

Making Reality Evident: Feminine Disempowerment and Reempowerment in Two Grimm's Fairy Tales

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For the past 20 years, some critics have decried representations of women and girls in the fairy tale. The feeling has been that female heroines are not "heroic" enough, that their actions are more often nonactions than forceful assertions of will and desire. They have suggested that certain fairy stories actually retard the development of young girls by implicitly praising the heroine's "inability to act self-assertively, total reliance on external rescues, willing bondage to father and prince, and her restriction to hearth and nursery" (Stone 1985:125-145; Stone 1975:42-49; Rowe 1979:237-258; Lieberman 1972:383-395). Certainly, we feel this to be the case in popular versions of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty, where 20th-century Walt-Disneyfication has stripped the stories of most of their dramatic content and left us with only the most insipid details. But, for the most part, critics who object to these stories seem actually to be taking issue with the vacuousness of American children's books and film in general, not with the themes and motifs of the European folktales. In many cases, the two bear little or no resemblance.

For example, the much-publicized act of kissing a frog (who then turns into a handsome prince) is not a folktale motif. In fact, in the Grimms' story "The Frog King," the heroine who is approached by an amorous frog responds by throwing it against a wall. In this, she disobeys her father's explicit command to take the frog with her into her bed. In addition, the famous tag line, "Some day my prince will come," which serves as title and opening sentence, respectively, of anti-fairy tale articles by Marcia Lieberman and Karen Rowe, does not actually occur in any of the original folktale versions of "Snow White." The portrayal of Snow White as passively awaiting a male rescuer (and then singing about it) is purely a Hollywood invention; the original

folk stories do not thematize feminine waiting, hoping, or dreaming. Iona and Peter Opie stress this point when they say, "Fairy tales are unlike popular romances in that they are seldom the enactments of dream-wishes" (1974:14). These facts do not make the Walt Disney version any less offensive, but they do point up the importance of distinguishing between modern American variants of a fairy tale and the story as it exists in various forms in the European folk tradition. We must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

As it turns out, the issue of the female protagonist's apparent passivity has more to do with genre than gender. It is, of course, always dangerous to generalize about a genre whose contents are so rich and varied and whose boundaries are so porous, but it is necessary at the very least to talk about what constitutes "heroism" in the folktale and how that differs from conceptions of the heroic in the epic, for example. We are familiar with the exploits of a Gilgamesh, an Odysseus, or a Lancelot. That kind of muscular, straightforward courage is rarely met with in folktale protagonists of either sex. While the epic hero has a larger-than-life quality, the folktale hero is, in the words of Max Luthi, only "a deficient creature":

The fairy tale hero, even if he is a dragon-slayer, is time and again shown as one in need of help, often as one who is helpless, who sits down on the ground and weeps because he has no idea what to do. . . . He has no specific abilities . . . he is not equipped by nature for specific tasks. (Luthi 1984:137)

According to Luthi, fairy tale protagonists' helplessness, their "detouring," their dependence on outside (often supernatural) sources speak for "a religious touch" in the fairy tale's portrait of man. Says Luthi, "The fairy tale hero is as little master of his own fate as is man in general" (1984:139). Indeed, it seems to be precisely the dependent or un-masterful aspects of human experience with which the fairy tale is most concerned. In this, the fairy tale shows a different side of man than either the epic, which emphasizes individual valor, or the novel, which shows men and women in a social setting. One could say that it is the business of the fairy tale to set the lofty conventions of the epic on their head, to speak to and for the unempowered, the uncertain, and the peripheral members of the human community, to show the human being in his or her distressed, enmeshed, and deficient aspects, rather than as an independent executor of his or her own unambiguous will and desire. The lack of assertiveness that feminist critics decry in the folktale heroine is often nothing more than an expression of the genre's quasi-religious attitude toward human experience. Thus, if we wish to evaluate the female protagonist in the

context of the folktale tradition, we must ask a different set of questions than the ones that are being asked now. Instead of asking, "Does this heroine achieve reasonable life goals directly and assertively?" we must ask, "How and why are female protagonists marginalized and disempowered in these texts?" And second, "What strategies do they use to escape persecution and to right the balance of power?"

