# Revolting «Little Red Riding Hood»

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## Resumen

En este artículo se analizan cuatro versiones modernas y humorísticas de «Caperucita Roja» escritas por Roald Dahl, James Finn Garner, F'Murr y James Thurber. Se demuestra cómo estas nuevas versiones comparten una serie de estrategias comunes que deconstruyen y se «rebelan» contra el patrón tradicional de los cuentos de hadas al tiempo que crean otros nuevos.

*PALABRAS CLAVE: Caperucita Roja. Versiones modernas. Humor. Estrategias comunes. Rebelión. Patrones tradicionales.*

## Abstract

This paper analyses four modern humorous retellings of «Little Red Riding Hood» written by Roald Dahl, James Finn Garner, F'Murr and James Thurber. It shows how these new versions share a series of common strategies which deconstruct and «revolt» against the traditional fairy tale pattern creating, in the process, new models.

*KEY WORDS: Little Red Riding Hood. Modern humorous retellings. Common strategies. Revolting. Traditional patterns.*

## Résumé

Cet article analyse quatre versions modernes et humoristiques du Petit Chaperon Rouge écrit par Roald Dahl, James Finn Garner, F'Murr et James Thurber. On démontre comment ces nouvelles versions utilisent une série de stratégies communes qui déconstruisent et se «rebellent» contre le patron traditionnel des contes de fées tandis qu'ils en créent de nouveaux.

*MOTS-CLÉS: Le Petit Chaperon Rouge. Versions modernes et humoristiques. Stratégies communes. Rébellion. Patrons traditionnels.*

Parodying and manipulating fairy tale material is not a modern literary device. Already in the nineteenth century, Lewis Carroll included in his *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) parodies of well- known Victorian nursery-rhymes, but it was not until after the second World War that revising and retelling fairy tales became a popular and massively used resource. Discussing the reason for this will be one of the aims of this essay. 'Little Red Riding Hood', the tale we will concentrate upon, is one of the most manipulated and reinterpreted fairy tales of this century —having more than a hundred different versions written from multiple points of view (Zipes, 1993).

The versions of this tale by the writers James Thurber, Roald Dahl, James Finn Garner and the French cartoonist F'Murr, stand out among many other versions for their humorous vein. In Thurber's *Fables For Our Times,* we find that LRRH is a shrewd girl who shoots the wolf dead; in Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes,* she kills the Wolf but also the wisest of the three little pigs to make herself a wolfskin coat and a pigskin travelling case; in Murr's *Au Loup!* comic strips, the Wolf and other fairy tale villains form a union to ask Perrault to change the tale's endings; and in Garner's *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories,* the huntsman gets killed at the end, whereas: «Little Red Riding Hood, her grandma and the cross-dressing wolf set up an alternative household based on mutual respect and cooperation» (Garner, 1994: 4).

With these amusing retellings, the reader finds himself both surprised and delighted at the unexpected twists on character and plot that this well-known tale takes on. These writers play with our expectations as readers, and the fun we experience with these new versions derives from the contrast between the original and the modern version of the tale. It is essential therefore, in this type of literature-production-by-manipulation, that we are acquainted with the original source of the story in order to enjoy our reading. But the question is, why do these

authors rewrite in the first place? What is there in our contemporary world that pushes so many writers to manipulate fairy tales? And what is it exactly they are doing with the tales? Do they all use different techniques or do they actually share common strategies? If so, which are these and what part do they play, in the wider field of contemporary literature?

This essay will try to answer the above questions by analysing in detail, first of all, what these manipulations consist in. Roald Dahl's version of 'LRRH' will be taken as the basis for text analysis. Then, we will relate and compare the results of Dahl's tale with the other versions mentioned above to see if they use different or similar techniques. Finally, we will try to draw some conclusion that may explain the possible reasons that move these authors to rewrite classic fairy tales.

## 1.  Dahl and the Proppian pattern

'Revolting' is the key word in the following pages. That Roald Dahl's version of 'LRRH' forms part of a storybook called *Revolting Rhymes* is something that should not be taken lightly. The ambiguous title plays with the double meaning of the word 'revolting', thus suggesting: one, that the tales may produce disgust in the reader, and two, that the tales are rebellious because they go against an established order. As it happens, both meanings of 'revolting' are exploited in Dahl's fairy tale version. The first one, disgust (mixed with lots of humour), is the trademark that makes 'LRRH' different and a typical Dahlian product, but the second import of the word, the rebelling against, is probably the key to understand what Dahl, Thurber, Garner and Murr are actually doing with their 'LRRH' versions. As we will see, to 'revolt against' is going to be the common literary war cry of these modern writers, —the leitmotif behind their versions. But what is it exactly they revolt against?

Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale*, revealed there was a structural pattern underlying all Russian fairy tales. For Propp, each action performed by a character is a 'function.' These functions were classified according to their significance and the position they occupied in the course of the narrative in the tale. What Propp discovered was that there was a distinctive order in the sequence of these functions, and in consequence, a limitation in the freedom within the sequence. He also discovered that heroes and villains were always associated with certain functions only. These discoveries he materialized and summarized in a scheme made up of Greek and Latin letters, each of them representing a function in the tale. What Dahl, Garner, Murr and Thurber seem to

do is to subvert the Proppian scheme by reversing the functions normally associated to victim/seeker heroes and villains in fairy tales. This change will affect the outcome of the scheme, which will not look as the original tale. Let us see Grimm's and Dahl's Proppian scheme of LRRH for comparison. This is Grimm's scheme:

I. $\alpha \gamma \beta (\in \zeta \eta \theta) = \delta A$     II. $(\in \zeta \in \zeta \in \zeta) = \eta\theta \, A \, B_4 \, C\!\uparrow \, J_5 \, J_{10} \, W^\circ$

I. First Sequence
$\alpha$ = Initial situation
$\gamma$ = Interdiction (don't talk to strangers)
$\beta$ = Absentation (LRRH leaves home for Grandma's)
$(\in \zeta \eta \theta) = \delta$
    $\in$ = Reconnaissance (the Wolf asks her where she is going)
    $\zeta$ = Delivery (LRRH answers)
    $\eta$ = Trickery (Wolf sets her a trap)
    $\theta$ = Complicity (LRRH submits to his plan)
Since all of these functions actually form part of the violation of the interdiction ($\delta$), we put them in between brackets.
    $\delta$ = Violation of the interdiction (LRRH talks to the Wolf)
A = First villany (the Wolf gobbles up Grandma)

II. Second sequence
$(\in \zeta \in \zeta \in \zeta) = \eta\theta$
    $(\in \zeta)$ = Reconnaissance/ Delivery (the exchange between LRRH and the Wolf: «What great big ears you have, Grandma!»)
    $\eta$ = Trickery
    $\theta$ = Complicity

The exchange is actually part of the Wolf's trap ($\eta$) to eat LRRH. His plan includes putting on Grandma's clothes, getting into bed and the exchange between him and the little girl. The aim is to deceive LRRH and make her fall into his trap ($\theta$ = complicity). Since the exchange is part of this trickery-complicity ritual and an important element for comparison with Dahl's own exchange, it is practical to show it in between brackets.

