INNOVATION, PERSISTENCE AND SELF--CORRECTION: THE CASE OF SNOW WHITE

Christine Shojaei Kawan*

Snow White is one of our favourite fairy tales. Some scholars presume that it is of Mediterranean origin, but it is popularly associated with winter images and, through the world famous version of the brothers Grimm, with Germany. Their *Snow White* tale has been translated, often not very faithfully, into many languages; it has been shortened and simplified for picture books and primers, and amplified for the stage and the movies. In short: *Snow White* versions which are labelled 'Grimm' do not necessarily represent the original Grimm version. The most famous adaptation of the Grimms' *Snow White* is undoubtedly Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) which became as influential for international *Snow White* reception than the Grimm tale itself, maybe even more influential.

But *Snow White* is not only a book tale adapted by a wide range of media, it is a tale type of oral tradition which is very widespread all over Europe and is also found far beyond, especially in America and Africa.[1] However, it would be impossible to say how many hundreds of oral variants there are altogether which have been published in books and stored in the archives: folktale archives and tale type catalogues may well give numbers, but they include fragments, defective and deviant versions as well as variants which fit the ideal type pattern well; moreover, they make no distinction between tales deriving directly from bookish traditions, others that are more indirectly influenced by literary sources and the ones that are independent from the literary mainstream.

Snow White motifs are attested since the Middle Ages; however, the stories about King Harold Fairhair and beautiful Snjófrí.r,[2] the lai *Eliduc*

* Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Friedländer Weg 2. 37085 Göttingen. Germany. <ckawan@gwdg.de>

[1] See Ernst Böklen, *Sneewittchenstudien*, Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1910/15, 2 vols. Steven Swann Jones, *The New Comparative Method: Structural and Symbolic Analysis of the Allomotifs of "Snow White"*, FF Communications no. 247, Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1990; Christine Shojaei Kawan, "Schneewittchen (AaTh/ATU 709)", in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (henceforth referred to as *EM*), XII, 1, Berlin and New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2005, cols. 129–140; Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, I, FF Communications no. 285, Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004, type 709 (henceforth referred to as ATU).

[2] M[atthew] J[ames] Driscoll (ed. and trans.), *Ágrip af Nóregskonungasoogum. A Twelfth-Century Synoptic History of the Kings of Norway*, London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 1995, pp. 4–7; Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, I, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Reykvjavík, Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1941, pp. 125–127; Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C[arl] R. Unger (ed.s), *Flateyarbók:*

by Marie de France or Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* cannot be considered as fully-fledged *Snow White* tales. It would therefore be very difficult to say when and where the earliest *Snow White* version came into existence. We do not know, for example, if Basile's tale *La schiavottella* (II, 8), which is often quoted as an early *Snow White* version, is one of Basile's experiments, based on extant variants of *Snow White* and *The Stone of Pity*,[3] or if this is a tale of his own making. At all events, I am inclined to think that a folk tradition of *Snow White* must have existed prior to 1782, the year when Johann Karl August Musäus, a German author noted for his ironical renditions of popular narratives, published his mock historic tale *Richilde*[4] which is the earliest text known to date that can be truly called a version of *Snow White*. It would indeed appear odd that a story focusing on the evil stepmother rather than on the charming heroine should have brought forth the folk tradition. A generation later, the brothers Grimm as well as their rival namesake, Albert Ludwig Grimm,[5] counted *Snow White* among the best known German folk tales and emphasized the variability of this popular tradition.[6] Their statements are confirmed by the fact that the brothers and Albert Ludwig published two different forms of the tale at about the same time (in 1812[7] and 1809, respectively), which correspond to two distinct

en samling af norske konge-sagaer med indskudte mindre fortællinger om begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt annaler, I, Christiania, Malling, 1860, pp. 582–583; Else Mundal, "Kong Harald Hårfagre og samejenta Snøfrid: Samefolket sin plass i den norske rikssamlingsmyten", *Nordica Bergensia*, XIV, 1997, pp. 39–53; Russell Poole, "Ormr Steinþórsson and the 'Snjófríðardrápa'", *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, XCVII, 1982, pp. 122–137, esp. p. 126.

[3] ATU 894: *The Ghoulish Schoolmaster and the Stone of Pity*.

[4] Johann Karl August Musäus, *Volksmärchen der Deutschen*, ed. Norbert Miller, München, Winkler Verlag, 1976 (1961), pp. 73–117.

[5] Heinz Rölleke, "Grimm, Albert Ludwig", in *EM* (as note 1), VI (1990), cols. 167–169.

[6] Brüder Grimm: *Kinder- und Hausmärchen: Vergrößerter Nachdruck der zweibändigen Erstausgabe von 1812 und 1815 [...]*, ed. Heinz Rölleke (in collaboration with Ulrike Marquardt), I, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986, p. XXXII, cf. pp. XXXIII–XXXIV (Anhang); Johannes Bolte and Georg Polívka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- u. Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, I, Leipzig, Dieterichsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Theodor Weicher, 1913, p. 450, cf. pp. 451–453; Albert Ludewig [sic] Grimm, *Kindermärchen*, ed. Ernst Schade, [Hildesheim] Olms – Weidmann, 1992, p. VII.

