



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## A Wild Philology

Sadhana Naithani

Martels & Tales, Volume 28, Number 1, 2014, pp. 38-53 (Article)

Published by Wayne State University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13110/martelstales.28.1.0038>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/546495>

## A Wild Philology

---

A book has recently celebrated two centuries of uninterrupted popularity: the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (KHM), first published in 1812. This is also the book that has engaged Donald Haase over many years. Donald Haase's contribution to the study of the KHM has been equally wide-ranging. From studying the reception of the Grimms' tales to the study of their European intellectual tradition, Haase has brought forth the complex and rich composition of the KHM through his analysis of the sociohistorical context of the KHM on the one hand and through the analysis of individual tales in the KHM on the other. To celebrate the two centuries of the KHM and to honor Donald Haase's work on it, I present a study of one of its makers: Jacob Grimm.<sup>1</sup>

The 1812 publication of the KHM was the first of two planned volumes. This first volume contained eighty-six stories, and the second volume appeared in 1815 with seventy-two more stories. The first edition had a print run of 900 copies, and the second edition in 1819 had a print run of 1,500 copies. In 1825 the popularity of the KHM increased with the *Klein Ausgabe* (small edition), which contained fifty stories particularly told for children. This edition also had a print run of 1,500 copies. The two-volume version appeared again in a third edition, in 1837, this time with revisions made to the text, and after that in quick succession editions were published in 1841, 1843, 1850, 1858, 1864, 1870, and 1890—the last being the twenty-third edition (Kuchinke-Bach, 17–18).

We also have a more intimate reason for celebration. For scholars of oral narratives and fairy-tale studies, the KHM signals the inception of their discipline of study. Because of their editorial and scholarly work and their methods for tale collection, Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm are seen as the initiators

*Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2014), pp. 38–53. Copyright © 2014 by Wayne State University Press, Detroit, MI 48201.

of the field of folkloristics and *Germanistik*, or German studies. Other academic disciplines also recognize the brothers as pioneers of their field of study, including linguistics and law. In the domain of linguistics Jacob Grimm has the distinction of having established the phonetic correspondence between Sanskrit and Germanic languages. His work was based on the scholarship of Danish scholar Rasmus Rask, and the connection between Sanskrit and German is known to linguists as both Rask's rule and Grimm's law. In the history of legal studies Jacob Grimm is recognized for establishing the relationship between law and language. Indeed, the KHM is just the first in a series of pioneering works by Jacob Grimm, but the position of the brothers most exalted today is in the discipline of folkloristics.

What distinguishes the KHM are two consequences of its making: (1) the unabated popularity of the tales contained in it among general readers of all ages and (2) its academic value seen in terms of its international diffusion and its inspirational nature for collectors all across the world. It is well-known that the English term *folklore* was coined by the British antiquarian William Thoms in 1846, but Johann Gottfried Herder's term *Volkslied* (folk song) was a far older coinage. German folklorist Wolfgang Brückner remarked that while formulating the term *folklore*, Thoms was aware of the Brothers Grimm, had reviewed Wilhelm Grimm's *Die Deutsche Heldensage* (German Heroic Saga, 1867, published by Dietrichsche Buchhandlung, Göttingen), and had referred to the Grimms as exemplary philologists while formulating the term *folklore* (Kuchinke-Bach, 52–53). The fame and reception of the brothers across Europe is well-known. The most popular notions about folklore, even taught institutionally outside Europe, are the ideas expressed by the brothers in the preface to the KHM.

Immense popularity and wide academic reception are two realities of the KHM. The popularity has led to imitation and adulation, whereas the academic reception of the KHM has been more varied. The popularity and the academic evaluation are centrifugal processes. The KHM is at the core from which grow the popularity and scholarship. In scholarship the KHM is a book that has been laid threadbare through analysis, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. At one level critics have shown that the texts of the KHM were modified over time with each edition, leading to significant changes in the texts and consequently to the interpretation of these texts. At another level the ideas about folk and folklore, as postulated by the Brothers Grimm, have been analyzed with reference to their sociopolitical context and influence. In this line of thought, the context of nineteenth-century German nationalism and the political and intellectual engagement of the brothers with it have illuminated their ideas about folk and folklore. Scholars such as Jack Zipes, Donald Haase, Maria Tatar, and Ruth Bottigheimer have emphasized the constructedness of the

Grimms' conceptions of folk and folklore, and accordingly these scholars have deconstructed them. The same line of thought has extended to establishing that the ideas of National Socialism a century later were a culmination of the kind of nationalism articulated by the Brothers Grimm, although most critics today recognize the distinction between the nationalism that characterized the Grimms' work and that of 1930s Germany. Critical theory, feminism, discourse analysis, and deconstruction have made immense contributions to our understanding of the role played by the notions of folk and folklore as formulated by the Grimms in the making of notions about modernity.

