

**Between the Mother's Imaginary and the Father's Symbolic:
The Dialectic of Fragmentation and Aggregation in
Haydn Middleton's *Grimm's Last Fairytale***

*Hala Sami**

In his novel, *Grimm's Last Fairytale*, published in 1999, the British writer Haydn Middleton, who principally writes for juvenile readers, is particularly interested in interweaving history and fiction. "Novels," Middleton remarks in his author's notes, "arise out of the shortcomings of history... In creating this fiction based on the lives of the Brothers Grimm, I have tried to write a novel that is not in itself another shortcoming" (1999, 248). Middleton's aforementioned book, written for adults, was eventually nominated for "best novel" by the British Fantasy Society of the same year.

The novel weaves Grimm's life as a personal journey on the verge of expiration with the story of a country that is struggling with its political and national destiny, a country that oscillates between the hope of unification on one hand and the challenge of fragmentation on the other. The narrative begins in September 1863, a few days before the death of Jacob Grimm, the elder of the two famous brothers, on 20th September in Berlin, and includes reflections on Jacob's thoughts about his past life, recollections of some of the brothers' experiences, and their purpose for collecting, annotating, and occasionally revising the *Tales for the Young and Old* (1812). As Jacob spends his last days touring "the places where he once lived" (16), he experiences flashbacks and occasionally falls asleep and dreams of his life-story as connected to Giambattista Basile's "Sun, Moon and Talia" from the *Pentamerone* (1634) and Charles Perrault's "*La belle au bois dormant*," (1697), both of which are gruesome and macabre versions of the Grimm's "Sleeping Beauty." The very last stage of Grimm's life-journey unfolds against the backdrop of a series of wars and struggles between the German provinces and neighboring states, a period in German history that begins with the German struggle to obtain independence from a France ruled by Napoleon III in 1852 and ends just a few years before Otto Von Bismarck becomes the first Chancellor of the German

* Associate Professor of Comparative Literature, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University.

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Empire in 1871. The correlation between the history that takes place outside of the narrative and the dreams that drive the action inside the narrative supports Grimm's version of storytelling, here defined as the art of altering time and events to reveal a greater truth that affects both the conscious and the unconscious of the audience.

During Jacob Grimm's life, the country also witnesses the slow growth of an Industrial Revolution that begins with the simple modifications of inventions that temper the work previously performed with more primitive tools and ends with a radical transformation of human life. For purposes of this study, the case of the spinning wheel, an invention that led to more efficient production of cloth, provides an important example. In his famous essay "The Storyteller," Walter Benjamin cautions against the loss of this invention: "For storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when the stories are no longer retained. It is lost because there is no more weaving and spinning to go on while they are being listened to" (1968, 91). Later, in an interesting study on the art of storytelling, Maria Tatar also affirms this close association between storytelling and the art of weaving and spinning as follows:

The presence of the spindle reminds us that one of the favored sites for telling folktales was the workroom or Spinnstube, where spinning yarn helped to while away the hours devoted to spinning flax. [...] The alliance of spinning with tale telling is therefore an especially congenial one, for the labor of the one is lightened by the activity of the other. (1987, 112-3)

The Grimms and the spinning wheel not only contributed to the momentary retention art of storytelling but also contributed to a future in which the nature of that art and our understanding of its meaning and purpose will be forced to undergo drastic change. Haydn Middleton's *Grimm's Last Fairytale* is a postmodern text, which does not subscribe to any particular fixed historical truth. It does not recognize the canonicity of a narrative, but rather acknowledges various "truths". The postmodern perspective, "shows a marked tendency towards fragmentation, or towards little narratives, local narratives, small identity narratives, which break the hegemony of universal values, demoting grand narratives and their universalistic pretensions to the status of local histories of local elites" (Currie 1998, 108). In other words, the postmodern approach to storytelling entails its deconstruction (Jenkins 2003, 79), as it is not perceived as an absolute given. The past is, thus, "destabilise[d] and fracture[d]" (79). As a

result of such fragmentation, “cracks open[ed] up” and “new histories can be made” (79). In fact, in postmodern fiction, “The search for unity (narrative, historical, subjective) is constantly frustrated” (Hutcheon 1988, 162). Above all, the postmodern text features a duality, which, among many possibilities, is “to confront the real-world [...] “with its representation or model or double” (McHale 1987, 43). It illustrates “a “double-decker” structure of reference” (1987, 28), which, in turn, produces “a dramatized mirror of its own narrative” (Hutcheon 2013, 49). The double structural textual entity contains two types of discourses whereby one language is a metalanguage of another—by which a metalanguage may be defined as “a language which takes another language as its object” (Waugh 1984, 4).

These characteristics of postmodern fiction coincide with the present paper's concern with the psychoanalytical perspective, particularly the principal concepts of the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan and, more so, his interest in the manifestations of the human unconscious. Lacan principally builds on Freud's views in psychoanalysis, the most prominent of which are the mirror stage and the Oedipal crisis. Lacan's mirror stage marks the child's perception of him/herself “*as an identification*” (2001, 1), in association with the mother. What the child sees in the mirror is a “specular image” (2001, 2). It is an image, which emerges in dreams and takes “the form of disjointed limbs” (2001, 3). It is what Lacan calls *le corps morcelé*, or “a fragmented body-image” (2001, 3). The mirror stage pertains to the imaginary order that Lacan associates with “the imaginary order of nature”, or Mother Nature (*Book I* 1991, 149).