[7] First manuscript version: 1808. See Brüder Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, ed. Heinz Rölleke, III, Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam jun., 1980, p. 465; Theodor Ruf, *Die Schöne aus dem Glassarg: Schneewittchens märchenhaftes und wirkliches Leben*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 1995, pp. 20–26. Ruf's book is a puzzle to me: he offers a detailed scholarly description of the text history of *Snow White* (pp. 19–33), but then goes on to construct a "true" historic background for the tale in the Hessian-Bavarian Spessart mountains (although he is aware of the widespread international tradition of the *Snow White* tale), according to the method of "fabulology" (p. 50), admittedly a joke of its inventor (Karlheinz Bartels), as Ruf himself explicitly states (pp. 12–14). Hans-Jörg Uther (Brüder Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, ed. Hans-Jörg Uther, IV, München, Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1996, p. 109) characterizes Ruf's book as a parody, which is likely, but there is nothing funny at all about it.

narrative strands,[8] and that in the same period yet another distinct form of *Snow White* had been collected by the German romantic poet Eichendorff in Silesia,[9] perhaps among the Polish part of the population.[10]

The version of the brothers Grimm mixes tales of at least three informants: a twenty year old girl friend, Marie Hassenpflug,[11] as well as two male collectors, Ferdinand Siebert and Heinrich Leopold Stein;[12] additionally, the brothers were acquainted with eight other German variants six of which they discussed in their notes to the *Household Tales*.[13] Recently, it has been suggested[14] that Ferdinand Grimm, one of their younger brothers,[15] had created the tale of *Snow White*, but this possibility can be excluded[16] as two *Snow White* variants had already been printed before the Grimm *Snow White* was published, that is, the aforementioned versions by Musäus (*Richilde*, 1782) and Albert Ludwig Grimm (a dramatized tale entitled *Schneewittchen*, 1809); moreover, the 'tale of beautiful Sophie and her envious sisters' seems to have been collected by Eichendorff in 1808.[17] As comparison with the

[8] Brüder Grimm (as note 6), pp. 238–250, no. 53; Albert Ludewig Grimm (as note 6), pp. 1–76.

[9] Albrecht Schau, *Märchenformen bei Eichendorff: Beiträge zu ihrem Verständnis*, Freiburg i. Br., Universitätsverlag Eckhard Becksmann, 1970, pp. 159–161, cf. pp. 38–40.

[10] Cf. ibid., pp. 39–40. The Polish living in Upper Silesia and adjoining areas spoke *Wasserpolnisch*, i. e. a Polish dialect which was interspersed with German elements.

[11] Heinz Rölleke, "Die 'stockhessischen' Märchen der 'Alten Marie': Das Ende eines Mythos um die frühesten KHM-Aufzeichnungen der Brüder Grimm" [1975], *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm – Quellen und Studien: Gesammelte Aufsätze,* Trier, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2000, pp. 8–22, here pp. 20–21; id., "Von Menschen, denen wir Grimms Märchen verdanken" [1987], ibid., pp. 23–36, here pp. 34–35.

[12] Brüder Grimm, ed. Rölleke (as note 7), p. 465.

[13] Brüder Grimm (as note 6), pp. XXXII–XXXIV (Anhang); Bolte and Polívka (as note 6) pp. 450–453; Brüder Grimm, ed. Rölleke (as note 7), pp. 87–90 (pp.[99]–[102]). The opening of another variant had been published by Jacob Grimm in the first volume of the journal *Altdeutsche Wälder* (edited by himself and Wilhelm) in 1813 (*Commentar zu einer Stelle in Eschenbachs Parcifal*, pp. 1–30, here pp. 10–11), cited from Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Werke, Forschungsausgabe*, section III: *Gemeinsame Werke*, XXXVII: *Altdeutsche Wälder*, I, new ed. by Otfried Ehrismann, Hildesheim, Zürich and New York, Olms – Weidmann, 1999); see also Albert Wesselski, *Deutsche Märchen vor Grimm: Einführungen und Anmerkungen*, Brünn, München and Wien, Rudolf M. Rohrer Verlag, 1942, pp. 63–65; furthermore, a somewhat deficient form of ending is mentioned in one of the early manuscripts, see Heinz Rölleke (ed.), *Die älteste Märchensammlung der Brüder der Grimm: Synopse der handschriftlichen Urfassung von 1810 und der Erstdrucke von 1812*, Cologny-Genève, Fondation Martin Bodmer, 1975, p. 250.

[14] Brüder Grimm, ed. Uther (as note 7), p. 105. According to Ruf (as note 7), pp. 20–25, Ferdinand Grimm is the collector of the tale.

[15] Ludwig Denecke, "Grimm, Ferdinand Philipp", in *EM* (as note 1), VI (1990), cols. 169–171.

[16] See also Heinz Rölleke, "Grimms 'Sneewittchen'-Märchen: Anmerkungen zur frühesten Textgeschichte", in id. (as note 11), pp. 82–85. According to Rölleke, Ferdinand Grimm is not the collector (let alone the creator) of *Snow White*, but served his brothers only as a copyist.

[17] See Schau (as note 9), pp. 38–39.

Jacob's (Ferdinand's?) first, unpublished manuscript shows the brothers Grimm have introduced a considerable number of changes[18] in their *Snow White* versions in the first and second editions of the *Household Tales* (1812, 1819).[19]

The most well-known modification the brothers Grimm made is probably the substitution of Snow White's cruel mother by an evil stepmother.[20] In this connection, Maria Tatar has reproached them dishonesty in handling their sources because they had maintained that the tales remained faithful to folk tradition as far as the content was concerned, admitting only that they had reworked the style.[21] There is, however, no firm evidence that the Grimms had invented the bad stepmother, although this cannot be entirely ruled out: they may just as well have found the stepmother in one of their informants' variants. In their comments on the six unpublished German *Snow White* versions at least, they mention one case where the villainess is a stepmother, one where Snow White is picked up during a drive by a count and his wife (in this tale, Snow White is a rather short-time adoptive child), another where Snow White's rivals are her sisters (as in the tale collected by Eichendorff), whereas for the remainder of the variants the status of the vilainess is left unexplained.[22] And if we look at the corpus of oral variants that is available to us today, bad mothers and bad stepmothers seem to be quite evenly distributed.[23] After all, both impersonations of the

[18] Since 1815, it was mainly Wilhelm Grimm who took care of the *Household Tales*, see Heinz Rölleke, "Kinder- und Hausmärchen", in *EM* (as note 1), VII (1993), cols. 1278–1297, here col. 1285. Albert Wesselski (as note 13), p. 64 claims that, in the case of *Snow White*, even the first extant manuscripts had already been subjected to modifications by Jacob Grimm.

