

"Fathers and Daughters"

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[(essay date 1991) *In the following essay, McGlathery explores the erotic implications of the father-daughter relationship in the romantic folktales of the Brothers Grimm, Giambattista Basile, and Charles Perrault, highlighting common plot scenarios.*]

As the stories discussed thus far show, emotional involvement between parents and children is a frequent object of portrayal in folktales. That this is especially true of the romantic tale should come as no surprise, for in love plots generally the requisite hindrance to the fulfillment of young desire often takes the form of parental objection or intervention. There are surprises to be found here, however. In particular, the romantic folktale offers the possibility of hinting, with seeming innocence, at erotically tinged undercurrents in the relationship between parent and child that do not lend themselves to tasteful direct portrayal.

Fairy tale romance often depicts the child's first experience of leaving home and venturing out on its own, usually in connection with choosing a mate. In the stories of the brother and sister type, resistance to the taking of this step is reflected in a desire to return to the bosom of the family or, failing that, to retain the devoted company of one's siblings. Thus, we have seen how Hansel and Gretel, while prepared to survive together in the forest if need be are overjoyed at being able to live with their father, and how the sister in "**The Seven Ravens**" succeeds in restoring her brothers to human form and bringing them home with her. Or when the situation at home precludes returning there--as in "**The Twelve Brothers**," "**The Six Swans**," "**The Little Lamb and the Little Fish**," and "**Little Brother and Little Sister**"--the siblings set up housekeeping together elsewhere or the sister marries and the brother joins the new household.

The aspect of such stories that occupies us at present, though, is the nature of the parents' feelings toward the children in this crisis, especially those of a father toward a daughter. Although the frequent role of the evil stepmother primarily serves to provide occasion for the brothers and sisters to demonstrate their devotion to one another, the stepmother's intervention may also point to the question of the father's degree of attachment to the children. The answer is almost always that the father's love is unquestioned, but that the changed circumstances in his household render him powerless to take effective action. Thus, the father in "**Hansel and Gretel**" reluctantly agrees to abandon the children in the forest; his counterpart in "**The Six Swans**" fails in the attempt to hide the children from the stepmother; in "**Fundevogel**" the devoted father is simply away from the house when his lady cook--the stepmother-figure there--sets about to do the mischief; and in Basile's "Ninnillo and Nennella" the father's attempt to leave a trail for the children in the forest fails when a donkey eats the clover.

In the stories in which leaving home involves the prospect of marrying, the emotional situation is rendered potentially more complex by the possibility of a degree of erotic attachment between parents and children of the opposite sex. To the extent that the Beauty and the Beast type focused simply on the girl's panic--or surprising lack of it--at the thought of marrying, the issue of her possible attachment to the father was incidental, and was indeed precluded in a number of instances. The girl in "**The Hare's Bride**," for example, does not appear to have a father and simply runs home to mother. In "**Fitcher's Bird**," the girls' eagerness to get home likewise has nothing to do with thoughts of their father. And the sisters Snow-White and Rose-Red are the daughters of a widow--although this very lack contributes to their attachment to the bear as houseguest and avuncular playmate. In some of these stories, however, and in a number of others as well, the child's arrival at marriageable age provides the occasion for a display of intensified devotion between a parent and a child of the opposite sex, and occasionally even of jealous or incestuous passion on the part of the parent.

I. Paternal Devotion

The crisis in the relationship between a father and his daughter may involve nothing more than his parental concern that she make a proper marriage, often in connection with his desire to become a grandfather. Even these decidedly innocent depictions, however, place the father in a position of concerning himself with a matter of most intimate importance to the daughter, the prospect of surrendering her virginity. This degree of intimacy is heightened, moreover, by the almost-universal circumstance that the father is a widower, or that the mother at least plays little or no role or is not mentioned. Thus, as we have seen, the father in "**King Thrushbeard**" teaches his daughter humility by forcing her to marry a troubadour, while the father in Basile's "Pinto Smalto" finds himself accepting as his son-in-law a magical doll fashioned by the daughter's own hand. The charm of these portrayals lies largely in the wide range of possibilities provided by the ingredient of **faery tale** magic.

The father in "**The Frog King**" (*KHM [Kinder- und Hausmärchen]* 1) does not suggest that the daughter should marry the animal, to be sure, but he does insist that she keep her promises to the creature and is indeed delighted to accept him as son-in-law once he has been restored to princely human form; nor does he object to their having consummated the union prior to the wedding. The father may even unconsciously identify with the young man as having succeeded, under magical circumstances and against great odds, in gaining entry to the daughter's bedroom. By contrast, in "**The Iron Stove**" (*KHM* 127), where the daughter's promise concerns marriage, the father conspires with her to avoid fulfilling it. His shock is understandable, considering that she made the promise to an iron stove; but there are hints that the attachment between father and daughter is quite strong, especially on her part. She does not tell the father, for example, that the promise was made actually to a young man imprisoned in the oven who claimed to be a prince. One thus may imagine that she fears that the father would then have considered the fellow a suitable match and have insisted that she keep the promise. This impression that the princess is ambivalent about surrendering the role of daughter for that of wife is reinforced by her desire, after she has finally kept her promise to rescue the prince from the oven, to return home to say a few words to her father.

Unlike the daughters in "**The Frog King**" and "**The Iron Stove**," the girl in Basile's "Cannetella" (III, 1) avoids marriage, preserves her virginity, and apparently resumes her former role in her father's household. Here we have the case, as in "Pinto Smalto," that the father, wanting progeny, begs the daughter to marry, whereas she is devoted to remaining a virgin, and in this instance has indeed dedicated her virginity to the goddess Diana. The type of the haughty virgin, Cannetella attempts to avoid marriage by setting what she considers to be an impossible condition: the head and teeth of the prospective husband must be of gold. As fate would have it, the condition is satisfied by the king's mortal enemy, the sorcerer Fioravante, to whom the king, not recognizing him, gives the daughter as bride. Fioravante, though, does not appear interested in consummating the union, since he simply locks up Cannetella in a stall, intending to keep her there seven years while he is away. She is rescued by her father's loyal blacksmith; and, fearing that the sorcerer will attempt to abduct her, she has the father put seven iron doors on her room. This measure does not prevent Fioravante from gaining entry, but the spell he has placed on the castle is broken just in time to prevent the abduction. The sorcerer is slain, and the daughter's express desire now to remain forever with the father apparently achieves its fulfillment (though the story ends simply with the would-be abductor's death).

While it is hard to know what to make of Cannetella's adventure, the evident result is that the father is made to forget his desire for progeny and is rendered content to live out his days with the unmarried daughter, whom he clearly adores and who seems equally devoted to him. A possible reading of the story is thus that the sorcerer's role serves to fulfill a secret desire on the father's part for an excuse to retain the status quo in his relationship with the daughter, or a similar wish on the daughter's part, or both. The names of the characters, indeed, may hint at a subterranean eroticism: the father is king of "beautiful little hill" (*bello poggio*; cf. *mons veneris*) and sires the daughter with his wife Renzolla (*renna zolla* 'lump of sand?'), yet only with the magical aid of the goddess Siringa ('lilac' or 'syringe'), after whom he promises to name the daughter, in memory of the goddess's having transformed herself into a *canna* ('pipe', 'tube', etc.); from this imagery it would almost appear that he sired the daughter with the goddess herself, or at least with the goddess in mind). The name of the father's enemy perhaps suggests "flower in front" (*fiore avanti*), referring to the sorcerer's apparent contentment to abduct the girl without then possessing her sexually or, by extension, an unconscious desire on the part of the father himself to retain her virginal presence. Finally, the father's readiness, in the face of the magical threat from outside, to bar the way to the daughter's room with seven iron doors may hint that he is secretly happy to have just cause for joining her in her jealous guardianship of her virginity.

