

## MÄRCHEN

**1. Definition:** The *m.* is one of the most popular genres of narrative folklore, and it is part of oral literature in prose. Nowadays, it is usually told for entertainment. It can, but need not rely on actual historical events; rather, it usually involves fantastic and unreal events, circumstances, and persons which are, however, presented as believable. Many attempts to define the *m.* have focused on the often supranatural and magic nature of the *m.* and its internal world. Such a narrow view, however, does not seem to be justified, since there are different types of the *m.* (cf. §3), as well as cross-cultural and historical differences, which should be taken into consideration.

**2. Example and Analysis:** The term *m.* is a diminutive form of the Middle High German word *maere* (Old High German: *mârt*) which, in turn, is a news, report or narrative, irrespective of its potentially entertaining purpose. In former times, the term *m.* carried the predominantly pejorative connotation of the unreal and was applied to stories which were made up by imagery. Since at least the 18th century, however, the term *m.* has been used in the more neutral sense it has at present.

The term *m.*, which in German denotes a particular genre of folk narrative(s), can hardly be translated into any other language without affecting its concrete meaning. Thus, the English and French names *tale* or *conte*, for example, are both much broader in their meaning; *folktale* and *légende* both refer to closely related forms, too, and the names *fairy tale* and *conte de fées* only denote a part of what is meant by the term *m.* Therefore, the original German name has been accepted as an international term, too. This may be additionally justified by the world-wide distribution and popularity of the collection of German *m.* composed by the two brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812/15). The following example (1) is taken from the English translation of No. 50 in this collection, originally entitled *Dornröschen*:

## (1) Little Briar Rose

A long time ago there were a King and Queen who said every day: "Ah, if only we had a child!" but they never had one. But it happened that once when the Queen was bathing, a frog crept out of the water on to the land, and said to her: "Your wish shall be fulfilled; before a year has gone by, you shall have a daughter."

What the frog had said came true, and the Queen had a little girl who was so pretty that the King could not contain himself for joy, and ordered a great feast. He invited not only his kindred, friends and acquaintances, but also the Wise Women, in order that they might be kind and well-disposed towards the child. There were thirteen of

them in his kingdom, but, as he had only twelve golden plates for them to eat out of, one of them had to be left at home.

The feast was held with all manner of splendor, and when it came to an end the Wise Women bestowed their magic gifts upon the baby: one gave virtue, another beauty, a third riches, and so on with everything in the world that one can wish for.

When eleven of them had made their promises, suddenly the thirteenth came in. She wished to avenge herself for not having been invited, and without greeting, or even looking at anyone, she cried with a loud voice: "The King's daughter shall in her fifteenth year prick herself with a spindle, and fall down dead." And, without saying a word more, she turned round and left the room.

They were all shocked; but the twelfth, whose good wish still remained unspoken, came forward, and as she could not undo the evil sentence, but only soften it, she said: "It shall not be death, but a deep sleep of a hundred years, into which the princess shall fall."

The King, who would fain keep his dear child from the misfortune, gave orders that every spindle in the whole kingdom should be burnt. Meanwhile the gifts of the Wise Women were plenteously fulfilled on the young girl, for she was so beautiful, modest, good-natured, and wise, that everyone who saw her was bound to love her.

It happened that on the very day when she was fifteen years old, the King and Queen were not at home, and the maiden was left in the palace quite alone. So she went round into all sorts of places, looked into rooms and bed-chambers just as she liked, and at last came to an old tower. She climbed up the narrow winding-staircase, and reached a little door. A rusty key was in the lock, and when she turned it the door sprang open, and there in a little room sat an old woman with a spindle, busily spinning her flax.

"Good day, old mother," said the King's daughter; "what are you doing there?" "I am spinning," said the old woman, and nodded her head. "What sort of thing is that, that rattles round so merrily?" said the girl, and she took the spindle and wanted to spin too. But scarcely had she touched the spindle when the magic decree was fulfilled, and she pricked her finger with it.