To answer these questions, it is useful to look at two less popularized but still widely known fairy tales, "The Maiden Without Hands" (Type 706)¹ and "All Fur" (Type 510B).² (Editors' note: Summaries of the two tales are found, respectively, in Notes 5 and 6.) Both stories depict distressed heroines who, like Snow White and Cinderella, wander away from home to find relief from tyranny and are eventually elevated to positions of power and dignity. According to Stith Thompson, variants of each story occur in most major European folk traditions as well as in the earliest European book to include fairy tales, Straparola's *The Delightful Nights*. In addition, variants of "All Fur" (a close cousin of "Cinderella") occur in the Basile and Perrault collections as well as in more than 200 oral versions (Thompson 1977[1946]:128). Both stories were published in the first edition of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmarchen* in 1812 and were reprinted in all six succeeding editions. I am reading fairly typical versions of the stories in the recent Zipes translation of the 1857 Grimms' edition (Zipes 1987).³

As collectors and editors, the Grimms substantially restructured the oral tales to reflect emerging bourgeois values. Zipes argues that the resulting literary fairy tales "operate ideologically to indoctrinate children so that they will conform to dominant social standards which are not necessarily established in their behalf" (Zipes 1988:18). According to Zipes, the ideological content of the tales results in an "overall pattern" of values, mores, and attitudes which the Grimms' stories not only elaborate but also help to establish. For young women, this pattern is fairly clear. Says Zipes:

The female hero learns to be passive, obedient, self-sacrificing, hard-working, patient, and straight-laced. Her goal is wealth, jewels, and a man to protect her property rights. Her jurisdiction is the home or castle. Her happiness depends on conformity to patriarchal rule. (1988:57)

It is interesting to note that, although Zipes' own translation is taken from presumably the most bowdlerized edition, both "The Maiden Without Hands" and "All Fur" portray heroines who are clearly outside these bourgeois norms.⁴ If there is a pattern to be found in these

stories, it is in the protagonist's rejection of patriarchal rule, her flight away from the social world and into the wilderness, and her gradual development of a power that successfully competes with bourgeois values of money, property, and female self-effacement.

The Maiden Without Hands

The young woman's destiny in this story is ruled by her overarching need not to succumb to the "deal" that her father has made.⁵ The drama originates, then, in the fact of her commodification by society, but, more specifically, by her father, who is the representative in her life of the social laws concerning women. Her exchange leads both to her father's wealth and to her own life conflicts. The fact that the father can actually sell or trade the daughter has profound impacts on the lives of each and ultimately makes untenable the relationship between them, at least from the daughter's point of view.

While the father's actions with respect to the daughter are certainly base, the story grounds them in another economic fact, the father's poverty. The miller is a poor man, and it is as a poor man that the story contextualizes his action. Socially disenfranchised and made distraught by poverty, the miller is interested in gaining first his own social standing and material comfort. After that is achieved, he is willing to offer his daughter protection, a gesture which she understandably refuses. The father's role in the story is further problematized by his apparent blamelessness, or the reduction of his error to the appearance of mere thoughtlessness or an unfortunate but unavoidable mistake. Yet, on closer scrutiny, we see that the miller's actions are irresponsible. For example, the miller's responses to the devil are clearly inadequate. First, when the devil requests what is behind the mill, the miller answers, "What else can that be but my apple tree?" Second, when ordered to chop off his daughter's hands, the miller replies, "How can I chop off the hands of my own child?" In each case, the miller is only too willing to think too little about his actions. The tale finally shatters the illusion of the miller's innocence when it shows how his wife, on hearing the story about his encounter with the old man on the road, understands clearly and immediately the devastating nature of the bargain that her husband had made.