Indications of a particular attachment between father and daughter are provided in a different way in "**The Skilled Huntsman**" (*KHM* 111). Here the daughter marries in the end, quite happily and very much with her father's blessing. Yet there is the interesting circumstance that the means of identifying the young man who has rescued her from impending abduction by greedy giants include, among other things, two tokens of love and devotion between the king and his daughter that were found by the young huntsman in the tower bedroom where she was in a deep slumber: a pair of slippers under the bed, one with her name on it, the other with that of her father, and a large neckerchief with her father's name on the right side and hers on the left. Moreover, the father seems almost to have set the stage for the daughter's rescue by an eventual bridegroom, which may indicate a degree of anticipatory, vicarious identification with whoever is destined to become the lucky suitor. In an antechamber the young man finds a saber with the

king's name on it, which he uses then to slay the giants, and on a table next to the saber a sealed letter in which it is said that "whoever had the saber could slay anything he encountered." Also, there is the curious circumstance that the huntsman finds the slumbering maiden completely sewn into her nightshirt, suggesting that the father envisions her rescue as being such that she will not be violated. And the huntsman fulfills this evidently desired role, for he is content to cut off a small piece of the nightshirt: "Then he went away and allowed her to sleep on undisturbed."¹ That he also takes along all three of the items with the father's name on them--the saber, the slipper for the right foot, and the right-hand half of the neckerchief--indicates that the young man thinks of himself, if only unconsciously, as assuming the father's role as the maiden's fetishistic admirer, since slippers and neckerchiefs--not to forget nightshirts--belong to the more intimate sphere of a maiden's wardrobe.² Finally, the father's rage at the daughter's rejection of the--false--rescuer, an unbearably ugly captain, as bridegroom serves as a final hint, perhaps, that the "rescue" represents the fulfillment of a secret, guilty dream on the father's part.

Often, the father's devotion is a decidedly minor, though still not insignificant, element. In "**The Goosegirl at the Spring**" (*KHM* 179), the king banishes the youngest of his three daughters for having responded in a seemingly insulting, though actually quite devoted, way to his demand that the daughters express their love for him--a scene reminiscent of that in *King Lear*, of course. In "**Rumpelstiltskin**" (*KHM* 55) the girl's predicament is caused by her miller father's unfounded boast that she could spin straw into gold, a fantastic claim that likely is motivated as much by his excitement over her beauty as by his hope of gaining favor with the king; indeed, it is possible to view Rumpelstiltskin's magical role in getting the daughter out of this mess as related to her father's having gotten her into it, especially since the dwarf's demand to have her child bears resemblance to the concern of widower--and in that sense "bachelor"--fathers in folktale that their daughters produce children. And in "**Cinderella**" (*KHM* 21), the father's seeming lack of devotion in failing to protect Cinderella from the stepmother's abuse or otherwise to concern himself with his daughter stands in odd contrast to his awareness of her appeal. Twice, with playful teasing, Cinderella escapes the prince's pursuit. First she leaps into the dovecote (cf. the dove as a symbol of Aphrodite), and then into a pear tree (cf. the association of fruit trees with women's seductive wiles, and the resemblance of the pear's shape to that of a woman). Each time, on hearing the prince's report of this, the father asks himself, "Could it have been Cinderella?"

Portrayals of devotion between father and daughter are more pronounced and frequent in Basile's *Pentamerone*. Reference has already been made to the depictions in "Pinto Smalto" and "Cannetella." In Basile's version of the Cinderella story, "The Cat Cinderella" (I, 6), a perfidious governess exploits Zezolla's place in her father's affections to achieve her aim of becoming his wife. Then, Zezolla herself makes use of the father's devotion in getting him to bring home from his travels the magical present that enables her to win her prince, and thereby to escape the oppression of the governess become stepmother.

The circumstances of the magical adventure on which the daughter sends her father are particularly suggestive regarding emotional undercurrents in their relationship. In her misery, Zezolla is confronted by a dove (as symbol of Aphrodite?) who tells her that if she desires anything she should let it be known to "the fairy dove on the island of Sardinia." When, as then happens, the father (a prince) sets out for Sardinia on state business and inquires of Zezolla what

present he should bring her, she asks only that he give her greetings to the fairy dove and beg her to send something, but adds the warning that if he neglects to do this for her he will not be able to leave that island. The father does indeed forget and must be reminded of his promise through the good agency of--love's--magic, hinting at a need on his part to suppress all thoughts of the daughter and his paternal duty toward her, perhaps precisely because his devotion to her is secretly still quite intense. The result of his curious mission on the daughter's behalf is that she is provided with the magical means for nurturing and fulfilling her dream of marriage to a prince: through the date twig the father brings her (together with the magical implements for cultivating it), she obtains the magnificent raiment she uses to captivate the beloved.

In the Grimms' Cinderella story (*KHM* 21), the father's mission in bringing such a present to the daughter is likewise of crucial importance. The situation, though, is complicated by the fact that the magical twig's role results from its having been planted on her mother's grave, not from its having been the gift of an exotic fairy. Here the spirit of the dead mother, embodied in the white bird (a dove, evidently) that visits the hazel tree which has grown from the twig, serves as the agent of fulfillment of the girl's dream of marriage (cf. *in die Haseln gehen = fensterln* 'paying a nocturnal visit to a girl's room' and *Haselnusz* 'hazel nut' as a symbol of fertility). But the father's--unwitting--contribution to this magical adventure may suggest that he secretly harbors a devotion to the dead wife that has transferred itself to the daughter. In particular, Cinderella's condition that the hazel twig he is to bring her shall be the first one that knocks off his hat as he rides along on his trip points to something like loss of dignity, as though the mother or daughter were magically playing a trick on him or trying to make him "come to his senses." For her part, Cinderella seems initially to have no idea of why she wants such a twig (much less any guarantee that one will indeed happen to knock off the father's hat), and certainly no inkling that planting it on the mother's grave will lead to her winning a prince.³

The same sort of magical mission is found also in "The Little Slave Girl," the second tale of the Cinderella type in Basile's collection (II, 8).⁴ In this case, however, the relationship is that between a girl, Lisa, and her uncle, the baron of Selvascura ("Dark Forest"). Moreover, the uncle's feelings toward the niece are complicated by the fact that she is the daughter of his dead young sister, Lilla, to whom he was most devoted, who conceived the child in an unusual and magical fashion during a game with her playmates in which the girls were to jump over a rose without knocking off any of the petals. The pregnancy occurred as a result of Lilla's having cheated at the game, by swallowing the petal she had knocked off without the other girls' having noticed it. The implication is that the pregnancy was a punishment for having committed a shameful, dishonest, or forbidden act--an act, though, that bears some resemblance to the usual way of becoming pregnant, in view of the rose symbolism. This magical circumstance must contribute, one would assume, to a romanticization of Lilla in the brother's eyes, for whom she, as virgin mother, must appear as something like a secular counterpart to the Queen of Heaven. Indeed, since the baby was conceived without being sired, the baron may secretly fancy himself to be the niece's father "in the spirit," so to speak, as a sublimation of forbidden incestuous desire (see the tales of the brother and sister type).