A = Second villany (LRRH is gobbled up by the Wolf)
$B_4$ = Misfortune is announced (the Wolf snores loud and the huntsman suspects)

C↑= *Counteraction of the hero* (the huntsman decides to go and check on Grandma)

$J_5$ = The villain is defeated without preliminary fight (the huntsman shoots the Wolf)

$K_{10}$ = Misfortune liquidated: captives are freed (LRRH and her Grandma libertated thanks to the huntsman)

$W°$ = Compensation (the huntsman skins the wolf's fur and the other two eat the cake and wine LRRH has brought.)

And here is Dahl's version of the same tale. (Warning: some of the functions don't quite apply. More information after the explanation of the functions.)

I.  $a_6$ C↑ A     II. $(\in \zeta \in \zeta \in_{neg}) = \eta \theta_{neg} A_{contr} (J_5) K W°$

I. First Sequence

$a_6$ = Lack of something: food (the Wolf is hungry)

C↑ = The 'hero' sets off to action (the Wolf decides to go to Grandma's and eat her)

A = First villany (the Wolf gobbles up Grandma)

II. Second Sequence

$\in \zeta \in \zeta \in_{neg}$ = Reconnaissance/Delivery («What a lovely, big, furry coat you have on!», this third remark is not the correct one);

$A_{contr}$ = Second villainy not committed (LRRH is not eaten. Instead, LRRH kills the Wolf )

$(J_5)$ = The villain is killed without preliminary fight (LRRH shoots the Wolf.) In parenthesis, because this function is assimilated to $A_{contr}$, since both actions are similar and performed by the same character.

K = Lack liquidated. (LRRH obtains the wolf's fur she needs (?) to make herself a new 'hood' or coat)

$W°$ = Compensation (LRRH makes herself a wolfskin coat and substitutes her old hood for her new coat)

At a first glance, the schemes already show important differences between the two versions. Let us have a first, quick approach to see an application of Propp's scheme to Dahl's version.

To start with, Dahl's version starts in medias res. If we take a look at his first sequence, we will notice that all the preliminary section (the Greek letters in Grimm) where LRRH's mother warns her daughter against strangers and the

encounter with the Wolf in the forest is missing in his scheme. In Dahl, we start straight off with the Wolf in the forest. Dahl changes the camera angle, so to speak, so it is now the Wolf who becomes the focus in the first lines of the tale instead of LRRH. LRRH does not make her appearance until the middle of the tale. As we can see, the characters have reversed their cue. If in Grimm we had to wait until the Wolf made its appearance, in Dahl it is LRRH who keeps the reader waiting. The effect of this reversal, of this changing 'camera' angles, is very revealing.

On the one hand, Dahl is warning the readers. He is suggesting to them this is not going to be the LRRH they are acquainted with, and therefore, that they must be on the alert. Dahl wants active and not passive readers. He is asking them to keep their eyes open, to interact, to keep the old tale in mind for comparison with his own version to see what his has to offer.

On the other hand, Dahl is blurring the limits between villain and heroine. In Grimm, it is clear and obvious who plays the villain, the hero and the victimized heroine role. In Dahl's version this is not so clear anymore. LRRH and the Wolf tend to fluctuate continuously between the roles of the villain and the heroine. Thus, if in Grimm everything was black or white, in Dahl the role of the hero and the villain tend to blend with each other, so that nobody now seems to be entirely good or bad. The result is that Dahl's characters adopt very ambiguous attitudes. This will help to keep the reader intrigued as to who is who in the tale, and as to the outcome of this new LRRH version.

Let us see now how the ambiguity works on the characters. The Wolf has always been the villain of the piece, but in Dahl he is placed in a slightly different light. The functions he is first associated with correspond to the «hero» and not to the «villain» role: ($a_6$ C↑.) Also, the lines and vocabulary that go with these functions offer a positive instead of a dark picture of the Wolf:

> As soon as Wolf began to feel
> that he would like a decent meal
> he went and knocked on Grandma's door (Dahl, 1982: 36).

Here, the name «Wolf» is not preceded by the usual negative adjectives such as «wicked» or «bad» that may predispose the reader to frown at this character. He is simply called «Wolf» and the poor creature is hungry. He does not seem to be a savage animal eager for blood and raw meat, but rather one of us, human beings, in search of something nice and tasty to fill our bellies with: «a decent meal». Even when the Wolf sets off to Grandma's, nothing could suggest to us till line five in Dahl's version, that he is going there to eat her. We keep the idea on

mind, of course, because this is what happens in Grimm's tale, but the way he has been described so far seems to suggest a different alternative: that the Wolf is going to beg some food scraps to Grandma. It is only when we are told about «the sharp white teeth and the horrid grin» in line five, that we are thrown back suddenly onto the old familiar frame of 'LRRH', and the Wolf becomes again the villain (A) he has always been.

This ambiguous attitude of the Wolf -from hero to villain- is something that is also present in the character of LRRH as well. Her entry in the second sequence (taking the Wolf 's cue), and some of the functions she is associated with do not quite correspond with her supposed victimized heroine role but rather with the villain's. $A_{contr}$, for example, is not a function performed by the Wolf, but by LRRH herself. The villany the Wolf was going to commit (A, to eat LRRH) is aborted to invert the roles of victim and executioner. By killing the Wolf she is committing the villany the Wolf should have done and in a certain sense, because she is replacing him, she can be considered to be the villain now. At the same time, though, she is performing a heroic role, which is to defend herself from a foe (J5.) So as we can see, this LRRH has a double face. She fluctuates from villain to heroine indistinctively. These positive and negative connotations put LRRH under an ambiguous light. This ambiguity is even increased and emphasized at the end of the tale when we learn that LRRH now goes around the forest not with «a silly hood upon her head» anymore, but with a «lovely furry wolfskin coat» (40) instead.

