

2. *The Kinder- und Hausmärchen*

What is the literary status and significance of Grimms' *KHM*?

Grimms Märchen sind nach wie vor das bekannteste, weitestverbreitete und meistübersetzte Buch deutscher Sprache¹

This statement can be taken almost at face value; the popularity of the *KHM* is reflected in a sheer number of copies published second only to that of the Bible, book sales which surpass those of the Bible as a consequence of the evangelical nature of much Bible distribution, the appearance of 'new' editions and translations, and in continued academic and popular interest in the collection. The collection has attracted scholarly interest from "folklorists, educators, psychologists, and literary critics of different persuasions, including literary historians, structuralists, semioticians and Marxists".² The influence generated by the widespread dissemination and popularity of the *KHM* has made the work into a battleground and a testing ground for competing ideologies, humanist, racist, feminist, Freudian, Marxist, and in turn, for the literary theories they have generated. As a result, the *KHM* have been accorded paradigmatic value in the consideration of a variety of historical, social and literary phenomena. The tales have been appropriated and interpreted in order to demonstrate that they reflect inescapably human conflicts, concerns and hopes,³ that they are products of a

¹ Heinz Röllecke: *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm*. München, Zürich: Artemis 1985, p. 102.

² Zipes: *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World*. New York, London: Routledge 1988, p. 16.

³ For example: Ernst Bloch: *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. Frankfurt am Main:

racially idealised Germanic heritage,⁴ that they are repositories of deep psychological truths,⁵ that they mimetically embody the hopes and wishes of the 'common people'.⁶ They have also been condemned as racist, sexist, inauthentic and unsuitable for children.⁷ In making such claims however, ideologically motivated commentators have often confused fact with speculation, and revealed their own vested interests by ignoring the textual history and historical particularity of the collection. Preferring to believe that the tales in the collection authentically (in a modern folkloristic sense) preserve material of great antiquity, that they 'speak for themselves', or conversely that the tales are literary inventions or the product of

Suhrkamp 1959.

⁴ For example: Werner von Bülow: *Die Geheimsprache der deutschen Märchen: Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der deutschen Religion*. Hellerau bei Dresden: Hakenkreuz 1925. and: Josef Prestel: *Märchen als Lebensdichtung: Das Werk der Brüder Grimm*. Hueber: München 1938. The former consists of interpretations of selected tales which seek to accommodate the tales to Nazi ideology through emphasis on Teutonic mythology and racial consciousness, while the latter is a pedagogical manual designed for educators, which claims the tales to be uniquely German.

⁵ For example: Bruno Bettelheim: *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Knopf 1976. Bettelheim's study gained much popularity through its simultaneous appropriation of the *KHM* to orthodox Freudianism and justification of violence and gruesomeness in the *KHM* by stressing the therapeutic value for children of both. The psychological approach also seems to synthesise readily with humanist views of the tales; see for example: Erich Fromm: *The Forgotten Language: An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales and Myths*. New York: Grove Press 1951.

⁶ For example: Peter Taylor and Hermann Rebel: "Hessian Peasant Women, their Families, and the Draft: A Socio-Historical Interpretation of Four Tales from the Grimm Collection" in: *Journal of Family History* 6 (Winter, 1981), pp. 347-78.

⁷ Moore, Richard: "From rags to witches: stereotypes, distortions and anti-humanism in fairy tales." *Interracial Books for Children* 4 (1975), pp. 1-3. This short essay combines all four of these propositions.

deception on the part of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, they have often ignored or downplayed the authorial and editorial roles played by Jacob Grimm, Wilhelm Grimm and various oral informants or 'authors', the 'authorial' role of printed sources, and the historical circumstances surrounding the authorship of the *KHM*. Thus, ahistorical and materialist currents in scholarship on the *KHM* have tended to neglect the literary status of the collection, or to treat it in a simplified manner, while a perception that the *KHM* are primarily 'children's literature' has produced negative assessments of the literary value of the collection, in a manner which invites comparison with the critical denigration of parody.

In considering the origins, authorship and influence of a text it is necessary to make distinctions between fact and speculation. Literature has a social existence, and this social existence is to some extent empirically verifiable; texts are published in a certain year, authors write and revise, editors revise (and rewrite), publishers print manuscripts which may or may not still be extant today, and reprints are produced from older editions of texts and from authorial or editorial revisions of manuscripts and older editions. Changes and mistakes are introduced at each step of this process, a process which can to some extent be followed by comparing different versions of texts. Biographical and historical data can be gleaned from extant nonfictional texts. On the other hand, making connections between biographical data and manifestly fictional texts at best involves educated guesswork, at worst, speculation. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some limited generalisations about the emergence of literature in historical context, and especially 'literature' and *Märchen* in their early Romantic conceptions; because the *KHM* appeared during a time of radical change in the conception of literature and its uses, and

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were both influenced by, and closely involved in bringing about these changes, such generalisations have some direct relevance to consideration of the literary status of the *KHM*. Moreover, since the *KHM* consist of and incorporate folkloric material, consideration of the emergence of literature, the interrelationship of oral and literary traditions, and particular uses of oral and literary traditions by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm are necessary in order to explain the significance and influence of the *KHM*. The *KHM* appeared at a turning point in German literary, social and political history, and understanding of these factors can help to explain some of the subsequent uses and misuses to which the tales have been put.

There are various theories as to the ultimate origins and age of *Märchen* as a genre. Etymologically, the noun *Märchen* probably stems from the same root word as the Old High German adjective *mâri*, meaning 'famous' or 'renowned', through the Middle High German noun *mære*, meaning 'report' or 'message'. The diminutive *-chen* (variants are *-lein* and *-ken*) can be taken as referring on one hand to the length of the 'message', and on the other hand to its 'improbable' character, in opposition to the substantive form *Mähre*, which can denote the telling of a 'true' tale.⁸ This etymological approach also effectively characterises the aspects of the genre most generally agreed upon in the vast number of definitions of *Märchen* which have been advanced; the most common characteristics of the *Märchen* or tales represented in Grimms' collection are their short length and more or less 'improbable' character.