This impression of the uncle as doting on the niece out of an incestuous devotion to his sister is reinforced by subsequent magical events in the story. As a result of a fairy's curse at her christening (the motif especially familiar from the Sleeping Beauty story), Lisa, having reached

the age of seven, dies when her mother forgetfully leaves the comb in her hair with which she has been grooming her (cf. the use of this motif in the Snow White story). The girl's corpse is placed inside seven crystal boxes, fitted within one another, and then put in a remote room of the castle. Her mother, Lilla, soon dies out of grief over her loss. That Lilla, on her deathbed, makes her brother promise never to open the room containing the crystal coffins, as she gives him the key to it, implies that she senses he will feel the urge to do just that, out of passionate adoration of the niece, the magically conceived offspring and image of his beloved sister. (The uncle is thereby placed somewhat in the position of the wife or potential bride in the stories of the Bluebeard type.) That it is instead the wife he takes, after a year of grieving over the loss of his sister, who succumbs to the temptation does not lessen the suspicion that the uncle is passionately devoted to the niece. On the contrary, the wife's surrender to curiosity about the forbidden room results in her jealous belief--surely not so very wide of the mark--that the baron has been worshipping the beautiful dead maiden, who has now magically become fully grown (the crystal boxes have grown right along with her).

It is at this point that "The Little Slave Girl"--which, as we have seen, combines elements of the Sleeping Beauty, Bluebeard, and Snow White stories--becomes the Cinderella type. Having inadvertently revived the girl, in her jealous rage, by grabbing her hair and pulling her out of the coffin, the uncle's wife abuses her and turns her into a kitchen maid. On his return from a hunting trip, the uncle does not recognize Lisa, whom the wife presents to him as an African slave girl. When the baron then goes off on another journey, Lisa asks him to bring back three presents for her--a doll, a knife, and a sharpening stone--and warns that should he forget to do her bidding, he will be prevented from completing the trip.

As then becomes clear, Lisa's request reflects her thoughts--perhaps only unconscious--of her uncle as her potential angel of rescue. In the kitchen she repeatedly laments her fate to the doll as though it were a live person, demanding from it a response. When the doll does not answer, she sharpens the knife and threatens to kill it, whereupon the doll gives the--evidently desired--reply that it has heard her better than a deaf person (meaning the uncle?). Finally, the uncle overhears the niece speaking in this manner to the doll and looks through the keyhole into the kitchen. This time, though, Lisa threatens to kill herself if the doll does not answer. The uncle, who has recognized her from the story she has been telling to the doll, kicks open the door, takes the knife, restores the niece to her blossoming beauty, sends the wife back to her relatives, and marries the niece to a young man of her choice. Thus, in the end the uncle has returned to a bachelor life such as he led prior to his sister's death. And most important, his relationship to the beloved niece has been restored. To be sure, he has lost his status as her guardian and custodian, but he has surely gained an even greater place in her affections for having served as her angel of rescue.

Similarly interesting, though rather incidental, depictions of paternal devotion are found in other tales of Basile's collection. In the frame story itself, the tale of Princess Zoza's love for Prince Thaddeus of Roundfield, there is the example of a father who, being a widower, desires nothing more than to see his beautiful daughter laugh. He attempts to cure her melancholy by having a fountain of oil built to amuse her with the sight of people hopping around it to avoid soiling their clothes. The indirect result is that the princess soon turns her thoughts to marrying, a development which suggests that such serious-mindedness in a girl is a sign of latent desire and

that the father is bound to lose her someday to a husband. In this sense, then, a father's passionate desire to see his daughter laugh involves something of a secret, forbidden wish to have her relate to him as to a lover. In another story, "Peruonto" (I, 3), the father reacts to his daughter's unexplained pregnancy with a rage colored by irrational thoughts of himself as having been thereby not only dishonored but cuckolded as well. He tells his council, "You all know already that the moon of my honor has gotten horns." Ultimately, the father becomes reconciled to his new role as grandfather, as does the father in "The Raven" (IV, 9), a sorcerer who at the end arrives in a cloud just in time to prevent his daughter from throwing herself from a window and to explain that all of the magical adventures that have beset her, her husband, and his brother were wrought by him as punishment for the brothers' abduction of her and for her susceptibility to the temptation of fine raiment that led to it.

II. Jealous Passion

In the stories discussed above, we have already seen elements or tinges of jealous passion intruding occasionally into otherwise innocent feelings of paternal devotion. There are, however, certain tales in which the father's feelings about the daughter, or his actions in connection with her role as bride, exceed the bounds of propriety. This is perhaps most evident in those stories in which the father one way or another becomes involved in what transpires in the bridal chamber on the wedding night. To be sure, in "**Hans My Hedgehog**" (*KHM* 108) this involvement occurs at the bridegroom's request: he tells the old king that he should have four men stand guard before the door and make a large fire, in which they are to burn the skin the hedgehog will shed just before he climbs into the marriage bed. Once this has happened and Hans is lying in the bed "completely in human form, but ... black as coal as though he had been burned," the king calls for his physician, who washes the bridegroom "with good salves and covers him with ointments" so that he is transformed into a handsome young man, very much to the daughter's delight. In "**The Two Royal Children**" (*KHM* 113), though, a father's jealous love of his daughters, and accompanying envy of the suitor as prospective bridegroom, is indicated by his condition that if the young prince is to have one of the daughters to wife, he must remain awake in her bedroom for nine hours--from nine in the evening to six in the morning--without falling asleep. The--ironic--implication of the father's odd demand may be that he imagines that in this way the young man will be prevented from "sleeping" with the daughter and will thus have to suffer the torments of unfulfilled desire.

As it happens, the eldest daughter and the two younger ones after her trick the father by having the statues of St. Christopher standing in their rooms answer each hour for the young man, who thereby passes the test despite having fallen asleep in the girls' bedrooms (there is no indication that he engages in any intimacy with them, except the laconic reports that he "laid himself on the threshold"). That the father, each of the first two times, goes back on his word by refusing to give the daughter to the prince in marriage and by making him repeat this great accomplishment with the next youngest daughter reinforces the impression that the king harbors a forbidden love for the daughters, as does the circumstance of his hourly visits outside the bedroom doors to insure that the suitor is still awake, and that he subsequently sets three further seemingly impossible tasks once the prince has passed the original test with each of the three girls in succession. Moreover, the presence of a statue of St. Christopher, the guardian saint for children, in the bedroom of each of the girls suggests that the father may think of them as susceptible to the

temptations of desire (St. Christopher, if not Daddy, will see what you are doing in your bedrooms), as does the fact that the younger the daughter, the larger her St. Christopher's statue, especially since it is the youngest daughter who proves the most "fetching"--both in the appeal she holds for the prince and in her determination to win him as husband. This impression of the statues' role is strengthened, if anything, by the girls' use of St. Christopher as accomplice in their deceit of the jealous father.

In Basile's *Pentamerone* there are several stories in which the father's attention similarly becomes focused on the daughter's bedroom or on the bridal chamber. The father in "The Beetle, the Mouse, and the Cricket" (III, 5) stipulates that, although Nardiello, the simpleton son of a rich farmer, has met the challenge of making his melancholy daughter laugh, the marriage will be valid only if the youth succeeds in consummating it within the space of three nights. The king, who does not consider Nardiello a suitable mate for a princess, then slips him a sleeping potion each night to prevent the marriage's consummation. In "The Serpent" (II, 5) the king, who has similarly been forced to betroth his daughter to an unwanted suitor (in this case understandably so, since it is a snake), peers in through the keyhole to discover what transpires on the wedding night, and then breaks down the door in order to do away with the snakeskin that the bridegroom has shed in emerging as a handsome prince. And in "Sapia Liccarda" (III, 4) a rich merchant, fearing that his daughters might invite young men into their bedrooms while he is away on a business trip, boards them up in the house--but to no avail, of course.