The substitution of her old garments, including the remark the narrator makes about the hood («silly» as if suggesting «It was about time you updated / changed your wardrobe»), the pride with which she exhibits her new acquisition, and her readiness with the pistol (as if she had been practising), all this suggests very dubious reasons for her going to Grandma's house. We are left with the possibility that LRRH's visit to Grandma was not for charitable purposes (to bring her food and keep her company) but for a want in new clothes. K, which in Grimm represents the happy rescue of the two women from the Wolf's belly, seems to become in Dahl a materialistic liquidation of a need instead. K in Dahl's version should actually correspond to the liquidation of $a_6$ (the Wolf's hunger) and of the Wolf's eating Grandma (A), but here LRRH, apparently indifferent to her Grandma, concentrates only on getting her fur and not bothering about other people's problems.

It is only an impression, a possibility left for us to decide, but these little changes placed here and there, are enough to leave us wondering about the supposed perfect innocence of this LRRH. The real intentions of LRRH are much clearer in Dahl's version of 'The Three Little Pigs', where LRRH evidently

involves herself in the story to liquidate her need for «a pigskin travelling-case». In 'LRRH', however, these dark intentions are as yet unclear. They are suggested but when the tale finishes the reader doesn't know if the killing of the Wolf was casual or premeditated.

Let us see now more in detail which are the 'revolting' ideas Dahl's schemes transmit and his relationship to the other modern LRRH versions already mentioned. The 'revolting' ideas will be presented in three main sections: Characters, Morals, and Blending.

## 2. 'Revolting' characters

In the following section, we are going to analyse in detail the changes that the characters of LRRH and the Wolf undergo in these modern versions.

—LRRH: A MODERN HEROINE

a. LRRH in Dahl's version

Little Red Riding Hood is the one who deals the final blow of the tale, the one who turns the screw on the plot and manages to surprise us all. This surprise can be explained by our expectations about her character.

There is a big gap and contrast between Grimm's portrayal of a passive and innocent little girl, ignorant of the Wolf's intentions and thus easy to deceive, and Dahl's portrayal of a brave, active, «modern» girl who, as if acquainted with the potential evils of today's society, takes safety measures by carrying a gun with her. What Dahl has done here is to manipulate the functions, so that in his version LRRH's role shifts from what Propp calls a «passive, victimized heroine» to an «active, seeker heroine.» Thus, if in Grimm's tale she was the hunted, in Dahl's version she is the hunter; an unexpected reversal of roles. In the original fairy tale, LRRH had to wait for the huntsman to come and rescue her, but in *Revolting Rhymes* the little girl stands on her own two feet showing she needs no brave young man or prince to save her from her foe (A $_{contr}$ and J5 in Dahl's version are performed by LRRH and not by the huntsman). She is the one who «rescues» herself, the one who takes the initiative, the focus. She becomes the heroine of the piece. This will come to the reader as a surprise since our expectations of fairy tale women are usually associated to the image of defenceless, weak creatures who cannot do a thing for themselves except waiting for the hero to help them escape (Sleeping Beauty, Snow-White, Jorinda.)

Dahl's tough and strong protagonist is a break with the traditional rules of the fairy tale in what concerns heroines. In this sense, what we find in *Revolting*

*Rhymes* is a rebellious, modern child who, tired of playing the victim role decides to change the script of the story all by herself, perhaps as an attempt to catch up with modern times. Women's rights and feminist movements have such a strong presence in today's society, that the portrayal of these weak victims the fairy tales insist on picturing over and over tends to look backward and completely outdated. Thus, we could regard Dahl's 'Little Red Riding Hood' as an attempt to make the tale «politically correct» according to the sensibilities of today. It is important to bear in mind, though, that such «updatings» in the tale are not serious. In fairy tales, you can't expect victimized female characters to take charge of the situation. Victimized heroines are not associated to J functions as long as there is a male hero around who can do the job for them. It is a treat, then, to see LRRH, a girl belonging to a timeless, a-historical past, a character who has become a classic in our folklore, suddenly throwing away her unmovable role of goody-innocent girl to jump into the twentieth century and adopt the manners of a tough gunwoman. For further discussion of this abandoning the a-historial time of the fairy tale, see section 4.c in the 'Blending' section.

### b.  LRRH in Murr, Thurber and Garner

In Murr's, Thurber's and Garner's LRRH versions very similar things occur. Both in Murr's and Thurber's versions, for example, the writers destroy our expectations of LRRH's character. To start with, Thurber does not call her by her full name but simply «little girl». This term is repeated six times in the few lines that make up his version, which also happens to be entitled: *'The Little Girl* and the Wolf.'[1]

The effect that repeating the same words over and over creates, predisposes the reader to believe that this is the perfectly harmless, naïve creature we are so familiar with. The writer, of course, knows better. As in Dahl, when Thurber is sure we have been taken in, he twists the end so that we discover this is not such a foolish «little girl» after all but a sharp one who can very well tell the difference between a Grandma and a Wolf lying in bed. As in Dahl's version, «the little girl» finishes off the Wolf with a gun. The only difference is that Dahl's heroine seems to be more liberal and cheeky. She draws a «pistol from her knickers» (Dahl, 1982: 40) while Thurber's draws her «automatic out of her basket» (Thurber 1939: 5). Dahl's irreverent detail helps to increase the humour of the new version and to widen the chasm between the old and new LRRH. Finally, just as in Dahl's version, no hunter or woodsman comes to her rescue, thus showing the girl can fence for herself.

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[1] My underlining.

Murr's LRRH is slightly different. Here, the Wolf spends the time *trying* to get hold of LRRH without success. Murr offers not one but many versions of the same situation, which consists in LRRH's arriving safely to Grandma's house and in the Wolf's trying to catch LRRH with all kinds of traps. What is emphasized in Murr's is the characters' awareness of being in a tale they have to perform again and again. The result is that both characters know exactly what they are supposed to do and what is going to happen afterwards. Actually, both play tricks on each other, but everytime the Wolf sets LRRH a trap, she manages to escape with another trick that she has been keeping up her sleeve. It is a situation quite similar to a Tom and Jerry cartoon, where the cat tries to catch the mouse and fails despite all his efforts. In Murr, it is very clear that LRRH is aware of being in a tale, so she is always on guard when she meets the Wolf. She is not easy to deceive and not naïve at all. No hunter comes to help, and the fun of Murr's versions is to see what next trick they will play on each other, that is, what will be the next twist in LRRH's tale.

