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## **FAIRY TALES AS A FORERUNNER OF EUROPEAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: CROSS-BORDER FAIRY TALE MATERIALS AND FAIRY TALE MOTIFS**

Due to the Romantic movement there was a growing attention for recording oral tradition. Pedagogues advocating an independent literature for children recognized the importance of folktales especially for the mediation of bourgeois virtues and social norms. Influenced by the stilistic model of the Brother Grimm's Household Tales and as a result of the propagation of national literatures, a broad range of application within the printed and pictorial media developed in European countries. Folktales as a products of the mass culture possess multiple applicability. This paper deals with different spheres of application and outlines the functions of folktales as popular reading material.

Keywords: oral literature, children's literature, fairy tales, folktales, Grimm, popular culture

Most part of the development of the European fairy tale took place in the last one hundred years. Only some of it goes back to the time before the Middle Ages and is hence older in its structure. Sources and models of German fairy tales are often found in the widely read international narrative literature. Material, types, and motifs are not specifically German, but common European cultural assets. Exemplarily, I recall the humorous tale about the peasant Unibos, who as a cunning swindler duped his foolish neighbours with his clever tricks, or the dragon slayer tales, widespread in many cultures, that since the 10th century have wandered through all genres of western literature.

Without wanting to touch exhaustingly all literary genres, five important source and function fields for the tradition of "fairy tale" themes and materials from the late Middle Ages till the modern era can be discerned: legend and exempla collections from the late Middle Ages, including, e.g., the *Gesta Romanorum*, widespread in many vernacular

editions (including numerous fairy tale style narratives) and the *Legenda aurea*; the Italian novel collections, especially those of Boccaccio, Straparola and Basile; the numerous collections of French fairy tales (*contes des fées*) of the 17th and 18th centuries of which the fairy tales of Charles Perrault with children as protagonists were particularly influential; the narratives from the *Arabian Nights* by Antoine Galland made famous at the beginning of the 18th century; the great Indian collections, like the *Pañcatantra*, with its many translations and adaptations, or the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, or *Ocean of Stories*, by Somadeva from Cashmere.

### **Early developments**

In the last quarter of the 18th century a historical interest in folk poetry as an authentic expression of different nationalities had gradually developed. Since the middle of the century the dominating influence of French culture and language in Germany manifested itself in translations and adaptations of fairy tales. Collections entitled "Mä(h)rchen" often contained lengthy novellistic narratives or were sheer accumulations of romantic tales about knights and robbers. Examples are *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* by Musäus (1782-1787) or *Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen* by Benedikte Naubert (1756-1819), published only few years later.

Herder's call to collect folk tales, folk legends and mythology, to present the German testimonies of the "romantic thought" and trace its origins, his conception of folk poetry as recasts and renderings in the appropriate tone which should prompt readers to selective lecture influenced his contemporaries and led to a renewed interest for sources from the Middle Ages and early modern times up to the present. The romantic movement of collecting folk poetry also increased interest in oral tradition and its preservation. Oral tradition was as much valued as literary testimonies and could, according to Jacob Grimm, be used as an illustration of written monuments. The first collections of folk tales (legends and hero legends) appeared at the turn of the 18th century. Lengthy and boring knight romances were abandoned for shorter wonder stories that were more concise and rich with excitement. In connection with the newly developing literature for children and the young another conception of the fairy tale asserted itself. The negative meaning of unbelievable and insignificant tales (old wives' tales) was replaced by a trend towards universal values: fairy tales, legends, chapbooks and related genres experienced a revaluation especially with respects to the mediation of virtues and social norms.