One of the most intriguing examples of a father's resistance to the thought of his daughter marrying is found in "**Old Rinkrank**" (*KHM* 196). A king has a glass mountain built and tells his daughter's beloved that whoever can succeed in running over the mountain without falling can have his daughter to wife. Out of a burning desire to be wed to her beloved, the princess eagerly offers to join him in attempting this feat, in order to catch him should he begin to fall. The result is that she falls, the mountain opens up, and she disappears into it, becoming the prisoner of an old man with a long gray beard (the title role) who tells her she must choose between becoming his maidservant and being killed. As the years pass, their relationship develops into something like that of an old married couple, though their cohabitation remains chaste. Eventually, she escapes from the gnomish captor and is reunited with the father and the beloved. The father, daughter, and her beloved succeed in killing Old Rinkrank and, made rich by his gold and silver, live happily on together.

Is there a secret, or ironic, connection between the roles of the father and the gnome, who is perhaps a projection of the father's guilt over a subterranean desire to steal the daughter's youth by keeping her for himself? Rinkrank cohabits--celibately--with the girl until she has grown old; then, the time for jealous love on a father's part having passed, the father, daughter, and bridegroom live happily together under the same roof.

In a number of stories depicting a father's feelings about a daughter, the focus is on the circumstances of her birth. In "**The Twelve Brothers**" (*KHM* 9) the father, passionately hoping that, contrary to superstition, thirteen will be his lucky number and his wife will finally bear him a daughter, has coffins made for his twelve sons, so that the child may be his sole heir, should it be a girl. The impression is thus created that from the outset he has been yearning to have a daughter and therefore resents the sons, whose successive births have brought him a series of a

dozen disappointments.⁵ As we have noted, there is a similar, though less drastic, portrayal at the beginning of "**The Seven Ravens**" (*KHM* 25), where the father, who has yearned for a daughter, is so aggrieved over the prospect that the baby girl might die that he utters the fateful wish that his seven sons be transformed into ravens when they fail to return immediately with water for her emergency baptism. One also finds cases in which the wish for a daughter is fulfilled in an almost fantastic manner, recalling, say, Athene's springing full-grown from the head of Zeus. Thus, in a variant opening of the Snow White story, a count has no sooner expressed the wish, as he is out riding with his wife in their carriage one winter day, that he might have a daughter with skin as white as snow, etc., than such a girl indeed appears, as if by magic, at the side of the roadway.⁶ And in Basile's "Viola" (II, 3) an ogre, having emitted a loud fart and then discovered a beautiful young maiden standing behind him, imagines that he has sired her in this manner and dotingly takes her in as his daughter.

There are, to be sure, exceptions to the rule that fathers in romantic folktales are depicted as being devoted to their daughters. In "**Rapunzel**" (*KHM* 12), the father does not display any remorse over having to surrender the baby daughter to the hag, to whom he has promised his pregnant wife's child in exchange for the rampion required to satisfy the wife's lust for that leafy salad vegetable. And in "**The Robber Bridegroom**" (*KHM* 40), the miller offers no objection to his daughter's going out alone to visit the fiancé's house in the forest, at the latter's insistence. The points of these stories, though, lie elsewhere.

In the tales of the Sleeping Beauty type, depiction of the father as longing for a daughter becomes related to a crisis involving her eventual arrival at marriageable age. The father's yearning in "**Little Briar-Rose**" (*KHM* 50) is answered by a frog's announcement to the queen, as she is bathing, that she will give birth to a daughter before the year is out (a travesty, perhaps of the Annunciation to Mary?). The ironic point of this "miraculous" conception is perhaps that with a passion so intense wishing alone might suffice to produce a pregnancy, or even that the king's desire is more to obtain a daughter than to sleep with his wife. The matter of the hag's curse of the baby girl, and the twelfth fairy's amelioration of it, may likewise be viewed as secretly related to the father's doting wish for a daughter since the result is that, befitting a princess, the girl remains ignorant of the onerous distaff chore of spinning. She is thereby also prevented from indulging in the traditionally concomitant pastime of building romantic castles in the air (cf. German *spinnen* in the sense of "fantasizing"). And, most important, she does not take a husband when she reaches marriageable age, but remains in the stage of blossoming maidenhood for fully a hundred years.⁷

The intensity of the father's devotion to the daughter is more evident in two versions of the Sleeping Beauty tale found in Basile's collection. In "Sun, Moon, and Talia" (V, 5), when the girl, in fulfillment of the curse, falls down as though dead, the grieving father locks up her corpse in the sylvan palace where they have been living together and leaves, never to return, in the hope that he might thus forget the great misfortune that has befallen him. At her birth, the father--her mother is not mentioned--gave her the name Talia (i.e., Thalia, Greek *Thaleia* 'the blossoming one'), testifying no doubt to his yearning for a daughter and his anticipation of her arrival at maidenhood. Once Talia has fallen into the deathlike sleep and the father leaves, he plays no further role in the story.

The subsequent events, however, concern a similarly intense passion for the daughter on the part of another older man, a king who is unhappily married. While out hunting one day he discovers the seemingly dead girl and, filled with passionate desire, carries her to a bed in the abandoned palace, "and plucked the fruits of love," as we are told. When he later returns, he finds that she is alive and has given birth (while still in the deathlike sleep) to fraternal twins (a boy and a girl), and he promises to come back for them. The degree to which the girl represents for him an ideal beloved is attested by his subsequent mumbling of her name and those of their children (Sun and Moon) in his sleep, thereby leading to his wife's discovery of his infidelity. The king then, in turn, discovers his wife's plan to do away with the rival and her offspring (she intends to have the children fed to him). He has her thrown on the fire she has prepared for Talia, and lives happily ever after with the beloved and their children.

One suspects that the fulfillment of the king's passion may be in some sense an ironic substitute for similar fulfillment of the part of the aggrieved father, especially since the father's departure from the scene is followed immediately by the king's entry into the story. Had the father acted as this king does upon his discovery of the seemingly dead maiden, he would of course have violated the incest taboo, whereas this king is guilty simply of an act of adultery rendered excusable in view of his wife's evil or jealous nature. At the same time, though, the king's deed amounts to a form of rape and of necrophilia, so that a degree of vice attaches to it after all. His act is thus not so very different from the case in which the father, had he not left the secluded palace immediately after the daughter's apparent death, might have succumbed to the same temptation. The odd circumstance that the father does not bury Talia further suggests that his departure forever from the castle was the product not only of grief but of secret fear that the same passionate devotion that renders him incapable of consigning her remains to the grave might cause him to violate her corpse.⁸ This possibility, though, is otherwise not indicated in the text, and thus remains pure conjecture.

In Basile's other tale of this type, "The Face" (III, 3), one does not actually have a *sleeping* beauty. Indeed, only the opening of this story belongs to that type, and as such constitutes rather a travesty of it. Here it is made quite clear that the mysterious danger awaiting the daughter is, first and foremost, simply her arrival at womanhood, with the attendant awakening of desire. And the father responds in a transparently jealous or possessive way, building a tower to house the daughter after it has been prophesied that she is in danger of having "the main sluice of life (*la chiavica maestra della vita*) uncorked by the thighbone of an animal (*per un osso maestro*)."⁹ The effect of her incarceration with twelve ladies-in-waiting and a governess and of the king's order that only meat with no bones be brought to her is, if anything, to fan the flames of desire. She flirts shamelessly with the first eligible male she spies from her tower and promises on the spot to run off with him. The magical means of her rescue, not surprisingly, is a bone (a thighbone that a dog brings into her tower); and she immediately rides off with her prince.