[19] For the texts, see Rölleke 1975 (as note 13), pp. 244–259; Brüder Grimm, ed. Rölleke (as note 6), pp. 238–250, no. 53; Brüder Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen: Nach der zweiten vermehrten und verbesserten Auflage von 1819* [...], ed. Heinz Rölleke, I, Köln, Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1982, pp. 185–193, no. 53.

[20] This was a change introduced in the second edition, see Brüder Grimm (as notes 6 and 19).

[21] Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 24. She seems to rely on "John Ellis' charge that the Grimms consciously deceived the German public" (rebutted by Heinz Rölleke and Jack Zipes), see Tatar, p. 239, note 29, although in her note 30 she calls Ellis' definition of folktales problematic. For the brother Grimms' own theoretical conception of tale presentation and the point of view of nineteenth century German scholars in general see Ines Köhler-Zülch and Christine Shojaei Kawan, "Les frères Grimm et leurs contemporains: Quelques réflexions sur l'adaptation des contes traditionnels dans le contexte socio-culturel du XIXe siècle", in Veronika Görög-Karady (ed., in collaboration with Michèle Chiche), *D'un conte ... à l'autre: La variabilité dans la littérature orale*, Paris, Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1990, pp. 249–260; Ines Köhler-Zülch, "Der Diskurs über den Ton: Zur Präsentation von Märchen und Sagen in Sammlungen des 19. Jahrhunderts", in Christoph Schmitt (ed.), *Homo narrans: Studien zur populären Erzählkultur, Festschrift für Siegfried Neumann zum 65. Geburtstag*, Münster, New York München and Berlin, Waxmann, 1999, pp. 25–50.

[22] Brüder Grimm (as note 6), pp. XXXII–XXXIV (Anhang); Bolte and Polívka (as note 6), pp. 450–452; Brüder Grimm, ed. Rölleke (as note 7), pp. 87–90 (pp. [99]–[102]).

[23] See Böklen (as note 1), I, pp. 66–67; Jones (as note 1), pp. 42–43, 98–104.

adversary, the mother as well as the stepmother make perfect sense – the antagonism between a mother and a daughter is more powerful from a psychological point of view and adds to the dramatic impact, but it is easier to blame a stepmother, and it is a well-known fact that stepmothers were an omnipresent social reality in former times, when many women prematurely died in childbirth. The reason why the brothers Grimm should have preferred the stepmother is self-evident: a stepmother as a villainess was more in line with their own system of values, and would appear less disturbing from a child's point of view[24] – this type of antagonist was clearly better suited for a book conceived as a collection of "household tales". Nevertheless, there is no proof that they had invented this trait, and it is very well possible that the evil mother and the evil stepmother have coexisted side by side in *Snow White* tradition prior to the Grimms.

Concerning innovation, it is much easier to make another point. One of the best-known motifs of the *Snow White* tale, indeed, perhaps the most famous one, is the very image of the heroine, a girl "as white as snow, as red as blood and as black as ebony".[25] This is one of the stock phrases and stock pictures in fairy tale literature, this is how Snow White is popularly identified, and there are probably few children and few adults in the Western world who are not acquainted with it. Images of heroines who are as white as snow or as white as milk are very widespread throughout international tale tradition and especially in versions of ATU 709, the *Snow White* tale type. One of the very earliest impersonations of the dead or seemingly dead woman who is preserved in all her beauty, Harold Fairhair's wife, is known as Snjófrí. r;[26] Swedish variants of the *Snow White* type include protagonists named Snövit,[27] Greek heroines are affectionately called Chionati or Chionoula, that is, Snowey,[28] a Miss Snowey is even found in an Arab variant from Jerusalem.[29] The heroine's exquisite paleness is not always likened to snow:

[24] See also Jones (as note 1), p. 41.

[25] See also Francisco Vaz da Silva, "Red as Blood, White as Snow: Chromatic Symbolism of Womanhood in Fairytales", paper presented at the 14th Congress of the International Society of Folk Narrative Research (July 2005) in Tartu, and to be published in *Marvels and Tales* (2007).

[26] See note 2.

[27] Waldemar Liungman, *Sveriges samtliga folksagor i ord och bild*, I, Stockholm, Lindfors Bokförlag AB, 1949, pp. 284–289; Oskar Hackman, *Finlands svenska folkdiktning*, I.A.1, Helsingfors, Tidnings- och tryckeri-Aktiebolagets tryckeri, 1917, pp. 224–227; see also Bolte and Polívka (as note 6), pp. 453–454.

[28] Marilena Papachristophorou, *Sommeils et veilles dans le conte merveilleux grec*, FF Communications no. 279, Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2002, p. 58; Anna Angelopoulou, "Blanche-Neige ou l'enfant-ancêtre", *Daedalus: Revue d'études néohelléniques*, I–II (1994), pp. 170–188.

[29] Enno Littmann, "Schneewittchen in Jerusalem", in Theodor Menzel (ed.): *Festschrift Georg Jacob zum 70. Geburtstag 26. Mai 1932 gewidmet von Freunden und Schülern*, Leipzig, Harrassowitz, 1932, pp. 165–173.

in Italian and French she may simply be Bianca or Blanchette,[30] she may be compared to a flower and may be called, for example, Blancaflor[31], which is a common name for Spanish and Catalan folktale heroines[32] that can be traced back to epic tradition,[33] whereas in a Brazilian variant of *Snow White* the heroine is called Branca de Neve and her mother Branca Flor.[34] Descriptions of such exquisitely white ladies often associate the white with the red, and while the white can be likened to snow or to milk, the red can be likened to blood or a flower, especially the rose, alternatively a fruit, the pomegranate, for example[35]. Winter and summer images are combined in another tale by the brothers Grimm, *Snow White and Rose Red*, whose heroines are two complementary sisters.[36] In tale tradition, the beautiful contrast of the red and the white colours not only serves to describe a lovely person, it constitutes a narrative motif:[37] the sight of the two contrasting colours, especially blood on snow, arouses the ardent wish for a child with skin like snow and cheeks or lips like blood, as in the *Snow White* tale type,[38] or for

[30] James Bruyn Andrews: *Conte ligures: Traditions de la Rivière recueillies entre Menton et Gênes*, Paris, Leroux, 1892, pp. 75–79, no. 18 (translated into French as "Blanche"); Eugène Polain, *Il était une fois: Contes populaires entendus en français à Liège [...]*, Paris, Société d'édition Les belles lettres, 1942, pp. 52–56, no. 5.