As the father grows rich from his bargain, the daughter is disinherited, depersonalized, and finally, dismembered. First, she is sold to the devil. Next, she is denied water. Third, she is denied hands. To be denied water and hands is to be denied the means with which to defend herself from the deal that has been made. But to be

denied hands also has another, more sinister meaning. It is to be denied the means with which to do anything in the world. It is the ultimate disempowerment because it ensures the daughter's helplessness and, finally, it guarantees against her anger or retribution. Having been used so badly in the father's house, she leaves home. At this point, the path of the young woman's destiny has been set. She is faced with the challenge of regaining her hands (the power to perform acts in the world) and of reestablishing—or possibly establishing for the first time—her true power and identity as a woman.

In the course of the narrative, she achieves both these goals. Through her two marriages to the king, both quite different, we see the gradual development of her power and identity. Her first marriage is based upon her identity as "a poor creature forsaken by everyone except God." The king takes pity on her and has a set of silver hands made for her. But these hands, which are merely mechanical, and this identity, which provokes pity rather than love, prove to be inadequate to the danger that threatens her, and she finds herself again fleeing the devil through the forest. At the end of the story, the king and queen marry a second time. This time the question of the true identities of both parties is addressed before the marriage takes place. The king, who no longer looks like a king after seven years of wandering and grief, wanders into the cottage where his wife and child are sleeping. As he is sleeping, the handkerchief that is covering his face drops to the floor, and the handless maiden identifies *him* as the now-worthy husband and father of her child. The king, however, is unable to recognize the whole woman before him; it is only after he sees the silver hands that he believes she is his wife, only no longer a "poor forsaken creature." The second marriage equalizes the original disparity of their relationship: what was at first a marriage between a "king" and a "creature" turns into a marriage between two individuals. Whereas the first marriage was based upon the maiden's need and the king's whim, the second is based upon the queen's power and the king's long initiation into suffering. Thus, the story presents marriage, not as an end in itself, or as a goal of feminine development, but a means by which the questions of power and identity can be addressed. Appropriately, the only two episodes of dialogue between the king and the woman in the story both center on the question of the woman's identity and the nature of her power, whether human or divine. At their first meeting, the man asks, "Have you come from heaven or from earth? Are you a spirit or a human being?" (Zipes 1987:121). The only other time the king addresses the woman is at the cottage in

the forest, right before their second marriage, when he again asks her who she is. It appears, then, that the question of feminine identity is a problem, not only for the woman, but for the man too, who must come to understand her differently than he had.

But what finally governs the young woman's development in the story is not her relationship to the king at all, but her ever deeper retreat from the male, socioeconomic world into the femino-centric world of the forest. The forest is the social world's counter-reality; in it, the woman discovers her own (feminine) power. In her first move, the Handless Maiden journeys from her father's house, where the problem of a failing mill determines her destiny, to the king's garden, where the problem of a missing pear is equally, though not as tragically, definitive. Again, her destiny as a woman is related to a harsh economic law. The pear in the king's garden is his property. It is no longer simply a pear to be eaten, but a commodity to be protected from being eaten. This fact, which indicates the king's power and forms the basis upon which the social world is organized, is both alien to the daughter and, at the same time, inextricably linked with the evolution of her fate. The king's garden, while closer to the natural world than the father's mill, is still a hostile place for the maiden, and she is confronted there as an intruder, a transgressor.

The young woman's second move is from the king's palace to the small cottage in the forest. This cottage is noteworthy for the ways in which it subverts the laws of the male world. By offering "Free Lodging for Everyone," the cottage offers an alternative to the socioeconomic system which has proved so oppressive in the young woman's life. Because its lodging is "free," it subverts the economic order which requires an exchange of money for every good and service. Because it is "for everyone," it subverts the social order in which human beings are valued according to their position in a hierarchical power structure. The further the young woman retreats from the socioeconomic system of fathers and kings, the more she is able to be influenced by her own spiritual reality. Finally, her immersion in the female world is so complete that her hands grow back, but they return as a result of the power of God, or the power antithetical to the devil's world of exchange.

