

Introduction

This study discusses some recent responses to Jacob and Wilhelm Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (hereafter: *KHM*), using the example of 'Rotkäppchen' (*KHM* 26). Material from Grimms' *KHM* has been used extensively by twentieth century authors, and these authors have employed a wide variety of textual strategies in order to incorporate Grimmian material into new texts. A common textual strategy, traditionally described using a family of literary terms which includes parody, travesty, contrafact, cento, pastiche and pekorale, involves the utilisation of techniques of textual appropriation in the adaptation of a literary antecedent. However, methods of defining these literary terms have typically involved the identification of a technique such as imitation of form with changes to content, or inappropriate contrast of high and low subjects or forms, and have assumed that the classification of any given text could proceed on this basis. According to such definitions, imitation of form with changes to content defines a text as a parody, while inappropriate contrast of high and low subjects or forms defines a text as a travesty or burlesque. By neglecting the semantic and rhetorical functions of the techniques previously mentioned in favour of stressing formal, structural properties, these definitions fail to account for the possibility that such techniques may be used in combination, and that textual appropriation may form part of an interpretative or critical strategy. In the first case, where techniques are used in combination in a text, the literary terms as defined by the above methods lose their distinctive characteristics, forcing the critic to classify the text as a 'mixed form'. In the second case,

where an interpretative or critical strategy may be involved, failure to account for this possibility may encourage a negative, even condemnatory appraisal of parody, and of the text as *Unterhaltungs-* or *Trivilliteratur*, or as being *bloß komisch*. That is, since many modern definitions of these literary terms can be said to be reductive and classificatory, they cannot be used to explain the phenomena they claim to classify. They therefore prove to be unhelpful as critical terms.

It would seem worthwhile to explore the literary fairy tale in its development as related to the Grimm collection from the mid-nineteenth century to our day, especially during the last decade, which has witnessed a growing interest among writers and artists in developing satires, travesties, fantasy tales, and even science fiction movies exploiting Grimmian formulas.¹

To some extent, this development has begun to be explored, the impetus coming in the mid-1970s from philological work which clearly showed that the collection is a literary product with a complex history of multiple authorship.² The contention made in this study however is that discussion of parody of the *KHM* has been hampered by nebulous and reductive use of critical terms, and by inadequate understanding of the interpretative possibilities of parody. Furthermore, chequered

¹ Linda Dégh: "What Did the Grimm Brothers Give to and Take from the Folk?" in: James McGlathery (ed.): *The Brothers Grimm and Folk-tale*. Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1988, pp. 66-90.

² Without philological and biographical work into the origins of the *KHM* by Heinz Röllecke and Ludwig Denecke, informed discussion about the literary status of the *KHM* would be impossible. The development of the literary fairy tale in relation to Grimms' collection has been to date most fully explored by Jack Zipes. See: *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*. London: Heinemann 1979 and: *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*. London: Heinemann 1983.

past uses of the term parody, a general critical suspicion towards theories of parody and satire and a lack of interdisciplinary communication have led commentators either to attempts at understanding parody of the *KHM* through the lens of previous literary criticism and genre classification of the *KHM*, criticism which has often proceeded from misconceptions about the origins and literary status of the collection, or into a kind of interpretative refusal. Mirroring the well-founded methodological criticisms which folklorists have directed against the psychoanalytic interpretation of literary fairy tales as 'folklore', the latter group of commentators prefer to collect parodies, travesties, satires and pastiches without commenting on their distinguishing formal and structural properties, or possible range of semantic and rhetorical functions. The existing critical confusion and refusal to theorise about parody is further compounded by the vague and even contradictory use of literary terms such as *Volksmärchen*, *Kunstmärchen* and *Antimärchen*, terms often used in discussion of parody of the *KHM* in preference to terms which describe techniques of textual appropriation or textual strategies.