Garner uses his version to kill two birds with one stone. On the one hand, his LRRH revolts against the traditional women roles already mentioned, but on the other hand, and this is what makes him different, he makes fun of the extremes that can be reached by applying «politically correct» tags to everything, even fairy tales. In his attempt to correct all the «sexist, racist, culturalist,» and other - ist remarks that according to the author may hurt people's feelings, LRRH's character undergoes some changes. Besides moving from a passive to an active role as in the other versions, she stops being a little girl to become a «young person» with her own ideas about women in society. The speech she addresses to the «woodcutter-person» when he breaks into Grandma's house shows it: «Sexist! Speciesist! How dare you assume that women and wolves cannot solve their own problems without a man's help?» (Garner, 1994: 4). LRRH has become in Garner not only an active heroine but also a convinced feminist. All of these attempts to make the world of fiction fit in the same box of laws that rules the human world as if both worlds were similar are amusing and, at the same time, ridiculous.

c. Gradma and the huntsman/woodsman

Before passing to the study of the Wolf, some comments first about two other characters that appear in Grimm's fairy tale and which in the modern versions acquire some new aspects which they lacked before and which are worth mentioning. Let us take a look at Grandma and the huntsman/woodsman.

There is an interesting 'revolting' feature that occurs in Garner's and Murr's version only. The revolt of the heroine characters against their traditional patterns and functions goes as far a to even involve the character of Grandma. As much a

passive victim as her granddaughter is, Grandma can be regarded as a pre-LRRH figure in traditional versions because she foreshadows LRRH's fate. She is depicted as a defenceless, weak lady, easy to deceive and devour. In Murr's and Garner's versions, however, Grandma shakes off her passive role to become an active heroine very capable of defending herself if circumstances call for it.

In Garner, Grandma, moved by her granddaughter's «impassioned speech» about male heroes intruding in women's affairs, decides to back her up and act for herself. She jumps out of the wolf's mouth, seizes the woodcutter-person's axe and cuts his head off as a sign of her repulsion against traditional male and female roles in fairy tales: «we don't need heroes anymore», she seems to say, «we can manage for ourselves». Like LRRH, for politically correct reasons, Grandma stops being a sweet, weak old lady to become a grandmother «in full physical and mental health and fully capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult» (Garner, 1994: 2).

In Murr's comic strips, similar things occur. From time to time, Grandma surprises us with signs of her new character. On page 45, for example, LRRH finds the Wolf reading quietly outside Grandma's house. Asked by LRRH, he shows an arm where Grandma's teeth marks are clearly visible, and says: «She bites!». It is interesting to notice how Grandma acquires animalistic features proper of the Wolf and not of a sweet old lady. She bites as a watch dog would a stranger breaking into its territory. Grandma is given a touch of the villanous to her apparent sweet nature and like LRRH and the Wolf in Dahl, the frontier between goodie and baddie is blurred. The revolution of female fairy tale characters taking the ways of modern women is made the more amusing with the incorporation of these new active old Grandmothers.

With LRRH taking the focus and the initiative of the story, there is, in consequence, a tendency to eliminate or ridicule the role of the hero-saviour in these modern retellings. Thus, Dahl, Murr and Thurber, choose to wipe out the huntsman/woodsman from the story without much ado. Garner, in contrast, includes *the male figure in his version but only to make fun of him, to make him an object of* laughter. The woodcutter here is portrayed as «a Neanderthal»: a brainless, stupid anti-hero who comes to the rescue of the girl following, thoughtlessly, his fairy tale instinct of man-saviour. When LRRH shouts angrily at him for making with his presence a silent sexist remark about the helplessness of women in dangerous situations, the huntsman doesn't know what to say: «The woodcutter blinked and tried to answer, but no words came to him» (Garner, 1994: 4).

The portrait of this woodcutter is far from our expectations of the fairy tale hero attributes. Heroes are usually brave, intelligent and witty, that is, besides physical strength, they have brains. This «hero», however, has nothing but

instinct and strength. He is too stupid to understand such things as women's vindications in fairy tales. His bursting into the house with an axe, «trusting your weapon to do the thinking for you» (Garner 1994: 4) —the sexual innuendo adds to the animal/primitive picture of this saviour— makes the portrait of this hero totally unheroic and ridiculous.

Thus, here is another break with the Proppian pattern, another manipulation by these twentieth century writers concerning the traditional distribution of functions among male and female characters in fairy tales. In these new versions, male heroic functions are passed onto a woman, (in this case LRRH) who, leaving aside her victim functions, becomes the heroine of the piece. Thus, C and J5 functions undergo an exchange so that for once, they do not correspond to the seeker-hero but to the female-victim.

—THE WOLF: AWARENESS OF BEING IN A TALE

As we will see, the most outstanding feature of the Wolf in these modern versions is that he is completely aware of being in a tale. This feature is implicit in the character of LRRH as well but it is more evident in the Wolf and therefore our study will be centered in his character mainly. One more, the first three lines of Dahl's version put us on our guard. They are a warning suggesting that what follows will not be quite the story we all expect:

> As soon as Wolf began to feel
> That he would like a decent meal,
> He went and knocked on grandma's door (Dahl, 1982: 36)

We notice that the Wolf goes to Grandma's as a matter of fact. In contrast with Grimm's tale, where the Wolf is ignorant of the existence of a house and its inhabitants, and needs LRRH to get information, in Dahl's tale the Wolf has a previous knowledge of the original Grimm plot. He knows where to find food, why LRRH is absent from Grandma's house, and which are the three questions she will ask him. He clearly seems to be aware of being in a tale told and retold a thousand times. Being thus used to this routine and knowing how the events are supposed to develop, the Wolf is taken aback by LRRH's unexpected remark on his «furry coat». That makes him shout:

> That's wrong! cried Wolf. Have you forgot
> to tell me what BIG TEETH I've got? (Dahl, 1982: 40).

Like an actor who knows his lines and scene by heart, the Wolf is annoyed at his fellow actress' wrong line, and to the delight of the readers, he makes explicit

reference to the original text they have been performing for years and which she is expected to follow. With her remark, LRRH has actually broken the pattern and, more specifically, she has revolted against this well-known exchange. She makes three remarks all right, but the third clashes with the others. Her remark shows a revolt against stock sentences, a desire to change the script. Her anachronical reference to a «furry coat» and the deviation from the fairy tale we all know adds humour to the version.