And, in the very moment when she felt the prick, she fell down upon the bed that stood there, and lay in a deep sleep. And this sleep extended over the whole palace; the King and Queen who had just come home, and had entered the great hall, began to go to sleep, and the whole of the court with them. The horses, too, went to sleep in the stable; the dogs in the yard, the pigeons upon the roof, the flies on the wall; even the fire that was flaming on the hearth became quiet and slept, the roast meat left off frizzling, and the cook, who was just going to pull the hair of the scullery boy, because he had forgotten

something, let him go, and went to sleep. And the wind fell, and on the trees before the castle not a leaf moved again.

But round the castle there began to grow a hedge of thorns which every year became higher, and at last grew close up round the castle and all over it, so that there was nothing of it to be seen, not even the flag upon the roof. But the story of the beautiful sleeping "Briar-rose", for so the princess was named, went about the country, so that from time to time Kings' sons came and tried to get through the thorny hedge into the castle.

But they found it impossible, for the thorns held fast together, as if they had hands, and the youths were caught in them, could not get loose again, and died a miserable death.

After long, long years a King's son came again to that country, and heard an old man talking about the thorn-hedge, and that a castle was said to stand behind it in which a wonderfully beautiful princess, named Briar-rose, had been asleep for a hundred years; and that the King and Queen and the whole court were asleep likewise. He had heard, too, from his grandfather, that many kings' sons had already come, and had tried to get through the thorny hedge, but they had remained sticking fast in it, and had died a pitiful death. Then the youth said: "I am not afraid, I will go and see the beautiful Briar-rose." The good old man might dissuade him as he would, he did not listen to his words.

But by this time the hundred years had just passed, and the day had come when Briar-rose was to awake again. When the King's son came near the thorn-hedge, it was nothing but large and beautiful flowers, which parted from each other of their own accord, and let him pass unhurt, then they closed again behind him like a hedge. In the castle yard he saw the horses and the spotted hounds lying asleep; on the roof sat the pigeons with their heads under their wings. And when he entered the house, the flies were asleep upon the wall, the cook in the kitchen was still holding out his hand to seize the boy, and the maid was sitting by the black hen which she was going to pluck.

He went on farther, and in the great hall he saw the whole of the court lying asleep, and up by the throne lay the King and the Queen.

Then he went on still farther, and all was so quiet that a breath could be heard, and at last he came to the tower, and opened the door into the little room where Briar-rose was sleeping. There she lay so beautiful that he could not turn his eyes away; and he stooped down and gave her a kiss. But as soon as he kissed her, Briar-rose opened her eyes and awoke, and looked at him quite sweetly.

Then they went down together, and the King awoke, and the Queen, and the whole court, and looked at each other in great astonishment. And the horses in the courtyard stood up and shook themselves; the hounds jumped up and wagged their tails; the pigeons

upon the roof pulled out their heads from under their wings, looked round, and flew into the open country; the flies on the wall crept again; the fire in the kitchen burned up and flickered and cooked the meat; the joint began to turn and sizzle again, and the cook gave the boy such a box on the ear that he screamed, and the maid finished plucking the fowl.

And then the marriage of the King's son with Briar-rose was celebrated with all splendor, and they lived contented to the end of their lives.

(Grimm's Fairy Tales : 237-41)

As in ex. (1), the plot of a m. typically centers around a limited number of narrative sequences, i.e. particular event structures such as 'difficulty - its mastering', 'fight - victory', 'task - solution', 'search - finding', etc. Usually, the scene is set either by the violation of some initial order or by a particular lack of something (cf. the lack of a child in ex. 1), and its liquidation in the end (Propp 1928: 91). In fact, as Dundes (1963) has shown, some American Indian folktales have even been reduced to the report of the lack and its liquidation exclusively. Propp (1928) has described the various types of actions typically found in the m., noting that only a limited number (namely 31) occur in his corpus of 100 Russian m. (Zaubermärchen/magic tales, more particularly; cf. §3). In his view, the various types of action (and their consequences) are more important than who fulfills them. In fact, persons are usually not characterized as individuals; they are not described in detail and we know little about their internal lives. Rather, they are carriers of action (*Handlungsträger*) which have certain roles in the course and process of actions which they get and keep going. Mostly, these figures, which are often explicitly referred to only in terms of their function (such as 'king' and 'queen' in ex. 1), center around the hero(ine), and their function is derived in terms of the protagonist. Thus, we typically have functions such as 'adversary', 'helper', 'giver', etc. Again, it was Propp in his above-mentioned study, who showed that there are a limited staff of persons in the m. and that one can attach particular actions to them (Propp 1928: 79ff.). - Typically, the persons involved are representatives or carriers of particular values (either one or any combination of them) which, in the composition of the m., are opposed to each other; these oppositions, such as 'rich vs. poor', 'young vs. old', 'pretty vs. ugly', etc. are systematically related to each other in their extreme polarities (cf., e.g., Dornröschen's qualities such as pretty, young, rich, in ex. 1).