On the other hand, the Oedipal stage and crisis witnesses the father's disruption of the happy bond which already exists between the mother and her child (Ramsey 2001, 138). The paternal interruption “is for Lacan the moment of the child's entry into the Symbolic Order” (Ramsey 2001, 138), whereby s/he assumes “a subject-position” (Ramsey 2001, 138), while “The unity felt in the Imaginary order” (Ramsey 2001, 138) is repressed. Lacan notes that “the most striking” “function of the father” “is the introduction of an order, of a mathematical order, whose structure is different from the natural order” (*Book III* 1997, 320). In fact, “the symbolic order is the language, conventions and symbols valued by a particular culture” (Rowland 2002, 110). It is “the realm of the Law [...] as opposed to the imaginary order of nature” (Evans 2006, 204). In a similar vein, Susan Rowland, a post-Jungian specialist refers to a mode of classification initially proposed by C.G. Jung. The latter associates consciousness with Logos, whereas the unconscious is the realm of Eros: “Eros and Logos are archetypal principles of mental functioning”

(Rowland 2002, 40). While “Eros denotes connective qualities of feeling and relationship”, Logos, on the other hand, is associated with “rationality, spirit and intellect” (Rowland 2002, 40). Within a binary structural context, “Eros is feminine and Logos masculine” (Rowland 2002, 40). More significantly, Lacan is mainly concerned with the unconscious, which he describes as “the discourse of the Other” (2001, 130), which is based on a “whole structure of language” (112). It is a domain, which consists of a “battery of signifiers” (quoted in Evans 2006, 189). Despite the precept of binary opposition, generated by the imaginary-symbolic dialectic, Lacan points out that there is no “one-to-one” correspondence, in these two “spaces”, between the signifier and the signified, which he renders by means of the verb “to slip” and the noun “slippage”. It indicates that “the slippery movement of signification is endless, and stable meanings dissolve altogether” (Evans 2006, 192-3). Lacan describes “the effects of the signifier” “as metaphor and metonymy” (2001, 164).

Feminist critics, particularly in France (Ramsey 2001, 139), felt averse to the binary opposite structure elucidated by psychoanalysts, as this usually places the woman/female/feminine as the less favored party of the binary structure (2001, 139). As such, French psychoanalytical feminists (Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva) and post-structural feminists (Hélène Cixous) have been particularly engaged in re-thinking and subverting “the domain of phallogentrism” (Grosz 1990, 22). Luce Irigaray, for instance, addresses and criticizes Lacan’s view of gender within the binary structure, as it is likely to confine “the feminine into merely performing a mirroring function for the masculine” (quoted in Rowland 2002, 113). It is understood that the Symbolic, for Julia Kristeva, “is where ‘repressive political structures’ [...] operate” (Ramsey 2001, 139). Kristeva, nonetheless, positions the “semiotic” associated with the pre-Oedipal stage on a deeper instinctual plane that predates the Symbolic (Kristeva 1984, 49). “Upon entry into the symbolic, the semiotic is repressed, yet remains within to disturb and challenge symbolic representations” (quoted in Rowland 2002, 119-20). As Elizabeth Grosz aptly puts it, the Semiotic, for Kristeva, is “a phase dominated by the space of a mother’s body” (Grosz 1990, 15). Similarly, Hélène Cixous’ *Écriture féminine* celebrates women’s liberating voice from suppression, and, in defiance to the proponents of these major psychoanalytical precepts as she states: “Now, I-woman am going to blow up the Law: an explosion henceforth possible and ineluctable; let it be done, right now, *in language*” (1976, 887). In fact, she proposes woman’s newly found language:

If woman has always functioned “within” the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this “within”, to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. (1976, 887)

She is the “woman’s *seizing* the occasion to *speak*, hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been based *on her suppression*. To write and thus to forge for herself the antilogos weapon” (Cixous 1976, 880). In this light, she describes a woman’s entity: “If she is a whole, it’s a whole composed of parts that are wholes, not simple partial objects but a moving, limitlessly changing ensemble, a cosmos tirelessly traversed by Eros, an immense astral space not organized around any one sun that’s any more of a star than the others” (Cixous 1976, 889).

In the light of the views discussed above, *Grimm’s Last Fairytale* will be examined at the intersection of postmodernism, psychoanalysis and post-structural feminism. The paper proposes to view Jacob Grimm’s dream and hence, his unconscious, as a Pandora’s box, which reveals to him an option in his life he chose to repress. Middleton’s novel renders a dramatized enactment of a human psyche, in which Grimm’s consciousness and the unconscious are two juxtaposed entities, the spaces of which mirror each other, punctuated by a series of images, motifs and signifiers, alternately pertaining to the father and mother, respectively, and illustrating a symbolic-imaginary dialectic. While the symbolic illustrates Grimm’s concern for a unified entity, the imaginary, on the other hand, asserts and champions his fragmented identity.

