

## Tributary forms

### Marchen

Folktale characterised by elements of magic, supernatural.

Endowment of a mortal character with magical power, special knowledge.

German term Marchen used by folklorists embraces tall tales, humorous anecdotes.

Usually begins with once upon a time... placing it in an indefinite time and space.

Usual theme: triumph over obstacles, with or without supernatural aid. Succeeds where one is least likely to.

Stock characters: Witches, wicked stepmothers, ogres, handsome princes.

Snowwhite, Cinderella, Little Red riding hood, sleeping beauty.

Hero however poor has easy access to the king.

Wins king's favour through luck or cleverness, marries princess, inherits kingdom!

Identical versions are found in all cultures...German, French, Indian, Persian...origin unknown.

Magic and enchantment with fairies, goblins, gnomes, giants, elves.

Appeals to our sense of the marvellous.

Suspend disbelief and allow patterns of wish fulfilment to have free reign.

Purpose could be morality, satire, fantasy, adventure... but fairy world and magic are used to achieve this purpose.

Two kinds of Marchen: Primary (anon. oral tradition) and secondary (conscious artistic adaptation)

### Myth and Marchen

They share the same kind of content, but they are different in their preoccupation. While myth concerns itself with religious matters and aristocratic heroism, marchen is concerned with familiar daydreams of the ordinary folk. Myth is manifold and diverse but marchen has a limited formal structure.

This pattern is demonstrated by the Russian formalist Vladimir Propp after analyzing a hundred Russian fairytales. According to him the basic functions of a plot are rigorously limited and conform to a regular sequence. Villain for instance, may be a witch or dragon; hero's misfortune may be a material deficiency or inflicted injury; maximum number of roles never exceeds seven; maximum units of action never exceeds 31—hero leaves home, receives magical help, villain punished etc. Not that every tale has all the 31 units, but each follows a constant order.