[31] Aurelio M. Espinosa, *Cuentos populares españoles recogidos de la tradición oral de España*, I, Madrid, Instituto "Antonio de Nebrija", 1946, pp. 240–244, no. 115; J. Alden Mason, "Porto Rican Folk-Lore: Folk Tales", *The Journal of American Folklore*, XXXVIII (1925), pp. 507–618, here pp. 522–524.

[32] Especially in versions of type 313: *The Girl as Helper in the Hero's Flight*, see, for example, Espinosa (as note 31), pp. 265–269, no. 123; Julio Camarena Laucirica and Maxime Chevalier, *Catálogo tipológico del cuento folklórico español: Cuentos maravillosos*, Madrid, Gredos, 1995, pp. 85–95; Julio Camarena Laucirica, *Cuentos tradicionales recopilados en la provincia de Ciudad Real*, n. p., Instituto de estudios manchegos, 1984, pp. 99–117, nos. 53–54; id., *Cuentos tradicionales de León*, I, Madrid, Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1991, pp. 150–153, no. 83; Carme Oriol and Josep M. Pujol, *Índex tipològic de la rondalla catalana*, Barcelona, Generalitat de Catalunya, 2003, types 313 A and 313 C.

[33] For *Floire et Blancheflor*, a romance circulating under only slightly differing titles over nearly all of Europa and first attested in about 1160, see Elisabeth Frenzel, "Floire et Blancheflor", in *EM* (see note 1), IV (1984), col.s 1310–1315.

[34] M. Calvet Fagundes, *Estórias da Figueira Marcada*, n. p. [1961], pp. 85–90, no. 15.

[35] See Böklen (as note 1), I, p. 62.

[36] Brüder Grimm, ed. Rölleke (as note 7), II, pp. 278–285; Brüder Grimm, ed. Uther (as note 7), III, pp. 31–38 (no. 161: *Schneeweißchen und Rosenrot*; ATU 426: *The Two Girls, the Bear, and the Dwarf*).

[37] Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, V, Copenhagen, Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1957, Mot. Z 65.1: *Red as blood, white as snow*; for the three colour combination see Mot. Z 65.1.1: *Red as blood, white as snow, (and black as a raven)*.

[38] The motif is also found in another Grimm tale, *The Juniper Tree*, see Brüder Grimm, ed. Rölleke (as note 7), I, pp. 239–248, III, 87 [99]; Brüder Grimm, ed. Uther (as note 7), I, pp. 230–240 (no. 47: *Von dem Machandelboom*; ATU 720: *The Juniper Tree*); and in an Irish folktale quoted by Emmanuel Cosquin, "Le sang sur la neige", *Les contes indiens et l'Occident*, Paris, Édouard Champion, 1922, pp. 218–246, here pp. 228–229 (probably a variant of ATU 451: *The Maiden Who Seeks Her Brothers*) .

such a spouse, as in *The Three Oranges* (ATU 408) and *Faithful John* (ATU 516). This is clearly a morbid picture, conveying forebodings of death and bordering on cruelty when the slaughter of animals is involved; a variation of the motif, the sight of one's own blood on *ricotta* or another milk product after having cut a finger, has always seemed parodic to me, and I suspect that it might have been invented by Basile.[39]

Within the *Snow White* tale type, we have thus names or depictions of heroines which only refer to the colour white while in others white and red are combined, and there are also heroines that are simply described as "beautiful" or "very pretty".[40] But what about the famous picture of a girl defined by the three colours white, red, and black? It cannot be found very often. Emmanuel Cosquin, in his study on the motif of blood on snow as a colour formula suggesting beauty, cites seven occurrences: two in medieval Celtic literature (the story of Deirdre in the *Book of Leinster*[41] and the story of Peredur – the Welsh Perceval – in the *Mabinogion*), two in Basile's and Gozzi's adaptations of *Faithful John*, one in the *Hundred and One Nights*, and two in folktales from North Africa and Ireland.[42] None of them is a version of *Snow White*. In these tales, the wish for a wonderful bride (or a wonderful husband or child) is most often aroused during hunt when a raven is killed; alternatively, a raven is perceived in the snow while it is drinking the blood of a dead animal. In Basile's *Cuorvo* (IV, 9), for example, king Milluccio, while hunting in the woods, sees a raven that has just been killed lying in his blood on a pure white marble slab, and wishes for a wife as white and red as this slab and with hair and eyebrows as black as the raven's feathers. Similarly, in the second unpublished German *Snow White* variant cited by the brothers Grimm, a count and a countess in their carr-iage pass three heaps of snow, three pits filled with blood and three black ravens, and the husband wishes for a wonderful girl which is just as white, red and black.[43] These are very

[39] Christine Shojaei Kawan, "*Li sette palommielle, Lo cuorvo, Le tre cetra*. Drei Märchen von Basile und ihr Verhältnis zur mündlichen Überlieferung", in Michelangelo Picone and Alfred Messerli (ed.s), *Giovan Battista Basile e l'invenzione della fiaba*, Ravenna, Angelo Longo Editore, 2004, pp. 223–246, here p. 240.

[40] See, for example, Geneviève Massignon, *Contes corses*, Aix-en-Provence, Annales de la Faculté des Lettres, 1963, pp. 169–171, no. 76; José A. Sánchez Pérez, *Cien cuentos populares*, Madrid, Editorial Saeta, 1942, pp. 154–159, no. 61; Alfonso Jiménez Romero, *La flor de la florentena: Cuentos tradicionales recogidos en Arahal*, eds. Melchor Pérez Bautista and Juan Antonio de Río Cabrera, [Sevilla] Fundación Machado, 1990, pp. 155–157, no. 42.