The carriers of action, which may even be animals, though with human traits (cf. the frog in ex. 1), need not necessarily be from this world; they may be members or part of the world beyond (cf., e.g., the fairies in ex. 1) which, however, are not as typical of the m. as, for instance, witches. There are free transitions between 'this world' and 'the

world beyond', and persons from both worlds, although they are clearly distinguished, freely contact and communicate with one another. Lüthi (1947: 8ff.) has called this phenomenon, which, according to Levy-Bruhl (1927) is typical of the primitive mind in general, the 'unidimensionality' of the m. Often, the laws of place, time, and causality are ignored. The place is seldom defined in concrete terms; the action may take place anywhere, and there are no spatial limitations. Time, too, is indefinite and unlimited. In ex. (1), e.g., nothing is said about the geographical location of the kingdom, and we only know that the story took place "once upon a time"; and one hundred years pass by without significant changes.

Formulae such as "once upon a time" as well as others, are typical stylistic features of the m. Introductory and closing formulae, too (cf., e.g., "and they lived happily thereafter"), function both as genre markers and as links or transitions from the reality of the story-telling situation to the events presented in the m. Additionally, there may be internal formulae which occur repeatedly throughout the m. pointing to a possible similarity to the *volkslied*. Another stylistic feature of the m. is the use of particular numbers which usually have symbolic meaning, based on long tradition and mythological background. Thus, it is not by chance that there are exactly twelve good fairies and one evil fairy, since twelve (as opposed to thirteen) is traditionally a lucky number (cf., e.g., the twelve Gods in the ancient Greek and Roman pantheon, or Jesus' twelve Apostles in the monotheist Christian religion). Other recurrent numbers are 'seven' (often symbolizing 'many', as the number 'nine' does in other cultures), and, in particular, 'two' and 'three'. Whereas 'two' either symbolizes a homogeneous pair (e.g. two brothers or sisters with identical qualities) or polar extremes, 'three' often reflects deeper structural phenomena (two brothers fail, the third succeeds) governing the course of events in the m. All of these various features have been used to justify to speak of a basic type for at least the European m., if not the m. in general (Lüthi 1962: 25).

3. **Typology:** The first systematic attempts to arrive at a typology of the m. date from the 19th century, and they were advanced by scholars such as v. Hahn, Gomme, Grundtvig, Wundt, and others. The lack of an internationally accepted and applicable typology, however, was overcome only in this century, when the Finnish scholar A. Aarne (1910) published his *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* in the then newly-founded journal of international folk narrative research, the *Folklore Fellows Communications (FFC)*. On the basis of German, Russian, and Scandinavian material, Aarne developed a typology which soon became (and in principle still is) the basis for international (comparative) folk-tale research. This system, which has been adapted and applied to folk-tales from cultures of all parts of the world (c.f. Lüthi 1962: 20ff.),

was enlarged and revised twice by Thompson, in 1928, and again in 1961. Like in the original version, tales are grouped into three subcategories; each particular type is numbered. Aarne originally provided 2000 numbers (of which only 540 had been 'filled up' by concrete material at his time) which were distributed in the following categories:

- (1) Animal Tales (Tiermärchen); Nos. 1-299
- (2) Ordinary Folk-Tales (Eigentliche Märchen); Nos. 300-1029
  - (2a) Tales of Magic (Zauber-/Wundermärchen); Nos. 300-749
  - (2b) Religious Stories (Legendenartige Märchen); Nos. 750-849
  - (2c) Novelles/Romantic Tales (Novellenartige Märchen); Nos. 850-999
  - (2d) Tales of the Stupid Ogre (Märchen vom dummen Riesen oder Teufel); Nos. 1000-1029
- (3) Schwänke; Nos. 1030-2000

Only two categories were later added to this system (which has been subdivided into several more detailed and more specific subclasses) by Thompson: formula tales (Nos. 2000-2399) and unclassified tales (Nos. 2400-2499).