Crossing the Border of Un/Consciousness

Recurrently, in the novel, the imaginary is transposed onto the symbolic so as to corroborate their interchangeability. The collapse of one world into its counterpart is illustrated by the supersession of signifiers and invites for an examination of the shift from one order to the other. As mentioned above, to Lacan, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is not stable because there is no exact correspondence between them. Such malleability takes the form of “slipping”, which is a process that indicates the constant movement from one realm of signification to another. There are several instances in which

such a shift occurs in the novel, whereby the principal characters, Grimm and his mother, metonyms of the father and mother, respectively, cross the border from consciousness to the unconscious, and vice versa. The shift blurs the boundary between the symbolic and the imaginary, as well as emphasizes the fact that they mirror each other. For instance, in his dream, Jacob apprehends himself as the prince in the fairy tale of “Sleeping Beauty”: “The prince knew that he himself had slipped back across a frontier, perhaps from a ‘fatherland’ into the land he had always regarded as his mother’s” (137). The dream leads Grimm to revert to the pre-Oedipal phase, as he “slips back” to the imaginary. This also applies to his mother: “Again he could only think she had somehow slipped into this world from another” (33).

In several instances, crossing the conscious-unconscious border takes the form of horse riding, which renders a process of travelling in an inner journey and illustrates such a shift: “It was like riding, [...]. He imagined himself drumming along a straight country track on a horse so reliable that he could let his eyes linger on the passing scenery” (138). In addition, the blurred boundary between both realms is accomplished by bringing the realm of reality into the world of the dream. Reverting to the dream world (the unconscious) is preferred to consciousness and replaces it: “Grimm went quietly. But in his mind he was on horseback again, and what he saw from the saddle was more vivid than anything he saw around him [...]. It was as if this inner land where he rode was beginning to make more sense to him than the ‘real’ new world of double-entry book-keeping and night-lit factories” (147). The dichotomy between the “inner land” (the unconscious, the dream) and the “world of [...] book-keeping” is blurred, as the shift to the dream world is more “vividly” apprehended and replaces the “real” world.

More significantly, crossing the border from the symbolic to the imaginary, and vice versa, is achieved by moving through one part of the earth to another: “Grimm’s dream had been drearily predictable: burial alive, passing through to some other world as the dirt rained down on him from this one. It could hardly be called a nightmare anymore. He felt almost relieved each time to be departing from a fatherland whose future now looked so bleak” (33). In another instance, Grimm shifts from the dream to consciousness, “finding his nose and throat badly blocked and the whole of his right side feeling oddly muffled, as if a weight of earth lay on it” (139). In one of the examples, while Grimm was between wakefulness and sleep, his niece points out to him that he was dreaming: “Dream? Was she blind? Could she not see the streaks of mud all over him? The clods of earth on his eyes, in his mouth?” (191). In another

instance, “Grimm sank back. [...] he had to close his eyes [...] He felt as if he were sinking, falling in a shower of crumbled earth, [...] He continued to fall but soon the motion became so natural that he noticed it no more than a weekend stroller notices the earth turning” (219).

The unstable correspondence between the symbolic and the imaginary is enacted by the process of moving, or for that matter slipping, from one status to the other, which takes on the form of emerging from the earth, while sinking and returning to it, once again. This also accounts for Grimm's recurrent act of going up or climbing, which is an act of subscribing to the symbolic; whereas when he falls asleep (goes down) and enters into the dream mode, he goes underground, in the heart of Mother Earth, or the “other” facet of the earth, the realm of the unconscious. This process of border crossing, of moving “‘upward’ and ‘downward’”, takes on a “topographical” dimension (Bakhtin 1994, 206), which underscores the omnipresence of mother/earth and portrays her as the source, as well as the end, of life.

The Father: Symbolic

The opening lines of the novel form a “Prologue”, beginning in the tradition of a conventional fairy tale, announces the absence of a unified homeland, and a serious concern for the map of a currently fragmented Germany. In his final days, Grimm introspects about his life and ponders the failure of his national project, as German unification will later be achieved at the hands of Bismarck with “blood and iron”. With the Industrial Revolution, spinning, and hence, storytelling, become marginalized, almost inexistent, vocations. Instead, they are relegated to Grimm's unconscious, where, in his dream, they appear in grotesque proportions and confront him with an image of his life, which unfolds as macabre and grotesque. The juxtaposition of Grimm's conscious and unconscious minds is portrayed as the contestation between two “textual spaces” with two competing registers:

Once upon a time, there was no Germany.

For centuries the German people lived in a patchwork of principalities, duchies and kingdoms, some of them so small that one ruling prince was said to have accidentally dropped his realm from his pocket and lost it forever while out on an afternoon stroll. At the other end of the scale, stood militaristic Prussia, with its capital in Berlin.

But as the age of the railway and the factory dawned, there lay beyond the map another Germany: a timeless land of the heart and mind, full of dark forests and sometimes even darker fairytales. (“Prologue,” *Grimm’s*, 1)

The opening lines unfold the dialectic relationship which is represented by “a patchwork of municipalities”, and “militaristic Prussia”, respectively. This is further illustrated in another instance where Grimm feels nostalgic towards a more “romantic” world, as the German nation gradually becomes “A world of trains, not horses; stone cities not forests” (195).