Opposite extremes in the debate about the ultimate age and

⁸ Röllecke: *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm*, p. 10.

origin of the tales collected in the *KHM* are to be found in the claim that some of the tales may contain survivals of ancient rituals and beliefs, albeit in sublimated form,⁹ and the claim that the preservation and transmission of a *Märchen* genre in Europe were only made possible by the emergence of a literary tradition during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance.¹⁰ However, it seems unlikely that it will ever be possible to determine if *Märchen* were predominantly part of oral or literary tradition. It further seems unlikely that it will ever be conclusively shown whether the primary audience for *Märchen* consisted of adults or children, although the 'coarse' content of many oral variants of tales (see Chapter 3) suggests that they were told to or by both groups. What can be said with some certainty about the *Märchen* collected by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm is that their antecedents lie both in oral and literary traditions, in tales intended for adult and child audiences, sometimes for both, and that Grimms' collection is a product of a complex interaction between these traditions.

The early tale collecting activities of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were closely linked with similar efforts by Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim, and thereby with the intellectual currents of the *Heidelberger Romantik*.¹¹ An earlier influence on the intellectual basis for the Grimms' tale collecting activity was Friedrich Karl von Savigny, a Professor of Law at Marburg, under whom Jacob studied. Savigny

⁹ August Nitschke: *Soziale Ordnung im Spiegel der Märchen*. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog 1976-1977.

¹⁰ Albert Wesselski: *Versuch einer Theorie des Märchens*. Prager deutsche Studien 45. Reichenberg: Sudetendeutscher Verlag Franz Kraus 1974 [1931].

¹¹ Zipes: "The Revolutionary Rise of the Romantic Fairy Tale in Germany" in: *Breaking the Magic Spell*, pp. 41-92.

stressed the importance of studying the legal system both synchronically and diachronically to establish the role of culture in law, and the role of custom in binding society together.¹² This led the Grimms to take an interest in old German literature, customs and traditions, eventually leading them to become more interested in philology than law, since they came to hold the opinion that language had ultimate priority in the production of cultural cohesion. Nevertheless, Karl von Savigny's progressive methodological reconciliation of past and future remained a powerful intellectual influence as the Grimms began to study and collect literature for Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim, who planned to complete their collection of folk songs *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* with "alte mündlich überlieferte Sagen und Märchen".¹³ Brentano initially directed the Grimms towards fixed literary versions of folktales and references to oral tradition in Karl Nehrlich's novel *Schilly* (1798), and pointed out folkloric elements in Baroque novels by Fischart, Moscherosch and Grimmelshausen.¹⁴ Their attention directed to literary fairy tales more generally, the Grimms attacked the work with the high degree of diligence and thoroughness for which they had become known in academic circles. In the process, they simultaneously conceived of their own project, also involving the collection of folk material in literary form, and became familiar with many of the literary antecedents for such an endeavour.

¹² Zipes: *The Brothers Grimm*, p. 28.

¹³ Clemens Brentano, quoted by Heinz Röllecke in: "Nachwort" in: *Kinder- und Hausmärchen: Ausgabe letzter Hand mit den Originalanmerkungen der Brüder Grimm; mit einem Anhang sämtlicher, nicht in allen Auflagen veröffentlichter Märchen und Herkunftsnachweisen*. Heinz Röllecke (ed.). Volume III. Stuttgart: Reclam 1980, p. 594.

¹⁴ Röllecke "Nachwort", p. 594.

The Grimms began their work on this project during a time of radical cultural change. The eighteenth century saw a growth in the size and significance of the middle classes, but within the framework of a social and political reality still greatly influenced by feudalism. In England, the middle classes had gained a limited right to a voice in government, while in France the middle classes had overthrown the monarchy and done away with the nobility in the French Revolution of 1789. However, in Germany, or rather, the collection of autonomous states which comprised Germany, the middle classes remained largely cut off from political representation and power. At the same time, a process of fundamental change to the cultural fabric of European society, set in motion in the mid-fifteenth century by Gutenberg with the invention of mechanical printing, was being completed almost three centuries later, between the mid-eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries, as the "historical shifts we collectivise as the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution"¹⁵ brought about the spread of mechanical, democratic print. These shifts, which were eventually to bring about the transformation of agricultural, feudal kingdoms into industrial capitalist, parliamentary democracies, allowed science to replace religion as the primary epistemology, and a world view orientated towards a future of unending progress to replace an earlier orientation towards tradition and the past. The economic affluence which was starting to spread to Germany through the early Industrial Revolution, and which later made possible the democratisation of education, was also beginning to promote the widespread dissemination and acceptance of the print medium; such

¹⁵ Alvin Kernan: *The Death of Literature*. New Haven, New York: Yale University Press 1992, p. 11.

transformations allowed the emergence of a print-based culture, that is, a culture which accepts the print medium as its primary repository and transmitter of culture.

At the time of the appearance of the *KHM*, the German middle classes, excluded from political power but empowered through print-based education, "took for [themselves] the right to judge in matters of virtue and vice",¹⁶ and the task of cultivating the moral sense necessary to make such judgements fell increasingly to the print media, through philosophy and literature. Novalis, for example, saw in the ideals of the French Revolution a victory of morality over aristocratic politics. However, significantly for the Romantic movement in Germany as a whole, the revolution itself did not spread, and for the development of the *Heidelberger Romantik*, closely linked with the Grimms' tale collecting activities, the ideals of the revolution were replaced by Napoleon's absolutism, the Napoleonic Wars, and the occupation of Hesse by the French. In this context, neoclassical courtly poetry as exemplified by the aristocratic French tradition of the *conte des fées* was of limited relevance, especially if, as Jack Zipes suggests, it:

performed the function of legitimising the norms of absolutism while providing *divertissement*, and even, especially for female writers, a means to air some discontentment with marriage arrangements and patriarchal domination.¹⁷

The 'mythologising' of literature, its reification into a coherent

¹⁶ Peter Klaus: "Romanticism Today: The "New Irrationalism" in West Germany and Its Historical Context" in: *Germanic Review* 61 (Winter 1987), pp. 19-28, p. 20.

