynamic images in Serra's wordless adaptation is the reflection of Little Red Riding Hood in the eyes of the wolf which symbolizes the imminent danger and the wolf's predatory focus on her, creating an intense sense of impending threat. Additionally, another scene depicts Little Red's hair blending with the wolf's silhouette as it attempts to consume a red butterfly. This surreal depiction perhaps represents the intertwining of their destinies and the unavoidable confrontation between innocence and malevolence, emphasizing the complex dynamics between the protagonist and the antagonist. Red Riding Hood, then, is depicted climbing the steep back of the wolf representing the path that leads towards the grandmother's house framed by trees that form a tunnel-like enclosure. When she gets into the house she encounters the wolf. Wolf's image is framed in pictures which show the wolf's teeth, eye, paw, and claws, creating an unsettling gallery that emphasizes the wolf's presence and menace. This builds an atmosphere of suspense and foreboding, reflecting Little Red Riding Hood's growing awareness of the danger. Then, the wolf opens his mouth, with his enormous sharp teeth and red tongue, he is ready to devour the small figure of Little Red Riding Hood. The narrative culminates in an image where Little Red Riding Hood's and her grandmother's eyes glow in the darkness within the stomach of the wolf. Yet, the presence of light breaking through the darkness as they emerge, aided by the hunter, gives hope and salvation. The final image of Little Red Riding Hood walking hand in hand with her grandmother and the hunter signifies a return to safety.

Beatriz Martín Vidal's "Caperuza" (Vidal 2016 [37]) offers an interesting retelling of the Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale through a wordless narrative divided into three evocative chapters. The cover itself sets the tone for the book, depicting a young girl, Little Red Riding Hood, with a red poppy covering one eye. This visual metaphor of the poppy hints at themes of transformation and duality, suggesting both innocence and a deeper, darker narrative underneath. The poppy, traditionally associated with sleep and death, foreshadows the heroine's transformative journey (Fig.10.).



Fig. 10. *Caperuza*

Source: Vidal, B M 2016, *Caperuza*, Thule Ediciones, Barcelona.

In the first chapter, "Enrojeciendo" (Blushing), Vidal presents the metamorphosis of the heroine into Little Red Riding Hood. The transformation is depicted through red petals that adhere to her body, gradually enveloping her. The red petals, evocative of the iconic red hood, suggest a natural evolution into her new identity. The visual progression captures the stages of this transformation, emphasizing the organic and inevitable nature of growth and change. The second chapter, "El juego de las preguntas" (The Question Game), delves into themes of identity and deception. The heroine engages with a mask, touching its eyes, face, and nose in a tactile exploration. This mask stands as the wolf's disguise in the original fairy tale, representing deceit and the hidden dangers beneath seemingly benign appearances. The heroine's interaction with the mask is a quest for truth and understanding, culminating in the revelation that the wolf is wearing the mask. This moment mirrors the unveiling of the wolf's true nature

in the traditional narrative, underscoring the theme of unmasking deception. The subsequent imagery of the wolf alone, having consumed the heroine, aligns with the classic tale's darker themes but sets the stage for a transformative resolution. The final chapter, "Escapando" (Escaping), reinterprets the story's conclusion with a redemptive twist. It begins with a striking image of a small red flower emerging from the wolf's back, signifying rebirth and hope. As more flowers sprout, reminiscent of the red poppy petals, the wordless narrative progresses to a powerful visual of Little Red Riding Hood herself emerging from the wolf. The heroine's emergence as a more empowered and self-aware individual is vividly depicted in the final image where she directly gazes at the reader/viewer. This proposes a newfound strength and empowerment, transforming her narrative from one of victimhood to one of triumph and self-realization.

Jed Alexander's wordless book "Red" (Jed 2018 [38]) offers a modern reinterpretation of the classic "Little Red Riding Hood" fairy tale. The cover of "Red" immediately sets the tone for the book, depicting Little Red Riding Hood walking into a dense forest with her basket, while the massive tail of a wolf snakes through the trees, hinting at an ever-present danger (Fig.11.). Interestingly, a bird, half-hidden behind a tree trunk and wearing a birthday hat, foreshadows the twist that awaits the reader. This clever use of imagery establishes a sense of foreboding and curiosity, engaging the audience from the very beginning. Furthermore, the title "Red" is prominently colored in red, immediately highlighting the central role of the protagonist and underscoring the thematic significance of the color throughout the story.

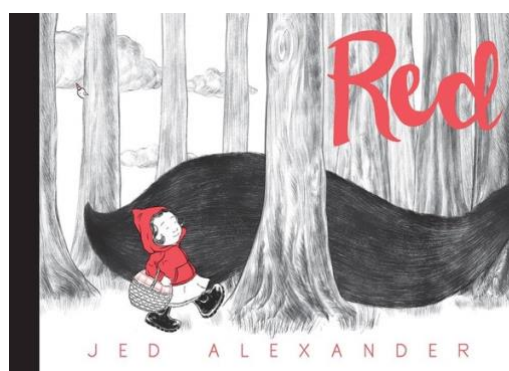


Fig. 11. Red

Source: Alexander, J 2018, *Red*, Cameron+Company, Petaluma, California.