The coupling of a father's wish for a daughter with the prospect that she will then leave him is quite plain in another of Basile's stories, "The Three Crowns" (IV, 6), where a king hears a voice ask him whether he prefers to have a daughter who would flee from him or a son who would destroy him. The fact that this voice actually leaves him no choice makes one suspect that he secretly wishes for a daughter. Once the girl is born, he locks her up until he has arranged to marry her off. But the moment she is released from captivity, the prophecy nonetheless comes

true, as she is carried off by a stormy gust of wind. This magical event, which prevents her marriage to the bridegroom her father has selected for her, may project her resentment of the father's possessive control of her destiny. In any case, the eventual result of her magical abduction--her marriage to a king whom she, disguised as a boy, has served as a page--suggests that her experience of having been locked away by the father made her yearn all the more to bask in the devotion of an older man. The effect of the mysterious, magical prophecy made to the father is thus to ensure that he will succeed in alienating and thereby losing the daughter, just as in the Sleeping Beauty story the father's dotting concern to keep the daughter innocent of anything having to do with spindles ensures that when she first encounters one she will be all the more drawn to it. In this sense, we are dealing in each instance with the proverbial self-fulfilling prophecy.

In yet another of Basile's tales, "The Flea" (I, 5), the devotion that fathers in folktale commonly exhibit toward daughters is transferred to a pet flea. Since the father's fascination with the flea, however, becomes entwined with the question of whom--and whether--the daughter shall marry, it may be suspected that the flea is in some measure a substitute for the daughter. The father's involvement with the flea begins one day when he discovers it biting him on the arm and is about to kill it, but instead suddenly develops an infatuation with the creature. He feeds it daily with blood from his arm until it has grown quite large (here one may be reminded that the daughter represents his own flesh and blood that he has nurtured and raised to maturity). He then--implausibly--has the flea skinned and the hide tanned, and offers to give the daughter in marriage to any man who can guess from what animal the hide has been taken. It is at this point, particularly, that an association of the flea with the daughter, and a hint of repressed jealous passion on the father's part, suggests itself. The father must consider it practically impossible that anyone should be capable of guessing the truth; and he therefore would have a rationalization, of sorts, for not giving the daughter away in marriage. In this sense, the daughter is the pet whom he has nurtured with his life's blood and then "skinned," or cheated, in hopes of retaining possession of her.

As the examples discussed thus far indicate, a father's passionate love for a daughter is a subject that, in view of the incest taboo, calls for delicate handling and veiled depiction. Portrayed openly, the matter is simply too offensive. There is, for example, in a tale of the brother and sister type, "**The White Bride and the Black Bride**" (*KHM* 135), the case of the widower king who wanted to remarry only if the woman were as beautiful as his dead wife, and then was fortunate enough to find her exact image, yet still more beautiful, in the young sister of his coachman. Thus, one is dealing in that case only with spiritual, as opposed to physical, incest. There is, however, one great exception to this avoidance of portraying a father's openly incestuous desire for his daughter. And the tale in question is represented in all three classic literary collections of folktales: in Basile, Perrault, and the Grimms.

In the Grimms' version of this story, "**Allerleirauh**" (*KHM* 65), a widower king conceives the mad plan of marrying his daughter.¹⁰ This forbidden, if not entirely unnatural, wish is motivated in part by lingering grief over the death of his beautiful wife, to whom he was passionately devoted. The dying spouse's request that he promise never to take another wife unless he should find a woman as least as beautiful as she is likely an expression of her confidence in the incomparability of her beauty, for the request makes sense only as indirect testimony to a desire

on her part that he not remarry (this is her explicit motivation in Perrault's version). The king's promise to the wife is likewise a confession of his eternal devotion, but it subsequently provides as well a justification for his assertion of his right to marry the daughter. In the context of the story, the circumstance of the wife's request and the king's promise offers an explanation of the secret desire that fathers feel toward their daughters. By the time a daughter has reached adolescence, the mother's beauty has begun to fade, or she is in any case no longer the nubile, virginal maiden with whom the father once fell in love (it is of course not necessary, as happens here, that the mother actually has died). The king's failure, during the years that the daughter is growing to adulthood, to find a prospective bride as beautiful as the dead wife may be counted as evidence that his secret desire is for the daughter. That such guilty passion is involved is also indicated by the likely element of repressed awareness in the father's failure to notice, until the daughter has reached marriageable age, that she is equal in beauty to her dead mother. At this point, in any event, the issue is joined. If the father does not marry the daughter, she will leave his household and wed another, as then happens in the ensuing course of the story.

The king's councillors react with horror to his announcement that he intends to wed the girl, admonishing him that "God has forbidden that a father should marry his daughter; nothing good can come of sin, and the kingdom will be dragged along into ruin." The daughter's horror at the prospect is all the greater, of course. Yet the plan she conceives for dissuading the king from his mad folly suggests that she is secretly delighted by the intensity of his passion. The extravagant request she makes as the condition for acceptance of his proposal of marriage amounts to an unconscious invitation to him to demonstrate the degree of his devotion. In stipulating that he must first provide her with three dresses--one as golden as the sun, one as silver as the moon, and one as shining as the stars--and then with a fur coat made from a piece of hide from each and every animal in his kingdom, she is making the sort of demand, only much exaggerated, that one might expect from a spoiled daughter or a haughty bride or vain courtesan. If the girl's secret, unconscious wish is to test how far the father's passion for her will carry him, it certainly is fulfilled; and once he has complied with her demands, she has no choice but to flee. The father's sinful passion is not punished, other than by the loss of the daughter, and with her flight from his castle he disappears from the story. This indicates that the opening episode is, in the last analysis, a roguishly comic depiction of certain aspects of the emotional crisis experienced by many a father and daughter with the latter's arrival at marriageable age.¹¹

In Perrault's and Basile's versions of the *Allerleirauh* story, the focus is so completely on the intensity of the father's passion, and the disgust and revulsion it produces in the daughter, that there is little reason to suspect that she may secretly share his dream. The father in Perrault's "Donkey-Skin" ("Peau d'Ane") displays not the least hesitation in squandering all the riches of his kingdom in the vain hope that the daughter will agree to marry him. In particular, he accedes immediately to her ultimate demand, born of desperation, that he sacrifice the source of his kingdom's wealth, a magical donkey in whose straw each morning golden coins are found (in place of the usual excremental matter). The king's willingness to have the miraculous donkey slaughtered so that the daughter might have its hide (hence Perrault's title) can fairly well be said to offer final proof, as it were, that the father's foolish passion has made an ass of him. Meanwhile, the daughter in this version is removed from suspicion that she unconsciously desires to test the heat of the father's passion, insofar as it is not she herself but the fairy godmother from whom she seeks advice in her adversity who is responsible for suggesting the

series of demands to be made in an effort to dissuade him. Since the godmother, though, is possessed of supernatural powers, she may be seen to that extent as a creature of fantasy and a magical mentor. The advice she gives may therefore reflect, after all, a secret desire on the daughter's part to take the measure of her father's devotion.¹²

In Basile's version of the Allerleirauh story, "The She-Bear" (II, 6), the daughter has no opportunity to pose seemingly impossible demands that may satisfy a secret desire to know just how much the father is captivated by her. The father, enraged by her rejection of his proposal, simply orders her to come to his bedroom that evening to consummate the union. The matter of unrestrained and forbidden sexual passion is very much out in the open. As the old woman who serves here as the daughter's adviser puts it, the father, who is behaving like an ass (cf. the symbolism in Perrault's "Peau d'Ane" referred to above), would like this evening "to play the stallion." To punish the father for his outrageous demand and thereby also enable the daughter to escape the fate envisioned for her, the hag gives her a splinter which, when she puts it into her mouth, transforms her into a she-bear. The odd--though certainly most effective--character of this magical remedy likely represents a continuation of the sexual imagery in this episode, especially the hag's words about the father being an ass who would like to play the stallion. The father's unnatural command, in effect, reduces the daughter to the role of a concubine or female animal, since she is offered no choice in the matter. Were the daughter actually to join him in bed, she would feel herself, at best, to be no better than a she-bear.