The consequence of all this is that the Wolf's expectations and his previous knowledge are identified with or equalled to our own as readers. We know, as well as the Wolf, how the tale is supposed to end and which are those assumptions he expects to be fulfilled. The identification between the Wolf and the reader allows Dahl to play with the reader's and the Wolf's expectations, so that we will not be the only ones surprised by the outcome of the tale, but also and most importantly, the character of the Wolf himself. Thus, what this «identification» technique does is to reinforce and intensify the surprise we experience when encountering the final twist of the plot. The main difference is that for the Wolf this new ending is a nasty surprise whereas for the reader it is a source of delight and amusement because nothing turns out to be as we would expect it.

In the other versions, the Wolf is also caught by surprise and the references to the tale are more or less present as well, except perhaps in Garner's version. In Garner's, the reader has to keep the original tale in mind, but the amusement and interest of his version is based more on the substitution of old social values by new, modern ones based on social respect and political correctness rather than on the awareness of being in a tale.

In Thurber's version, awareness is not explicit, but rather implied: «One afternoon, a big bad wolf waited in a dark forest for a little girl to come along carrying a basket of food (..) Finally, a little girl did come along and she was carrying a basket of food» (Thurber, 1939:5). Just as in Dahl's, the Wolf goes to the forest as a matter of fact. Apparently, he knows that sooner or later a little girl with a food basket will come along, so he goes to the forest on purpose. The implication is that the Wolf is aware of being in a tale he has performed a thousand times before, and so, that he is simply following a script he already knows. (He also knows, without asking, that the basket she is carrying is for her Grandma.) The result is that we, the readers, know as the Wolf does what exactly is going to happen so once again, our suprise at the outcome of the story is equal to that of the Wolf.

Murr exploits the awareness of the characters and plays with the expectations of the reader more than anybody else. It becomes clear from the multiple

variations on the same scene situations and the comments that LRRH and the Wolf make about them, that the protagonists are perfectly aware of being in a tale that, as if a music tape, can be rewound and replayed again and again. The characters, the Wolf above all, show themselves sick of performing and delivering the same lines. The Wolf says things like:

> — *(To LRRH in the forest)* «I suppose you're going to Grandma's once more» (Murr, 1982:20).
> — *(Putting on Grandma's clothes)* «I hope one day I'll catch that Little Red Riding Hood. I spend my wolf life disguised as Grandma» (Murr, 1982: 21).

The pictures that go with these lines make the comments even more amusing since they illustrate a very bored and weary Wolf with his face on his hands, completely indifferent to his role. He is supposed to put on a very wicked face and look excited but here he really looks tired, knowing that despite his efforts he will never catch this new and slippery LRRH. Even Grandma shows signs of weariness too. On page 8, she is not tired of delivering the same lines but of eating the same food. She shouts at a surprised LRRH when she checks the contents of her basket: «Cake and butter again? From now on I want caviar!!» (Murr, 1982:10).

LRRH, on her part, checks on the Wolf everytime he doesn't do what he is expected to. On page 4, for instance, LRRH meets the Wolf in the forest smoking and singing quietly to himself but to her utter surprise, he walks away from her without saying a word. LRRH stops him short by saying: «Well! You've forgotten your lines or what?» (Murr, 1982:12). The Wolf, who is actually a Wolf belonging in a Fable and not LRRH's Wolf, is equally surprised and says: «Ah, I see now. You are the understudy». LRRH doesn't understand a word and calls angrily for his lines. The Wolf quite confused agrees, but pointing out first that he doesn't see any water stream (the stream is essential in his Fable.) Eventually, LRRH realizes her mistake. Here we see, first of all, a blending between two different stories ('LRRH' and the 'Fable of the Wolf and the Lamb-for further discussion of 'Blending' see the appropriate section), and second, an emphasis upon the awareness of being in a tale. This emphasis is made clear with the theatricality imprinted into the dialogues. The tale appears as a play where nothing works unless the actors (the characters) deliver their right lines and the setting is the appropiate one (this Fable Wolf was annoyed because he couldn't see any water stream around.)

As we can see, Murr's cartoons are perhaps the closest to Dahl's version in what concerns playing with stock dialogues, awareness of being in a tale, and the blending between two different tales (Dahl mixes up the 'Three Little Pigs' with

'LRRH'.) What makes Murr different is that, if in the other versions the readers are identified in surprise with the Wolf or the woodcutter only because there is only one version of the tale, with Murr the list of characters we can identify with is extended because Murr, unlike the others, offers multiple variations of the same tale. Thus, our surprise can be identified with that of LRRH, Perrault (who is introduced as a character in the comic strips), the Crow and the Fox in La Fontaine's Fable, and with other fairy tale characters invited in by Murr like Bluebeard, the Prince from 'Sleeping Beauty' and 'The Three Little Pigs'.

## 3. Revolting against fairy tale morals

All these violations on the fairy tale pattern carry with them a change in the denouement of the plot and, in consequence, a change in the morals that Grimm's tales aimed at. For the Victorians who were still very much influenced by the didactic current in the 18th century, a fantasy was fine as long as it included some warning lesson for the child. That is, the mentality of the period required children's books to be instructive as well as entertaining. The combination of these two features found its way into the Fables and the tales of oral tradition collected and improved (moral included) by the brothers Grimm. These fairy tales were to the parents' liking because they allowed children to set their imagination free at the same time they taught them instructive lessons. Originally, the didactic purpose of LRRH was to warn children against strangers and show them the consequences of disobeying their parents, but the new LRRH versions are going to revolve around a complete different moral: Thurber's «It is not so easy to fool little girls nowadays as it used to be.»

Garner's moral, however, goes a little further than Thurber's. Because his LRRH is a corrected version of everything that in his opinion is politically incorrect in Grimm's tale, Garner adds something else to Thurber's moral, and what he adds sounds more like an eager feminist warning to men: «How dare you assume that womyn and wolves can't solve their own problems without a man's help?» (Garner, 1994:3). The tragicomic death of the woodcutter pictures the «terrible» consequences of those who do not want to take notice of this new warning. Thus, the old moral has changed completely to something else. We have moved from warning children against strangers to warning men against intruding in women's affairs, as if saying «Man, think twice before daring to come to the rescue of a woman nowadays.»