The wordless narrative begins before the title page, with a scene that subverts the expectations set by the traditional tale. A giant wolf emerges from the forest carrying packages of wrapping paper, ribbons, and party hats, delivering them to an older woman at the door of a cabin. This scene sets a surprising tone, suggesting that the wolf might not be the antagonist as in the original story. The grandmother, portrayed in contemporary attire with athletic shoes and red stockings, looks at the wolf with an expression of surprise. Alexander's detailed black-and-white illustrations meticulously depict the textures of tree bark, fur, mushrooms, and the wolf's bushy tail, which extends past several trees, creating a stark, almost timeless atmosphere. The selective use of red and pink draws the reader's/viewer's eye to elements associated with the festive atmosphere, guiding the narrative and emphasizing the playful and warm aspects of the story. The protagonist, a small girl in a red hood and black boots, enters the forest carrying a basket. As the story unfolds, the wolf, initially appearing menacing, is seen blocking Red's view of the forest creatures carrying items for a party. The interaction between Red and the wolf is particularly telling: the wolf seems to be trying to persuade Red to take another path, reminiscent of the original tale, but she stands firm, with her body language suggesting distrust and annoyance. In the next spread, Red raises a finger at the wolf while he raises his hands as if to say, "Alright, alright. I'm leaving". Meanwhile, a skunk tiptoes through the trees with a red-ribboned package, a pair of foxes pass by with bouquets of red balloons, squirrels with ribbons, and rabbits with

a birthday cake all move behind Red as she converses with the wolf. This lively, bustling forest filled with friendly creatures contrasts sharply with the typical portrayal of the forest as a place of fear, highlighting the collaborative effort to create a memorable surprise. The climax of the story occurs at the grandmother's house, which is festively decorated with balloons, ribbons, and gifts. The house, filled with various forest animals, bursts with warmth and cheer, standing in stark contrast to the traditional dark and foreboding setting of the original tale. The wolf, adorned with a large red bow, sits contentedly amidst the festivities, further emphasizing his role as a benevolent character in this retelling. The surprise birthday party prepared by the wolf, grandmother, and the forest creatures brings a delightful and heartwarming twist to the classic tale. In the concluding scenes, after the party, Little Red Riding Hood is depicted riding the enormous wolf through the forest under the moonlit night. This powerful image transforms the traditional narrative, presenting the wolf as an ally and symbolizing a harmonious coexistence. The moonlight bathes their path in a gentle glow, highlighting a journey that transcends fear and conflict, forging a new, unified adventure into the depths of the forest.

Wordless books often utilize the iconic imagery of Little Red Riding Hood and rely on the audience's familiarity with the fairy tale to reconstruct new visual narratives. For example, Mitsumasa Anno's (1977 [39]) book, "Tabi no Ehon" (Anno's Journey) utilizes this approach and was awarded the Golden Apple at the Bratislava International Biennale that same year. The plot of the book revolves around a traveler, specifically the author's own trip to Europe in 1963 and 1975 (Beckett 2012, p. 85 [40]). The European material cultural heritage (buildings, monuments, etc.) is intersected in space and time with the immaterial (toys, customs, etc.) through the use of iconic panoramas. Through these, with a selected perspective from above, the reader can also identify familiar figures from theatre, music and the arts in general, as well as from myths, legends, traditions and of course folk tales, such as Little Red Riding Hood. Similarly, Tord Nygren's (1987 [41]) "Den röda tråden" (The Red Thread), published in Sweden and later in English, features a "Can you find" list on the dust jacket that includes Little Red Riding Hood among other characters. This paratextual element assists readers in navigating the enigmatic visual narrative, where a red thread winds through various scenes and characters (Beckett 2003, p. 24 [42]). Another wordless book is "Wolf in the Snow", by Matthew Cordell (2017 [43]) that received the prestigious 2018 Caldecott Medal. The narrative tells the story of a girl and a wolf cub who each get lost in a snowstorm and then find each other. As the storm subsides, the girl helps the lost wolf cub find its pack, facing various dangers along the way. In turn, the wolves help guide the girl back to safety by alerting her parents. The book's imagery is reminiscent of "Little Red Riding Hood", particularly in its depiction of a girl in a red coat and the interaction with wolves. Lastly, we could support that wordless books often utilize the iconic imagery of Little Red Riding Hood to transcend linguistic barriers, engaging readers through universally recognizable narratives. These books rely on the audience's familiarity with the fairy tale to reconstruct the story visually. By doing so, they tap into a collective cultural memory, allowing readers to connect with the story on a deeper level.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The enduring appeal of "Little Red Riding Hood" and its numerous adaptations lies in its remarkable adaptability and the rich, varied themes it explores. It demonstrates how stories can transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries, resonating with diverse audiences across time and space. This timeless appeal is a testament to the enduring power of fairy tales and their ability to reflect and adapt to changing societal values and artistic expressions.

The transformation of "Little Red Riding Hood" into wordless adaptations invites a deeper exploration of how stories function and why they endure. Stripped of words, these narratives rely on the universality of human experience, using imagery to tap into shared emotions and collective memories. In their first form, stories were oral, passed down through generations, relying heavily on the listener's imagination and personal interpretation. Similarly, wordless books turn passive consumption into active creation, emphasizing the participatory nature of storytelling. This process highlights the role of the reader, challenging the notion of a single, authoritative narrative and suggesting that stories are living entities, constantly evolving through the interpretations of their audiences.

Furthermore, wordless adaptations of “Little Red Riding Hood” illustrate the profound impact of visual literacy in contemporary storytelling. They emphasize the capacity of images to convey complex narratives and emotions, demonstrating that the essence of a story can be captured and understood without the need for written text. This shift from text to image aligns with the broader cultural movement towards visual communication, reflecting the changing modes of how stories are told and consumed in modern society.

Ultimately, the adaptability and resilience of “Little Red Riding Hood” affirm the dynamic nature of storytelling. Whether through words or images, the tale continues to engage, inspire, and resonate, underscoring the inherent human need to tell and retell stories that capture the complexities of our experiences and imaginations.

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