The early phase of fairy tale editions lasted from the first Perrault edition (1697) until the appearance of the *Kleine Ausgabe* of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (KHM). During this time, French influence was dominating. This also applies to francophil countries, for example Russia and Poland, where translations of *contes de fées* or the *Mille et un Jours*

and the *Arabian Nights* were published. Exemplarily, I would like to mention the famous *Bibliothèque bleue* (containing about 1200 titles of different genres) of the 18th and 19th centuries and the *Cabinet des fées*, both comprehensive compilations of French *contes de fées*, *Oriental and Orientalizing fairy tales*. The author and publisher F. J. J. Bertuch based his several volumes of the *Blaue Bibliothek aller Nationen* (1790/91, 1797) partly on the last important edition of the *Cabinet des fées*, which consisted of 41 volumes, but presented the treasury of the French fairy tale in different order.

At the center of these early fairy tale editions is the text, probably partly because of limited printing techniques and high production prices, and because of a relatively limited reading public in a time when many were unable to read.

Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* proved as a decisive model for the fairy tale fashion that began to spread all over Europe. The title page of the booklet shows a nanny with a distaff, her hand extended and her mouth open suggesting that she is telling a story. She is surrounded by children, dressed in courtly fashion, who are attentively listening to the *Contes de ma mère l'oye* (title of Perrault's manuscript version of 1695 which is found as an inscription on the door in the background). Candle light indicates that it is evening and that the stories are told as an entertainment. It is also suggested that storytelling was performed by servants. In the following years, the representation of a narrator that is surrounded by attentively listening children became a popular European pictorial motif; later on, when compulsory education was introduced in Europe and entailed a higher percentage of alphabetization, the female storyteller was often replaced by a female reader of tales.

Relatively soon, several fairy tales emerge that meet with generally acceptance. Besides, there is also a tendency towards independent ecotypical forms, examples of which in England are "Jack and the Beanstalk" or the dragon slayer tale "Jack the Giant-Killer", which circulated in Europe in popular adaptations. A further tendency manifests itself in different variations that affect the forms of illustration: the tale of the murderer Bluebeard (Blaubart Nr. 3, 1847) is — obviously under the influence of dramatizations — settled in the Orient. Illustrations of the tale depict Bluebeard as a Turk, respectively dressed in Oriental style robes with falchion, breeches and a turban. Such transformations are obviously to be seen in connection with the romantic predilection for the Orient that is also reflected in the arts of the 19th century. This could possibly have something to do with the propagation of foreigner stereotypes, like those that are often found in 19th century colonial narratives. A further difference to continental editions of the time consists in the revaluation of pictorial representations. No longer as a mere title vignette and subordinated to the text, fairy tale illustrations appear as full pictures, taking as much space as the text itself. In the German-speaking area this

development began about 20—30 years later, probably due to the fact that interest in fairy tales developed only hesitatingly in Germany.

Fairy tales for "children", "good children", for "the youth", or in a mere elitist way "for the children of the educated classes" as had been recommended by pedagogues in forewords and subtitles since the beginning of the 19th century appeared sporadically since about 1820 in readers. This is also the time when — after long interruptions — editions with fairy tales of other peoples began to appear again continuously, and particularly in magazines and calendars. A varied fairy tale landscape emerged.

This development benefitted from the fact that children as a literary audience were discovered, and certain literary themes were adapted into moral stories, nature books, adventure novels, game and hobby books etc., especially for the sake of a young audience. Popular tradition was idealized as a valuable matter of the past, a national heritage, that would offer possibilities of identification and provide psychological shelter in times of economic difficulties and political standstill.

The Grimms' title *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* attests for it. The aims they name in the preface and the ranges of application of popular tradition which were outlined a little later in the *Deutsche Sagen* had a lasting influence on European legend and folktale collections. Part of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* were soon translated into other languages (Danish 1816, Dutch 1820, English 1823, Portuguese 1837). However, Grimms' collection of fairy tales only became a success in 1837, when the *Große Ausgabe* (Full edition) appeared.