As in Perrault's and the Grimms' versions of the Allerleirauh story, in Basile's "She-Bear" the new raiment, or in this case the transformed appearance of the daughter that formed a part of her efforts to defeat the father's plan to marry her subsequently plays an indispensable role in her captivation of her eventual husband. Here the princess's use of her magical appearance as an animal in winning her prince casts retrospective doubt on the complete purity or chasteness of her initial employment of this guise to thwart her father's plan. She appears to enjoy this role of female bear; at least she makes use of it in order to enter into a relationship with a prince as his pet. The prince, "finding himself confronted with this female bear, was about to die of fright; but then, seeing that the animal, all the while crouching and wagging its tail like a little pet female dog, was circling around him, he regained his courage." The implication is that the girl's acquiring of the ability to change herself into a she-bear, which she first used to defeat her father's immoral purpose, is in part a symbolic representation of her nubility. With this new, magical role as she-bear the princess has simultaneously acquired the mating instinct and mastered the art of flirtation. It is as though the father's mad plan to make her his wife served to awaken the woman in her, in this sense.

III. Sons and Mothers

Basile's "She-Bear" is of further interest for its depiction of a mother's involvement in her son's choice of a bride. The portrayal of the mother-son relationship, in this aspect, is much less common in the romantic folktale than the like situation between father and daughter. In Basile's story, the matter is highly comical. The intensity of the mother's devotion is evidenced by her consent, at her lovesick son's request, to allow the pet bear to serve as his nurse. Preziosa is thereby able to demonstrate her own devotion to the prince and her virtue as a prospective wife, thus winning the mother's blessing for their union. Most striking, though, is that Preziosa's

resumption of her human form occurs in connection with her granting of the mother's request (at the son's urging) that she kiss the prince in his sick bed to keep him from fainting, out of unfulfilled desire. As the she-bear is kissing him, the splinter falls out of her mouth--"I don't know how," so the narrator roguishly avers. Thus, the mother's role here, like that of the father in a number of stories of the animal suitor type, is that of matchmaker or go-between (the type of the *ruffiana* from the *commedia dell'arte*); and the fun concerns the point that a doting mother would accept even a female animal as a daughter-in-law should this be her beloved son's passionate wish. A variation on this theme of the mother as go-between is found in another of Basile's stories, "Belluccia" (III, 6), where the mother helps the son discover whether the youth who has been sent to keep him company during an illness, and with whom he has fallen in love at first sight, is not in reality a maiden.

Portrayals of mothers bending their efforts to see that their sons are not disappointed in love appear to be lacking in the Grimms' collection. There are, however, depictions of true and tender love between a mother and a son. In "**The Little Shroud**" (*KHM* 109) a mother grieves so over her seven-year-old son's death that he appears to her in his funeral dress and begs her to desist, because her tears prevent the shroud from drying and he thus can find no peace in the grave. Prior to this scene, the child returned from the grave at night to visit the places where in life he had sat and played, and when the mother wept, he wept too. A similarly touching love between mother and son is depicted, as we have seen (Chap. 1), in "**The Juniper Tree**" (*KHM* 47). There the mother's wish for "a child as red as blood and as white as snow" is fulfilled with the birth of a son (not a daughter, as in the Snow White story). Her joy at his birth is so great, though, "that she dies" and, according to her wish, is buried beneath the juniper tree under which her cutting of her finger while peeling an apple gave rise to the wish for a child. Moreover, she appears to have identified with that tree during her pregnancy as she watched it, too, blossom and bear fruit. When the son then suffers under the resentment and abuse of his stepmother, his half-sister Marleenken's devotion compensates him for the loss of the mother whom he never knew. The association of the stepsister with the dead mother is suggested, however, only after the stepmother has murdered the boy. Marleenken ties up his bones "in her best silken scarf" and lays them on the grass under the juniper tree: "And when she had laid them there, she felt at once so much better and did not weep any longer. Then the juniper tree began to stir, and the branches spread themselves apart and then came back together again, just as when someone is so very overjoyed and does the same with his hands." A mist came forth out of the tree, and out of the mist a beautiful bird that "sang so magnificently and flew high into the air; and when it was gone the juniper tree became again as it was before; and the scarf with the bones was gone. Marleenken though became quite happy and delighted, just as though the brother were still alive." The half-brother's reincarnation as a bird and his subsequent return to human form, after his revenge on the stepmother, thus result from a collaboration between Marleenken and the dead mother, and as a token of their shared devotion to him. The half-sister therefore appears almost to be the dead mother's agent, as the boy's angel of rescue (cf. *Marleenken* as "Little Mary Ann," i.e., as a little heavenly and virginal mother).

Portrayals of a mother's reunion with her son in connection with his discovery of a bride are found in at least two of Basile's stories. In "The Padlock" (II, 9) there is, indeed, a hint that the mother's feelings for the son, on his arrival at manhood, involve a tinge of incestuous desire, since at the end we learn that the son's absence from home and his amorous involvement with his

eventual bride resulted from a witch's curse to the effect that he "should wander about far from his homeland until he might be embraced by his mother and the rooster would not crow any longer." The spell is broken only after the following events have occurred: the girl with whom he has slept finds her way unwittingly to his mother's castle; she gives birth to a beautiful son, whom her former lover comes mightily to adore; a lady-in-waiting overhears him exclaim during these secret visits, "Oh, my most beautiful little son, if my mother knew! She would wash you in a basin of gold; she would wrap you in swaddling clothes of gold. If the song of the roosters were silent, I would never leave you"; and the youth's mother, on hearing about this from the lady-in-waiting, has all the roosters in the city killed, and when the son returns the following night, she embraces him. As the narrator reports, "As soon as he found himself in his mother's arms, the spell was broken and his affliction was ended."

This enigmatic close of the tale suggests that the earlier developments in the story--which concern the youth's appearance to the girl at the well as a handsome Moorish slave boy, her seduction by him, his rejection of her when she contrives to discover his true appearance, and her subsequent wanderings while pregnant with his child--are the result of an emotional crisis regarding his attachment to his mother and his awakening sexual desire. What causes him to show himself again to the girl is the birth of the son, and evidently because the boy's arrival fills him with sweet memories of his relationship with his mother. The words of devotion he addresses to the infant son project his longing to be adored and embraced by his mother; and now that he has become a father, this proves indeed to be possible again. That the mother, though, first takes the precaution of seeing that all roosters in the town have been slaughtered suggests that she feels the danger of incestuous desire is still present. In any case, it would appear that the son had to become a father before the "curse" of an incestuous desire could be broken, laid to rest, or sublimated.

In Basile's other tale of a mother's happy reunion with her son, "The Dragon" (IV, 5), the nature of her relationship to the youth appears far less enigmatic, and seemingly quite innocent. Here the mother, Porziella, is protected from starvation and death, and ultimately released from solitary imprisonment, through the loyal efforts of a magical bird. The bird is actually a fairy whom Porziella, in turn, had saved from being dishonored by a satyr as she lay slumbering in a forest. The fairy's motivation in her efforts on Porziella's behalf is somewhat ambiguous, however. In rescuing her benefactress, the fairy also wins Porziella's son Miuccio as her husband. Moreover, it is odd that the fairy did not manage, or even attempt, to repay Porziella in kind by preventing the latter's violation by the misogynous king of Altamarina. Instead, she only restrained the king's arm when he attempted to slay Porziella with a dagger after he had raped her.