All these new messages only help to increase the hilarity of these twisted versions. The new morals are completely opposed to the original grave didacticism

of the tale. They are up to date and have nothing to do with innocence but with the knowledge of the evils of the world. That is, they are morals which seem not addressed to innocent children anymore (the potential victims) but to the villains (the tormentors) or, in Garner's case, the heroes. The morals become warnings advising the villain of the piece to sharpen his wit, to improve his traps and future stratagems if he wants to catch his victims, because in these new versions the latter are not innocent and stupid anymore. In Garner's case the warning in the moral is slightly different. The moral advises men to keep out of LRRH's path instead of encouraging them to become more involved in the story. In any case, the abyss between the old and the new morals is so great, and so different and far from our expectations of what a fairy tale morality should be, that we can't but laugh at the odd, hybrid result.

The revolt against these old morals, together with the twists and manipulations introduced in the story, form part of the strategies these modern writers use to demolish the traditional conventions of the fairy tale. These authors feel that fairy tales must be renovated, that certain elements inside the tale must be changed and brought up to our twentieth century mentality because they make sense no more. Among the outdated values that, according to these modern writers, need a retouch, the old morals of the fairy tales seem to take pride of place. As we have just seen, all the modern versions of 'LRRH' have been manipulated so as to come out with something different from the original message of the tale. These authors seem to be sick of the extremes to which fairy tales characters can go (either terribly wicked or helplessly innocent and good) without taking any middle point. Dahl and the other modern authors break the walls that isolate goodies from baddies to obtain characters with ambiguous, dubious attitudes. These new attitudes change the plot of the story and, in consequence, the oudated messages of these fairy tales, which are replaced by new modern ones. By doing that, these authors make us look at the fairy tale in a different perspective, lighting for us hidden aspects that we had not considered before and, in general, awakening in the reader a critical awareness that he lacked. Having in mind the old version, we are not going to read these fairy tale versions with the usual matter-of-factness, but with a critical mocking eye. The result of all these alterations is that the classic, stagnated form of the fairy tale becomes a potential source for new writing. These modern authors will spot the outdated values with a new version of the tale. They seem to be experimenting, working their way into new kinds of writing by going beyond the boundaries of the narrative genres already established. The demolition of the walls that divided heroes from villains so cleanly actually represents, on a lower level, what these authors are doing on a bigger scale: blending genres, mixing up old and modern elements, experimenting

with new forms of literature. Working on the boundaries, on the threshold genres, seems for these authors the way out of the canonical, the conventional, the established. It appears to be their point of departure to evolve into other types of literature and to question the ones already established by writing new versions of them.

## 4. Blending

a. Modern elements in old-time fairy tales: anachronisms.

Dahl, along with Thurber, Garner and Murr, seems to enjoy mixing modern objects/elements with old-time settings and characters. These anachronistic elements are mainly of three types: references to modern devices (machines and institutions, in the form of vocabulary or illustrations), introduction of twentieth century concepts, and usage of colloquial language.

Dahl and Thurber's most significant anachronism is the introduction of the gun as the modern element in an a-temporal story, but there are examples of the other strategies as well. Dahl's LRRH is written in a humorous informal style very different from the sterness of the traditional fairy tales. We can hear the Wolf saying things like: «Ah, well, no matter what you say, I'm going to eat you anyway» (Dahl, 1982:40) or LRRH in 'The Three Little Pigs' using idioms: «My darling pig, my sweet, that's something up my street» (Dahl, 1982:46). The colloquial register is general to the whole tale, and there is even room for irreverent vocabulary as well. In his versions, we can find explicit references to body odour ('Jack and the Beanstalk'), Cinderella's and LRRH's underwear and even sexual innuendos in 'Snow White'. This is surely an attack against conventions since these traditional fairy tales were very much influenced by the rigid moral code of the Victorian era. Direct or near allusions to the body were taboo, and LRRH was pruned of all the sexual allusions and violence that Perrault's version contained. Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes* seem to be a return to these pre-Grimm days. This irreverence and disrespect towards the norms that define the fairy tale is yet another tool to undermine traditions, to break with conventions, to widen the gap between the old and the new version of a fairy tale. It is as if Dahl was saying «Look. This is ridiculous. Characters in fairy tales are never seen going to the bathroom to satisfy their primary needs. They always seem to be clean, neat and pure. Let us attack this absurd prudery. Let us make these characters more like us, more humane.» The colloquial undertone and the irreverent vocabulary have a twofold purpose. They go against the formal narrative conventions but they also demolish the a-temporality of fairy tales.

Hearing the characters speaking and acting like one of us, we do not feel the fairy tale world to be very different from our own. That sense of alienation between fairy tale and reader is gone in these new retellings. The blending of old tale material with modern narrative styles and vocabulary demolishes patterns but it also makes us rethink this type of literature that we have always taken for granted.

In Thurber, the anachronistic device of the automatic in 'LRRH' is followed by references to modern institutions («the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer»), and people («Calvin Coolidge»). These, once again, break with the a-temporality of fairy tales and add humour to the already unexpected twisted end.

In Garner's version, modern objects are introduced for politically correct reasons. Thus, «mineral water» and «fresh fruit» will be the modern variants to the traditional bottle of wine and cake. These modern elements not only bring in a discordant and humourous note to the tale, but also help to introduce modern concepts and issues that nowadays are the order of the day. Thus, in the example above, we are invited to think of that modern hysteria concerning healthy diets and fresh products free from cholesterol. LRRH makes it clear to Grandma that these snacks she is bringing to her are: «fat-free, sodium-free snacks» (Garner, 1994:2).

Illustrations are also included in these modern author's plans as a strategy to break with conventions. The illustrator Quentin Blake, for example, in tune with modern times and with Dahl's intentions, brings up to date the traditional illustrations that go with fairy tales. These old illustrations, like the ones by Gustave Doré for example, always depict its characters dressed in old-fashioned clothes and set against an a-historical magical background. What Blake does is to break with these illustrating patterns and blend the old with the new, like Dahl himself has done with the written part of the tales. Thus, while keeping the illustrations still recognizable, Blake inserts touches of modernity here and there. His characters are dressed in modern clothes (Snow White wears jeans and a T-Shirt and LRRH high heels) and they are surrounded by modern domestic appliances (the vacuum-cleaner in 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and the TV set at Grandma's house in 'LRRH'.)