This story draws our attention to the gradual evolution of feminine power, the power, in this case, of religion, but more usually of witchcraft, art, healing, or seduction. (This is one of the few fairy tales in which a woman's power is sanctioned by the Christian god, but, even so, we see the woman finally becoming empowered, not in a convent or church, but in a small house in the forest, the traditional

home of the witch.) The maiden's retreat into the feminine world becomes the means by which she is able to preserve her psychic integrity and to establish her true power and identity in spite of the devil's claim.

All Fur

In this story, the issue of feminine destiny is associated, not only with the original problem of incest, but to problems in the organization of society, which allows some people to be above the law while others are denied status and rights.⁶ The fairy tale depicts a world in which people are allotted power according to their position in a hierarchy that begins with the king and ends with the animals of the forest. The daughter's destiny is governed by the unequal balance of power between fathers and daughters, hunters and beasts, kings and servants. As daughter, as beast, and as servant, the possibilities of her life are always defined in relationship to the figure of father, hunter, or master, and as such her power is repeatedly hidden or denied and her identity is continuously misconstrued.

The original harbinger of the incorrect valuation of the daughter is, of course, the incestuous father who is unable to distinguish between two female individuals—wife and daughter. His inability to make this distinction and his unlimited "legal" power (the fact that he not only represents the law of the land, but, in essence, *is* the law of the land) makes this error catastrophic for both the daughter and the community. This first mistake is compounded by others: the hunter mistakes her for a wild beast, the cook mistakes her for a witch, and the king mistakes her for an orphan who is "good only to have boots thrown at her head." Thus, the problem of incest is symptomatic of a deeper issue at the heart of the story—the question of the daughter's true power, identity, and value.

The absurd kind of problem that results from the power imbalance between the king and his daughter is indicated ironically in the fiasco that occurs when the daughter attempts to assign difficult tasks to her father. Usually in fairy tales, the person who seeks something is given impossible tasks by the person who has the power to grant the request or the special knowledge needed for the completion of the seeker's goal. In the case of marriage, a suitor is often assigned impossible tasks by the maiden who is being sought or by her representative. In most cases, the hero receives some kind of supernatural assistance or solves the tasks by virtue of some special talent. In this story, however, the motif of the impossible task is almost comically subverted by the fact that the suitor, as king, simply

orders his subjects to perform the tasks and, with a minimum of effort, produces the required results. He does not suffer fear or despair; he does not overcome fear and despair by cleverness, courage, singleminded industry, or the ability to make supernatural alliances. Thus he does not, in fairy tale terms, show himself to be either worthy or gifted. In this way, the fairy tale highlights a frightening loophole in hierarchically organized power structures: the fact that a king's power can outmuscle all ordinary human conventions—social, psychic, and even literary. His power can transcend all rules, even the incest taboo. The king's councillors clearly foresee the devastating effects of such kingly lawlessness when they say, "Nothing good can come from such a sin, and the kingdom will be brought to ruin" (Zipes 1987:260). But even they are powerless against the whims of a monarch.

The task of the woman in this story, then, is to return both herself and her community to a right relationship to the king, or, perhaps more accurately, to return the king to a right relationship with her and the community. This can be achieved only when the king learns to understand the true power and identity, the true otherness, of the woman. The fact that the girl's father did not understand her correctly is what threw his community into jeopardy and necessitated her flight through the forest. For a correct (not an incestuous) marriage to take place, the second king must answer correctly the question of the woman's identity. As the first king has misidentified the daughter, the second king is involved in the mystery of her identity. The second king must see the daughter's power as truly "other," as truly distinct from his own (social) power, despite the degradations he has submitted her to in the terms of "beast" and "servant."