Jacob Grimm’s life is dominated by images and metaphors pertinent to the symbolic order. As a child, he remembers how “He loved the way his father talked to him, [...] the pleasure of being taken into the confidence of a man who *was* the law” (28). During a conversation, he remarks to his son: “kings and princes can’t be made, my son. They are born. You can’t make gold out of straw” (27). Furthermore, the predominantly metaphorical language of the symbolic order can be clearly observed in the recurrent metaphor of dismemberment and fragmentation of the fatherland, whereby the disintegrated German nation is analogous to a human body with dismembered limbs and lacks an autonomous state’s head: “We Germans form a single body; its limbs demand one head” (144), remarks Carl Von Savigny, Grimm’s mentor. The words rightly reflect the symbolic realm, which does not rely on imagination and stories, but on classification, order and discipline.

Thus, drawing on a nationalist spirit and being preoccupied with “a fatherland in fragments” (203), both Jacob, and his brother Wilhelm yearned for a unified German nation with a strong patriotic assertive sovereign. They fervently supported the compilation of their famous *Children and Household Tales* (1812) that would comprise all the stories contributing to the creation of a powerful *Reich*. For the sake of producing one coherent volume, the individual narratives (“Each part of the fatherland has its own story” (134)), which are distinctive of each German state, will be sacrificed for the sake of a single body of work.

The Mother: Imaginary

The brothers had two distinct approaches of recording the tales recounted to them by elderly women from the various provinces. Jacob was keen on preserving the tales as they are told (128), while Wilhelm was very good at revising and re-writing them. However, when Jacob dreams of his life-story as

the fairy tale of "Sleeping Beauty," he ventures into his brother Wilhelm's world. He explores "the road not taken" and grants the reader a glimpse of the repressed storytelling option in his unconscious. In fact, Jacob's niece, and Wilhelm's daughter, Auguste, "wondered whether, deep inside, her Apapa had ever hankered to slip into such an untamed forest world too, to live inside Nature, not hover at its edges identifying the plants and trees for everybody" (64). She asks her uncle: "what if you [...] just slipped through a crack in the map?" (198); and she cautions him not to "go to the land beyond the map" (200). Thus, the novel illustrates Grimm's constant oscillation between the "land beyond the map", that is, to venture beyond the patriarchal symbolic map, to the "untamed forest" of the matriarchal imaginary world, and "its edges." It is to go beyond the world of compiling stories and to venture into the realm of creativity. The latter is repressed and manifests itself in the form of Grimm's dream.

Notably, from his childhood memories, Grimm mainly remembers his mother as a Mother Goose, who was a repository of stories, and who could anticipate her son's talent for storytelling, against which his brother Wilhelm argues and interjects: "Boys don't tell stories. Not men either. There's no *Father* Goose, is there? Only maids and mothers!" (13). His interruption reflects a patriarchal culture, which labels storytelling as a woman's practice. Therefore, Grimm disregards his mother's anticipation that he would make a successful storyteller. Instead, he chooses to subscribe to the logocentric value of only collecting stories from various provinces to tell *the* story of the German nation. Nevertheless, the young Jacob remembers how he would urge her to tell them a story as children: "He glimpsed her teeth as she smiled [...]. Teeth and tales, always teeth and tales. Jacob would watch her mouth so closely during the tellings that he almost felt sucked inside" (11). Later, Jacob's dream will embody this childhood memory.

The fairy tale of "Sleeping Beauty" proves to be the key factor, disrupting the coherence of the novel, as the text's structure consistently alternates between the main narrative and the alternative tale. The latter represents the space of the mirror-like unconscious, where the mother is delineated as the principal motivator of Jacob Grimm's life and career. Unlike the romantic simplistic version of the Brothers Grimm entitled "Briar Rose" (1992, 124-7), in which the prince finds his way through the briars to finally kiss the sleeping princess awake, Jacob's dream is based on his precursors' more gruesome version. In a reference to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Hutcheon observes that the protagonist "would like to reduce history to autobiography," that is, "to reduce"

the country “to his own consciousness” (1988, 162). This is accomplished by the embeddedness of a biographical novel within the principal narrative, which serves as “a parodic intertext” (Hutcheon 1988, 162). In the present context, the foreign version of the fairy tale interpolates the main narrative. It becomes analogous to the French invasion of the fatherland, which disrupts the unification of the German nation and haunts the German collective unconscious. Similarly, German national identity is superimposed upon Grimm’s personal identity. Thus, the fragmentation of the fatherland is equally reflected on the personal level, as the German geo-political condition is reduced to Grimm’s own consciousness. Earlier in the novel, and while chatting with his niece, Grimm briefly compares both fairy tale versions:

Ours ended with the prince’s arrival: the awakening and the marriage. In other versions this was no more than the mid-point in a much more grisly tale. Look at Perrault the Frenchman’s variant, *La Belle au bois dormant*. [...] the war, the prince’s enforced absence, the hideous appetites of the figure who then took the reins of power. (92)

Later in the novel, in a conversation between Grimm and the French sovereign, who rules over the German provinces, the Frenchman asks: “So what happens in *your* story when this evil principle remains, as it were, at large?” (110). To this, Grimm replies: “That’s where our story ends, Majesty. With the awakening” (110). The emphasis on the possessive pronouns “your” and “our” makes of the fairy tale of “Sleeping Beauty” a narrative of national identity. The discrepancy between the two versions embodies the conflict between the two nations, which is determined by the princess’s sleep as opposed to her awakening, and hence, the discordance between the unconscious and consciousness, or the imaginary and the symbolic, respectively.

