

## IDEOLOGY AND FAIRY TALES

As Christian Zimmer writes, it is quite difficult to investigate ideology: «To grapple with ideology is to grapple with a phantom since ideology has neither a body nor a face, it has neither origin nor base which one could recast to provide the battle against it with a precise a well-defined object. Ideology manifests itself under the form of fluid... and acts through infiltration, insinuation, and impregnation" (quoted after Zipes 2006: 34).

Ideology can be understood as a comprehensive vision, a way of looking at things, «a set of ideas, which organize our lives and help us understand the relation to our environment (Calzada-Perez, 2003: 5), a framework that is shared by social groups and organizes the beliefs and attitudes of a given social group. Ideology permeates all language use. Sarland points out that «all espousal, assumption, consideration and discussion of social and cultural values, whether overt or covert... all writing is ideological since all writing either assumes values even when not overtly espousing them, or is produced and also read within a social and cultural framework which is itself inevitably suffused with values - that is to say, suffused with ideology» (Sarland 2005: 31).

The ideology of a text is usually implicit and inseparable from discourse. John Stephens compares this to a geometrical shape in which one figure is inscribed within another, as an octagon within a square, for example, in such a way that the two figures merge at overlapping boundaries. Segments thus exist in which the inner figure coincides with the outer and becomes invisible. The segments of the octagon which are separate from the square represent ideology rendered obtrusively. Nevertheless, ideology is never separable from discourse in actual practice (Stephens 1992: 2). Stephens thus makes an important distinction (following Hollindale) that ideology can appear as an overt or explicit element in the text, disclosing the writer's social, political or moral beliefs, openly advocating certain ideas or it can be 'passive ideology', that is, the implicit presence in the text of the writer's unexamined assumptions, which consist of values taken for granted in the society that produces and consumes the text. The latter type of ideology is more powerful than the first, as it is treated as a matter-of-course and thus less likely to be questioned (Stephens 1992: 9,10).

Stephens points out that ideology may be inscribed both in a story and a significance. Significance refers to the theme, moral, insight into behaviour, and is thus more straightforward, whereas the ideology of the story is about the the way a given story can be referred by the audience to events in the actual world, the question is not whether the story is truthful, but whether anything that happens in the story can occur to the reader.

There are specific areas, such as politics and literature, in which it is particularly important to realize which ideology shapes them. In this paper, the focus is on fairy tales, a genre often used for ideological purposes in the socializing process, the task of which is to shape and educate the young generation. Thanks to the tales written down and edited by

the Brothers Grimm, Andersen, Perrault and others, a canon of tales aimed at children and supporting their civilizing process could be established by the end of the 19th century in many European countries. Fairy tales became an educational tool and were gradually changed to suit certain ideologies and reflect stereotypes and roles desired by the society. One of the main purposes fairy tales could serve was ordering the collective imagination of children, give them a sense of belonging to one community, inculcating in them religious, cultural and social values\* desired by the given social group. These values would later become the philosophy of life for whole generations (cf. Krysztofiak 1998:165).

However, although fairy tales are now usually associated with children, it has not always been so. It is a well-known fact that the oral tradition of the fairy tale existed long before any of them were written down. Tales, believed to be expression of folk wisdom and told to an audience of adults as well as children, presented archetypes, anthropological, spiritual and psychological truths, archetypes rather than stereotypes. Their aim was to depict and explain the world, give insights into human experience, be an example of roles undertaken and choices made in real life. There are motifs that repeat in the fairy tales, to mention only beings who hinder, beings who help, extraordinary animals, magical spells, quests to fulfil etc. Folk fairy tales depict model situations, such as the fight between good and evil, they present a world where evil is punished and good rewarded, models deeply rooted in the universal collected unconscious, as described by Jung:

It has contents that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrata of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us (Jung 1968: 4).

O'Connor in turn sees fairy tales as reflections of our mind's «innate predispositions with which to respond to life's experiences», linking us «not only with [our] own past, but the past of the species» (O'Connor 1985: 21, quoted after Trim 2004: 45-46).