In the meantime, books of fairy tales, also illustrated editions, encountered a higher acceptance. Particularly, the use of fairy tales for educational purposes increased. This circumstance benefitted the authors of literary fairy tales, such as Wilhelm Hauff and Hans Christian Andersen, poets who became famous for their fairy tales. Since their appearance, their works belong to the most popular fairy tale books in Europe and beyond; their number of editions is hard to overlook. Further editions the Grimms' tales followed rapidly, always alternating between the full and the small edition. Wilhelm Grimm may have regarded the last edition from 1857 as completion of his work on these fairy tales, and after decades of interruption he provided a revision of the commentary volume (1856). The number of texts was round, both in regard to fairy tales (200), and children's legends (10). But in fact, there were in total 211 texts.

It is indisputable that social values and educational concerns have a large part in the KHM. Jacob Grimm obviously had a middle class environment in mind when he wanted the collection to become "a folk book and a book of education, especially also for the more refined world". In the preface of the 1812 edition, after a description of the characteristics of the fairy tale the brothers state reservedly:

It is grounded in these characteristics that it is so easy to derive a good lesson and an application to the present from these fairy tales; it was neither their purpose nor the reason of their invention, but it grows out of it, like a good fruit from a healthy bloom, without human inference.

From edition to edition the rate of additions which showed heroes and especially heroines as pious and god-fearing grew. Obedience and unconditional performance of duty, the assumption of tasks without questioning characterize positively described figures of tales of magic. Heroes and heroines always receive help, through chance and luck. Seldom they gain their victories due to intellectual talents or as a result of learnt abilities.

Corresponding to these tendencies, Wilhelm chose new texts, and incorporated, quite explicitly, Christian values, ethic norms and educational concerns. He did so by no means only in a sublime way, as it is often maintained, but steadily increased Christian and educational values increased during the long phase of edition, with regard to spheres of life touched by the fairy tales. In monologues, the hero and the heroine tell the readers of the fairy tales how they evaluate their acts. Together with the educational function, this shows a direct connection of the KHM to books on domestic economy, which had had a lasting effect especially on the Lutheran doctrine. In this light, fairy tale collections can be considered as an ethical guide for the people of the house, as precepts and models of conduct for the most different life situations, whereas legend books, with their historical and heroic narratives, especially furthered 'patriotic' education. The importance of this conception not only emerges from remarks of the brothers and the prefaces to their collections, but first and foremost from the stages of adaptation of the fairy tales themselves. The assessment of the Grimms' collection as a book of education made editors like Heinrich Dittmar (1792-1866) and Wilhelm Wackernagel (1806-1868) adopt many fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, because of their propagation of 'German' virtues and their aspiration at preserving old culture goods. Fairy tales were a morally rich matter: For some of them there were even schedules, of which one could read off these values (attitudes) and use them for instruction as in case of KHM 5, 10, 21, 24, 26, 27, 51, 73, 80, 153. The whole spectrum of middle class values was represented in these fairy tales. This also applies to collections of fairy tales which appeared on the market since the 1830's and which adapted both the materials and the language of the fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers, especially those who had children as protagonists. The fact that no copy right in the strict sense existed further contributes to this development.

Many fairy tales depict the heroine as a prototype, characterized by a combination of industriousness and beauty. Often she at first appears as an insignificant heroine of lower class origins, but she is predestined to social advancement, because she distinguishes herself through diligence and good housekeeping and feels for animals and nature. Thus the KHM