Thus, the unconscious reveals to Jacob the one fairy tale of “Sleeping Beauty”, which does not appear in his compiled volume. Instead, it illustrates the repressed mother’s version, that is, the intrusive story, which would disturb the homogeneity of the volume compiled by Grimm. Just like the undesired French occupier, the mother/ogress is the uninvited thirteenth fairy/wise woman of the famous fairy tale. *Her* story, as Cixous points out, makes a “shattering entry into history” (1976, 880; emphasis mine) and interpolates the father’s symbolic meaning. *Her* story is a metonym for *her* body, which, “is a whole, [...] composed of parts that are wholes” (1976, 889; emphasis mine). It is

repressed because it is the version which confirms Grimm's fragmented identity. In his unconscious, Grimm is haunted by the embedded fairy tale, which magnifies his life-story, and takes terrifying proportions.

While consciousness can be viewed as a space, in which images of the father abound, the interpolated space of the dream, on the other hand, is orchestrated by a dominant mother figure. The contention between the Law of the Father, calling for unification and a whole entity, and the mother's imaginary, celebrating dispersion and individuality, is played out onto the space of the unconscious. Grimm opens his eyes to the *other* facet of the symbolic order, in which the mother produces *his* story in her own "language", in the discourse of the Other, as Lacan postulates. She takes over "the reins of power" and *her* "word" becomes the *Law*: "Let *her* word be law" (190; emphasis mine), Grimm tells the princess in the dream.

The dream of "Sleeping Beauty" illustrates a prince, who is launched on a quest by his mother to find the princess of the Rose Kingdom and marry her. The prince struggles to find the sleeping princess, whom he fails to wake up, but is tempted to rape her during her sleep. The shameful adulterous act yields twin siblings. Two years later, one of the children suckles on the mother's finger and removes the "deadly" splinter, upon which she wakes up.

In the dream, Grimm sees his mother as a metonym for Mother Nature or Mother Earth, an impersonal, shapeless, indifferent, and animal-like entity, who belongs to the natural order. She had "blue toughened skin on her heels [...]. Her feet never looked warm enough, and her hands – [...] – were like cool slate to the touch" (33). Furthermore, "her face looked bloated, misshapen. Her seated body too seemed heavier" (117); "she seemed to have been pumped up like a pig's bladder, with different parts of her inflating to different degrees. If she had not been his mother, he would have found her grotesque" (132). In these various images, the mother is depicted as a distorted wild creature, not abiding by any law or discipline. Grimm's depiction of his mother corresponds to his childhood memory of her with "teeth and tales": "*Clack – clack – clack* [...] the king's mother ran her tongue around the inside of her mouth and went on making the loathsome sound with her teeth" (241). She is a creature whose garret is outlined as an animal's lair, with its "heat, stench and hideousness" (241)

Furthermore, the dream reveals the mother and the princess as interchangeable entities. As the dream encompasses repressed material, which, naturally, would return in a distorted form (Evans 2006, 168). It accounts for the grotesque depiction of both women, the mother and the princess, as they form part of a specular image, which reflects Grimm's subjectivity as well as sheds

light on the father-motherland dialectic. The image constantly encroaches upon Grimm's mind and intercepts his view of the princess, who proves to be a metonym of the symbolic order: "Whenever she [his mother] came into his thoughts [...], he tried to think only of the svelte princess [...]. His shame at the way he had treated the king's daughter now confused him so much that at times he imagined her bloated out of all recognition too, there on her bed in the garret" (132). And similar to the mother, the princess is equally depicted as animal-like: "At the foot of the tower he turned back to face his queen [...]. She came on like a pale, lopsided blur, almost on all fours, whimpering, gagging, turning her tufted head from side to side as if to shake out a nightmare" (223). Their close association is further noted by Grimm: "With its spinning wheel and heap of flax, the arrangement of his mother's room was almost exactly the same as the princess's garret," (118). The garret is the place from which the mother spins her thread of a story but also the place where the sleeping princess is found almost dead. Paradoxically, both women are depicted as two contending forces in Grimm's dream. The connection between them conveys the overlapping of the symbolic and the imaginary. Consequently, they also attempt to resist and eliminate each other: while the mother is averse to the image of the helpless princess, who abides by the symbolic order and the law of the father, as will be discussed below. The princess, on the other hand, finds the mother-ogress a repulsive creature, who dismantles order. The princess tells Grimm: "She's evil, pure evil. Not a woman at all, not a *person*! She can be any shape she likes!" (208). She continues: "It's what she *is*. Her nature," (223). "Wipe her out or she'll haunt the generations" (226).