In order for the king to identify the daughter correctly, he must see through the wrong identities that his own language and social organization have created around her. The three interchanges at the end of the story between the king who has been awakened to the mystery of the woman and the servant who has made some very good soup serve as a kind of coda to the theme of identity. The king asks the creature, "Who are you?" She answers, "I'm just a poor girl that no longer has a mother or father" (Zipes 1987:262). In this way, she identifies herself as a person who has somehow managed to escape the kinds of identity that are recognized by the social organization which the king represents. Without a father, she is without a name. Her fatherless status constitutes both her curse and her freedom. Second, when the king asks why she is living in his castle, she gives the strange response: "I'm good for nothing but to have boots thrown at my head"

(Zipes 1987:262). The answer reiterates the evaluation that society has made of her, an orphan. She dutifully repeats the king's own error, an error that will be exposed by further developments in the story. The particular phrase she uses ("good for nothing except to have boots thrown at [her] head") emphasizes what we have come to understand as the original problem: the hierarchical organization of power and value in the community. For if it is upon her head that others put their boots, the disinherited daughter is figuratively placed under other people. Third, to the question, "Where did you get the ring that was in the soup?" the girl responds, "I don't know anything about the ring" (Zipes 1987:262). In this way, she denies the king access to the knowledge of the origin of her power. Her lie protects her from any attempt by him to usurp her power. It is this origin of female power that the woman keeps secret and that constitutes her mystery, her value, and her "otherness" in the king's social economy. When the king finds the beautiful woman underneath the furry cloak, he finds, in effect, a meaning of the term *woman* that precedes his own language and social order and that speaks for the existence of a reality that his social economy does not include. His appreciation of her as truly "other" forms the basis for a new distribution of power, a harmonious marriage, under the reign of which the community can thrive.

Although the answer is not available to the king, we must nonetheless ask what constitutes the daughter's power in this story. First, it appears that the daughter's power does not develop during the course of the story but that it is already there when the story opens. Faced with threatened incest, the daughter responds shrewdly and with full knowledge of her rights. She requires of the king three impossible tasks. The daughter in this story does not hesitate to take upon herself the mantle of power vis-à-vis the father; she fails, not so much because her own power is faulty, as much as because her power cannot compete with the unlimited, socially sanctioned power of a king. The fact that the daughter acts without the help of a supernatural guide suggests that she herself is already supernatural. Her power is not acquired; it is inborn. When we ask where her power comes from, we are immediately aware of her resemblance to the mother and of the singularity of both, as well as to the way the mother's dying request rebounded on the daughter, setting her up for trouble. It is the daughter's resemblance to the mother that forms the two ends of the daughter's story: first, her physical similarity to the mother inflames the father's desire and initiates the problem; second, the inborn power inherited from the mother creates the resolution.

Beyond that, however, is the disturbing fact that the daughter also inherits the unresolved conflicts of her parents' marriage, a conflict that again revolves around the problem of how to establish feminine identity in a secret society. By insisting on being replaced only by a woman as beautiful as herself—and, one might even say, by dying in the first place—the mother has left the father with a "lack" that only the daughter can fulfill. While it is the father's inability to differentiate between women that constitutes his side of the problem, it is the mother's desire to separate herself from other women, to be singular among women, that compels her to request a condition that she imagines can never be met. While the powerful father remains incapable of distinguishing between women, the powerless mother must resort to extreme means to differentiate herself from all the potential "wives." Thus, the daughter must ultimately take up not only her own personal problem, but the problems of her parents and society itself.

This fairy tale, like "The Maiden Without Hands," is deeply concerned with the question of how the organization of society—in this case, the hierarchical power structure—affects women, especially the valuation of women's arts and industries. Both "All Fur" and its popular cousin "Cinderella" portray as debased the woman herself and her traditional place, the hearth. In the place of a dignified Hestia (Greek goddess of the hearth who reigned over the arts of spinning, cooking, weaving, healing, and other "magic" transformations), these fairy tales show us a dirty, abandoned, generically-named servant girl whose work has been degraded to the level of "dirty work" or work that no longer has cultural significance. One might say that both "All Fur" and "Cinderella" are about the need for the reevaluation of the woman's traditional power, a power that is always set apart from the socioeconomic realities that usually define status and well-being in the king's world.