Recently the concept of parody has been defended and resurrected. Separated from comedy and the comic, its 'dialogic' form was proposed by the Russian Formalists as providing a general model of literary evolution.³ Less rigorously separated from comedy and the comic, its intertextual aspect has been stressed in recent structuralist and neostructuralist theory, and in debates about 'postmodernism', particularly with respect to architectural quotation and the case of polystylistic

³ Margaret A. Rose: "Modern and late-modern theories and uses of parody" in: *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press 1993. pp. 103-192.

novels.⁴ However, neostructuralist claims that intertextuality is a purely intralinguistic phenomenon are contradicted by the claim made in this study that the possibilities and functions of parody are by no means exhausted by this type of intertextuality. In this study the critical and interpretative components of parodic intertextuality will be stressed, shown to intersect with satire, and used to distinguish parody from other related strategies such as contrafact, travesty, cento, pastiche and pekoral.⁵ Hence, Charles Jencks's understanding of post-modern and recent parody as relativist and 'value-free' will be eschewed, since this understanding would rob the term parody of much of its distinctiveness.

A more extensive and useful rehabilitation of parody as a critical term can be achieved through the consideration of texts which employ diverse techniques of textual appropriation in response to a common literary antecedent. The proposition to be advanced in this study is that recognition of the presence of parody involves balancing and interrelating the formal, structural properties of the text with its possible semantic and rhetorical functions, since parody has been traditionally conceived of as a genre, but will be defined in this study as an interpretative textual strategy. Thus, although parody will be defined in relation to travesty, contrafact, cento, pastiche and pekoral, a wider conception of parody as an interpretative response to a literary antecedent will be advanced, which includes intertextual, metafictional, comic, critical and creative aspects.⁶ The purpose of this approach is to demonstrate that

⁴ Rose: "Contemporary late-modern and postmodern theories and uses of parody" in: *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern*, pp. 193-274.

⁵ This approach is indebted to that proposed by Margaret A. Rose in her study of definitions and uses of parody: *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern*.

⁶ This approach is based primarily on the work of four theorists of parody:

familiarity with a literary antecedent and consideration of its history provide the tools with which to imbue a response with interpretative possibilities, and enrich the reader's understanding of a given response. Thus, it will be argued that texts which can be read as containing interpretative responses to an apparently simple, single text can generate a complex of interpretative possibilities, in the light of awareness of the possible semantic and rhetorical functions of parody, and of the interpretative possibilities and historical particularities of the literary antecedent itself. Conversely, the historical particularities of a literary antecedent, specifically, those of 'Rotkäppchen' (*KHM* 26), but more generally, those of the *KHM*, will be used to set limits on the interpretative possibilities inherent in the appropriation of the literary antecedent, and to suggest the role played by interpretative components in the definition and use of the above literary terms. Thus, the terms parody, travesty and contrafact will be defined as interpretative strategies, cento and pastiche will be described as either comic or 'value-free', and pekoral will be defined as unintentional, comic self-parody. In this context, the *KHM* seem to provide an apt example of a parodied text or collection of texts, since the interpretative history of the collection is full of claims about the transcendental truth of interpretations which clearly conflict with either textual or historical evidence, and sometimes both. This will be taken to show the dangers of ahistorical, ideological methodologies, of failing to balance the historical and literary particularities of a text and its *Wirkungsgeschichte* with the literary convention of reading a text for meaning.

Theodor Verweyen, Gunther Witting, Linda Hutcheon and Margaret A. Rose. See bibliography.

The purposes of this study are threefold. First, it is suggested that students of modern *Märchen* could benefit from a wider definition and understanding of parody and its complex possibilities, since appreciation of the possible functions and uses of parody as an interpretative response to the *KHM* is greatly enhanced by close reading of and familiarity with the parodied text, and knowledge of the text's history, interpretative and social. Secondly, that clarification and systematic use of the literary terms parody, travesty, contrafact, cento, pastiche and pekoral, as well as the genre categories *Volksmärchen* and *Kunstmärchen* is desirable, since it helps avoid vagueness and confusion, and useful, since the distinctions made will have some explanatory as well as descriptive force. Thirdly, that comparison of Grimms' version of 'Rotkäppchen' (*KHM* 26) with recent parodic responses to it can reveal commonalities and differences in the production and reception of the *KHM* and modern *Märchen*, especially in conjunction with an historical approach to the problems of defining literary terms and genres.