Unlike the absent father/land of the symbolic order, the mother is an overpowering presence in the imaginary. Against the paternal Logos, she manifests herself as a powerful Eros, a Jungian anima, as it were, a creative force, who is able to sew straw into gold. According to Cixous' call for the appropriation of the patriarchal language, "containing it, taking it in her own mouth" (1976, 887), Grimm's memory of his mother is associated with "teeth and tales". It is the image of the mother that manifests itself in Grimm's unconscious, as an ogress, who is transposed onto the spinning machine. Both the mother and the spinning wheel produce the same sound and perform the same function, a prevalent motif in Grimm's dream. She is recurrently depicted "sitting, fully dressed, beside her spinning wheel" (21). She is an overwhelming storytelling juggernaut, whose constant clacking sound and echoing voice dominate Grimm's dream with "the slightly eerie clack-clack-clacking of the spindle that bobbed at night in her upstairs room" (69-70); "And the sound of

her great clacking teeth behind those opened lips made him stagger where he stood" (226). The image is associated with an echoing reiteration, which have a haunting effect: "There are other worlds than this, you know" (19). The mother's assertive words defy the existence of a single absolute story. Her obsessively repeated words and her insistence on the multiplicity of versions is interpreted by Lacan as the outcome of repression and the return of the repressed. It takes the form of a signifier: "The presence of the signifier in the Other is, in effect, a presence usually closed to the subject, because it usually persists in a state of repression [...] and because from there it insists on representing itself in the signified by means of its repetition compulsion" (Lacan 2001, 153). Thus, the repetition confirms the existence of a deluge of repressed stories. They assert the prince's fragmented identity, as well as overwhelm and defy Grimm's endeavor and dream to contribute to a single grand narrative. In fact, the mother's echoing haunting voice looms large in his unconscious and challenges the single narrative acknowledged by the symbolic order. The mother-ogress's reiterated words underscore Cixous' triumphant woman, who is "a whole composed of parts that are wholes" (Cixous 1976, 889).

Accordingly, in the dream, Grimm's life-story is reduced to one story among many others, which is illustrated by images related to spinning, weaving and the spindle: "From his mother's darkened little room to the top of this tower, his route had seemed to be measured out in spindles" (101). Furthermore, "It was as if he had found his way through the labyrinthine forest with a spun thread tied to his ankle. And now – [...] – the thread had been pulled tight to draw him back, through time and from this high forest crag" (115 – 6). In fact, the mother-ogress is portrayed as a devouring entity who engulfs the prince into her own story. Her body not only yields many stories but also exacts a heavy toll on its subjects. The maternal body asserts itself as the source of the story as well as the source or the bearer of the subject. Middleton portrays her as a parthenogenetic entity, as Lacan points out, who can generate a deluge of stories, telling stories with a vengeance, without the aid of a male counterpart: "An indefinite number of beings can issue from a woman" as "parthenogenesis is on the way", Lacan notes (1997, 320). Her parthenogenetic nature coincides with the postmodernist argument that fragmentation causes the production of countless little narratives. Indeed, "Weaving is a work of creation and of bringing to birth" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996, 1093). Conversely, Grimm, a metonym of the father, is frustrated and disillusioned, as his dream to be an active participant in the emergence and birth of a unified Germany does not materialize: "Here on the hallowed soil of Hesse he had hoped to play the midwife at the birth of a proud

new Reich, peacefully unified, constitutionally governed. But [...] he had realized that his ideals had no place in this grubby political arena” (215). In juxtaposition to each other, while the mother supersedes the father, the latter (Grimm) fails to assume the maternal role.

The mother ogress, who entraps Jacob within the discourse of the Other, is the empowered woman, whom Cixous praises and calls for emergence. She does not function “within the discourse of man”, but “she dislocates this ‘within’” (1976, 889). The tables are turned, as instead of holding stories and storytelling in disdain and contempt, she initiates her son into one story pattern, among many others: “Old One’s mother called him to her bedroom late on the fifth night ... ‘It’s time for you to go from here,’ she said without lifting her eyes. She was standing in front of her spinning-wheel, ... ‘You’re old enough now, a man in most senses. It’s time for you to make your own way’” (32). As such, the mother’s law derives from the very thread, the spinning of which transforms into the famous fairy tale: “She lowered herself again onto her spinning stool and rested her hand on the high heap of flax. ... ‘As you travel, think of yourself as a prince’ [...] a prince who could one day be a king.” The thread of the story becomes responsible for creating the subject’s fate, which, in turn, is decreed and reduced to the narrative thread: “She pressed the flat of her hand into the flax then raised it, leaving behind a clear impression” (35). As such, the mother incorporates her son within her own language system (the story thread), a signifier by means of which she is capable of turning her son into a prince, of turning straw into gold.