Ideology is what appears not on the level of archetypes (understood as a prototype, universal pattern of behaviour, common to all individuals) but would rather reflect specific social influences. In the words of Jorge Larrain, «Ideology is not concerned with the general conflicts between good and bad, truth and error, and so forth. Ideology conceals historical and concrete social contradictions in the interest of a dominant class, and this is its specific level of analysis» (Larrain 1979). This is to say that the core of the story usually remains the same, but details, settings, character descriptions are changed in each new historical epoch. The symbols of the tales are endowed with new meaning, transformed, or eliminated in reaction to the needs and conflicts of the people within the social order (Zipes 2006: 6). The versions of the tales that seem most familiar, such as the Grimms' Children's and Household Tales, which are now the most reprinted and best known in the world and serve as reference points for all kinds of fairy-tale productions, be it theatre, cinema, opera, even though they are regarded as universal and classic, contain symbols already marked by a sociopolitical perception - an ideology that suited middle-class taste throughout Europe and North America. What is more, even before the tales were transformed into literary tales, they had already been marked by certain sociopolitically conditioned perception. Zipes describes how oral folktales, originally stamped by matriarchal mythology, circulated in the Middle Ages and were transformed in different ways: «the goddess became a witch, an evil fairy, or a stepmother, the active, young princess was changed into and active hero; matrilineal marriage and family ties became patrilineal, the essence of the symbols, based on matriarchal rites, was depleted and made benign, and the pattern of action that concerned maturation and integration was gradually recast to stress domination and wealth» (Zipes 2006: 7).

Observing the transformations of tales, in particular those written and adapted in the last centuries, one could reflect on how and why certain authors tried to influence children or adult images of children through the fairy tale; how these authors reacted to the prescribed

fairy-tale discourse and intervened to alter it according to their needs and social tendencies. These questions could also be asked with reference to translators.

In the following part of the paper, several instances of ideologically shaped fairy tales are examined. First, two 'classical' versions of two fairy tales: *The Beauty and the Beast* and *The Little Mermaid* will be compared with their interpretation by Disney. The tales, popular both in their film and book form, have been very influential on the child and adult audiences all over the world. At the same time, they embody a certain ideology.

Madame Gabrielle de Villeneuve wrote *Beauty and the Beast* in 1740 for the young women of the 1700s, who were often sent off to arranged marriages that seemed to awake their fear. The purpose of the story was to teach them not to judge by appearances (an ugly outside can hide a loving heart), but to show that they could learn to love, awakened from childhood to adulthood leaving their parents and childhood behind. The plot and description of characters clearly serve this purpose. Also, the story presents the patterns of behaviour, manners and morals socially accepted at that time (a detailed analysis of the tale and its versions can be found in Zipes 2006: 03-57). In Disney's version, many changes have been introduced, especially as regards portraying the male and female characters:

1) The role of the Beauty as a heroine structuring the whole narrative seems to be diminished. Hearne writes: «Structurally, we've lost Beauty as hero - she who instigated the action by asking for a rose no longer asks for a rose, she who almost killed the Beast with her lack of perception but instead saved him by developing perception becomes an observer of two guys fighting over a girl» (Hearne 1997:102, quoted after Friedmeyer 2003).

2) In the final scene of the original, there is a journey - Beauty returns to the Beast after a visit to her family. What motivates her is a sense of duty, and her love, which she does not realize until she returns to the Beast. Disney made the final scene a battle, a fight between two men (Gaston and the Beast) over a girl, thus diminishing her role to a prize which is won. Her passive character is underlined in some previous episodes as well, when she is repeatedly rescued by others, and in the chase scene used to get her back to the Beast, where she is shown as an object rather than an active heroine shaping the narrative,

3) The character of the Beast is also quite different in both versions: in Madame de Villeneuve's, he is a hospitable landlord, who is gravely, though unintentionally offended by Beauty's father, whereas Disney shows a beast who severely punishes trespassing. In the original story, the Beast looks frightening, but is in his heart is kind and gentle. As Friedmeyer points out, some critics have complained that Disney has created an abusive situation - although his Beast does not attack Belle, the threat of physical violence is present and the story can lead young women into thinking that they can change anyone with their beauty, which will result in their being abused (Friedmeyer 2003).

Another example of Disney's ideological message would be *The Little Mermaid* (1989). In Andersen's version, the main desire of the mermaid is an immortal soul and living with people, whose world and way of life she finds enchanting. Merfolk may live 300 years, but afterwards they change into the foam of the surface of the water, a fate the mermaid wants to escape through getting an immortal soul. Her way to achieve this goal is to marry a human. On the other hand, Disney shows a mermaid who falls in love and wants to marry the prince, an immortal soul is never mentioned. Not only the heroine's motivations in both versions are quite different, so is the ending of the story: Disney uses the obvious Hollywood happy ending in that the mermaid's wishes are fulfilled and she marries the prince, whereas Andersen's prince marries another, and the mermaid is changed into a daughter of the air. As such, she can deserve her immortal soul by her good deeds, which she will need to perform for the next 300 years. A didactic paragraph is added, in which we learn from one of the air spirits that:

After three hundred years, thus shall we float into the kingdom of heaven,» said she. «And we may even get there sooner,» whispered one of her companions. «Unseen we can enter the houses of men, where there are children, and for every day on which we find a good child, who is the joy of his parents and deserves their love, our time of probation is shortened. We can count one year less of our three hundred years. But when we see a naughty or a wicked child, we shed tears of sorrow, and for every tear a day is added to our time of trial!