are characterized by a great number of middle class norms that correspond, on the whole, with the world of the *Biedermeier*, but are also timeless values. Virtues like diligence, tidiness, industriousness are highly valued while laziness and idleness are negatively sanctioned. Wanton use of bread is rigorously avenged. Children's activities in the KHM are characteristic of good children: they study, sing, take walks, are economizing, work, cook, wash, spin, tend animals, make music, pick flowers, and take care of themselves. They are described by way of aesthetical comparisons, by the assignment of moral characterizations, such as evil and loving, and by intellectual qualities such as prudence and intelligence. A further, often supplementary category is the social milieu: the tale is about the child of poor people or rich parents. Educational stories are well represented in the Grimms' collection (e.g., KHM 5, 26, 43, 117). On the basis of general rules of education and the catechism — — above all the parts concerning the fourth commandment — strict obedience towards their parents is required for children. In such a manner, the KHM convey clear pictures of the protagonists, which readers and listeners can embellish with their own imaginations. Deviation from these values is only permitted within humorous tales and anecdotes with their disposition to reversion of moral values which are regularly interspersed for relaxation. What has been stated for the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, can be also applied, with certain restrictions, to most of the other collections of fairy tales, especially the two editions of the Thuringian librarian Ludwig Bechstein (1801-1860). Although Bechstein did not understand his collection as a book for small children, he stressed in the foreword (1853) that the field of the German fairy tale was an "Eldorado of poetry [...] that rosily glorifies the childhood morning of the young generations and strews their paths with stars and flowers, which unforgettably stay in their memories for a lifetime." Bechstein, wrongly scorned by the pedagogues, considered himself as a poet and a collector. For many decades, he was more successful than the Grimm brothers with his fairy tales that appeared since 1845 in Leipzig at Wigand's. For example, up to 1853, the number of printed copies of his *Deutsches Märchenbuch* amounted to more than 70.000 and he was also present in pictorial media and in anthologies — facts little known today because of the worldwide success of the Grimms' collection that caused all the other editions of fairy tales to fall into oblivion.

### **Fairy tales as popular literature**

Technics of reproduction, especially since the 1820's, made the mass distribution of literature for children and the young possible and increased pictorial representation. Pictorial media such as picture sheets became more and more important. Especially popular picture prints as media of communication for everyone, sold at reasonable prices, had — beside the representation of animals, children, fashion and uniforms — a predilection

for fairy tales, in response to young audiences, and often used as their text bases fairy tale texts by the Brothers Grimm and Ludwig Bechstein. Picture sheet publishers in Weißenburg (Alsace), Munich, Stuttgart, Magdeburg, Neuruppin or Vienna produced fairy tale picture sheets, some of which appeared in editions of several hundred thousands. Gradually the proportion between pictures and texts changed, pictures becoming more and more important. Picture sheets were not only produced for the domestic market but also for large-scale export to the Netherlands, Scandinavia, France and England.

Since the 1850's, individual fairy tales appeared as richly illustrated books in high or oblong sizes, edited as part of fairy tale series. Most of them were fairy tales, appearing especially for children which had already proved to be popular in individual editions in the previous decade: "Little Red Riding Hood", "Hansel and Gretel", "Puss in Boots", "Cinderella", "Snow White", and "Sleeping Beauty".

With the emergence of fine paper production in the 1860's, a number of fairy tale scenes and characters, such as dwarves, brownies, elves or fairies became available on coloured, punched or stamped paper. As for toys, fairy tale scenes became available as pictures for the *Laterna Magica* since 1880; at about the same time, paper theaters with fairy tale themes increasingly appeared on the market, just as since the 1870's commercial pictures (*Kaufmannsbilder* or *Reklamesammelbilder*, special German term), later followed by publicity pictures for collection, publicity labels and picture postcards.

### **Development in the 20th century**

This development continued in the 20th century. Opulent fairy tale picture book series and bibliophilic fairy tale books appeared side by side with cheap illustrated fairy tale books of poor print and paper quality. New uses of fairy tales emerged within the product range of family games and children's toys: card games, fairy tale dominos, painting games, fairy tale dice games, fairy tale puzzles. The broad range of variation is also reflected by leporellos, fairy tale painting books, Christmas plates, advent calendars, and classroom wall decoration pictures, fairy tale films and stamps. Today fairy tales are present in the new pictorial media, are revitalized by specially created fairy tale magazines and can be encountered as record covers, CD's, videos, DVD's. However, there can be no doubt that fairy tales only occupy a small section within literature for children and the young, a section which also is subject to strong fluctuations, and even if it stays more or less constant altogether the general tendency is rather decreasing in comparison to the development up to the 1970's.