¹⁷ Zipes: *The Brothers Grimm*, pp. 82-83.

institution by men of letters such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Matthew Arnold, created an independent aesthetic realm for literature, emphasising the appreciation of truth and beauty in art, but scholars such as the Grimms and Brentano felt such developments to concur with the artificiality of courtly poetry. Scholars such as the Grimms hoped to revitalise a literary tradition which they considered to be decadent and artificially contaminated by this abstract, neoclassical aesthetic by turning to the customs, ideals and laws of the German past, which they felt were preserved through language, and hence in oral tradition.

The development of the Romantic literary fairy tale in German speaking areas was indebted in the substance of many tales to the popularity of the seventeenth and eighteenth century aristocratic French *conte des fées*, and to specific texts, most influentially, Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités* (1697), also known by its subtitle *Contes de ma mère l'oye*, and Madame d'Aulnoy's *Contes nouveaux ou les fées à la mode* and *Contes des fées* (1698). These French literary fairy tales in turn drew on sixteenth and seventeenth century incorporation of oral tradition into literary works, and specifically on Italian texts such as Giovan Francesco Straparola's *Le piacevoli notti* (1550/1553) and Giambattista Basile's *Lo cunto de li cunti* (1634/1636). The 'genetic' spread of *Märchen* from the sixteenth through to the early nineteenth century, when the Grimms began their collecting activities, thus involved a complex interrelationship of transmission, translation and fragmentary publication, as well as numerous interactions between oral and literary traditions. The Grimms were well aware of these developments, and of the close but complex connections between Italian, French and

German oral and literary traditions.

Consideration of the relationship between oral and literary traditions in the production of the *KHM* can show the problematic nature of attempts to apply genre categories such as *Volksmärchen*, typically defined as the product of many anonymous authors,¹⁸ and *Kunstmärchen*, as the product of a single, identifiable author,¹⁹ to the collection. For example, remarks made in the editorial Preface to Volume I of the First Edition of the *KHM* (1812) suggest that the Grimms saw themselves as preservers and retellers of an oral tradition in a manner which was 'true to the folk':

Wir haben uns bemüht, diese Märchen so rein als möglich war aufzufassen [...] Kein Umstand ist hinzugedichtet oder verschönert und abgeändert worden [...]²⁰

The Grimms' conception of 'the folk' and their consequent approach to folklore as *Naturpoesie* were however quite different from that of a modern ethnographic folklorist. The Grimms were pioneers in the field of folklore, a field which did not exist as a separate or coherent discipline. Thus, although it may prove to be informative to comment on differences in approach and methodology, there are few grounds for an evaluative comparison, a type of comparison which has led to dismissive estimations of the *KHM*.

¹⁸ Jens Tismar: *Kunstmärchen*. Sammlung Metzler 177. Stuttgart: Metzler 1977, p. 1.

¹⁹ Tismar: *Kunstmärchen*. See also: "Kunstmärchen" in: *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*. Volume II, pp. 909-912.

²⁰ Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm: "Vorrede" to the 1812 First Edition in: *KHM der Brüder Grimm: Vollständige Ausgabe in der Urfassung*. Friedrich Panzer (ed.). Wiesbaden: Emil Vollmer 1955, p. 61.

The Grimms were certainly interested in collecting oral narratives, but were also heavily influenced by literary models which ranged from those of Basile, Perrault and Madame d'Aulnoy through to elements from novels by Fischart, Moscherosch and Grimmelshausen, Jean Anton Galland's French translation of the Arabian *1001 Nights*, contemporary German and French collections such as the *Blaue Bibliothek aller Nationen*, and collections and individual tales by Johann August Musäus and Benidikte Naubert. They especially admired two texts composed in *Plattdeutsch* by Phillip Otto Runge, 'Von dem Fischer un syner Fru' (which became *KHM* 19), and 'Von dem Machandelboom' (eventually *KHM* 47), for their atmosphere and overall consistency of tone.²¹ They were thus likely to select texts for their planned publication which conformed to such models, and to rely on informants who were capable of producing oral performances in accordance with them. It would not have been consistent with the nature of the Grimms' project for them to publish oral narratives which were fragmentary or rambling, while reference to literary models was probably also a pragmatic necessity; since the Grimms were working well before the advent of sound recording, even before the invention of shorthand, memory must have played a significant role in the transcription of tales. The social setting of tale telling will have also led informants to avoid obscene material, as the Grimms did not venture 'into the field' to record narratives, but rather invited their informants to come to them, or collected tales, for example, during civilised, conversational evenings with friends and acquaintances.

The Grimms' claim in the 1812 Preface that the tales were

²¹ Röllecke: *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm*, p. 52-60.

"nach mündlicher Überlieferung gesammelt" is however true in a strict sense, since the Grimms did in fact write down tales as told by a number of informants. At different times during the evolution of the collection, through successive editions, these oral informants ranged from the circle in Kassel already mentioned with Jacob and Wilhelm's sister Lotte Grimm at its centre, which included Friederike Mannel, a schoolteacher, Dorothea Wild, the wife of an apothecary, her four daughters, and the Hassenpflug sisters, Jeannette, Marie and Amalie, through to Dorothea Viehmann, a tailor's wife who contributed many stories to Volume II of the First Edition (1815), Friedrich Krause, a retired Sergeant of the Dragoons who told several tales in exchange for some of the Grimms' old clothes, and members of the *Bökendorfer Märchenkreis*, which included individuals from the Haxthausen and Droste-Hülshoff families.²² As a result of the circumstances under which these tales were collected, many of the tales were fragmentary in form, necessitating their completion from other sources or by combining tales. As Donald Ward points out, Jacob complained in a letter to Karl von Savigny in 1808 that even with the best of informants, the beginnings of tales were often the most complete, since these were the parts the narrators remembered best, while the endings often became incoherent or rambled.²³ In this light, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Grimms considered themselves to be working with a dying oral tradition. Bearing in mind that they wished to present this tradition in the best possible light, it is even

²² Röllecke: *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm*, p. 70. See also: Walter Scherf: "Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm: A Few Small Corrections to a Commonly Held Image" in: McGlathery (ed.): *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale*, pp. 178-191.