[41] Here, exceptionally, a woman wishes for a *man* with hair as black as a raven, cheeks like blood and a body as white as snow, see Cosquin (as note 38), p. 226; in Cosquin's last example (pp. 228–229) a queen wishes for a baby girl.

[42] Cosquin (as note 38), pp. 219–223, 226, 228–229. For commentaries on early parallels of the three resp. two colour motif see also Jacob Grimm (as note 13), pp. 1–30; id., "Vorrede", in Giambattista Basile, *Der Pentamerone oder: Das Märchen aller Märchen*, trans. Felix Liebrecht, Breslau, Josef Max und Komp, 1846 (reprint Hildesheim and New York, Georg Olms Verlag, 1973), pp. V–XXIV, here pp. XXII–XXIII; Wesselski (as note 13), pp. 63–65.

[43] Brüder Grimm (as note 6), p. XXXII (Anhang); Bolte and Polívka (as note 6), p. 450; Brüder

strong images of ill omen. Obviously, the combination of the three colours white, red, and black, which Jacob characterized as the principal and most sensual ones, appealed to the Grimms, because the colours' significance increases when united into a threefold whole, which confers an impression of completeness and corresponds to one of the basic principles in folk narrative, the rule of three.[44] Always on the lookout for earlier, exemplary attestations, Jacob Grimm, in his article on the three colour combination, was able to refer the motif to the authorities of the Bible, Indian mythology, classical antiquity and medieval literature.[45] Moreover, he quotes an opening of *Snow White* which is reminiscent of Basile's *Cuorvo*: the queen wishes for a child as white as snow, as red as blood and "with hair as black as this raven which is hopping in front of the window".[46] For publication in the *Household Tales*, however, the brothers Grimm modified the inauspicious picture – or perhaps complemented another source which only had "as white as snow and as red as blood" by a third component, the black –, replacing the sinister raven by ebony for which no precedent in tale tradition seems to be known. A window frame of ebony evokes the elegance and refinement of a royal household – a skillful solution which may have been conceived by the Grimms themselves. Oral tradition appears to have remained reticent concerning the three colour formula in general and immune to ebony in particular, preferring the two colour combination of white and red.[47] It is also symptomatic, for example, that in a Pennsylvania German variant which owes much to Grimm, the mother, who pricks her finger while sewing, wishes for a daughter "whose skin would be as white as snow, whose hair would be black as coals, and whose lips would be red as blood" – ebony, a rare and precious wood, being substituted by a plebeian element, the coal.[48] In folk variants of *Snow White*, the heroine is even sometimes described as golden-haired,[49] and it is therefore not by accident that the queen in the Grimms' early manuscript version wishes for a child as white as snow, with

Grimm, ed. Rölleke (as note 7), pp. 87–88 (pp. [99]–[100]).

[44] On the combination of the three colours and their symbolism see Jacob Grimm (as note 13), esp. pp. 14–24; for the law of three see Max Lüthi, "Drei, Dreizahl", in *EM* (as note 1), III (1981) cols. 851–868; "Dreigliedrigkeit", ibid., col.s 879–886.

[45] Jacob Grimm (as note 13), pp. 8, 10, 17–18, 20–24.

[46] "Mit so schwarzem Haar, als der Rabe, der da vor dem Fenster hüpft". See Jacob Grimm (as note 13), pp. 10–11. According to Wesselski (as note 13), pp. 64–65, Jacob Grimm was unaware that he was citing from an earlier version of *Snow White* which preceded the manuscripts sent to Brentano and to the publisher of the *Household Tales* and which he himself must have modified, and that because of this mistake the brothers later neither quoted Jacob's paper on the two resp. three colour formula nor was it included in the collection of Jacob's minor writings.

[47] See Böklen (as note 1), I, pp. 64–65; Jones (as note 1), pp. 98, 100.

[48] Rev. Thomas R. Brendle and William S. Troxell, *Pennsylvania German Folk Tales, Legends, Once-upon-a-Time Stories, Maxims, and Sayings*, Norristown, Pennsylvania German Society, 1944, pp. 15–17.

[49] Böklen (as note 1), I, p. 65.

cheeks as red as blood and *eyes* as black as the window frame, and that the girl who is born to her will have hair which is not black, but yellow.[50]

Another deviation of Grimms' *Snow White* from the mainstream of oral tradition concerns the resuscitation episode. In the majority of oral tales the prince falls in love with the beautiful dead maiden in the coffin, takes her with him and puts her in his bedroom, and it is often told that he spends much time with her, becomes lovesick, looks at her and weeps.[51] It is a morbid episode, suggestive of necrophilous love, which reminds us of the story of Harold Fairhair and of the lai *Eliduc*. Sometimes the prince himself resuscitates the beautiful maiden, but more often she is brought back to life by somebody who has spied on him – his mother, a sister, a chambermaid, a servant, or a thief who wants to steal the girl's jewels.[52] This traditional form of the resuscitation episode was adopted by the brothers Grimm for their first edition of the *Household Tales* (1812):

> "the prince had it [the coffin] carried to his castle and had it put into his room, and was sitting there all day long and could not take his eyes off it; and when he had to go out and could not look at Snow White he grew sad and couldn't eat a thing if the coffin was not at his side. But the servants, who had to carry around the coffin perpetually, grew angry, and one of them once opened the coffin, lifted Snow White up and said: 'for the sake of such a dead girl we are being plagued all day long' and with his hand he kicked her in the back".[53]

This unfriendly act brings about Snow White's resuscitation. The problem of passionate unfulfillable love is thus resolved by a comic turn, a funny note rounding off the deeply emotional theme. Mourning for the beloved woman is one of the fundamental motifs of *Snow White,* and it was in conformity with this core of inner meaning that the brothers Grimm, in their first edition of the *Household Tales*, substituted a widespread form of the resuscitation episode for an earlier irregular version which is found in their original manuscript: there, it is the unconsolable father who entrusts Snow White to "his experienced doctors" (the cure they apply would neither seem to require medical training nor is it clear what they are exactly doing in order to revive the heroine: they take the corpse and then tie a rope to the

[50] Rölleke 1975 (as note 13), pp. 244, 248.