Although I see the merit in sociopolitical and feminist critiques of the Grimms' KHM, in this essay I shift my focus to Jacob Grimm's paradigm of philology within which the KHM was conceived. I do so because my aim is to bring certain texts of Jacob Grimm's into sharp focus. There is a difficulty in doing this because there is a palimpsest of more than a century of scholarship inscribed in our understanding of these texts. It is as though Jacob Grimm's texts are at a distance and that in order to bring them into the sharp focus of my virtual lens, I must blur the palimpsest in my vision, just virtually and just for a brief moment. In this brief moment I focus only on the primary texts. In meditation, for example, a gradual disconnect from immediate realities allows for newer realizations. Likewise, the blur I cause in my vision enables a meditative connection with Jacob Grimm's texts and a meditative reading of the same. This meditative connection and meditative reading imply a deep focus on the texts in their own intellectual context.

In this essay I explore a *centripetal* process (not the centrifugal processes of popularity and scholarship). In the centripetal process that I explore, we see the growth and evolution of the idea of folk and orality in the mind of one of its theorists—Jacob Grimm. Rather than focusing on the layers of critical reception of Jacob Grimm's work, here I return to his primary texts to tease out another type of reading of his work in order to explore how the ideas of folk, orality, and certain notions of the literary that framed the KHM remained active and important concepts for all other studies by Jacob Grimm. What Jacob Grimm started in the KHM was not finished therein but went on to become for him a core category of knowledge. If folklore scholars take this interconnect-edness into consideration today, a fuller potential of the idea of folklore as articulated by Jacob may become visible. I see a subterranean interconnected-ness of ideas in Jacob Grimm's writings and explore this interconnectedness through a study of the preface to the KHM and of texts related to Jacob's philo-logical work, including *On the Origin of Language* (1864), *Of Poesie in Law* (1815), and his talks on Lachmann (1864) and Schiller (1864) (all reprinted in Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*).

I begin with recapping a well-known text: the preface to the KHM.<sup>2</sup> The images that emerge from this text are something like this: A storm blows, rain lashes, and wind sweeps across the plains and mountains. The fields full of plants seem to have been laid to waste, but as the sun shines, some plants rise up again. Some will never rise up again, some may try, some may succeed, and some may fail. Those that survive will face many more storms, and some may rise up again and continue to survive through indeterminable time. Survival has no direct relationship with age: some die young, some last half a lifetime, but some continue to live, and the number of years adds strength, tenacity, and increasing possibilities of survival. Actually such plants do not just survive; they thrive, and thrive across time and space. Such plants are called *märchen*.

Related by the Grimms in their preface to the KHM, this story about the plants that have weathered several storms indeed is the story about the stories in the KHM. This tale of tales also conveys to readers that these long-surviving plants are now under threat of extinction, because storms now sweep them away. In this storm someone must collect and protect these plants and provide them with a new environment to live in. The action has to be quick: one needs to go out into the storm and gather these plants; if one were to wait for the storm to end, one would find nothing left at all. And that is what the brothers tell us they are doing. “It was perhaps just the time to hold on to these tales” (my translation),<sup>3</sup> making the sense of urgency palpable—a five minutes to twelve situation.