²³ Donald Ward: "New Misconceptions about Old Folktales" in: McGlathery (ed.): *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale*, pp. 91-100, p. 95.

understandable that they neglected to mention that many of the informants such as Jeanette and Marie Hassenpflug, whose tales were eventually published in Volume I of the First Edition of 1812, were "eloquente, gebildete junge Damen aus gutbürgerlichen Kreisen", who told "abgerundete, sinnvolle, Obzönitäten und Grobianismen säuberlich vermeidende Geschichten".²⁴

In the light of the above biographical and historical information about the Grimms' literary intentions, and information about their selection of informants, the Grimms' notes on the sources of the tales also begin to make more sense. For example, the geographical descriptive "aus der Maingegend" in their companion volume of Notes to the Third Edition of 1837 refers to the fact that either Marie or Jeanette Hassenpflug, descendants of Huguenots who spoke French at home and were well acquainted with the French tradition of the *conte des fées*, had heard the story during their childhood in Hanau am Main.²⁵ This, combined with Wilhelm Grimm's extensive editing of texts through successive editions of the *KHM*, leaves the Grimms open to the accusation of constructing 'fakelore' as opposed to collecting independent oral tradition in a modern folkloristic sense.²⁶ However, taking into consideration the interdependence of oral and literary traditions in the Grimms' conception of 'folklore', perhaps the worst the Grimms can be accused of is obscuring their sources, or of regarding them as less relevant than modern folklorists do. Incomplete or

²⁴ Röllecke: *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm*, p. 72. See also: pp. 72-78.

²⁵ Röllecke: *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm*, p. 71. Röllecke, "Nachwort", pp. 600-601.

²⁶ See: Richard M. Dorson: *Folklore and Fakelore*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1976.

defective scholarship has done much to reinforce the myths surrounding the origins of the *KHM*, an example being the propagation of the myth that many of the central tales in the collection actually told by Marie Hassenpflug had their origins in a Hessian housekeeper and nursemaid 'die Alte Marie', a myth begun by Wilhelm's son Herman Grimm in 1890 and still being propagated as recently as the late 1960s.²⁷

The substantial determinant of the shape which the *KHM* took by the Final Edition of 1857 was the process of revision carried out by Wilhelm Grimm. Although Jacob and Wilhelm criticised Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim for their editorial activity in reworking the songs for *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: Alte deutsche Lieder* (3 Volumes, 1805-1808), it was not out of ethnographic concern for the authentic transcription of oral performances, but rather because of disagreement about the nature of the revisions, revisions which the Grimms felt were unnecessary and artificial. Wilhelm Grimm was himself responsible for similar editorial practices in both volumes of the First Edition of the *KHM* (1812/15), as Heinz Röllecke has eloquently shown in his comparative edition of surviving handwritten versions of tales and their first published versions.²⁸ These editorial practices became more accentuated as subsequent editions of the *KHM* (1819, 1837, 1840, 1843, 1850, 1857) were revised, modified and added to by Wilhelm Grimm.

The initial impetus for this editorial role was in part provided by criticism of Volume I of the First Edition of 1812. The

²⁷ Röllecke: "Die 'stockhessischen' Märchen der 'Alten Marie': Das Ende eines Mythos um die frühesten *KHM*-Aufzeichnungen der Brüder Grimm", in: "Wo das Wünschen noch geholfen hat": *gesammelte Aufsätze zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen* der Brüder Grimm. Bonn: Bouvier 1985.

²⁸ Röllecke: *Die älteste Märchensammlung der Brüder Grimm*. Cologny-Genève: Fondation Martin Bodmer 1975.

gruesome content of tales such as 'Wie Kinder miteinander Schlachtens gespielt haben' (*KHM* 22 in the First Edition) provoked criticism of the collection to the effect that it was unsuitable for children, leading to the elimination of this tale from the Second Edition of 1819; this despite Wilhelm's opinion that the story taught a clear moral lesson about caution and restraint.²⁹ Other tales depicting violence such as 'Herr Korbes' (*KHM* 41) had a moral interdiction appended to them in response to criticism along these lines. More damagingly, the First Edition of the collection was criticised for sexual references, for example by Albert Ludwig Grimm, the (unrelated) author of a contemporary, competing collection of tales. The following criticism led Wilhelm to make textual changes to 'Rapunzel' (*KHM* 12), eliminating a reference to pregnancy as a result of sexual intercourse outside marriage:

Ich habe es [the *KHM*] immer nur mit dem größten Mißfallen in Kinderhänden gesehen [...] verweise ich nur auf Nr. 12, und Vater und Erzieher werden hier, wie an noch mehreren Orten, Ursache genug finden, ihm nicht den Namen einer Kinderschrift beyzulegen, was es auch nach der Ansicht der Herren Herausgeber wohl gar nicht seyn soll. Sollten sie es aber doch auch dazu bestimmt haben, so möchte hier das alte Sprüchlein anzuwenden seyn: Niemand kann zweyen Herren dienen.³⁰

This criticism also reflects the differing intentions of Jacob and

²⁹ Maria Tatar: *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1987, pp. 180-1.

³⁰ Albert Ludwig Grimm, quoted by Heinz Röllecke in: "Nachwort", p. 605.