All Fur's development can be measured according to the extent of her reliance on the inborn, feminine power which will serve, ultimately, as a check and balance to the social power of the king. Connected with the arts of spinning, cooking, and seduction, this power is associated with magic, with transformation, and with the "natural" rather than the social value of persons and objects. All Fur's power is closely associated with the objects she takes with her in her flight from the castle and puts into the king's soup (the ring, the spinning wheel, and the reel), with her cooking, with her dresses (spun by "the most skillful women"), and with her ability to seduce the king. The ring is a symbol both of the Self and of the whole Eros

phenomenon. The other objects denote traditional women's industries: the spinning wheel and the reel, tools of the weaver, refer to the women's capacity to spin or to dream of things, fantasies, or ideas which slowly become real. Spinning is an apparently magical type of feminine creativity in which the woman shapes the future of herself and those around her. The reel has a rich array of meanings which reiterate the idea of the creative power of altered states of consciousness: *to reel* is to dance, to run riot, to stagger unsteadily as though drunk, and to rattle off a story without pause or effect. It also conjures the image of seduction: one "reels in" a fish or something one has caught. The daughter's cooking also becomes an issue in the story: it is her apparently innate talent as a cook, as well as the objects she drops in the soup, which lead the king to question her. Her power as cook, like her powers as spinner and seductress, suggest witchcraft, and, indeed the court cook whose art has been upstaged calls her a witch. As in "The Maiden Without Hands," the accusation of witchcraft becomes a way for enemies of the woman to devalue the mysterious feminine power which appears so alien in the king's court.

All Fur's dresses are associated with the natural light of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and they are used, not merely to sexually entice the king, but, more importantly, to "enlighten" him to the fact of the woman as "other," or as someone whose mysterious presence points to the existence of a reality quite different from his own, a reality which his language and law cannot adequately describe, control, or encompass. By bringing the question of feminine power and identity to the forefront of the king's mind, All Fur allows him to see the error of his own too-close identification with his own socioeconomic structure, with the "man-made" world, if you will, and with the limitations of his own terms, his own language. As a seductress, All Fur awakens in the king his dormant capacity for awe and worship; she not only shows him the world of Eros, but also, and perhaps more importantly, instructs him in the limits of Logos. Thus, the seduction of the king can be understood as a redemption that restores to the king and his kingdom a more correct balance between the male and female principles and that saves the king, the daughter, and the kingdom from the certain death of a merely social reality.

Conclusion

The stories open with the maiden's disempowerment by the father and by the social and economic systems he represents. Her objectification by the father and, by implication, society itself, is the problem she must face. Like a typical folktale protagonist, she does

not set out to achieve heroic self-fulfillment; rather, she is motivated by the need to survive physically and psychically in a context of social and economic violence. This she does by retreating from the social world, either through distance or disguise. Her long initiation of silence and suffering is not without purpose, however. Almost magically, she finds or discovers a source of power that is otherworldly and uniquely hers with which she can assert herself in this world. She becomes, finally, a sort of numinous figure, a saint or a witch, whose very anonymity turns into a source of fascination to others. In this way, she is ultimately empowered to redeem the community which has misused her.

Throughout the stories, the heroine's power is related to the issue of identity. Both protagonists are nameless and remain unnamed in the narratives. Outside the narrative action (in the titles), they are known only by names which reiterate their social anonymity—the Handless Maiden, All Fur. Questions about their identities recur throughout the texts: The Handless Maiden is confused with a tree, a saint, a witch, and a stranger. All Fur is mistaken for her mother, a beast, a witch, and a servant. Yet both heroines seem to achieve power in spite of and even because of their escape from traditional roles and identities. Ultimately, their anonymity becomes the foundation of their redemptive power.

Because these tales are longer and better developed than the traditional Cinderella story, we can see the heroine's plight and her response to it more clearly. The Handless Maiden and All Fur are cursed and abused figures, who, in spite of grave injustice, are willing to take up the burden of their destinies. These are neither rags-to-riches stories, nor goodness-rewarded stories, but, to use the Opies' phrase, stories about "reality made evident" (Opie and Opie 1974:13). The heroine's real achievement is that she maintains her psychic integrity in a violent and abusive context. Her second achievement is that she is able to convince others of her true value after that value has been thrown into question. Thus, these stories, though appearing passive or claustrophobic compared to the heroic quest that we have been trained to read and appreciate, nevertheless take up important questions of the identity and power of those outside society's inner circle—the banished, disinherited, and dismembered.