Miuccio is the fruit of the king's violation of Porziella; and the fairy's secret feeding of her during her ensuing imprisonment makes possible the boy's birth and his survival. Therefore, we may suspect that desire for an ideal mate lies behind the fairy's actions. When Miuccio reaches adolescence, he is "adopted" by the king as his page. The queen's envy of this rival for the king's affection is thereby aroused; and this paves the way for the happy ending. The envious queen is destroyed; the king marries Porziella; the fairy asks, as her reward, to have Miuccio as her husband; and the two couples presumably live happily ever after.

The whole of the fairy's involvement in the story may be read, too, as magical wish fulfillment on Porziella's part. Her rescue of the fairy from violation by the satyr may hint at virginal sexual fantasy in anticipation of her own rape by the king. The fairy's restraint of the king when he is about to slay Porziella after having violated her may reflect a fantasy on Porziella's part that her beauty alone would suffice to save her from death (the king, at least, believes that it is Porziella's beauty that held back his arm). Her rescue through the magical powers of the fairy may represent a dream of being saved by her son. And the fairy's marriage to Miuccio may fulfill Porziella's own vicarious wish.

In the stories discussed above, the mother tends to be instrumental in bringing about the son's marriage to his beloved. One also finds, however, the opposite situation in which the mother somehow stands in the way of the son's further involvement with, or marriage to, the maiden of his choice. This potentiality of the mother-son relationship is usually depicted in connection with the motif of the false bride. Thus, in "**The Drummer**" (*KHM* 193), a youth who has just rescued a maiden from imprisonment by a witch takes leave of the girl to go home so that he may tell his parents where he has been. The girl warns him not to kiss his parents on the right cheek; but then, in his joy at seeing them again, he fails to think of her admonition. Having greeted his parents with that fateful kiss, he promptly forgets the beloved entirely. The mother meanwhile has selected a bride for him; and as a devoted and obedient son, he agrees to marry the girl of his mother's choosing. This same situation is found in Basile's "The Dove" (II, 7). Here, though, it is specifically a kiss from the youth's mother that causes him to lose all conscious memory of the maiden he has just rescued from the clutches of a jealous witch (in this case, the witch is the girl's mother). Moreover, the girl's mother, because of her own possessiveness regarding the daughter, is responsible for that result, because it is she who places a curse on the youth to the effect that with the first kiss Prince Nardaniello receives--from whomever--he will forget his beloved Filadoro completely.

In another of Basile's tales, "The Golden Tree Stump" (V, 4), the youth's mother--here it is she who is the witch--sets about openly to destroy his desired beloved and attempts to marry him to a repulsive bride who brags about her promiscuity. The youth, Tuoni-e-lampi ("Thunder-and-Lightning"), takes both his beloved and the revolting bride to the wedding chamber, slays the bride with a knife, and sleeps instead with Parmetella. His mother, on discovering this (and that her sorceress sister and her child have perished in an oven) repeatedly rams her head into a wall until she has burst her skull. Finally, in Basile's "The Face" (III, 3) another case of direct intervention by the mother ends tragically. On the wedding night, the son stabs himself after having kissed the false bride and then having recognized, in the page whom he had invited into the bridal chamber, the true bride (she died of a broken heart at witnessing his betrayal of her love). The mother, having already picked out a wife for the son, had summoned him home with a letter claiming she was on the point of death--a letter that arrived when the lovers were, as the storyteller reported, "in the midst of their pleasures."

As we have observed, depiction of fathers' attachments to their daughters is more typical of the romantic stories in Basile's collection than in the Grimms' tales of love. Moreover, such depictions as are found in *Grimm's Fairy Tales* tend to occur in stories that the later German collection has in common with the earlier Neapolitan one, such as Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, and Thousandfurs (Allerleirauh). The reason is surely that the subject easily offended the

sensitivities of a later age and more northern, puritanical climate. In late Renaissance Italy, by contrast, a father's, guardian's, or uncle's foolish love for his pretty daughter, ward, or niece became the dominant subject for comedy. Pantalone, the old fool in love, was the principal figure in the *commedia dell'arte* of Basile's time.

While magic usually plays a role in Basile's tales of the father and daughter type, it is not employed to veil the father's passion nearly to the extent it does in the Grimms' stories. The Neapolitan Renaissance author depicts the older man's devotion or jealous love openly as well as more frequently. In Basile's Sleeping Beauty tale, "Sun, Moon, and Talia," as in the Grimm and Perrault versions, the daughter pricks her finger and falls into a magical, deathlike sleep. Basile, though, has the father and daughter in a more intimate relationship, living together in a secluded sylvan palace, while Perrault and the Grimms have her living with both parents in the father's royal residence. And in Basile's other story about a father's worry over a curse or prophecy about his daughter, "The Face," the father goes so far as to lock her away in a tower. The Cinderella tale, meanwhile, represents a case in which the father's devotion emphasized in Basile's "The Cat Cinderella" has been transferred almost entirely to the dead mother in the Grimms' story, while Perrault completely did without this element in his version. Further, Basile employs the Cinderella story a second time, in "The Little Slave Girl," to depict an older man's devotion to a maiden, in this case an uncle's passion for his adored sister's daughter.

To be sure, both the Grimms' "**Allerleirauh**" and Perrault's "Donkey-Skin" baldly depict a father's incestuous love of his daughter, as did Basile earlier in "The She-Bear." Here the exception proves the rule, though, because this tale renders the father's passion less offensive as resulting from his grief over the death of his beautiful, beloved wife, with whose beauty only the daughter can compare. Moreover, Perrault and the Grimms made the fathers' feelings toward the daughter very tender. Thus, Basile's father does not bother to prove his devotion and try to win his daughter with gifts, as he does in the Grimms' and Perrault's versions, but simply and immediately orders the daughter to come to his bed.

Whereas the existence of a type of story focusing on a father's devotion to, or jealous love of, a daughter is evident, the same cannot be said for the theme of a mother's passion for a son. There are, to be sure, occasional depictions of at least innocent devotion of a mother to her son, as in the second half of Basile's "She-Bear"; and his "The Padlock" and "The Dragon" may hint enigmatically at even deeper, illicit emotional currents. Yet while fathers are expected, by popular tradition, to be sweet on daughters and mothers to dote on sons, and while, in a patriarchal society, a father might be excused or accepted as a fit subject for comedy if his passion for the daughter exceeded the bounds of propriety, depiction of a mother's incestuous feelings toward a son was wholly unacceptable, in the poetic imagination as well as in the prose of everyday life in early modern Europe (and basically remains so even today). Thus, in the *commedia dell'arte* the older woman's role was quite different from that of Pantalone, the older man chasing "sweet young things" who were usually his daughters, nieces, or wards. Instead, the older woman was typically the *ruffiana*, or matchmaking hag, who participated only vicariously in young love. This role as go-between, or facilitator, is indeed that played by the mother in Basile's "The She-Bear." The older woman's place in **fairy tale** romance, however, usually was involvement rather in the affairs of young maidens in love; and it is to the description and analysis of this role that we now turn.