[51] Böklen (as note 1), I, pp. 132–135; Jones (as note 1), pp. 68–69, 119–122.

[52] Böklen (as note 1), I, pp. 135–141; Jones (as note 1), pp. 68–69, 119–122.

[53] "Der Prinz aber ließ ihn [den Sarg] in sein Schloß tragen, und ließ ihn seine Stube setzen, er selber saß den ganzen Tag dabei, und konnte die Augen nicht abwenden; und wenn er aus mußte gehen und konnte Sneewittchen nicht sehen, ward er traurig, und er konnte auch keinen Bissen essen, wenn der Sarg nicht neben ihm stand. Die Diener aber, die beständig den Sarg herumtragen mußten, waren bös darüber, und einer machte einmal den Sarg auf, hob Sneewittchen in die Höh und sagte: um so eines todten Mädchens willen, werden wir den ganzen Tag geplagt,' und gab ihm mit der Hand einen Stumpf in den Rücken." See Brüder Grimm (as note 6), pp. 248–249.

four corners of the room), upon which he quickly marries off his daughter to a handsome prince.[54] In their first edition the Grimms thus replaced an unusual ending that is not very convincing[55] by the traditional, most widespread, meaningful one. However, the morbid nature of the prince's love may have made them feel uncomfortable, considering their prospective audience, and this was probably the reason why in the second edition they opted for the now well-known quick, inoffensive solution, which leaves no space for sickly thoughts: the heroine's accidental resuscitation occurs as soon as the prince is allowed to take the coffin with him.[56] No matter if the Grimms shortened the episode themselves or if they found it in one of their sources, this seriously weakened the story's inner meaning. Walt Disney may have sensed it and had instead Snow White awakened by a " kiss of first love", following the model of *Sleeping Beauty*.

The case of *Snow White* shows us how in oral tradition well-established traits in a well-established type[57] are able resist modification and are apt to survive even in spite of an overwhelmingly popular parallel book tradition. For example, if the Grimms' resuscitation episode recurs in oral variants modeled after their *Snow White* tale, a considerable portion of oral tradition nevertheless remains unimpaired by their version of the episode which ridiculously curtails the process of mourning and suffering, the experience of utter unhappiness. As far as the figure of the antagonist is concerned, the modification made by the brothers Grimms can be used as an argument in favour of their influence on the oral folktale corpus as much as a proof of the persistence of the original traits: in the oral corpus the mother as villainess exists side by side with the stepmother (which may have been introduced by the brothers Grimm, but could also represent a preexisting form of the villainess). What comes as a puzzling surprise is that the well-known three colour formula serving to describe the heroine – as white as snow, as red as blood and as black as ebony – which is perfectly convincing from an aesthetical point of view, has apparently not been adopted by oral tradition.

I want to conclude with an instance of self-correction. Self-correction, as formulated by Walter Anderson, refers to an *individual* process: in Anderson's opinion, tellers were able to correct defective versions when they heard their stories more than once.[58] Instead, I want to draw attention to the tale-

[54] Rölleke 1975 (as note 13), p. 250.

[55] Ibid., side-note: "dieser Schluß ist so nicht recht, u. mangelhaftig" (this ending is not right that way, and defective).

[56] Brüder Grimm 1982 (as note 19), p. 192.

[57] As all folktale types are, *Snow White* is subject to much variation which cannot be discussed here, but its structure is well-established (see Jones, as note 1) and its basic elements recur over and over again.

[58] Walter Anderson, *Ein volkskundliches Experiment*, FF Communications no. 141, Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1951; id., *Eine neue Arbeit zur experimentellen Volkskunde*, FF

tellers' *collective* reaction, the reaction of tradition as a whole so to speak, concerning items of content that had been modified in a way which runs counter to its inherent meaning. In the case of *Snow White*, this applies to the relationship between the heroine and her helpers. The dwarves seem to be an indispensable ingredient of the tale to all those who are only acquainted with the book tale and its various adaptations; however, in international oral tradition, the helpers are in general harmful and dangerous beings, most typically robbers or ogres, which are so moved by Snow White's beauty that they adopt her.[59] In the version of the brothers Grimm, the dwarves act as father surrogates, who treat Snow White with kind severity, and Snow White keeps house for them. In the midst of a tale of atrocity, Snow White's life with the little fellows far from the cruel world, in a house where everything is tiny, represents a point of escape, on which the Disney movie has elaborated, producing pictures of a childhood paradise, a garden Eden in the woods. In the latter half of the twentieth (and in the twenty-first) century, when it became a fashion to modernize, trivialize or sexualize popular fairy tales, Snow White's relationship to her hosts became the butt of jokes and parodies, suggesting its erotic nature. In Wolfgang Knape's prose poem from 1975, for example, the accusation: "dont't tell me you can be friends with seven men and not love any of them", leads to Snow White declaring that "it's now over with the seven".[60] Others, like Robert Gillespie in his poem *Snow White* (1971), raise the issue much more bluntly: "What is really going on out there in that house in the/ woods? [...] Does it ever get dirty and dull/ fishy-stale in their innocent linens?/ What are their little penises like, Snow White?"[61] Donald Barthelme's experimental novel *Snow*

Communications no. 168, Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1956; see Elliott Oring, "Experimentelle Erzählforschung", in *EM*, IV, 1984, col.s 684–694; Christine Goldberg, "Selbstberichtigung", in *EM*, XII, 2 (forthcoming).

[59] Böklen (as note 1), I, pp. 85–86; Jones (as note 1) pp. 50–51, 107–111.

[60] "Sag mir bloß nicht/ man kann mit sieben männern/ freundschaft halten/ und keinen lieben"; "endgültig vorbei sei es nun/ mit den sieben": Wolfgang Knape, "Schneewittchen", in Wolfgang Mieder (ed.), *Grimms Märchen – modern: Prosa, Gedichte, Karikaturen*, Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam jun., 1979, pp. 51–52.