The absence of individual characteristics and the tendency of fairy tale figures towards universal interrelations with all humans, supernatural

beings and animals they meet, makes fairy tales and their symbolism especially susceptible for many ranges of use within contemporary mass culture. Alienating effects are caused by the use of fairy tale motifs for satires, caricatures and advertisements. It is natural that popular fairy tales which for many decades have dominated illustrated forms and whose protagonists especially appeal to children and adolescents, have a privileged position (as was confirmed by an inquiry of the Allensbach Institute in 1996). "Snow White" (KHM 22), "Hansel and Gretel" (KHM 15) and "Little Red Riding Hood" (KHM 26) have been spearheading for decades, and are followed by the "Wolf and the Seven Kids" (KHM 5), "Sleeping Beauty" (KHM 50), and "Cinderella" (KHM 21). Besides, other Grimms' fairy tales have become favourites. Among these are, since the inclusion in the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, "Snow White and Rose Red", humoristic tales like "Hans in Luck" (KHM 83) and, since the last quarter of the 19th century, also other humorous fairy tales such as "The Table, the Ass, and the Stick" (KHM 36), "The Bremen City Musicians" (KHM 27), "The Brave Little Tailor" (KHM 20), or "The Smart Farmer's Daughter" (KHM 94). On the whole, humorous tales with cunning and clever heroes and heroines have enormously in gained popularity during the last decades, on the other hand, fairy tales about innocently persecuted and passive women like "The Goose Girl" (KHM 89) or "Rapunzel" (KHM 12) have lost popularity.

The following four currents, differing according to countries, emerge and influence the image of fairy tales in literature for children and for the young:

In Europe the international exchange of fairy tale books, especially for children, which was already observed in the 19th century, has increased and takes on new dimensions during the second half of the twentieth century, due to progress of the picture media. Fairy tale collections with illustrations by Lisbeth Zwerger, Hans Fischer, Felix Hoffmann, Ruth Hürlimann, Jiri Trnka, Svend Otto, Errol le Cain, Mitsumana Anno, Marlenka Stupica, Jan Martin Szancer, Janusz Grabianski, Vladimir Minaev, Vladimir Konasevic, Vojtech Kubašta, Nikolaus Plump, Valdemars Valdemanis, Edward Gorey, Maurice Sendak or Tomi Ungerer appeared simultaneously or shifted in time in different countries. At first, international collaboration was limited to the European countries (and the U. S.). Since the 1960's, important impulses came from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the U.S. and later on also from Japan. Moreover, several countries (Belgium, Italy, Spain, Russia, Belarus, Rumania, China) produce illustrated fairy tale books in foreign languages for exportation.

Publishers produce opulent editions of fairy tale books, containing the text of a popular fairy tale which is often shortened or adapted. Among these favourite tales are "Puss in Boots", "The Bremen City Musicians", "Kalif Storch" and "The Tin Soldier". In contrast, collections of fairy tales also offer in lesser known texts. Partial editions with hero stories from the *Edda* or the *Legends of classical antiquity* became classics.

Formerly popular selections of legends 'for the young', however, have mostly disappeared, due to the reorganization of the curriculum in schools. Yet, legend books are still available, but most of them concentrate on figures of cristallization, like the Silesian mountain ghost Ruebezahl, or the Pied Piper of Hamelin, whose tale is, by the way, one of the favourite 'fairy tales' in the U.S. As for humorous tales of popular tradition, trickster Till Eulenspiegel is a dominant figure; recently also his Turkish pendant, the Nasreddin Hodscha, became of interest. In selection of Eulenspiegel tales, most of his scatological jokes have been replaced by other tales, following the tradition of the prudish 19th century. Tales of lying are associated with the figure of Baron Münchhausen.