The language of the preface has a deep genetic relationship with the language of the tales and transforms the history of the tales into a story itself. This text is undeniable a tour de force. It catches the imagination of the reader. The way the brothers frame the *märchen* makes them extremely important for understanding society, history, and culture. By introducing the folktale through the metaphor of plants that have survived several storms but may not survive the storm of industrial modernity, the brothers locate the tales out in the wilderness, subject to the vagaries of nature and yet surviving. This image gives the tales an unprotected body and history and appeals to the protective instincts of the reader. Further in the text, the Grimms establish the importance of the tales and of their own work in such a manner that every sentence raises the value of the tales and their collection. The immediate effect on other scholars was inspiration to collect oral narratives, songs, and so on. It is well-known that scientific interest in folktales emerged soon after the second edition of the KHM. Anneliese Kuchinke-Bach points out that already in the second edition of 1819 we can glimpse the raging discussions about the collection, when the brothers defend their position against criticism that what they had included was not always proper for children.

The preface can be considered the manifesto for folktale and folklore research because it moved so many to action. It is, I would say, a text comparable to the Communist Manifesto of 1848 in that it changes the readers' perspective on something that they thought was not of much value. Although I would love to take the comparison further and explore whether the idea of folklore has had a more successful history than the idea of communism, I will stay with another consideration, and that is, How did the forceful ideas expressed in the preface connect, or not, with other seminal ideas of Jacob Grimm? My aim is to understand the place of orality and folk knowledge in Jacob Grimm's philology.

Historian of law Hubert Drüppel (62) mentions two paradoxes in Jacob Grimm's life. The first is that Jacob was known for his contributions to philology but started his higher education as a student of law. The second paradox is that it was Wilhelm Grimm, not Jacob, who completed his law studies, but it was Jacob who influenced the history of law (Drüppel, 61). This second paradox is not pertinent to my discussion here. Jacob Grimm talks about this in his autobiography and says that he took to the study of law only because of the wishes of his family and friends. His father had been in the legal profession, and Jacob felt pressured by his family to pursue the study of law. However, his attraction to the study of *einheimische* or "native" language and culture, as he recalls decades later in his *Talk on Wilhelm* (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 1: 167), overcame his sense of family obligation. While he was studying law, he came into contact with Carl von Savigny, who was one of his teachers. Savigny was a renowned scholar of classical Roman law and linguistics, still recognized today. I return to Jacob's dialogue with Savigny, but to begin with, let us follow Jacob Grimm's engagement with philology.

As a discipline, philology was old but at an important historical juncture. Traditionally, philology dealt with the study of texts in classical languages—Greek and Latin. In the beginning of the nineteenth century in Germany, the subject of philology was being challenged by the need to recognize German as a language worthy of philological study. This focus on a vernacular language of the Roman Empire was connected to the emergence of national German identity and can be traced back to Martin Luther and the challenge he posed by translating the Bible into German. Although it was acceptable in the early nineteenth century to study German philology, what exactly constituted the subject of this philology was the theme of discussion when Jacob Grimm moved into the field. At stake was the very definition of philology. The rules of the game were to be rewritten, and the basis of philological evidence had not yet been fully determined.

The problem in transitioning from classical to modern philology was that the discipline was based on the study of ancient and foreign languages. In classical

philology the text and its interpretation were central. In the development of German philology, one strategy was to replace Greek and Roman texts with German-language texts. The system worked with old and medieval German texts, but modern literary texts did not require the same effort as texts in classical or medieval languages. Even so, the centrality of written texts was advocated as the way to shift from classical to modern philology. Jacob Grimm's contemporary, friend, and competitor, Karl Lachmann, represented this position. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm entered the debate with the publication of the KHM and challenged the unquestioned wisdom of giving primacy to the written texts of a language as the subject matter of philology. Their argument, articulated by Jacob Grimm, was that the *märchen* provided sources of the study of the "real," spoken language—the language used by the people on a daily basis and expressive of their culture. For the Grimms even the works of such venerated writers as Goethe and Schiller were not understandable and interpretable without the knowledge of the language and cultural idioms of the people.