Notes

1. In their notes the Grimms refer to another version in which the young huntsman impregnates the princess as she sleeps (in this version she is lying naked on the bed). On discovering that the daughter is pregnant, yet claims not to know by whom, the father has her thrown into prison. This version thus appears to lack the symbolic depiction of the father's devotion to the daughter, though it may, at the same time, carry an even stronger suggestion that he is preoccupied with her as an object of desire. See Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, ed. Rölleke, III, 192-93; and cf. Bolte and Polívka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, II, 503. As Maria Tatar has observed, the eroticism in this version of the tale "must have struck the Grimms as unsatisfactory"; see her *Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, p. 7.

2. Bruno Jöckel judged that the young huntsman loses his courage as prospective lover because the symbolism of the names on the slippers and neckerchief "leaves no doubt that the daughter is bound to her father by strong ties of love." Jöckel also calls attention to the somewhat contrary implication that the king was seeking a suitor for his daughter: "That the father's name becomes a threat to the huntsman precisely at the point when his passion makes possession of the daughter its object is understandable. Less clear, though, might be the resulting reversal of the position of the huntsman vis-à-vis the king, since through the letter the king made him, on the latter's entry into the castle, the executor of his child's fate, as it were." Jöckel also suggests that the girl's tender age, symbolized by her virginal sleep, may play a role in the huntsman's reticence as a lover: "What does more to prevent him from going further, her sleep--that is, the girl's immaturity--or his fear of her father, is hard to say." See Jöckel, *Der Weg zum Märchen*, pp. 101-2.

3. In Bruno Bettelheim's view, "Cinderella's asking her father for the twig she planned to plant on her mother's grave is a first tentative re-establishment of a positive relationship between the two." Bettelheim, though, interprets the story as depicting, ultimately, the process of becoming independent of one's parents: "If Cinderella is to become master of her own fate, her parents' authority must be diminished. This diminution and transfer of power could be symbolized by the branch knocking the father's hat off his head, and also the fact that the same branch grows into a tree that has magical powers for Cinderella." See *Uses of Enchantment*, pp. 256-57.

In the Grimms' first edition (1812), the father had no role in procuring the twig. The mother, on her deathbed, tells the daughter to plant a tree, and indeed why she should do so: when she shakes the tree she shall have whatever she wishes, or help in necessity or adversity. In her grief over her mother's death, the girl waters the tree with her tears. Thus, in that version the focus, in this part of the story, is entirely on the devotion between the mother and daughter. See Rölleke, *Die älteste Märchensammlung*, pp. 298-317, esp. p. 299.

4. Folkloristic monographs on all known variants of the Cinderella story were done by Marian Roalfe Cox, *Cinderella: Three Hundred and Forty-Five Variants of Cinderella, Catskin, and Cap o' Rushes, Abstracted and Tabulated, with a Discussion of Mediaeval Analogues, and Notes*, with an introduction by Andrew Lang, Publications of the Folk-Lore Society, 31 (London: Folk-

Lore Society, 1892; reprint, Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1967), and, more recently, by Anna Birgitta Rooth, *The Cinderella Cycle* (Diss., Lund, n.d. [1951]; Lund: Gleerup, n.d. [1951]).

August Nitschke uses the Cinderella story to exemplify his historical-behavioral approach to folktales as a source of information about life in prehistoric times; see his "Aschenputtel aus der Sicht der historischen Verhaltensforschung," in Brackert, ed., *Und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind ...*, pp. 71-88.

5. The father's passion for the daughter is of course not the chief object of depiction, which is instead the girl's relationship with her brothers, although the father's mad desire for a daughter introduces the underlying theme of incestuous attachment. As Ruth Bottigheimer observed, from a feminist viewpoint, "The basic premise of 'The Twelve Brothers' is that disposing of the brothers will allow for a greater accretion of wealth and power to the sister. Therefore it is surprising that once this statement has set the whole tale moving, no more is heard about the father's (and mother's) kingdom, which the princess is to inherit"; see Bottigheimer, *Grimms' Bad Girls and Bold Boys*, p. 38. The explanation is that the incestuous yearning that seized the father has passed to the children, in the devotion of the brothers to their sister and hers to them.

6. See Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder- und Hansmärchen*, ed. Rölleke, III, 87-88.

7. For a similar interpretation of the father's role in "Dornröschen" as symbolically depicting "his romantic attachment to the daughter," see Jöckel, *Der Weg zum Märchen*, esp. p. 44: "the girl is hindered by her own father in that development which leads, after all, to another man." Bettelheim, meanwhile, takes the view that "the central theme of all versions of 'The Sleeping Beauty' is that, despite all attempts on the part of parents to prevent their child's sexual awakening, it will take place nonetheless"; see *Uses of Enchantment*, p. 230.

8. Bettelheim's interpretation of Basile's "Sole, Luna e Talia" is similar, but he sees the father's romantic attachment to the daughter, and the other king's attraction to her, as arising in response to seductive behavior on her part: "Might these two kings not be substitutes for each other at different periods in the girl's life, in different roles, in different disguises? We encounter here again the 'innocence' of the oedipal child, who feels no responsibility for what she arouses or wishes to arouse in the parent"; see *Uses of Enchantment*, p. 228.

The view that Basile's tale concerns incestuous and illicit desire is indirectly supported by Ester Zago's argument that Basile, here and in his Allerleirauh tale "L'orsa" (II, 6), de-emphasized these themes, compared with his possible sources, out of discretion and a personal reserve regarding sexual matters; see "Giambattista Basile: Il suo pubblico e il suo metodo," *Selecta: Journal of the Pacific Northwest Council on Foreign Languages* (formerly: *Proceedings of the Pacific Northwest Conference on Foreign Languages*), 2 (1981), 78-80.

9. For a psychoanalytic study of puberty rites as reflected in folktale, where girls are made outcasts, secluded, put in towers or in the care of an older woman, protected from imagined dangers, or instructed in the domestic arts, see Alfred Winterstein, "Die Pubertätsriten der Mädchen und ihre Spuren im Märchen," *Imago*, 14 (1928), 199-274.

10. As we know from their notes to another tale, "Das Mädchen ohne Hände" (*KHM* 31), the Grimms were familiar with a version of that story in which the father wants to marry his daughter. When she refuses, he personally cuts off her hands--and her breasts as well--and chases her off into the world. See Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, ed. Rölleke, III, 57-60; and cf. Bolte and Polívka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, I, 295-96. In the version the Grimms used in their collection, the father does not conceive a passion for the daughter, but instead unwittingly promises her to the devil (trying to get the daughter to commit incest with him, as in the other version, would amount to offering her to Satan, too). As noted earlier (Chap. 1), in Basile's related tale, "La bella dalle mani mozze" (III, 2), the girl has her manservant cut off her hands in order to thwart her brother's mad plan to marry her. The Grimms' "Das Mädchen ohne Hände" is cited by Renate Meyer zur Capellen as an example of how folktales reflect men's feelings about women, and the position of women, in a male-dominated society; see "Das schöne Mädchen: Psychoanalytische Betrachtungen zur 'Formwerdung der Seele' des Mädchens," in Brackert, ed., *Und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind ...*, pp. 89-119.

11. Jöckel makes a somewhat similar interpretation of the beginning of "Allerleirauh": "In our opinion ... the father represents for the daughter men in general, the representative of the male principle, toward which the girl must first have adopted a clear, and therefore affirmative, attitude before she goes about choosing for herself that man with whom she would like to share her life"; see *Der Weg zum Märchen*, p. 62.

12. An analysis of the story using deconstructionist notions of intertextuality was done by René Démoris, "Du littéraire au littéral dans 'Peau d'âne' de Perrault," *Revue des Sciences Humaines*, 166 (1977), 261-79.

Source: James M. McGlathery, "Fathers and Daughters." In *Fairy Tale Romance: The Grimms, Basile, and Perrault*, pp. 87-112. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991.

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