NO SLEEPING BEAUTY WITHOUT THORNS.
A MODEL FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF TRANSLATED FAIRY TALES

Abstract: Few stories have been translated so often and into so many languages as the classical fairy tales. As such, they are a true challenge for translation studies. This article proposes a methodology for investigating fairy tales in translation. The suggested method is essentially a comparative textual analysis, inspired by translation studies, literary theory, linguistic criticism and discourse analysis. It can be applied to the synchronic research of fairy tale translations within a restricted period as well as to the diachronic research of translations of one or more fairy tales over a longer period of time. A step-by-step model is presented, which makes it possible to classify and analyse changes in translations as well as adaptations. In order to bridge the gap between content and linguistic levels, a linguistic analysis is linked to focal points, grouped under categories from literary studies. The examples come from six recent Dutch translations of Sleeping Beauty, published between 1995 and 2007. In the final part of this study, a scheme is offered for the interpretation of the changes brought to light by the analysis. It takes into account individual as well as social factors and it is based on the concepts of norms, systems and functions. Such a structured method of analysis is hoped to offer new possibilities for the study of fairy tales in translation.

Keywords: children’s literature, fairy tale, translation, linguistic criticism, norms, Dutch

Few stories have been translated so often and into so many languages as the classical fairy tales of Perrault, Grimm and Andersen. As such, they are a true challenge for translation studies. Still, research on the translation of fairy tales is fairly rare. Apart from the in-depth studies by Martin Sutton (1996) and Cay Dollerup (1999), only a few articles have been published in readers and periodicals. Sutton made a philological, textually based
study of English versions of the Grimm’s *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in the nineteenth century. Dollerup studied the translations of the Grimm’s tales in Danish and international cultural contexts as an illustration of “some aspects of translations as a cross-cultural communication” (1999: ix). He meticulously tracked down the Danish translations between 1816 and 1986 and wrote a fine synthesis of the reception, impact and popularity of the Grimm tales in Denmark. In both studies, however, the methodological part is developed only to a limited extent. This article proposes a methodology for investigating fairy tales in translation. It does not focus on the selection nor on the reception, but on the texts themselves. The method is essentially a comparative textual analysis, inspired by translation studies, literary theory, linguistic criticism and discourse analysis. The method can be applied to the synchronic research of fairy tale translations within a restricted period as well as to the diachronic research of translations of one or more fairy tales over a longer period of time.

A comparative study of fairy tales and their translations must take into account certain restrictions and problems from the very start. First of all, there is the question of the source text, particularly relevant in the case of the Grimm Tales. The Grimm brothers published several editions during their lifetime. They not only added tales to the former editions, but also – particularly Wilhelm Grimm – rewrote many of them, omitting passages considered unfit for children and embellishing the style (Rölleke 1975; Seitz 1984; Tatar 1987; Bluhm 1995; Neumann 1996; Zipes 2007). Very often, translations do not mention the exact version of the source text. Therefore, the researcher can resort to one of the two most popular versions: the tenth edition of the *Kleine Ausgabe* (1858) or the *Ausgabe letzter Hand* (1857), for instance edited by H. Rölleke (1997).

Moreover, quite a few translations are based on an intermediate translation. In many countries, Andersen was translated from German and Grimm from English. Recently many lavishly illustrated international co-productions have an English source text. It is not always possible for the researchers to trace back the intermediate translation, let alone the source of that text. In those cases, they have to take into account that smaller changes may not be attributed to the translator of the target text, but rather to an intermediate version.

Finally, editions vary hugely in terms of shape, form and volume. There are rhymed versions, picture books, comics, baby books, dramatic texts, editions for children learning to read, to name just a few. The more these