The innumerable variants of a given tale (or tale type) are traced back to a particular basic form; they are then simply referred to their respective number with the additional index AATh, ATTh, AT, or MT (i.e. Märchentypus). Ex. (1), e.g., in this typology, is indexed as ATTh 410: thus, it would classify as an ordinary folk-tale, more particularly, as a tale of magic, and its content is summarized in the following way:

410 Sleeping Beauty. The King's daughter falls into a magic sleep. A prince breaks through the hedge surrounding the castle and disenchant the maiden.

The theoretical presuppositions of this type-system and the Finnish school in general have been criticized (cf. §7); its value as an international reference system, however, cannot be called into question.

Aarne/Thompson's *Types of the Folk-Tale* has been complemented by Thompson's (1932-36/1955-8) *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* in which ca. 40,000 typical and recurrent motifs, small thematic units, are listed and indexed; they are neither bound to any particular tale nor the m. as a genre, but may be found in other folklore genres such as the myth. The index of these motifs gives an excellent overview of the thematic repertory of folk literature in general, when added to the description of particular tale-types in Aarne/Thompson's *Types of the Folk-Tale*. In

case of ex. (1) the following motifs with their respective indexes can be found:

B211.7.1	Speaking frog
F312	Fairy presides at child's birth
M314.2.13.	Prophecy: death through spindle wound
D1962.1.	Magic sleep through curse
D1364.17	Spindle causes magic sleep
N711.2.	Hero finds maiden in (magic) castle
D735	Disenchantment by kiss

This motif-index has also been criticized; it neglects the interrelationship of motifs in a particular concrete m.; as in case of the type-index, however, it is one of the basic tools of modern folkloristics.

4. History: The m. often is considered to be one of the oldest genres not only of folk narratives, but of folklore in general. Yet, the time of its origin has not been reliably clarified: in Lüthi's (1947: 5) opinion, modern folk-tale research "ist sich nicht einmal darüber einig, ob die heute lebendigen Märchen in ihrem Grundstock viele Jahrtausende alt sind oder nur wenige Jahrhunderte". Actually, theories about the origin of the m. range in date from the early Stone Age to the late Middle Ages (cf. Moser 1977). On the issue of whether the m. existed as a separate category already in pre-historical times, it seem most reasonable to side with Lüthi (1962: 40) who says: "Darüber sind nur Vermutungen möglich, sie gehören nicht zur Geschichte, sondern zur Theorie des Märchens."

Stories which contain motifs typical of the m. as it is known today, have been found on ancient Egypt papyri. One text about two brothers (named *Anup* and *Bata*) has been found, which dates to about 1250 B.C.; the fragment of another story about an enchanted prince, which dates around 1000 B.C., deals with seven Goddesses (*Hathores*) who predict a child's death in a similar way as the fairies in ex. (1). Yet, a clear-cut distinction should be made between the documentation of single episodes and the existence of the m. as a separate genre; in other words, the existence of particular motifs at a given point of time cannot be regarded as a reliable proof that the m., too, existed as a category. It might, for example, also be possible that the above-mentioned stories were deliberately written by individual authors for the educated class of ancient Egypt, that the themes (or motifs) were not taken from oral folklore, but rather from high literature, or that the narratives themselves do not represent m., but Pharaonian myths (cf., e.g., the names of *Anup* and *Bata* and the names of two Gods from ancient Egypt, *Anubis* and *Bata*). - Much the same can be said about the old cultures of Assyria and Babylon (cf. the epos of Gilgamesh, for example, which

dates about 650 B.C.), and of Israel, too; many folk tale motifs (but no actual m.) can be found in the Bible (cf. Gunkel 1917). Similarly, m. motifs from both ancient Greek and Roman literature as well as from the literature of the early Middle Ages can, but do not necessarily have to be interpreted as proof of the existence of the m. as a separate category. On the whole, there is hardly any reliable proof that the m. existed as a genre until the 16th century, although typical themes and motifs can be found throughout world literature from the earliest times on. This lack of clear evidence is (at least partially) due to the fact that the m. (and other folklore genres) were regarded as texts for the entertainment of only the 'lower' classes, products which were not worth being recorded in written form.

