



Creative Work

Little Red Hat

Bridget Irving

www.bridgetirving.com

Introduction

I have made a picture book for children aged 4+ and their adult guardian readers. Many elements from *Animals Erased* (Stibbe, 2012) and ecolinguistics have shaped this book and the illustrations within it.

This book evolved during my MA in Visual Communication. I chose Red Riding Hood because it is a kind of hypertext fairy story; it and the (mis)representation of the big bad wolf are universally known, children are introduced to it at a very young age and it is often referenced in feminist dialogues. I was motivated by the discovery of an award-winning contemporary ‘feminist’ version of Red Riding Hood where Red kills the wolf herself, without the need to be rescued by a man. The book ends with the illustrated scene of a triumphant Red wearing a wolf fur coat and the forest is devoid of animal life. I do not believe anyone involved in the making and publishing of that book, and others like it, really see the wolf, the mocking of real violence toward real animals or the destruction of nature; all are erased. It is heartbreaking that cruelty and the (ab)use of animals as derogatory metaphor goes so unseen.

I wanted to change the story, show that humanity is the risk to wolves and not the other way round. Research took me into terrible territory and photographic images that still haunt me. Driven, I wanted to show not just the wolf’s perspective but how the traditional story masks all this terror.

Happily, *Animals Erased* led me through Haiku and Studio Ghibli, to Kishōtenketsu and non-western storytelling — this helped form a child friendly story that gently joins the ending back to the start. To combat erasure I gave the wolf a family and a perspective; they have a voice. The wolves are given salience by inclusion from the start, framed as nature through the window and there are pages devoted just to them. I was mindful to show closeness, similarity with humans, to include other animals, and illustrate wolves living wolf lives without human interference. However, I am aware that I have not included the wolf in the title and this is something that still concerns me but I did want the book to be about what people can do, about human actions and to underline the intertextuality with Red Riding Hood. I have had fifty copies printed! Perhaps it should have been *The Wolf and*

Little Red Hat.

I have come to learn about how line, form, shape and colour, how elements and position and status on the page affect status of a character; how ideas of human exceptionalism are generated through signs and symbols and semiotics; how illustration and illustrators and publishers draw on nostalgia to repeat familiar ideas and damaging stereotypes. I wanted to challenge all that, join the voices speaking for nature, and make the wolf visible through a picture book, one of the earliest introductions to our relationships with animals — I am so happy to share it here.

There is more info on my website. I have self-published it for now and I am setting out to submit to publishers.

Bridget Irving

www.bridgetirving.com

Reference

Stibbe, A. (2012). *Animals erased: Discourse, ecology, and reconnection with the natural world*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Me and my rescue wolf Buggy



I am passionate about animals in visual communication. I am especially concerned with picture books and food packaging but I maintain an interest in how all representations impact the human animal relationship and our belief systems around that.

Animals Erased and the online ecolinguistics course influenced my academic studies and my way of seeing the world and now my contributions to animal activism.