Notes

¹ In "The Maiden Without Hands" (Type 706), the reason for the amputation of the heroine's hands differs widely from one area to another. In some cases, it happens because she refuses to marry her father, or because her father has sold her to the devil,

or because she disobeys her father by continuing to pray, or because a female in-law is jealous. She wanders alone either on land or on sea until she is observed by a king who marries her in spite of her deficiency. She has a child but is accused of giving birth to a monster, and so she sets forth again with her child. The way in which her hands are restored varies widely from one version to another. See Thompson, pp. 120-121. (In other story types, specifically "The Maiden Who Seeks Her Brothers" (Type 451) and "Our Lady's Child" (Type 710), a young woman loses her power of speech and has her children stolen. See Thompson pp. 110 and 122.)

2 "All Fur" is a variation of Cap o' Rushes (Type 510B) which, in turn, is closely related to the Cinderella story (Type 510A). With 500 versions in Europe alone, Cinderella is probably the best-known of all folktales. Its cousin, Cap O' Rushes, exists in more than 200 oral versions. The Cap o' Rushes story begins either when the heroine leaves home because her father wishes to marry her or when she is banished from home because she does not answer her father in the way that he wants her to when he asks her how much she loves him (she might say that her love is like salt, not sugar). The heroine then assumes some kind of disguise, either a hat of rushes, a wooden coat, or a cloak of many different kinds of fur. She becomes a servant but is accidentally seen in her own clothes by a prince. The story then proceeds much like Cinderella with a repeated flight from the prince and an elaborate recognition scene. The identity of the girl is established usually by means of a ring or other objects that the heroine places in the prince's food or drink. (In appropriate stories, she demonstrates that salt is of greater value than sugar.) See Thompson pp. 127-128.

3 Both "The Maiden Without Hands" and "All Fur" were told to the Grimm brothers by young middle-class and aristocratic women from the town of Kassel who claimed to have heard them from nannies, governesses, and servants (Zipes xxiv). Between the first 1812 and the seventh and final 1857 editions, the brothers continuously edited and refined the tales to make them "more proper and prudent for bourgeois audiences" (Zipes xxvi).

4 Other stories, too, both within and outside the Grimms' corpus, show a variety of types of female heroism. In many, the woman is clearly pitted against patriarchal values and struggles effectively in behalf of her own freedom and dignity. See my unpublished paper, "The Poor Girl and the Bad Man: Fairy Tales of Feminine Power," presented at the session on Women in the Folktale, American Folklore Society Conference, Philadelphia, October 18, 1989.

5 A summary of "The Maiden Without Hands" is as follows: The story opens, not with a maiden, but with a father who is falling into poverty. One day the devil appears to him in the form of an old man and offers to give him unlimited wealth for whatever is behind his mill. Thinking that an apple tree is behind the mill, the father agrees and returns home only to find that it was, instead, his daughter he had signed away. When the devil comes, the girl washes herself clean and draws a circle around herself with chalk. The devil can't get near her and orders the miller to remove the maiden's water so that she cannot wash herself anymore. When the devil returns the next day, he finds the maiden weeping on her hands and keeping clean that way, so he orders the miller to cut off her hands. The miller complies. The third time, the devil finds that the daughter has continued to weep on the stumps of her hands and so kept herself clean. Thus, he loses his claim to her and must go away. Promising that she will live "in splendor" for the rest of her life, the miller urges his daughter to stay at home with him, but the girl responds by saying that she will wander out into the world and "depend on the kindness of people."