Wilhelm Grimm with respect to the purpose of the collection. Jacob saw the collection as being primarily of interest to scholars and adults, while Wilhelm's editorial practice reflected a desire that the collection would also prove useful as an *Erziehungsbuch*. Since editing of the collection through subsequent editions was a task carried out by Wilhelm, it is therefore unsurprising that he modified the tales in accordance with a conception of childhood innocence which precluded even the most oblique reference to sexual matters. It is interesting to note the persistence of a parallel tendency to conceal or avoid discussion of obscene material in folkloristic studies well into the twentieth century, an example being Stith Thompson's censoring of 'obscene' motifs from his monumental *Motif Index of Folk Literature*.³¹

As early as the Second Edition of the *KHM* (1819), Wilhelm Grimm had explicitly retreated from the editorial position of 1812:

[...] ihr bloßes Dasein reicht hin, sie zu schützen. [...] Das ist der Grund, warum wir durch unsere Sammlung nicht bloß der Geschichte der Poesie und Mythologie einen Dienst erweisen wollen [...] also auch, daß es als ein Erziehungsbuch diene. [...] Wir suchen die Reinheit in der Wahrheit einer geraden, nichts Unrechtes im Rückhalt bergenden Erzählung. Dabei haben wir jeden für das Kinderalter nicht passenden Ausdruck in dieser neuen Auflage sorgfältig gelöscht.³²

³¹ Tatar: *Off with their heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1992, pp. 4-5.

³² Wilhelm Grimm, *Vorrede to the Second Edition of the KHM* (1819), in: Röllecke (ed.): *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Volume I, pp. 16-17.

The apparent contradiction presented in Wilhelm's unchanged view of the collection as an essential product of 'the folk', despite his stylistic and structural alterations, and the lack of real conflict between Jacob and Wilhelm over later editing of the collection can be better explained through examination of the Grimms' metonymic understanding of folklore as *Naturpoesie* than through charges of nefarious and covert Teutonic nationalism.³³ The Grimms understood *Naturpoesie* as an oral product of many, unidentifiable authors, as opposed to *Kunstpoesie*, the literary product of a single, identifiable author, a distinction which has persisted in recent definitions of *Volksmärchen* and *Kunstmärchen*. In the course of their philological and historical work they developed the view that literature evolved out of folklore, and hence claimed the priority of oral over literary tradition. The project they were engaged in was thus designed to show "the debt or connection of literate culture to the oral tradition".³⁴ The Grimms' approach to folklore was revolutionary in that it conceived of 'the folk' as a kind of idealised, coherent author capable of producing literature just as an individual author would, producing 'high' as opposed to 'low' art, but as a result they did not hesitate to posit an existence for the tales independent of individual acts of tale telling. They did not conceive the telling of a tale as a performance or social act in the sense that modern folklorists do; in declaring that the tales 'speak for

³³ See: John M. Ellis: *One Fairy Story Too Many: The Brothers Grimm and their Tales*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1983. Ellis' charge that the Grimms set out to deceive their readers does not hold up on examination of the Grimms' prefaces to successive editions of the *KHM*. Ellis' claims are examined by Donald Ward in: "New Misconceptions about Old Folktales".

³⁴ Zipes: *The Brothers Grimm*, p. 33.

themselves', Wilhelm Grimm suggests a view of each individual teller of tales as a more or less skilful conduit or repository. Skilful telling of the tales later presented in the *KHM* was guaranteed by the Grimms' initial choice of sources. This also explains why they did not hesitate to stylise, rework or even combine tales from a variety of sources. The two-fold method which resulted from the initial selection of tales followed by the subsequent process of editing and revision can thus be understood as a process of interpretative selection followed by literary production, based on a poetic conception of 'the folk'. Indeed, after the publication of the Second Edition (1819), neither Jacob nor Wilhelm collected further tales from oral informants, but rather launched a further wide-ranging search for well-told literary tales and examples of tale types not yet represented in the collection. To this end, they engaged in correspondence with folklorists and philologists all over Europe, and continued to receive tales and tale fragments from friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

This background makes the Grimms' collecting activities and Wilhelm's later editorial activities more intelligible, recognising the collection as a literary project which aimed at a progressive reconciliation of oral and literary traditions. It can therefore be understood as having its origins "engstens an die modernsten literarischen Bestrebungen der Zeit [gebunden]",³⁵ and more generally, "as part of a political program conceived by the Grimms to reactivate interest in the customs, laws and norms that bound the German people together through language".³⁶

As a result of recent content analyses of the *KHM*, Wilhelm

³⁵ Röllecke: *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm*, p. 33.

³⁶ Zipes: *The Brothers Grimm*, p. 45, referring to Gabriele Seitz's critical biography of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm: *Die Brüder Grimm: Leben-Werk-Zeit*. München: Winkler 1984.

Grimm's editorial activity can be broadly summarised as being directed on the one hand towards the production of stylistic unity and consistency, and on the other hand, towards making diverse ideological currents in the moral structure of the tales appear more unified. A third editorial practice consisted of the incorporation of newly discovered tale fragments and motifs into already existing tales. The diverse nature of the collection with respect to morality has been examined by Ruth Bottigheimer, who detects at least three interrelated ideological strands or traditions in her content analysis of the *KHM*:

The first is an enlightened, educated tradition contemporary with Wilhelm's and Jacob's early collecting, which is evident in the Ölenberg MS and Volume I of the First Edition (1812). The tales from these two texts, many of which came from the Grimms' Kassel informants, evince a generally sociable outlook and a higher degree of social equality between men and women, especially in the realm of the spoken word. The second tradition is a rude, unlettered folk tradition. And the third is a twopronged tradition emanating from the Grimms themselves: on the one hand, the continuing influx of texts from earlier ages - chapbooks, manuscripts and story collections of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - and, on the other hand, Wilhelm Grimm's imposition of a Christian overlay based on the late medieval and early modern value system that permeates many of the tales the Grimms, and especially Jacob, unearthed in archives.³⁷

³⁷ Ruth B. Bottigheimer: *Grimms' Bad Girls and Bold Boys: The Moral and Social Vision of the Tales*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press 1987, p. 168.

