

satisfying work in every department. His work is not marred by the slips which weaken Davidson's now and then—as for instance when Davidson uses “ingénue” to describe “the young man first encountering life on his own” (p. 59). Ramraj's style is clear and unified and his plot summaries brief; his statements are balanced and so well substantiated that there are few which a knowledgeable reader would wish to question seriously. Moreover, Ramraj has an interesting and unifying thesis which catches the reader's attention at the outset and holds it throughout.

The central and unifying aspect of Richler's work, which Ramraj mentions on the first page of his book and keeps returning to throughout, is “Richler's ambivalence” (p. 1). Ramraj sees this ambivalence as both a strength and a weakness—but always as a distinguishing mark of Richler's fiction and his characters: “The ambivalent outlook, which Richler's protagonists share with him, is their primary hallmark” (p. 8). Ramraj argues convincingly that this ambivalence is the result of Richler's recognition of life's complexities and perplexities. “In providing the individual the opportunity of seeing both sides of an issue, the ambivalent vision encourages him to have the second thought, or to turn a more accommodating eye on human experience, or at least to hesitate to condemn out of hand human shortcomings and frailties” (p. 12). Ramraj goes on to persuade the reader that, because Richler does not see life or people in black and white terms, he is not primarily a satirist (one of the terms which has been used in an attempt to define him—by Davidson and others). Satirists are not noted for the duality of outlook which Ramraj terms Richler's “bifocal” or “binary” vision. Indeed, Ramraj notes, “In Richler's novels, the main personages are knowingly or unknowingly searching—futilely—for absolutes which would ease their indecisiveness and irresolution, and the novels are invariably plotted with this spiritual quest in mind” (p. 10).

Richler's ambivalence with respect to his characters is, however, more troublesome than is his general ambivalent attitude to life—and has provoked a good deal more controversy. With respect to one of Richler's best-known protagonists, Duddy Kravitz, Ramraj calls attention to the fact that some critics think that Richler censures Duddy, whereas others feel that he sympathizes with Duddy. Ramraj states that Richler's attitude is more complex than this, that “Richler himself has stated that Duddy is a character whom he both admires and despises” (p. 32). Davidson is not unaware of this aspect of Richler's work. Indeed, he makes one statement which very much resembles some of Ramraj's: “In Richler's best realistic fiction there is a kind of multifocal effect, a blurring of image that emphasizes the problems of judging” (p. 141). It is just that Davidson's focus throughout his book is not so clear, so balanced, or so consistent as Ramraj's.

John M. Ellis

*ONE FAIRY STORY TOO MANY: THE BROTHERS GRIMM
AND THEIR TALES*

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. Pp. 209 + ix.

\$17.50.

Reviewed by Josef Schmidt

One Fairy Story too Many is one book too many! What could have been a witty and interesting commentary in article form about the Grimm Brothers' rather free mode of adaptation when incorporating source material into their canonical collection is, instead, a repetitive, overblown and, in terms of scholarship, questionable tome.

The subtitle should be understood sarcastically; and the first sentence of the *Preface* reiterates the dark insinuation by promising the reader: “This book examines the question of what the Grimms' fairy tales really are” (p. vii). Ellis proposes that their resource persons were mainly bourgeois family friends and acquaintances, and not the “simple folks” they largely invented as a literary cover; that even for the first edition they used undue liberty in rendering “originals” into their kind of prose, in that they “deliberately, persistently, and completely misrepresented the status of their tales: they made claims for them which they knew to be quite false” (p. viii); and that they guiltily destroyed the authentic manuscripts post factum (p. 50 f.).

By the time of the 6th edition, they were totally uninhibited in styling the tales according to their own taste. And this was not just guided by their well-established concern for adaptation to a child's world and the middle-class family's sensibilities, but by a fuzzy notion of literary embellishment that led to lengthening and clarifying, and censoring explicit sexual details (p. 61 ff.). "And now it will be clearer how the Grimms have done violence to the original text in rewriting, elaborating, and clarifying it" (p. 61), exclaims John M. Ellis before releasing his critique in order to open the secret locks for the Grimm-Gate. His main argument is a quite naive notion of the historical transition from folklore into the medium of print. "The Grimms appear to have been guilty of a pervasive habit of tinkering idly and uninhibitedly with the language of their texts" (p. 85). "Authentic, true, original and honest" are key words to present the case that purports "to undermine completely any notion that the Grimms' fairy tales are of folk, or peasant, or even German origin. And the facts also show the Grimms' attempts to foster these illusions" (p. 12). The Grimm brothers appear to be charlatans, and only blind devotion kept scholars from fully disclosing the abominable crime; Max Lüthi and Heinz Rölleke are the most famous recent examples (of barely a handful of modern critics mentioned!). An appendix comprising about half the book presents "proof" for this claim by giving several versions/editions of three principal tales: *Der Froschkönig*, *Dornröschen*, and *Hänsel und Gretel* in German and English translation.

It is unappetizing to read through such overstated arguments since Ellis appears to be ignorant of rather basic concepts of literary, folkloristic, and sociolinguistic aspects of popular culture. For one, he seems unable to understand fairy tales as a living tradition—he does not bother to comment on how such a "bastardized" version could become the most popular book beside the Bible in German culture. For another, he implies standards of modern historical criticism to the work of two figures who were pioneers—and not perfectors—of the technique of "translating" an oral tradition into a literal one. Their suppression of, e.g., sexual details, is not seen in the context of a collective attitude, but as an individual conspiracy. Instead of trying to do the obvious, namely to take the three stories, print several versions, list variations, and categorize/evaluate them, only flashy aphorisms are dispersed throughout the book hinting at some monstrous deed. In actual fact, the author goes so far as to weigh the merits of the case against that of James Macpherson of *Ossian*-fame (pp. 95 ff.) and, not surprisingly, he comes to the conclusion: "The Grimms never bothered (as did Macpherson, J.S.) to collect material of real quality, lied to their public about its nature and their sources, destroyed their basic material, and again lied about the extent of their own role in creating their text..." (p. 98). One is flabbergasted that this exercise in overblown rhetoric describing the editing practices of the Grimm brothers in the verbiage of conspiratorial crime was not thrown out of court before it reached the printing press, or was at least rechanneled to a lower court suitable for a literary gloss in *The Armchair Detective*.