Murr does something similar with his cartoons though he is slightly more traditional than Blake. He keeps the old fashioned clothing and the traditional fairy background, but he cannot help inserting twentieth century items wherever he has room to do it. Scattered around his illustrations, we can see cigarettes and tins, a TV aerial on Grandma's roof, a limousine, a microphone, and a skyscraper. Also, his characters back up this shattering of illustrating conventions by making constant references to the modern world: the Wolf to French ex-President Giscard

and his policy of hard taxes, LRRH to the famous French dressmaker Pierre Cardin, Grandma going on holiday to St Trop (a very touristic French town by the sea), etc. There are also references to the Army and the bulldozers of the Government that threaten to destroy the forest (this introduces modern issues such as ecologism and the preservation of the fauna.) The anachronistic effect of these blendings reinforces the effect Dahl and the other authors are continuosly looking for, to break with the rules, to violate Proppian models, to play with the reader's expectations.

b. Blending narrative styles:

Fairy tales in rhyme are no great novelty. In Arnold Arnold's *Pictures and Stories from Forgotten Children's Books* there is a c.1820 version of 'LRRH' in rhyming verse. The verse form used here works both as a sugar pill to help children fix the didactic aim of 'LRRH' in their minds and as a literary game for fun and pleasure per se. Dahl's rhyming verse seems to have no other object than pleasure and if there is didacticism at all, this has been subverted to become part of the entertainment as well, as we have already seen in the section about morals. The use that Dahl makes of the rhyme is innovative not in the sense of the form, because he uses the traditional iambic tetrameter of the nursery rhymes, but in its contents.

Though there is no verse in Garner's version, it is interesting to see how his narrative tone destroys the traditional one. The «there once was» gives the fairy tale its typical register tone and sets it at once in the familiar framework of the fairy tale, but it is going to last little. The fairy narrative tone is continually broken by long clarifications between dashes, concerning some point that may hurt people's feelings because of its -ist bias. Thus, we find corrections, amendments: «Granny was not sick, but rather was in full physical and mental health» (Garner, 1994:3). The sentences become very long and full of relative clauses. They only help to slow the pace of the narrative, whereas fairy tales are written simply and quickly. Garner uses long sentences to kill two birds with one stone: he ridicules the 'politically correct' fever and at the same time he is demolishing the conventions of narrative pace in fairy tales. Garner, making fun of the care with which we must talk of things nowadays, makes wide use of all our system of euphemisms, periphrasis and other indirect techniques to omit problematic words with a discriminatory bias. Among these «conflictive» words we can find «little girl» which in this version is called «young person» to avoid sizeist and sexist remarks, or «log-fuel technician» to substitute for the traditional «woodcutter» expression. There are samples of coloquialisms in Garner's 'LRRH' version as well: «And just what do you think you're doing?» (Garner, 1994: 5).

Murr demolishes the fairy tale narrative in a different way. His strategy is not lengthening short senteces but introducing such a number of modern words that the register of the old fairy tales is broken. The result is an amusing mixture of old archaic sentences and formulas with modern words and often slang. For example, in the traditional (Perrault) French version, the stock sentence that Grandma pronounces when she hears the knock on her door is «Tire la bobinette et le reste viendra», but the Wolf in one of his multiple performances disguised as Grandma forgets the right words and says instead: «Tire la moulinette et- le truc, hum!- cherra» (Murr, 1982: 13). The effect is amusing since on the one hand, the character forgets his lines, and on the other the Wolf uses the twentieth century coloquial way of expressing things when we can not find the right word (le truc = the thing.) The language register is changed and this is an indication of the desire these authors have to demolish the conventions of the fairy tales, to look for new ways of reworking classic material.

c. Scriptwriting and Western features in a traditional fairy tale: abandoning the a-historical time.

When in Dahl's version LRRH shoots the Wolf, the scene looks like a parody of a typical gunslinging scene taken out from a spaghetti Western film by Sergio Leone. Besides the anachronism of the pistol and the mixture of fairy tale material with Western conventions, there is a change of writing style too which helps to intensify the surprising ending of the story. Thus, when LRRH draws her pistol, we can appreciate a change of pace in the narrative. There is a sudden acceleration which produces that sense of quickness required in a gunfight scene, where everything happens in the blink of an eye. In order to do that, Dahl moves from using long sentences distributed over several lines to the use of very short impact sentences (one or even two per line) that help to speed up the action:

> The small girl smiles. One eyelid flickers.
> She whips a pistol from her nickers.
> She aims it at the creature's head,
> And Bang, Bang, Bang, she shoots him dead (Dahl, 1982: 40).

Each sentence is written like the instructions in a filmscript for a camera as to what to film and in what order, so that the four little takes that would make up the scene are pictured vividly in our minds. In this particular passage, the little girl seems to leave behind her innocent Little Red Riding Hood role we are so familiar with to become a kind of Clint Eastwood female equivalent. The eyelid flicker is the key word that links LRRH with the specific brand of the spaghetti Westerns. In these films, the close-up is employed massively in the presentation

of the gunfight, with gunmen squinting in tension and little nervous ticks being noticeable on their faces. An additional fun-element, thus, is the transference of such 'macho' traits to an innocent fairy tale heroine.

### d. Blending fairy tales

Dahl's version of LRRH does not end when she is seen in the forest with her new wolfskin coat. The very next tale which follows ('The Three Little Pigs') becomes the framework for a new LRRH apparition. It is an apparition though that confirms our suspicions formed in the 'LRRH' version. The darker side of this new LRRH is explored and clarified for us readers. If in the former tale we had our doubts about her heroic goody girl character, in 'The Three Little Pigs' our suspicions are confirmed. We are not dealing with an innocent brainless girl anymore, but with a girl who takes her chances where she finds them to achieve her materialistic ambitions (now it is a travelling-case she needs.) Here, she is no more villainous and wicked than the Wolf. The villany of LRRH, though, cannot be taken too seriously since the humour of the verse and the anachronism of the concept of a travelling case relieve the tale from its crude flavour and work too much as a surprise to make us shudder or anything alike. It is interesting that the order of the tales in *Revolting Rhymes* is not arbitrary but rather responds to a logical rising climax that goes from the more amiable stories in which the hero/heroine encounters a highly original happy ending ('Cinderella', 'Jack and the Beanstalk', 'Snow-White'), to the last three tales distinguished by their 'macabre' end (Goldilocks is eaten by the three bears, LRRH skins the Wolf and shoots the eldest pig for her own purposes.) Thus, 'The Three Little Pigs' is at the top of this macabre climax that Dahl seeems to have pursued from the beginning and which nicely closes his *Revolting Rhymes*.

