An Animal Rediscovered:
The Wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood*
Reconstructed through Hanoverian Natural History

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Abstract

The Wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* has been one of the most famous antagonists in fairy tales for decades. The Hanoverian era, in which the first English translation of *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* was published in London and numerous retellings of the story appeared in the book market, marked the people's obsession with animals. One of the influential genres that promoted the interest was natural historical writing. This study, therefore, aims to reevaluate the function of the Wolf as an animal in the Hanoverian renditions of this traditional tale.

This paper, in the first place, endeavours to reconstruct the process by which the abhorred figure of the Wolf was created through the idea of the species's dietary habit. Through analytic compar ison between the descriptions of wolves in natural historical materials and those of the Wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood*, it was found that the first and foremost characteristic of wolves featured in both texts is their appetite; it is this feature that proves the Wolf 's significance as the representation of natural threat.

While the absence of resurrection in Perrault -based variants reinforces the idea of the Wolf as natural threat by suggesting its absoluteness, he seems to manifest another function other than the embodiment of harsh nature . The tale, which transformed into entertaining nursery books for children in the period, would have been more than a horror story that frightens the readers by exaggerating the absolute threat of nature. Considering the epidemic popularity of natural historical study of the day and how its enthusiasm is reflected in this fairytale, it is suggested that the Wolf functions a wonder of nature, a curious discovery made by the heroine. The tense dialogue unfolding between the child protagonist and the animal in the climax, which originates in Charles Perrault 's narrative, could have worked as a trigger for natural-history lovers of the period. The heroine's measurement and close observation of the animal 's arms, legs, ears, eyes and teeth correspond to the demand of amateur naturalists in the Hanoverian era--categorisation according to the visual features of each species. Along with the flowers, butterflies and other creatures in the woods, the Wolf is found by the little girl as a part of wondrous nature, in the age of discovering and categorizing creatures. Therefore, this

paper concludes that the Hanoverian *Little Red Riding Hood* can be read as an adventurous and witty cautionary tale of a young naturalist by presenting the Wolf before the audience as the symbol of dangerous yet intriguing nature.