Written documents can be found only from the 16th century on. Yet, the m. stops being a *folk-tale* in the narrow sense of the term as soon as it is manifested in written form, because it is not only deprived of its original context, but it also acquires the personal style of the documenter, and its content may even be manipulated by him. Probably one of the earliest collections and editions of m. which were taken (at least partially) from oral tradition, are the 21 m. in G.F. Straparola's *Le piacevoli notti* ('The Diverting Nights'), which was edited in Venice in 1550/53. Also in Italy, G. Basile - according to Bolte/Polivka (vol. IV: 184) "the first real collector of Märchen not only of Italy, but of Europe" - published some 50 m. in his *Pentamerone* (1634/36); and in France, Ch. Perrault's important book *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec de moralitez* (1796/97) contains eight original m. The examples both in Basile's and Perrault's editions show many parallels to m. familiar to us, and they are sometimes quite similar to the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* edited by the brothers Grimm in 1812/15, which ultimately justified the edition of folk-tales, and, in fact, became the prototype of many subsequent international collections. Precursors of ex. (1), too, can be found both in Basile's and Perrault's books under the heading of *Sole, luna e Talia* ('Sun, Moon, and Talia') and *La belle au bois dormant* ('The Beauty in the Sleeping Forest'). Still, there are significant differences between all three variants, not only in terms of single motifs and episodes, but also in the individual writing style of the compilers, too. Thus, a comparison between the Grimm manuscripts from 1810 (cf. Rölleke 1975), the first edition from 1812 and later editions shows that they knew early precursors, and that they elaborated and deliberately changed their earliest records. Ex. (1), for example, was later increasingly adapted to Perrault's version, although the overall didactic turn and moralizing tendency of the m. is a typical characteristic of the Grimms' writing style. In any case, in spite of the proximity of the Grimm's, Perrault's and Basile's versions to oral tradition, no conclusions can be drawn concerning the earlier existence of this m. Sources of ex. (1) before Basile's and Perrault's collections cannot be

documented from the realm of folklore, but they can be found in high literature, e.g. in the French prose novel *Perceforest*, written by an anonymous author ca. 1340 and first published in 1528. The clear boundaries between folklore and high literature have also been muddled by the assumption that still earlier sources of the above-mentioned three variants can be found in early Celtic-Germanic mythology (DeVries 1959).

It becomes evident what Lüthi means by saying that the history of the m. is ultimately a question of its theory. Unless we know something about its life and function of former times, i.e. about its 'biology' (cf. Degh 1979), nothing definite can be said about its generic origin. Additionally, it seems reasonable that the differences between the various types of the m. (cf. §3) should also be taken into account. Cultural or sociological studies focusing on factors such as intention, context, and manner of transmission began to appear in the 19th century, and these have shown not only significant cross-cultural, but historical differences, too. Thus, when Lüthi (1962: 106) maintains that "das eigentliche Leben des Märchens vollzieht sich heute in der Kinderstube", this is particularly true for European countries, but this does not deny the fact that m. were formerly told among adults, either during work or for entertainment. Reports from so-called 'primitive' cultures, too (which, by way of analogy, are supposed to reflect earlier stages in the history of the m.), show close links between m. narration and particular rites (the m. being told only in winter or summer, only at day or night, etc.). Such facts, however, lack in our understanding of the early days of the m. and make it practically impossible to date the time of its rise.

**5. Related Forms and Transformations:** As part of oral folklore, the m. is closely related to the *Kunstmärchen* (artificial m.) which is written by an individual and often well-known author. Nevertheless, particular *Kunstmärchen* which are, of course, subject to the style and intention of an individual author as well as to literary trends, may achieve the status of *Volksmärchen* if they are integrated into the oral repertory of a given culture (for information on *Kunstmärchen*, see: Apel 1978; Tismar 1977). - Of course, the m. is also closely related to other genres of folk narrative, such as the \*myth, the sage, the legend, the \*fable, the \*Schwank, etc. from all of which it should be distinguished on the basis of certain distinctive features.