The didactic message is quite straightforward and focuses on children's behaviour. In Disney, a didactic purpose is also pursued, and could probably be interpreted as the necessity of obedience to parents (Triton has the power of changing the mermaid into a human, but she does not ask him for help earlier - it is the wicked Ursula she has more trust to and thus ends up in misery).

Not only is the world-view and purpose of life different in both stories, it is also portraying the main character. Although in both versions the mermaid's happiness depends on the power of another, in Andersen's version she seems to be more independent. Andersen shows the mermaid as someone interested in the world beyond her own, in gaining an immortal soul, thus making her different from the rest of her folk. Marrying the prince is just one element of the game. In Disney's version, she can earn her happiness only after her father agrees to give her away to the prince, who is the ultimate goal.

Also, it is striking that all elements which could be considered sad, difficult or cruel were eliminated by Disney. The mermaid's voice is not taken away from her by cutting off her tongue (as in Andersen), it is just temporarily stored in a nautilus shell. The element of self-sacrifice, in terms of both her voice and happiness for the sake of another, is much milder in Disney. For Disney, an ordered and beautiful world seems to be what counts, as such a world would correspond to children's manicheism (Zajac 2000:169), that is, the need to perceive (ethical) reality in a simple way.

Disney's fairy tales seem to be didactic. His films affect imagination, but it turns out that imagination thus awakened should serve ideology, law and order, express certain visions of adequate behaviour and social roles of both sexes, presenting them in a stereotypical way (cf. Zipes 2006: 200). Disney seems to strengthen the didactic message of the older fairy tales. He warns the young audience: don't take risks, know your place, your happiness depends on your obedience to adults. Thus, his works are quite conservative and conventionalised, clearly structured, guided by the need to order and control the world, with the leading role of the male hero. It seems that fairy tales in his interpretation are not retold, but rather revised, presented in the Hollywood convention, without respecting integrity of the original tale nor its anthropological, spiritual or psychological truths presented. The way Disney adapts fairy tales may be evaluated positively (highlighting the value of fantasy, innocent play), or negatively (in terms of naivety, conservative character and infantile, Hollywood romantic happy-ending, as well as embodiment of American ideology - populism, puritanism, elitism, consumerism - Zipes 2006: 211).

Andersen in turn praises essentialist ideology, promoting the Protestant ethic and values of industriousness, honesty, diligence, virtuousness, infusing his tales with essentialist ideas of natural biological order (visible e.g. in the Mermaid's conversations with her grandmother), thanks to which he was able to «receive the bourgeois seal of good housekeeping» (Zipes 2006: 81). Disney seems to perpetuate the logic, if for the sake of financial gain and popularity.

It is also well worth mentioning that ideology can also be reflected on the level of translation, especially when religious and moral expectations of the readers from the source and target language culture are different. Krysztofiak (1996, 1999) provides examples of

disambiguation of such situations in Cinderella, when translators reduce the given open structure to a straightforward, unambiguous version which suits the recipient's moral and religious expectations. And so, the German sentence: *nahm sich der Mann eine andere Frau* ('he took himself another one - wife/woman') is translated: he married another woman - ojciec sieroty poslubit inna. kobiet§, which is just one of several possibilities included in the original meaning. Krysztofiak attributes these changes to the discrepancies between the source (German, Protestant) and target (Polish, Catholic) culture.

Also, one can notice interesting axiological aspects, when the translator adds from himself evaluative comments, which are not present (sometimes only implied) in the original: *einem reichen Manne, dem wurde seine Frau krank* - a rich man's wife fell ill is interpreted as *pewnemu bogatemu cztowiekowi zachorowala zona umifowana* - a rich man's beloved wife fell ill, which is a verbalization of the indirect message of the tale. Similarly, in *Hansel und Gretel*, the original version refers to the stepmother with a number of words: 'Stiefmutter', 'Mutter', 'Frau' (stepmother, mother, wife/woman). In Polish, translators tend to call her 'wicked stepmother' ('zla macocha'), which refers to the stereotype of a stigmatized person, traditionally associated with evil. In this way, translations focus on some selected meanings of the tale, highlighting those aspects which correspond to the values cultivated in the target culture and reflect the translators' and readers' expectations.