Wilhelm Grimm's consistent stylisation of the tales had the effect of uniting the otherwise disparate genres and narrative voices represented in the collection's wide range of sources and informants. He consistently turned reported speech into direct speech and dialogues and replaced foreign expressions with German equivalents. For example, the phrase "Rotkäppchen versprach der Mutter recht gehorsam zu sein" which appears in the version of 'Rotkäppchen' (*KHM* 26) found in the First Edition of 1812 became "»Ich will schon alles gut machen«, sagte Rotkäppchen zur Mutter und gab ihr die Hand darauf" by the Final Edition of 1857, while "ein Bouteille mit Wein" in the 1812 version of 'Rotkäppchen' (*KHM* 26) had become "eine Flasche Wein" by 1857.³⁸ Wilhelm Grimm's aim seems to have been to imbue the tales with a character which would suggest them to be a product of timeless folk wisdom, and he furthered this aim through the incorporation of twin formulas (such as *schlecht und recht*), onomatopoeic rhyming expressions (*ritsch ratsch*), and proverbial comparisons and expressions (such as *schnell wie der Blitz* and *aller guten Dinge sind drei*).³⁹

The success with which Wilhelm produced the stylistic consistency which unifies the collection is most effectively demonstrated by the applicability to the collection of the theories of Max Lüthi, who has delineated a number of stylistic and structural categories in relationship to the 'European

³⁸ See: Panzer (ed.): *Die Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, Volume I, p. 78, and: Röllecke (ed.): *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Volume I, p. 157.

³⁹ Wolfgang Mieder: "Ever Eager to Incorporate Folk Proverbs": Wilhelm Grimm's Proverbial Additions in the Fairy Tales" in: McGlathery (ed.): *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale*.

folktale', which effectively describe an 'ideal' type of *Märchen*.⁴⁰ Wilhelm's editing, careful reshaping, combining and reworking of tales produced uniformity of speech patterns and a consistently abstract, timeless narrative style throughout the collection, and it is this stylistic consistency which allows for the applicability of Lüthi's categories. These categories include *Eindimensionalität* (the co-existence of normal and supernatural events and the acceptance of supernatural events by the narrative voice and characters without comment), *abstrakter Stil* (the polarisation of characteristics such as young and old, good and evil, the use of proverbial and other fixed expressions, repetition which often occurs in threes and the generality of references to people and animals), *Flächenhaftigkeit* (the presence of figures purely as plot motivators and the contemporaneity of bodily and psychological processes), and *Isolierung/Allverbundenheit* (the single protagonist or succession of protagonists and their central relationship to all facets of the narrative), as well as other characteristics such as fascination with precious metals. Although some of these facets of the 'European folktale' were present in the oral narratives and literary sources collected by the Grimms, it is the final, most consistently edited edition of the *KHM* (1857) which is best described using these categories.

More generally, Wilhelm Grimm's editorial practices aimed for the elimination of sexual motifs or references, but preserved and sometimes even emphasised violent punishments, especially in connection with moral stricture and injunction/transgression/punishment structures. A gender difference becomes observable through successive editions with respect to the punishment of male and female protagonists, intensified by the

⁴⁰ Max Lüthi: *Das europäische Volksmärchen: Form und Wesen*. 9. Auflage. Tübingen: Francke 1992 [1947].

fact that disobedient male protagonists often appear in *Schwänke* or 'merry tales', and hence often escape punishment, while disobedient female protagonists often appear in morality tales.⁴¹ Emphasis is placed on virtues such as industry, thrift, self-reliance, cleanliness and order.⁴² An editorial balancing of social professions and tale types in the selection of tales ensures emphasis on these values, presenting the protagonists' actions as ethical-social dilemmas, and in the process introducing many powerful utopian motifs. Meanwhile, portrayal of resourceful male protagonists through emphasis on such virtues and disobedient female protagonists through violent moral strictures also seems to be consistent with Wilhelm Grimm's tendency to take speech away from women and give speech to men in his editing of the tales.⁴³ All these editorial activities lead to the conclusion that the Grimms, and especially Wilhelm, did not merely rewrite tales to create stylistic and structural consistency; they also 'refunctioned' the preformed material which they had collected, as Ruth Bottigheimer suggests from content analysis:

Diligent work, gender-specific roles, a generally punitive stance towards girls and women, and a coherent world view conducive to stability in the social fabric took

⁴¹ Tatar: "Sex and Violence" in: *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, pp. 3-38. See also: Bottigheimer: "Prohibitions, Transgressions and Punishments" in: *Grimms' Bold Boys and Bad Girls*, pp. 81-94.

⁴² Zipes: "Exploring Historical Paths" in: *The Brothers Grimm*.

⁴³ Bottigheimer: "Patterns of Speech" in: *Grimms' Bold Boys and Bad Girls*, pp. 51-56 also her Appendix B "Patterns of Speech" in: *Grimms' Bold Boys and Bad Girls*, pp. 177-189, where she analyses speech by male and female characters in 'Achenputtel' (*KHM* 21) in terms of frequency of utterance and character role, and shows the changes Wilhelm Grimm made to the frequency of these utterances through successive editions of the *KHM*.

shape over [Wilhelm Grimm's] years of editing and expanding the collection.⁴⁴

The Grimms' collecting and editing of the *KHM* thus produced an 'ideal' type of *Märchen*, but the heterogeneous voicing of the tales was 'concealed' by Wilhelm Grimm's consistent editorial practice.