Murr also takes advantage of the blending technique, but if Dahl only made use of this strategy once, Murr explores it at large, judging by the ample number of blending versions that appear in his book. There are versions of 'LRRH' mixed with fairy tales such as 'Sleeping Beauty', 'Bluebeard' and 'The Three Little Pigs', as well. This last one is strikingly similar to Dahl's version in its «cruel» denonuement (here, the pigs are killed and served as dinner) and the unexpected reaction of LRRH at the pig's SOS (both LRRH have their own ideas concerning the pigs'salvation from the Wolf.) The other blendings consist mainly of mixtures between LRRH and fables ('The Wolf and the Lamb', 'The Crow and the Fox'), legends (Jeanne D'Arc) and even famous play scenes such as the graveyard scene in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

## 5.  Conclusion

Now that we have finished to analyse how characters behave in Dahl's, Thurber's, Garner's and Murr's 'LRRH' versions, what the morals are these new tales transmit and the blending techniques most used by these authors, it is time to sum up what we have seen so far and draw some conclusions.

In the first place, we have seen that in the process of rewriting fairy tales these modern authors seem to follow very similar strategies. To a higher or lower degree, the following techniques appear in their modern versions of 'LRRH': reversing male and female functions, blurring the limits between villains and heroes, modifying old morals, making the characters aware of being in a tale, blending tales, breaking with the a-temporality of the fairy tales by inserting anachronisms, and playing with the expectations of the reader by twisting the plot where we least expect it. These are the main strategies these authors use to subvert the traditional Proppian scheme. The difference is that while some authors try to include as many «revolting» strategies as possible in their particular versions, others seem to be content to exploit only one or two. The result is that some authors stress certain strategies more explicitly than others but they all draw their «revolting» techniques from the same bag. Thus, we can say that these modern writers follow a common pattern when it comes to subverting traditional conventions in order to come out with new tale patterns.

Second, we have seen that behind the amusement that these new 'LRRH's versions present, there is an ideology and a purpose in modifying fairy tale patterns. In the section about morals we have seen in detail what these authors are doing. The new messages of 'LRRH' are the result of a previously thought out manipulation in the pattern of the fairy tale in order to come out with a new moral more in tune with modern times. The subversion of the Proppian pattern is thus not done at random but following a logic and an order. The author works here like a chemist carefully choosing and mixing his ingredients in order to come out with that new formula he has in his head. The new fairy tales are thus not the result of chaos or chance. Amusement and suprise therefore is not the only thing these authors are looking for. These are the superficial layers, the most striking elements and the easiest to perceive by the reader but not their main priority. The authors want to say something about traditional morals.

Third, undermining fairy tale patterns helps the reader to survey old plots —often taken for granted— with a critical eye that he previously lacked. These modern authors offer us a new way to look at classic literature, at established patterns. They want us to lose respect for classic matter. They point out details in the plot and the characters of the original fairy tale that we had not considered

before because we have been so used to the conventional pattern of these tales that we never really stop to think about them. These writers, though, try to involve the reader in the tale. They stress points here and there that seem to be screaming at the reader for him to watch and reflect. Thus, awakening a critical attitude in the reader seems to be one of the aims of this new type of literature. For these authors this undermining of patterns and spotting «defects» in fairy tales is a way of creating a new type of literature out of old classic plots and patterns. For the reader, it is a pleasing way to revise and rethink all those classic stories we have learnt by heart and taken for granted.

Fourthly, as we were already hinting up above, we have also seen how in these new reworkings of the fairy tale the role of the reader becomes very important. He is an essential element in this intertextual game with the text. He is forced to participate, to interact with the new tale in order to enjoy his reading. The reader is required to keep the old tale in mind. He must be familiar with the old framework in order to compare it with the new versions. The reader, thus, shifts from a passive to an active participant of the story. He is asked not to take everything for granted but to question familiar frameworks.

In the fifth place, we have also seen how the Proppian model is useful to see clearly and at a first sight the manipulations that these authors commit with the functions of the tales. The difference between the Proppian structures of Grimm and Dahl reflects scientifically what these modern authors are actually doing.

The question that remains open is what is there in our contemporary world that pushes these writers to rewrite fairy tales. We have already suggested that a change of mentality, an ideological gap as to the role that the tale should play in our society (didactic aims, reading for pleasure) and therefore a need to tune in fairy tales with moden times, seem to be the main reasons that move authors to rewrite these tales. But the thing is that if we take a look at what is going on in other forms of art, such as painting and sculpture, there seems to be a parallel movement suggesting that the deconstructing process that we have seen in the fairy tales belongs actually to a bigger scale, general to all arts. That is, what is happening in these modern versions of the fairy tales actually reflects a contemporary movement general to all arts and in vogue in this our twentieth century. Call it Post-modernism in the specific branch of literature, Cubism in painting or in sculpting, they all seem to share the same premises: to deconstruct previous art (to break with classical patterns) in order to come out with something new.

The origins of this deconstructing movement can be traced back to the end of the Second World War. By this time, the colonial empires had crumbled and two World Wars had been fought, leaving Europe shattered and people's confidence in

society blasted as ever. The old 19th century faith in the progress of humanity, in traditional values, and rigid morals was lost. Thus, it is probably at this period in time when, because of the circumstances, society became critical with itself, questioning among other things the arts, that so far had been regarded with as much respect and confidence as society itself. Only this could explain the existence nowadays of so many works of literature that taking as a start some old classic (i.e *Hamlet*), it is afterwards manipulated and reworked by the author to come out with a new product which points at and questions certain aspects of the former 'untouchable' classic work (i.e Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.*)

In painting, this is translated in a reworking of classic paintings («Las Meninas» by Picasso in cubist style, Francis Bacon's version of Velazquez' «El Papa Inocencio X»), and in sculpture we can observe an interest to break with the classical conventions of realism, usually depicting human beings (i.e. MichaelAngelo's «David»), to take instead inanimate objects and ideas as objects to represent (i.e Chillida.) New forms of expression is what these artists seem to be looking for. Breaking with the rules and the conventions of the past, retaking old models to create new ones through a sort of blending process are their main working tools. In literature, experimenting with materials written in the past to recycle them in the present, with all the anachronisms in vocabulary, style and genres that the process involves, seems to be the way out of the canonical for these modern writers, their way to create and say something new.

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