Perhaps the closest form to the m. is the \*myth. In fact, as Propp (1984: 45) points out, the myth and the m. (in particular the magic tale) may be practically identical in terms of their themes, motifs, and composition; often, they can hardly be distinguished from each other as to their external form. Still, they can and must be distinguished in terms of their social function: whereas the m. has a predominantly aesthetic and entertaining function, myth is thought to be a sacred phenomenon,

originally bound to certain ritual performances. This fact explains the close relationship between m. and \*myth, from a genetic (historical) point of view, which has been observed repeatedly by many scholars. Some scholars have regarded the \*myth as a direct precursor of the m., others consider the m. prior to \*myth, and some scholars assume the co-existence of both (cf. §7).

Like the m., the sage also deals with extraordinary events; the latter, however, is concerned with things which are believed, at least the sage is told to inspire belief, whereas the m. definitely belongs to the realm of fiction. The sage attempts to be historical and is usually bound to concrete places, a definite time, and historical persons. Nevertheless, there may be a zone of fluent transitions between these two forms (Röhrich 1956: 12). One basic difference can be seen in the status of the 'other world' which, in case of the sage, actually is considered to be a different world. In the m., however, both 'this world' and the 'other world' are either interrelated or they are regarded as belonging to one world.

Another form which is similar to the m. (and to the sage, too) is the legend. This close relationship is clearly reflected in French, where the name *légende populaire/folklorique* for the m. is opposed to the term *légende religieuse/hagiographique*. The latter incorporates one characteristic trait of the legend, namely that the reported extraordinary or supernatural events are interpreted from the point of view of a definite religious system. As opposed to the m., the legend has a mainly didactical and moralizing function. Still, Aarne/Thompson in their typology of the m. (cf. §3) consider the legend to be one subcategory of the m., and they index religious stories (legendenartige Märchen) under nos. 750-849.

The \*Schwank, too, is regarded to be a special subcategory of the m. in Aarne/Thompson's type-system (nos. 1030-2000). Yet, the schwank is a predominantly humorous genre, and it might be reasonable to side with Lüthi's (1962: 13) view that the schwank is not a separate category, but a parody of other genres, among them the m. (and one might term this category *Märchenschwank*).

The didactical impact, which is (at least potentially) inherent in many m., in particular in animal tales, is characteristic of another closely related genre, the \*fable. In fact, both forms may at times converge; the fable, however, is originally created by an individual author for practical (didactical or moral) purposes, although it may easily be incorporated into the folkloristic repertory of a given culture.

Apart from the similarity to the above-mentioned genres of folk narrative, practically any other folklore item can be incorporated into the m. Thus, often \*proverbs or charms/\*spells are quoted in m. (c.f. Rölleke (ed.) 1988). \*Riddles, too, may be found in the m., either explicitly, when some hero, for example, must solve a riddle (e.g. in

order to gain a bride or to save his life, etc.), or implicitly, when the solving of a task is a process comparable to the solution of riddles.

Often, m. have been transformed into other media besides language, such as plays, operas, or films. Ex. (1), e.g., has often served as source for such transformations (cf. Bolte/Polivka, vol. IV: 480ff.). Eight different film versions of *The Sleeping Beauty* were made between 1917 and 1970, and in this respect, this m. has only been surpassed by *Cinderella*, which has been filmed ten times (cf. Höfig 1981). Single motifs or episodes of m. have been illustrated, in particular in the form of drawings in m. collections. A similar kind of transformation is the illustration of m. in \*comic strips (cf. Brednich 1984). The latter genre, however, is similar to the m. in a more general sense, too, since it typically deals with events characteristic of the m. ('good vs. bad', 'rich vs. poor', 'pretty vs. ugly', 'fight and victory,' etc.). In fact, the m. shares such structural similarities with practically any form of trivial literature, such as crime fiction (Eco 1965), or trivial novels (Nolting-Hauff 1974). Thus, in a way, the m. seems to continue to exist, only in different form.