It is difficult to overemphasise the role of Wilhelm Grimm's editorial practice in the increasingly positive reception of the *KHM* through successive editions. A further decisive factor in the popular success of the *KHM* was the publication of the *Kleine Ausgabe* of the *KHM* (1825), a collection of fifty tales which reached ten editions in Wilhelm's lifetime. These tales were selected by Wilhelm Grimm with the express intention of catering to parents and their children, and this collection contains most of the tales which are today acknowledged to be the most popular. In selecting tales for the *Kleine Ausgabe*, Wilhelm avoided tales with dubious moral messages such as *Schwänke*, concentrating instead on cautionary tales, morality tales of long-suffering heroines and tales of resourceful protagonists.

The increasingly positive reception of the *KHM*, and the influence and popularity it began to generate, especially through reception of the *Kleine Ausgabe* during the second half of the nineteenth century, strengthened and solidified a hermetic correspondence between the popular conception of *Märchen* and the *KHM*. The term *Märchen* is hence problematic, as its use since the second half of the nineteenth century has been to a large extent determined by the influence and very existence of the *KHM*, a fact pointed out as early as 1930

⁴⁴ Bottigheimer: *Grimms' Bold Boys and Bad Girls*, p. 19.

by André Jolles in his generic designation of *Märchen* as "die Gattung Grimm".⁴⁵ Definition of the term is thus only possible through an historical conception of genre, while consideration of the term as it relates to the *KHM* is necessary in order to understand how modern parodists could be seen to be taking issue with it. Recent scholarship has revealed important biographical information about the Grimms themselves, and philological and historical detail about the process by which the *KHM* reached their final form of 1857, making it possible to consider the nature of the relationship between the *Märchen* genre and the text-history and social existence of the *KHM* as literature, and hence to ask questions more relevant to the delineation of legitimate interpretative possibilities for the *KHM* and consideration of the critical aspect of parody than debate about the ultimate origins and age of the *Märchen* genre.

Although the history of the reception of the *KHM* remains at best incomplete,⁴⁶ the degree to which *Märchen* came to be seen as *die Gattung Grimm* is revealed in the extent to which later, and even recent commentators have been willing to 'mythologise' the *KHM*. The fixed literary versions of tales contained in the collection have often been interpreted as *Volksmärchen*, that is, in terms which concur remarkably with the Grimms' understanding of *Naturpoesie*. To the extent to which the *KHM* can be seen as a high embodiment of two key

⁴⁵ André Jolles, quoted by Röllecke: *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm*, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁶ The beginnings of such a history can be found in Ulrike Bastian: *Die Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm in der literaturpädagogischen Diskussion des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt am Main: Haag + Herchen 1981, Jack Zipes: *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, and James McGlathery: *Grimms' Fairy Tales: A History of Criticism on a Popular Classic*. Columbia: Camden 1993

concepts of Romanticism, style as the essence of the literary work, and the mythologising of its stories as 'literature', it is ironic that so much criticism of the collection has proceeded on the assumptions that it is possible to understand 'the folk' through the lens of the *KHM*, and the meanings of folktales through analysis of the stylistic features of the tales collected in the *KHM*, with the tales which comprise the collection as embodiments of transcendental truths in symbolic form on one hand, and *Märchen* as *die Gattung Grimm* on the other. As a result of such approaches to the *KHM*, much of the complexity and diversity of authorship and content of the *KHM* has been neglected.

While specific interpretations of 'Rotkäppchen' (*KHM* 26) will be discussed in Chapter 3, the following illustrates some of the diverse tendencies in the reception and interpretation of the *KHM*.

With the growth of German nationalism during the second half of the nineteenth century, the *KHM* were increasingly seen as a repository of German culture, as a treasured part of German cultural heritage. However, an increasingly illiberal climate encouraged scholars to play down or ignore the cosmopolitan nature of the tales collected through the initial selection process, and the heterogeneity of voice which is still apparent through content analysis of successive editions, in favour of description of the collection as a product of a mythical Germanic heritage. This aspect of the reception of the collection was to some extent encouraged textually by Wilhelm's production of stylistic unity, but was to a greater extent promoted interpretatively by nationalistic tendencies in anthropological, mythological and folkloristic studies in the nineteenth century, and ideologically by the manufacturing of

a mythos, which, in its most vulgar form, pictured the Grimms going out 'into the field' to sit at the feet of *Märchenfrauen* and receive their timeless wisdom. This 'scholarly' interpretative process culminated in attempts to accommodate the *KHM* to Nazi ideology. An approach ideologically opposed to facism, but equally vulgar in its treatment of the literary status of the *KHM* has been to claim that the tales pass veiled comment on real social conditions and that the *KHM* can be read as a repository of German national character traits. Both of these approaches neglect the diverse, cosmopolitan origins of the collection in French, Italian and German literary and oral traditions.

The emergence of literature for children as a genre further contributed to positive reception of the collection. A conception of the child as an individual, but also as an object of moral instruction combined with the democratisation of print-based education, leading to the use of literacy as a tool of productive socialisation. The economics of publishing greatly contributed to the role played by fairy tales in the emergence of children's literature, since they were short, easily reproduced, and, as products of 'the folk', were considered to be in the public domain.⁴⁷ In common with nationalistic reception of the collection, this process was also accompanied by strong interpretative 'rewriting' of the tales. Concern with the *KHM* from the perspective of child development, especially with respect to the suitability of the tales for children, coincided with the emergence of Freudian psychoanalysis, a method with strong parallels to literary criticism in its interpretative re-writing and 'refunctioning' of the stories of Oedipus and

⁴⁷ See: Betsy Hearne: "Booking the Brothers Grimm: Art, Adaptations, and Economics" in: McGlathery (ed.): *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale*, pp. 220-234.

Elektra. Freudian and Jungian methods have been predominant in psychological responses to the collection. Despite radically different premises, the similarity in their approaches to the collection lies in the fact that Freudians have emphasised the instructional value of the collection in the socialisation of children, whilst Jungians have emphasised its therapeutic value for adults.