In the unconscious, Grimm encounters his specular image, in which the contention between both orders, the mother (a metonym of the imaginary) and the princess/queen (a metonym of the fatherland and the symbolic) manifests itself in several examples. The mother figure is the carrier of a phallic symbol, which is the spindle of her omnipresent spinning wheel: she is “‘The spinner in the garret, at the wheel with the poisoned spindle!’” (208), which the princess realizes and conveys to the new King: “‘She called to me and made me touch her spindle’” (208). The rejected mother ogress leads the princess to be pricked by the spindle and to fall into a long-borne sleep. By preserving the princess, who symbolizes the occupied fatherland, into the sleeping mode, the mother ensures that she remains in a state of unconsciousness and hence, keeps her captivated in the imaginary order, that is, in the “motherland”. On the other hand, the would-be king struggles to find the sleeping princess, whom he finally manages to reach but fails to wake her up, to restore her to the symbolic order, to recuperate the “fatherland”: “‘There is a princess, yes, but she sleeps, just as

this whole region sleeps” (88); “As she had slept, so had all the world around her” (100-101). Just as the compilation of the volume of fairy tales does not achieve German unification, in the dream, Jacob is unable to awaken the sleeping princess. When the prince first apprehends her: “She seemed in truth more like an exquisite tomb effigy than a living, breathing young woman” (103). The mother/ogress competes with the prince as a phallic symbol who is unable to awaken the princess but preserves her in a status quo. As such, the “sleeping beauty” is entrapped between sleeping and waking that represent two intersecting orders. The princess becomes the space/the “land”, or even, the body, upon which the dispute between both the symbolic and the imaginary is performed.

Thus, one can postulate that the repressed story looms large in Grimm’s dream and foregrounds the deceit of his search for an aggregate identity. On his way to the Rose King’s palace, he meets the three spinners. In certain myths they are “The Fates”, who “were spinsters, weaving the threads of destiny, [...] To weave is to [...] predestine [...] to create” (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1996, 1093). The Jungian Psychologist, Marie-Louise von Franz, notes that the three spinners “are actually the mother archetype divided into three different aspects” (1988, 116). She rightfully remarks that “the spinning woman often appears to be the bringer of inevitable destiny” (1988, 117). In the dream, the spinners possess an array of princes’ clothes, from which the prince is free to choose: “All of these outfits once belonged to princes”, one of them observes (70). As such, identity becomes a versatile concept that draws on disguise and is subverted by it. The act of getting dressed as a prince, makes of Old One a performer of a role in the dramatized fairy tale and confirms the inexistence of a single national master narrative, but different variations.

Two years after the attempt to awaken the princess, Grimm returns to the Rose Kingdom to marry her. Upon his arrival, a specular image manifests itself to him. He realizes that the playing children are his offspring and that they have made a scarecrow of the belongings he had left behind: “He recognized each item. They had all once been his own” (150-151); “he looked across and began to see the figure’s profile. [...] the wig sat on what looked like a wax face-mask with features very much like his own” (151). What forms the prince’s identity are several individual items that reflect his fragmentation. At one and the same time, the vivid image of the unconscious confirms Grimm’s fragmentation and underlines the illusive nature of the father’s head and center. In fact, the scarecrow parodies the prince’s aspiration for an aggregate identity that will dispel birds rather than to unify them.

The mask motif is further corroborated by the mask which the princess fabricates to compensate for his absence. The prince remarks to the chamberlain: “The face they’ve put on their figure – it’s so like mine.” (151) The chamberlain explains to him: “The princess had a cast made from the impression you left in the flax in the garret. From that she takes a series of masks. As soon as one shows signs of cracking, she immediately makes another” (151-152). The princess is keen on securing his mask as *whole*. The mask, here, validates “the specular image as” a “mere illusion[s] of wholeness” (Evans 2006, 86; emphasis mine). When the mask cracks, other masks are produced, as Jenkins notes, “When cracks open up, new histories can be made” (2004, 79). As such, just as personal identity does not possess *one* mask, German national identity is equally diverse: it consists of several provinces, each with its own story. Thus, the space of the unconscious becomes a dramatized mirror of Germany’s diverse identity as well as reveals to Jacob Grim his own identity. The various princes’ costumes and the mask are signifiers of a masquerade that underscore the illusion of identity as *a whole*.

The space of the dream is superimposed on the space of consciousness and further illustrates and defies the patriarchal logocentric concept of identity in several other instances. For example, before he leaves to take part in a battle, Grimm/the king sees his mother playing with his children in the garden while wearing “his face- mask” “and [...] comically waving her arms like a monster” (188). Wearing her son’s mask, the mother embodies a specular image with adult gestures with which he can identify. The mask allows for the transposition of the imaginary onto the symbolic. In doing so, she proves to Grimm that identity is a mere disguise and confirms his sense of not being whole. In his chapter entitled “The Signification of the Phallus”, Lacan discusses the notion of the masquerade and the face-mask, as he elaborates on the overlapping of the symbolic and the imaginary. Notably, he observes that “the function of the mask [...] dominates the identifications” (2001, 222). He further remarks: “The fact that femininity finds its refuge in this mask [...] has the curious consequence of making virile display in the human being itself seem feminine” (222). Therefore, the mask’s function is to blur the boundary of the symbolic and the imaginary as well as the feminine and the masculine. In fact, it dismantles the clear-cut binary and gender structure. Thus, the dream continues to unravel a displaced center as the specular image subverts the logocentric nature of the patriarchal/fatherland. The image is, once again, enacted by the mother figure: “One after another the children raced up and crashed against her great bosom” (188). As the heart or the bosom of Mother Earth becomes a new center, the mother supersedes the absent

father. On one hand, the princess, who figures as a metonym of the symbolic, strives to preserve his mask as “whole”. On the other hand, the mother- ogress, an embodiment of the imaginary, suggests a need for disintegration and change. In fact, in opposition to a structured patriarchal map, the mother “can be any shape she likes” (208).