**6. Geography:** The m. is a genre which can be found in all parts of the world. Bolte/Polivka, in the fifth volume of their *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, list collections of m. from all continents. Yet, one cannot say with ultimate certainty if the m. is a universal phenomenon, since such a statement depends on the theoretical definition of the m. Consequently, it would be necessary to decide case for case (i.e. culture for culture) if the m. is actually considered to be fictional, or if it is (even partially) taken for authentic reality, in how far it serves exclusively entertaining purposes and in how far it is still related to mythological ideas or rituals, before one can say without doubt that the m. as a genre with all its characteristic specifics is the property of all human cultures.

**7. History of Interpretation:** Along with systematic collections and editions, systematic investigations of the m. and its generic specifics began in the 19th century. The brothers Grimm, in various editions of folk tales and commentaries as well as in private letters, asked crucial questions about the character of the m., its meaning, way of life, and interpretation. Generally speaking, in the 19th century research on the m. was centered on its interpretation and origin, whereas investigations in this century have mainly focused on its function in society, its typology, structure and style.

The Grimms regarded the m. as the "Niederschlag uralter, wenn auch umgestalteter und zerbröckelter Mythen"; thus, they were practically the first representatives of the so-called 'mythological theory'. Jacob Grimm,

for instance, in his preface to the German translation of Basile's *Pentamerone* from 1846, interpreted ex. (1) as derived from the sleep thorn by which Odin (the king and master of Gods and men in Germanic/Norse mythology) puts the Valkyr Brynhild (one of his maiden-messengers) to sleep; Brynhild is later freed from her castle, which is surrounded by a rampart of flames, and married by Sigurd. - \*Myth is thus considered to be a direct precursor of the m., and the latter is something like a remnant of it; this view was later shared by scholars such as Wesselski, Propp, or Meletinskij. It was, however, contested by scholars such as Lang or Wundt. The Grimmian point of view implies the assumption of a monogenetic origin of the m., because it is assumed to have arisen in the Indo-European area. Such a view was later most vehemently promoted by Th. Benfey (1859) who, in his introduction to the German translation of the *Pancatantra* (an Indian collection of tales, fables, and m. from ca. 300-500 A.D.), regarded India to be the only place of birth of the m. This 'Indian theory' was very influential and had many followers; R. Spiller (1893) for instance, tried to trace back ex. (1) to the Indian tale *Surya Bai* ('The Little Sun Dame'); the latter, however, was first written down in 1865 so that no conclusions can be drawn as to the origin of the story. The 'Indian theory' was disvalued as early as the late 19th century, when m. and m. motifs were found from ancient Egypt and Greek literature. At present, India is still believed to be an important, but not the only source of the m.

A slightly different kind of monogenetic theory was later advanced by scholars of the so-called 'Finnish school', the foundation of which represents perhaps one of the most important events in modern folk-tale research. In 1907, the Finnish scholar K. Krohn founded an international research organization, the Folklore Fellows, in co-operation initially only with Scandinavian and German scholars and later with scholars from all over the world. The publications of this organization (*Folklore Fellows Communications, FFC*) are still being published today and represent the forum of international folk-tale research. - Krohn's collaborator, A. Aarne (1913), maintains that each m. was created "nur einmal an bestimmter Stelle und zu bestimmter Zeit". Monogenesis, thus, concerns only particular instances, not the m. as a genre. Consequently, "wo und wann die Märchen entstanden sind, hat in jedem einzelnen Falle die Spezialuntersuchung zu ermitteln" (ibid., 16). In spite of the criticism which has been made of the theoretical presuppositions of the Finnish school, international folk-tale research is indebted to the Finnish school for at least three achievements: the international organization of folk-tale research, the foundation of an international archive, and the development of an international reference-system (cf. §3).

Criticism of this conception of monogenesis has been particularly strong. The brothers Grimm, in their annotations to the edition of 1856, had already taken into consideration not only "the possibility of the

transition from one place to another", they had also admitted: "Es gibt Zustände, die so einfach und natürlich sind, die sich überall von selbst einfinden, es konnten sich daher in den verschiedensten Ländern dieselben oder doch sehr ähnliche Märchen unabhängig voneinander erzeugen". Much later, Jolles (1929) elaborated the idea that the m. practically creates itself; he regarded the m. as one of the *Simple Forms*. In any case, many scholars of different theoretical orientations have repeatedly argued in favour of the polygenetic origin of the m. in order to explain the extreme similarities between m. from different cultures.