Emphasis on the socialisation of children through literacy and literature combined with the appearance of a large, literate middle class and dissemination of the *KHM* through diverse print media in many countries with the result that, in terms of *Märchen* reception, the *KHM* had a normative effect on both oral and literary *Märchen* traditions that is difficult to underestimate.⁴⁸ Specifically, a greatly reduced canon of roughly a dozen tales emerged, tales such as 'Aschenputtel' (*KHM* 21), 'Dornröschen' (*KHM* 50), 'Rotkäppchen' (*KHM* 26) and 'Rumpelstilzchen' (*KHM* 55), which have taken on a cultural existence entirely independent of the *KHM*, although their motives, structures and themes are substantially derived from the versions contained in later editions of the *KHM*, and especially of the *Kleine Ausgabe*, through this conservative process of reception. Their continuing survival, albeit often in fragmentary, referential or bowdlerised forms in all types of media, print, film, TV, and in trans-media entities such as advertising means that these tales seem destined to survive current radical shifts in the cultural fabric of society.

The ultimate concern of most ideologically motivated interpreters of the tales collected in the *KHM* has been to discover

⁴⁸ Linda Dégh cites case studies of the normative influence of tales from the *KHM* on oral tradition which range from peasant villages in post-WWII Hungary through to supposedly pre-literate Philipino communities in: "What did the Grimm Brothers Give to and Take from the Folk?"

meanings in the tales, the assumptions being that each tale has its own unique meaning or limited set of meanings, and that the tales together form a coherent whole which should either be accepted or rejected. Underlying these assumptions are generally either the older proposition that the tales in the *KHM* are products of 'the folk', and that they can thus be used as authoritative texts, or the more recent argument that they are literary products written by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, and should thus be labelled as 'inauthentic'.

If the approach of earlier interpreters can be characterised as one of 'mythologisation', the approach of more recent interpreters can therefore be characterised as one of 'demythologisation'.⁴⁹ However, both types of ideologically motivated, meaning-orientated interpretation have obscured the circumstances surrounding the literary production of the *KHM*, either by denying them, or by propagating myths about them, the problem being that these critics of the *KHM* have either assumed that the Grimms were pure transmitters of oral tradition or pure authors of literary product. Neither is the case. The *KHM* must be seen as a hugely diverse, collaborative product. From the formalist, as opposed to historical perspective of genre, within the collection are examples not just of *Märchen*, but also of *Schwänke*, *Sagen*, *Legenden* and mixtures of these forms. The presence of these mixed forms is due more generally to the collaborative nature of the production of the *KHM*, but also specifically to the Grimms' editorial roles. The Grimms imported motifs from tale to tale, and even constructed new tales from selections of motifs. Wilhelm in particular produced the stylistic unity of the Final Edition of 1857, but the Grimms were more generally transmitters, re-

⁴⁹ Ward: "New Misconceptions about Old Folktales", p. 100.

tellers and adaptors of contributed narrative material. Biographical data and comparative examination of the tales themselves can therefore shed light on the Grimms' editorial and creative processes, but probably reveals little about the possible 'deep' meanings of tales.

The resulting dispute between folklorist and psychoanalytic critics can be seen as a conflict between synchronic and diachronic understandings of literature.⁵⁰ Synchronic, text-immanent approaches to the *KHM* claim that tensions exist between linguistic and thematic surface structures and deeper 'meanings', that is, truths about psyche, gender, class and individuality. Diachronic approaches on the other hand have attempted to locate the *KHM* historically and culturally, but the approach of many diachronically orientated 'demythologisers' has proceeded on the assumptions that *Märchen* are best understood as social commentary, and that literary tradition 'contaminates' oral tradition. Hence, these critics have neglected the status of the collection as literature, or condemned the collection as 'inauthentic'.

More balanced recent research, the results of which are summarised here, has conclusively demonstrated that the collection itself is both a literary product of multiple authorship, and the product of a complex interrelationship of oral and literary traditions. While this relativises or even disproves many past

⁵⁰ This dispute is addressed by Alan Dundes in two essays: "The Psychoanalytic Study of the Grimms' Tales with Special Reference to 'The Maiden without Hands' (AT 706)." *The Germanic Review*, 42 (Spring 1987), pp. 50-65, and: "Interpreting Little Red Riding Hood Psychoanalytically" in: McGlathery (ed.): *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale*, pp. 16-51, reprinted in Alan Dundes (ed.): *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook*. Madison, London: University of Wisconsin Press 1989, pp. 192-238. Dundes is more concerned with developing textually valid psychoanalytic interpretations, but his points about the application of textual history to interpretation are relevant in this context.

understandings of the *KHM*, especially interpretations which claim transcendental meaning for the tales in the collection, it also suggests intra- and intertextual, comparative examination of tales in the collection and consideration of their relationship to other forms of literary and artistic expression, in order to illuminate further the textual history of the collection and the influence of the collection on other artistic endeavours and social phenomena.

What emerges most clearly out of dispassionate consideration of the historical circumstances surrounding the Grimms' literary production of the *KHM* is their desire to 'refunction', and their success in 'refunctioning' the tales. That is, they were concerned not merely with the preservation of an 'ancient' folk heritage, but with imbuing what they saw as an important part of German cultural heritage with continuing relevance. To this end, through their process of careful editorial revision, they were enormously successful in reconciling diverse trends - liberal nationalism, Romanticism, the emergence of the genre of children's literature - to create a work of singular stylistic consistency, a work which has assumed a monumental importance in German cultural history. The fact that the *KHM* have assumed a monolithic importance, and that the collection has become a work of canonical status, is testament to the Grimms' achievement, but it also makes it unsurprising that other writers would wish to take issue with the canonisation of the *KHM*, with the uses and misuses to which the collection has been put, and with the assumptions, norms and values which are reflected and implicit in the text's construction.