On several occasions, the juxtaposition of the symbolic and the imaginary takes on the form of a confrontation between the two metonymic figures of the mother ogress and Grimm, standing face-to-face: “she called to him, neither irritably nor warmly, while he was still preparing himself *to face her*” (117; emphasis mine), and “she swung around on her spinning stool *to face him*” (225-6; emphasis mine). The confrontation further endorses the father-mother mirror-like structure. It is an encounter between *his/story* and *her* story. As such, throughout the novel, Eros and Logos are pitted against each other to structure a mirror-like existence. The final encounter in the dream is a climactic moment, whereby Jacob/the king cannot avoid facing the mother/ogress, who is also an animated destructive spinning machine, and who, mechanically and hysterically produces myriads of stories.

Having divested the royal couple of their children, the mother is held accountable for devouring and consuming their daughter. She decrees Grimm's fate and delineates his “last fairytale”, which he will be unable to avoid. In order to get rid of her, Grimm has to displace her to another story altogether, which makes up another world. The conflict proves to be a father-mother battle of signifiers: “It was between him and his mother now” (224); “this last task was his” (242). “But already he was thinking of displacing her, not wiping her out entirely. For there were, he knew, other worlds than this” (242). At the end of the dream, Grimm buries his mother alive in order to repress her destructive storytelling: “there are other worlds, he told himself as he began to circle the pit, sliding in piles of crumbled earth on top of her with his boot” (244). The young king adopts his mother's own language in order to repress her. They become two competing forces, attempting to replace each other. By burying the mother alive, he hopes to move her to another story and hence, another world, as well as to repress the sense of fragmentation. The various parts that initially make up the scare-crow, the prince's semblance, are attached to the mother-ogress, as he disposes of his belongings: “The sword was gone”, as well as her dress No flesh, no bones” (245). The story of his fragmented identity is, once again, repressed underground, in the imaginary: “The ogress is finally buried. But the clacking sound could still be heard” (245). What survives and permanently exists is the sound of a spinning wheel that will never cease to weave the threads of

another story. As she asserts the fragmentation of the fatherland and the fragmentation of Grimm/the king's identity, the mother moves through a crack in the map of the earth to weave the threads of another story and another destiny.

This is further corroborated by the act of burying alive, which embodies the movement from one world to another, from the symbolic to the imaginary and vice versa. As signifiers, Grimm, who is himself a father figure, and the mother ogress, exchange places: while he moves to the imaginary through his dream to be a character in the fairy tale of "Sleeping Beauty", the mother-figure follows a reverse trajectory. The final act of burying alive suggests a paradox as it highlights both a repressive act and a slippery signifier.

In conclusion, Grimm's last fairy tale is a repressed story that makes "a shattering entrance" and interpolates mainstream German history. In it, the mother emerges as the catalyst for a gradual encroaching of the unconscious upon the conscious. This, in turn, causes both the father and the mother, the two poles of psychological authority in the human mind, to become interchangeable. Such blurring of boundaries is made possible by means of signifiers, which connote illusion, deceit and, above all, parody the search for an aggregate identity altogether. They even distort the gender boundary and, in turn, dismantle the binary opposite structure much contested by post-structural feminists.

The mirror-like structure of the novel collapses one opposite entity into another so that they become one. The mother is Cixous' Eros, who insists on preserving the subject's fragmentation as she celebrates the diversity of her own body. She defies and denies the subject's eagerness to apprehend himself as whole. She weaves the metalanguage, which marks the contention between the imaginary and the symbolic. *She* is the interface between the conscious and the unconscious that *splits* Grimm's psyche and marks the liminal point between the imaginary and the symbolic. Unlike Lacan's proposition that the father disrupts the child-mother relationship, Middleton's mother figure is depicted as the intrusive agent into the protagonist's conscious thought-structure. She intercepts Grimm's insistence on abiding by the Law of the Father by blurring the boundary between the symbolic and the imaginary. *Her* story proves to be the tool that shatters the symbolic order inherent in the subject to create numerous centers of energy. This, in turn, allows her to appropriate the father's role and, as the discourse between the conscious and the unconscious unravels, overpower the subject and the symbolic.

Middleton's novel illustrates a contest, which is mapped out onto two juxtaposed psychological spaces. The dialectic in the human psyche is

represented by the tug-of-war between a fatherland, which seeks to assert the symbolic, and a motherland, which champions the imaginary, while nature proves to be an all-encompassing force, overriding culture. Despite their dichotomous nature, the two realms are linked by the spun thread of Eros as the spindle defies the patriarchal map and records the triumph of the overpowering storytelling machine.

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