An angel accompanies the maiden and smoothes her way. Eventually, the maiden is confronted by a king, a gardener, and a priest who demand to know whether she is a human woman or a creature from the spirit world. Answering that she is "a poor creature forsaken by everyone except God," she impresses the king with her pioussness. The king marries her, has a set of silver hands made for her, and eventually goes away to war. In his absence, the queen gives birth to a boy she calls Sorrowful. The king's good mother writes to alert the king to his good fortune, but the devil intercepts the messenger and switches her letter for one that says the young queen has given birth to a changeling. The king responds sadly and lovingly, but the devil switches his letter for one that orders the old queen to kill the young mother and the child and to cut out the eyes and tongue of the young queen as proof that she had done his bidding. Instead, the old queen sadly urges the young woman to leave the castle with her child and never return. She cuts out the eyes and tongue of a doe and keeps them to show the king.

Cast out again, the young queen wanders deep into the forest until she finds a small cottage with a sign that says, "Free Lodging for Everyone." Entering here, she finds herself again protected by an angel of the Lord and, after years of pioussness and devotion, her hands grown back. The king, meanwhile, has returned from war only to discover the series of miscommunications that cost him his wife and child. He sets out to find them, traveling seven years without eating or drinking. He is kept alive by God until he eventually comes to the small cottage and finds his wife and child. Then the king and the "handless maiden" are married a second time and live happily ever after with the king's good mother.

6 A summary of "All Fur" is as follows: This story, like the "Maiden Without Hands," opens, not with a young girl, but with a king whose wife has died. Before she died, however, the wife made her husband promise that if he took another wife after her death that the new wife would be as beautiful as she was. (The story has told us earlier that the king's wife was so beautiful that "her equal could not be found anywhere on earth.") After a period of mourning, the king decides to marry again and searches for a woman as beautiful as his deceased wife. He has no luck. Time passes, and the king's daughter grows until one day he looks at her and realizes that she is as beautiful as her mother. Suddenly he falls passionately in love with her and says to his councillors, "I'm going to marry my daughter for she is the living image of my dead wife."

When the daughter hears this, she is horrified and immediately asks the king to perform three difficult tasks, thinking that the delay will cool his ardor. But the king merely requires his servants to perform the tasks, and they are completed with little difficulty. So the daughter runs out into the forest with only a nutshell into which she has put a gold ring, a gold spinning wheel, and a golden reel. Also in the nutshell are the dresses she had ordered her father to make: one as bright as the sun, another as bright as the moon, and a third as bright as the stars. Finally, the daughter puts on the cloak that she had ordered her father to make: it is made out of 1,000 kinds of fur.

The daughter sleeps in a hollow tree in the forest, but in the morning she is caught by a king who is out hunting and who brings her back to his castle to be a servant. Inside the castle, she sweeps the ashes in the kitchen and sleeps in a closet under the stairs. She lives there "for a long time in dire poverty." One day the king holds a ball, and All Fur asks to be allowed to stand outside and watch. The cook allows her to go on the condition that she return in time to make the king's soup. So she goes into her closet, washes the soot off her face, puts on the dress as bright as the sun, and goes to the ball, where everyone makes way for her, and the king himself dances with her, entranced by her beauty. But when the dance is over, she flees back to her closet, changes back into her coat of fur, smears soot on her face, and goes into the kitchen to make the king's soup. She drops the gold ring into the soup, and after the king has eaten the soup, which is the best he has ever tasted, and has found the gold

ring, which piques his curiosity, he demands to meet the servant who has prepared the soup. But to all his questions, All Fur only answers that she is "good for nothing but to have boots thrown at her head" and that she knows nothing of the ring.

The next time the king holds a ball, the same thing happens, only this time All Fur wears the dress as bright as the moon and puts the gold spinning wheel in the soup. Again the king asks All Fur who she is and what she knows of the golden spinning wheel, and again All Fur replies evasively. The third time the king has a ball, All Fur appears wearing the dress as bright as the stars. Only now the king is ready for her and slips a gold ring on her finger before she can get away. She is late to make the soup, so she merely puts her furry cloak over the dress, and when the king asks to see her, he sees the ring and tears the cloak off her, so it is clear that she is the beautiful woman he has been looking for and not a mere servant girl. "Unable to conceal herself any longer," All Fur is married to the king, "and they live happily together until their death."

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