Apart from religious and moral factors, a very strong influence on fairy tale translations is politics. An interesting example of ideological changes here would be changing the outlook of the original to suit current political purposes of the dominant political system. Jack Zipes describes experiments undertaken in Germany during the late 1960s and 1970s, which encompassed the rewriting of fairy tales from a socialist perspective, which would expose social contradictions and oppression (Zipes 2002:198). Another example could be Andersen's tales in their 1948 translation by Witold Zechenter (described in detail by Dymel-Trzebiatowska 2007), which appeared in Poland under the Communist rule. Ideological changes introduced by the translator included eliminating all references to God on different levels of meaning, with regard to both colloquial expressions as well as deeper religious senses. To give two examples:

1) *The Little Match-Seller* (1846). The original tale contains numerous references to life after death: the protagonist's grandmother used to tell her that when a star falls, a soul was going up to God. Zechenter's version only states that a falling stars means that someone dies, thus losing the reference to after-life. In the final scene as well, when the grandmother and the little match-seller flow upwards far above the earth, «where there was neither cold nor hunger nor pain, for they were with God», ideology deletes the reference to God's presence, equalizing happiness with being far above, with the stars.

2) *The Fir Tree* (1845) is a tale about waiting for 'better' things to come, without appreciating living in the moment. The protagonist is a fir tree. Although the plot is set at Christmas time and the tale describes Christmas traditions seen from the perspective of a fir tree which becomes Christmas tree, this aspect has been thoroughly eliminated in Zechenter's version. One who knows nothing about the tradition could think that it is usual to decorate a fir tree and light candles on 'ordinary' winter evenings. However, it is probably clear for most readers, including children, what tradition is being described, although the text refuses to mention its name.

Interesting insights into ideologically shaped translations could also be exemplified by nineteenth century translations of *Dornröschen*, known today in the international canon as *Sleeping Beauty*. In her very insightful article, *Aspects of gender in translations of «Sleeping Beauty»*, Karen Seago analyses eight English versions of the tale, emphasising how the representation of male and female characters was made to conform to norms of 19th century gender expectations. Here, I would like to focus on just two aspects, one to do with gender roles, the other concerning tensions between expectations and behaviour.

The first change would be the character of the wise women (fairies). In the German texts, they are semi-divine beings, having the power over the life and death, related to mythological figures of the Nordic and Greek tradition, connected with the sphere of work and decision-making. The English translations treat them as humanized and domesticated, and, in some versions, they are associated with the nursery. The very word 'fairies' changes their character, showing these mythic powers as sweet flower fairies of didactic and moral tales. This results in a significant loss in stature and a loss of the attribute of wisdom.

The other change refers to the motif of the exoneration of the king from being responsible for his daughter's fate. In the German text by the Brothers Grimm, the thirteenth fairy curses the young princess because she had not been invited to the feast the king had ordered to celebrate the birth of his daughter. The reason the king decided not to invite the thirteenth fairy was simple - he had only twelve plates, not enough for the thirteen wise women in his kingdom. Therefore, his responsibility for what happens later is clearly visible in the German text. In the majority of the English translations under discussion, however, the passage is revised to show that the king cannot be held responsible for his decision, and any reference to his implied lack of paternal care and foresight is diminished in different ways. Some versions use abstract phrasing, decreasing the king's responsibility and weakening his link to the fateful invitation, implying his decision is determined by factors outside his control, some delete the passage or put the blame on the thirteenth fairy, thus showing the king to be in control of the situation. Here, both didactic and gender aspects come into play.

To sum up, I hope to have shown some ways in which ideology shapes fairy tale narratives. The topic is broad, and in this paper it was possible to highlight just a few issues which illustrate the influence of social expectations on the shaping of fairy tales. This is not to say that fairy tales are manipulative in their main function, only that manipulation is one of their components. The main purpose of speaking about ideology is to raise awareness among editors and translators of fairy tales, as well as among the young and adult readers so as to enable them to edit, translate, read and respond to cultural and ideological assumptions of different versions of fairy tales, to understand the cultural and psychological conditions which influence the shaping of the narrative in a given way.

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