[61] Robert Gillespie, "Snow White", in Wolfgang Mieder (ed.), *Disenchantments: An Anthology of Modern Fairy Tale Poetry*, Hanover and London, University Press of New England, 1985, pp. 153–154; for further examples see Willy Pribil, "Schneewittchen – frei nach Sigmund Freud", in Mieder (as note 60), pp. 44–45; Wolfram Siebeck, "Die sieben Zwerge", in Wolfgang Mieder (ed.), *Grimmige Märchen: Prosatexte von Ilse Aichinger bis Martin Walser*, Frankfurt, R. G. Fischer, 1986, pp. 201–202; Jürgen Becker, "Schneewittchen in New York", ibid., pp. 203–208 (a comment on Donald Barthelme's novel); Wolfgang Mieder, "Fairy-Tale Allusions in Modern German Aphorisms", in Donald Haase (ed.), *The Reception of the Grimms' Fairy Tales: Responses, Reactions, Revisions*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1993, pp. 149–166, here p. 156; WP Fahrenberg (ed.), *Der Grimm auf Märchen: Die beliebtesten deutschen Volksmärchen in der Karikatur*, Hamburg, Zinnober Verlag, 1989, cartoons by Horst Haitzinger, Sancho M. Gerken, Erich Rauschenbach (no pagination); for an overall sexualized version of the *Snow White* tale see Johann Christoph Spielnagel, *Zauberflöte und Honigtopf: Erotische Marchen*, n. p., Scherz, 1979, pp. 91–100.

White (1967) changes the scene of the tale to Manhattan where the heroine lives with seven window washers, who doubly exploit her: she serves them as a cheap housekeeper and as a shared sex playmate.[62] A commentator in a German literary lexicon, who is noticeably taken aback by this kind of modernization, criticizes Barthelme's treatment of the *Snow White* tale as very much in contradiction with the spirit of the fairy tale.[63] He would have been much surprised to learn that one of the gurus of international folktale scholarship, Vladimir Propp, in his treatise on the *Historic Roots of the Fairy Tale*, contends that on the contrary the function of the fairy tale heroine who lives with a group of men in the woods is precisely what Barthelme describes in his apparently "new" and nonconformist adaptation, namely housekeeping and free sexual companionship.[64] Propp's procedure of analogizing the supposed rites of pre class society with those recorded since the nineteenth century from ethnic groups living in very different parts of the world may be questionable but his Russian folk tale material is not, and there are also *Snow White* versions from other countries which are relevant in this context. In the bulk of *Snow White* variants, the relationship between the heroine and her hosts is described as fraternal, but it is striking that this fact is not taken for granted: it has to be made explicit from the start, by formulas such as "you are our sister and we are your brothers", as a binding agreement and a preventive measure.[65] The leader of the group sometimes explicitly warns his companions not to touch the girl.[66] This hints at things that might disturb the peace within the group: sexual violence, amorous entanglements or mutual jealousy. Passionate love is suggested in tales where the robbers commit collective suicide after discovering the heroine's dead body.[67] But most significantly, in a minority of cases, which

[62] See also Bacchilega, Cristina, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, pp. 42–46.

[63] J[oseph] C. S[chöpp], "Snow White", in Walter Jens (ed.), *Kindlers Neues Literatur Lexikon*, II, München, Kindler, pp. 279–280.

[64] Vladimir Propp, *Die historischen Wurzeln des Zaubermärchens*, trans. Martin Pfeiffer, München and Wien, Carl Hanser Verlag, 1987, pp. 148–155 (Russian original: *Istori…eskie korni volšebnoy skazki*, Leningrad, 1946).

[65] See, for example, Espinosa (as note 31), p. 242; Sílvio Romero, *Contos populares do Brasil*, ed. Luís da Câmara Cascudo, Rio de Janeiro, Livraria José Olympio editora, 1954, pp. 242–246, no. 37, here pp. 243–244; M[ieczys»aw] D[owojna] Sylwestrowicz, *Podania ómujdzkie* (Lithuanian traditions), II, Warszawa 1894, pp. 306–311.

[66] See, for example, Aurelio M. Espinosa hijo, *Cuentos populares de Castilla*, Buenos Aires, Espasa-Calpe, S. A., 1946, pp. 144–149, here pp. 146–147; Aurelio de Llano Roza de Ampudia, *Cuentos asturianos*, Madrid, Junta para ampliación de estudios e investigaciones científicas, 1925, pp. 91–92, no. 29, here p. 91; Aurora Milillo (in collaboration with Gabriella Aiello and Florio Carnesecchi), *Novelle popolari senesi, raccolte da Ciro Marzocchi, 1879*, I, Roma, Bulzoni editore, 1992, pp. 69–74, no. 22, here p. 70.

[67] Planinski [i. e. Janko Pukmajster], *Zbirka narodnih pripovedk za mladino*, Ljubljana, 1892, pp. 11–15; Vladimir Ardali*ƒ*, "Narodne pripovijetke iz Bukovice u Dalmaciji" (Folktales from Bukovica in Dalmatia), II, in *Zbornik za narodni ñivot i obi…aje juñnih slavena* (A Collection for