The trend towards monotonous representations increases, possibly due to the growing influence of the picture media. Fairy tale books are massively distributed within the so-called shopping center culture. These editions are characterized by a strong tendency to reduce and change the texts of book tales which over many decades have remained stable: The texts are often conceived for loud reading and have 3 to 6 lines per picture, so that the whole tale can be read in a couple of minutes. For over 30 years, such collections which have been produced for small children, on washable paper and in leaflet format, are highly accepted by the public, due to relatively cheap prices. The illustrations are characterized by humorous and funny doll-like representations (childish figures and requisites), a style known since the 1930's. Figures and animals which the youthful public encounters in such cheap fairy tale editions resemble to those appearing in animated cartoon films and in television. A recent example is the much discussed German cartoon film series "SimsalaGrimm" (1999/2000), shown on a children's TV station (*Kinderkanal*). The pictures' relationship to the text is recognizable, but the interchangeability of scenes, doll-like figures and animals is obvious and leads to an extreme alienation of the original contents, messages, and functions. Moreover, fairy tale magazines, circulated in a high number of issues for limited periods of time, are appearing regularly. They are often conceived for the common European market: only the text has to be changed according to the language, whereas the illustrations with the humorous doll-like figures can be used internationally.

Besides book tales, fairy tales are often used metaphorically and symbolically, primarily by picture and print media; they are also sometimes employed by way of alienation: a key scene of a fairy tale the content of which is presumed to be known, is presented, but its message is changed or inverted, inducing "a humorous conflict between the fairy tale belief in marvels and reality" (Lutz Röhrich), so to speak, the moral of the fairy tale is reversed. Thus, fairy tales are permanently present in the media as allusions, in combination with proverbial phrases and as metaphors. On the whole, fairy tales prove their multifarious suitability as products of the mass culture. Well-known popular fairy tales, so-called favourite tales, are

easily recognizable, and apparently, the norms and desires transported by the texts meet the collective needs.

Fairy tales therefore can be considered as forerunners of the European literature for children and the young. However, this does not imply any claims to exclusiveness. After all, other literary genres and their important representatives have also contributed towards the formation of European literature for children and the young, and are accepted as 'classics' in all European languages, too.

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## BAJKE KAO PRETHODNICA EUROPSKE DJEČJE KNJIŽEVNOSTI

### SAŽETAK

Zahvaljujući romantičarskom pokretu, koji je potaknuo skupljanje narodnoga stvaralaštva, na početku devetnaestoga stoljeća poraslo je zanimanje za usmenu tradiciju te se usmena književnost počela zapisivati. Pozitivno vrednovanje usmenog stvaralaštva na posljetku je dovelo do izjednačavanja usmene i umjetničke književnosti. Zagovarajući samosvojnost književnosti za djecu, pedagozi su prepoznali važnost bajke kao prenositelja građanskih vrednota i društvenih normi. Pod utjecajem stilskog modela *Bajki* braće Grimm, ali i kao rezultat razvoja nacionalnih europskih književnosti, došlo je do raznovrsnih aplikacija bajki unutar tiskovnog i slikovnog medija. Dok su na početku u središtu pozornosti bili tekstovi, razvoj tiskarskih tehnika i opadanje troškova proizvodnje pridonijeli su daljnjim tekstovnim ili slikovnim aplikacijama bajki.

Ovaj se rad bavi različitim razinama aplikacije te izlaže osnovne funkcije koje bajke preuzimaju unutar popularne književnosti. S obzirom na europski razvoj obrazlaže

se: 1) težnja ka uniformiranosti (Disney-stil), 2) težnja ka međunarodnoj suradnji u objavljivanju knjiga i publikacija koje uključuju bajke, 3) metaforičko-simboličke uporabe bajke.

Dakle, bajke su kao proizvod masovne kulture višestruko primjenjive. Uvriježenim i popularnim bajkama, tzv. najljepšim bajkama pridaje se iznimna vrijednost. Riječ je o tekstovima koji su očito nositelji normi i ideala suglasnih s potrebama društva, te se stoga bajke mogu smatrati avangardom europske književnosti za djecu i mlade. Ipak, bilo bi neprimjereno tvrditi kako su one jedine. I drugi književni žanrovi, zajedno sa svojim najvažnijim predstavnicima, pridonijeli su kao klasici europskoj književnosti za djecu.

Ključne riječi: usmena književnost, književnost za djecu, bajke, Grimm, popularna kultura