Oftentimes, the m. was interpreted as an allegory of natural phenomena, and it was thought to be a sun, the seasons of the year, or a vegetation myth originally. Stauff (1914: 23-26) interpreted ex. (1) this way: for him, king and queen are symbols of sun and moon, the heroine herself is a symbol of the earth, and the exclusion of the thirteenth fairy, in his opinion, represents the transition from the thirteen-month moon year to the twelve-month sun year. Vogt (1896) interpreted ex. (1) as a vegetation myth in which the 100 years of sleep symbolize the 100 winter days after which nature is being awakened by the spring sun (the sun king). Such speculative interpretations, however, were soon disqualified (cf. Thimme 1909: 93ff.). More important and more influential were the works of the so-called 'anthropological theory' (cf. Dorson 1977). Scholars such as A. Lang and E.B. Tylor in England, or A. Bastian and Th. Waitz in Germany, tried to relate the m. to the customs, mind and dream experience of so-called 'primitive' cultures. All of these approaches, which are based on the general assumption of the human unity/identity of mythological thinking, have subsequently been elaborated. Dream theory and the theory of archetypes (Freud, Jung, Rank) have led to psychoanalytical studies of the m. (cf. Laiblin 1969). Along this line, ex. (1) has been interpreted as symbolizing the heroine's internal maturing process, and as allegorically describing either her defloration or first menstruation (Bornstein 1933; Bettelheim 1975: 214ff.). Much work has been undertaken on the relationship of the m. to particular rites in former communities, and the m. has been proven to be closely related to ritual performances, either as a direct accompaniment or as a description of a particular ritual. Such an approach can be found in the works of Saintyves (1923) or Propp (1946), who attempted to show the *Historical Roots of the Magic Tale*. Earlier, Propp (1928) had tried to theoretically describe the (Russian) magic tale on the basis of typical and recurrent actions in his *Morphology of the Folk-Tale* which became the foundation of modern structural and semiotic investigations, particularly over the past 25 years. Currently, the m. is the object not only of folkloristics, ethnology, and literary scholarship, but also of disciplines such as anthropology, pedagogy, psychology, historical disciplines and many others. In addition to the *FFC*, one of the basic organs of folk-tale research is the journal *Fabula* (1957ff.); the basic

reference source is the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* which is presently edited (vols. 1-6 are available, i.e. letters A-H); it replaces the older *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Märchens* (which was never finished in the 1930s) and is international.

**8. Collections:** Collections of m. are available from almost any culture. Earlier reference works such as Eastman 1926 and 1937 have to be considered outdated. The most recent editions are permanently discussed in the extensive review section of the journal *Fabula*; regional or national information about representative editions can also be found in the relevant article of the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (1977ff.).

**9. Bibliography:** AARNE 1910, 1913; APEL 1978; BENFEY 1859; BETTELHEIM 1975; BOLTE, POLIVKA 1913-1932; BORNSTEIN 1933; BREDNICH 1981; DEGH 1979; DORSON 1977; DUNDES 1963; ECO 1965; GUNKEL 1917; HÖFIG 1984; JOLLES 1929; LAIBLIN 1969; LEVY-BRUHL 1927; LÜTHI 1947, 1962; MACKENSEN (ed.) 1930-3; MOSER 1977; NOLTING-HAUFF 1974; NOURRY 1923; PROPP 1928; PROPP 1946; PROPP 1984; RANKE (ed.) 1977ff.; RÖHRICH 1956; RÖLLEKE 1975, (ed.) 1988; SAINTYVES 1923; SCHERF 1982; SPILLER 1893; STAUFF 1914; THIMME 1909; THOMPSON 1928, 1932-1936/2 1955-58, 1946; TISMAR 1977; VOGT 1896; deVRIES 1959.

P. G.

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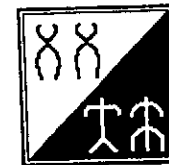
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