are, however, too many and which are reported from too many different geographical areas to dismiss them as accidental occurrences, the robbers fall in love with the heroine and want to marry her whereas she declines;[68] in some others, she actually marries one of the robbers; later on, when she finds a nobler spouse, she simply forgets about her first husband (if the robber husband, out of grieve, has not committed suicide) – but it also happens that she remains faithful to her robber spouse and rejects a king's proposal.[69] It cannot be excluded that intellectual adaptors of *Snow White* were acquainted with Propp's book or perhaps even with one such oral variant, but that cannot have been the case with all of them; the point of reference of most transformational adaptations must have been the version of the brothers Grimm. This can be supposed with almost certainty for a recent mock version of *Snow White*, a German comic film about "lonely men in the woods", who are all craving for the beautiful girl who has moved into their house.[70] Hidden amorous possibilities beyond the surface of the woodhouse collective's life are even suggested by the Disney movie where the dwarves are a mixture of tiny old men and naughty boys whom Snow White treats like a mother: the dwarves, however, are visibly in love with her and enjoy her kissing them on their bald heads; avoidance of sexual temptation is implied when they give Snow White their whole bedroom while the seven are sleeping downstairs, in the kitchen, very uncomfortably. The version of the brothers Grimm, instead, is more innocent: the dwarves and Snow White sleep in the same room; they have given her the bed of the seventh dwarf who has to take turns sleeping with his companions. The erotic or amorous or sexual undercurrent in the woodhouse episode seems to be distinctive enough to be taken up over and over again: recent attempts at transformation of the supposed traditional contents try to call the "old"

the Folk Life and the Customs of the Southern Slavs), XIII, 2, Zagreb, 1908, pp. 161–132, here pp. 167–182; Vasilij G. Bazanov and Ol'ga Borisovna Alekseeva, *Velikorusskie skazki v zapisyakh I. A. Khudyakova* (Great Russian Tales in the Recordings of I. A. Khudyakova), Moskva and Leningrad, Izdat. Nauka, 1964, no. 75; D. K. Zelenin, *Velikorusskie skazki Permskoy gubernii* (Great Russian Folktales from the Province of Perm), Petrograd, 1914, pp. 280–282, no. 44; Sylwestrowicz (as note 65), I, pp. 199–201, II, pp. 242–250, 306–311.

[68] See Böklen (as note 1), I, p. 96; Juan B. Rael, *Cuentos Españoles de Colorado y Nuevo Méjico*, I, Stanford, Stanford University Press, n. d., pp. 254–256, no. 121; Pau Bertràn y Bròs, *El rondallari català*, Barcelona, 1909, pp. 129–144, no. 15, here pp. 136–137.

[69] See Böklen (as note 1), I, pp. 95–96; Planinski (as note 67); Rafael Ramírez de Arellano, *Folklore portorriqueño: Cuentos y adivinanzas recogidos de la tradición oral*, Madrid, Junta para ampliación de estudios e investigaciones científicas, 1926, pp. 123–124, no. 85. Jones, however, who cites only two instances of a marital or premarital relationship (pp. 51, 110) concludes "that these companions are not sexually suitable for her. They are somewhat asexual, living with the heroine in a Platonic relationship" (pp. 53–54).

[70] *Sieben Zwerge – Männer allein im Wald*, Germany 2004, directed by Sven Unterwaldt. The dwarves are played by comedians, all well-known from television, the evil stepmother by Nina Hagen, a famous pop singer, and Snow White by her daughter, Cosma Shiva Hagen.This was the most successful German film in 2004.

tale in question – instead they are reviving an essential element of content that is in fact traditional.

Resumo

Branca de Neve é um dos contos mais conhecidos, graças aos irmãos Grimm e depois a Walt Disney. Além disso, o tipo *Branca de Neve* é representado por um abrangente *corpus* internacional de contos tradicionais com traços independentes.

Desde a primeira versão manuscrita (1808) até à segunda edição dos seus *Contos* (1819), os irmãos Grimm fizeram modificações significativas no seu conto, especialmente no que respeita à figura do antagonista, o episódio da expulsão e a ressurreição. Se a heroína que apresentaram ao público, a menina "branca como a neve, vermelha como o sangue e negra como o ébano" não é uma criação inteiramente nova, foi sob o impacto da colecção dos Grimm que este tipo de beleza se tornou numa figura recorrente no imaginário dos contos de fadas.

Por outro lado, tendo em conta o sucesso esmagador da *Branca de Neve* dos Grimm, é notável como tantas versões populares permaneceram fora do alcance da tradição criada pelos Grimm. Um exemplo surpreendente é o episódio do luto do príncipe pela bela donzela, que se manteve um traço típico das versões populares, embora os Grimm, que o haviam adoptado na sua primeira edição (1812), o omitissem na segunda, introduzindo em vez dele a solução rápida do acidente.

A *Branca de Neve* também oferece uma oportunidade de reconsiderar o efeito de auto-correcção de Walter Andersen, formulada na década de 1920, sob uma perspectiva de longo prazo: segundo ela, concepções inerentes vão sendo corrigidas sempre que são alteradas, como acontece com o episódio da casa na floresta das versões populares e nas mais recentes derivações da tradição do conto escrito (e/ou Disney), em anedotas, filmes, paródias. Traços que parecem ser inovadores são de facto tradicionais.

Abstract

Snow White is one of the most widely known tales, made world famous by the Grimm brothers and later by Walt Disney. At the same time, the *Snow White* tale type is represented by a comprehensive international corpus of folktales with independent traits.

Since the first manuscript version (1808) up to the second edition of their *Household Tales* (1819), the Grimm brothers made significant modifications of their tale concerning, most notably, the figure of the antagonist, the expulsion episode and the resuscitation. If the heroine they presented to the public, a girl "as white as snow, as red as blood and as black as ebony", is not an entirely new creation, it was through the impact of the Grimm collection that this type of beauty became a stock picture in fairy tale imagery.

At the same time, considering the overwhelming success of the Grimms' *Snow*

White tale, it is remarkable that so many folk variants remained uninfluenced by the Grimm tradition. A striking example is the episode of the prince's mourning for the beautiful maiden which has remained a typical feature of folk variants although the Grimms, who had adopted it for their first edition (1812), omitted it in the second one, introducing instead the now well-known quick solution by accident.

Snow White also offers an opportunity to reconsider Walter Anderson's concept of self-correction, formulated in the 1920s, from a long-term perspective: apparently, inherent conceptions are corrected over and over again when they have been altered, as shown by the rendering of the wood house episode in the folk variants and in more recent derivatives of the book tale (and/or Disney) tradition (jokes, films, parodies). Traits that appear to be innovative may thus in fact be traditional.