In *On Schiller*, Jacob Grimm begins with the description of a scene in Köln, witnessed 500 years ago by a foreigner. Men and women dressed in ornaments of flowers go to the river to put some herbs in it (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 374). Grimm uses the scene as a metaphor to speak about the role of writers of modern literature in the continuous flow of history and culture, of poesy, and affirms Goethe's and Schiller's contribution to the flowing river of (German) language and poetry, not just to modern literature. He takes this further to show that the great poets recreate works of art out of materials that their native culture and land give them, and he highlights the fact that both Goethe and Schiller created their masterpieces out of the oldest of genres: versified epic and drama (380). While discussing the language of Goethe and Schiller, Jacob praises Goethe's language, saying that there has never been any writer of German who uses the language like Goethe. It is clearly more sophisticated than the language of Schiller. As opposed to the cosmopolitan language of Goethe, Schiller's language is characterized by provincial or regional Schwabisch influences. Although Grimm characterizes Goethe's language as being more "cosmopolitan" than that of Schiller, which is characterized by local flavor, Grimm gives great value to Schiller's regionalist language. Jacob Grimm emphasizes that Goethe's language is expansive in his invention of new German words, which he thought were necessary to obviate what he viewed as the limitations of the German language, but Grimm valorizes Schiller's language, which moves in a smaller circle, but in it he is completely and gloriously at home and knows how to get the best out of it. Here, the point Jacob is making in favor of Schiller is based on Schiller's ease with the German language and its regionalisms. Grimm appreciates Schiller's language because it is

a creative use of the living language of the people. This shift is the hallmark of Jacob Grimm's style, method, and expression. Jacob champions the cause of a living language not only through his collection of oral stories but also in his appreciation of literature that uses the living language of the people over and above a creatively achieved and honed literary language. Jacob is interested foremost in the language of the people as a subject of philology, which he elaborates on in *On the Origin of Language*.

Interestingly, in *On the Origin of Language* Jacob begins with a critique of the pedagogy of classical philology. He is critical of classical philology because it is steeped in decoding Latin and Greek texts and is indifferent to the techniques of the poets and contents of the texts. Of all the fine insights, only those that help to develop hard and fast rules for textual criticism are considered worthy; the inner weave of the language and its beauty and richness remain ignored; and finally, no attention is paid to historical changes in these languages (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 256). Jacob's opposition to classical philology is clearly not just political or nationalistic. It also represents an opposition to a certain method of studying languages. To elaborate his point, Jacob discusses the way that Latin and Greek are taught in the German school system. In the curriculum it is never made clear why these languages are so important, what their relationships are to each other, to say nothing about their relationship to one's local language. The students are never taught "how to connect the three points of the triangle to make a figure from which one could understand the live-wire relationship between the three languages of Greek, Latin, and Mother tongue of the student."<sup>4</sup> Jacob infuses life and blood into the study of language and clearly opposes the reduction of philology to the study of grammar and vocabulary. He offers another model.

Jacob Grimm compares the study of language to the study of nature. He argues that just as botanists have studied the most common herbs to discover their medicinal properties and just as anatomists have dissected bodies to learn about the body's inner structure to restore its health, so the study of language has a higher purpose. Referring to his own times, Jacob maintains that the knowledge about languages has grown with journeys to foreign countries in the same way that knowledge about herbs has grown as a result of the entry of foreign herbs into Europe. As an example of a new kind of philology, Jacob cites the *Petersburg Dictionary*, sponsored by Tzarina Catharina in 1787–1790, and points out that the dictionary became the basis for understanding the relationship between different languages and brought forth the centrality of Sanskrit in relation to European languages (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 258).

One would think at this point that the comparison Jacob established between philology and the natural sciences would entail the adoption of the



scientific methods used by naturalists for the study of language. His aim, however, was something else. Natural scientists, he contends, have to gather data from nature, whereas the scientist of language, the philologist, uses logic to understand the origin of language, which may not be found in nature, “whether we recognize language as naturally created or as not naturally created” (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 260).<sup>5</sup> He goes on to argue that there is no evidence that language was created by nature or revealed by God. The only logical option is that human beings created it, and that is why its study is different from that of the natural sciences. Thus the scientist of language has to deal with phenomena created by human beings, anchored in history, and having reached their current state in stages.

But then Jacob seems to turn the argument around once again to go against this opposition between natural and social creations and asks whether or not there is something divine about language. The fact that language emerged everywhere and among all peoples is so overwhelming that it seems nothing short of God-given (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 261). Quashing the idea that God revealed language to humans, Grimm cites biblical and other references to show that in several stories God speaks to humans, and he points out that in all these instances God speaks directly and is understood. No revealing or articulation of a mutually intelligible linguistic code seems required. According to Jacob Grimm, the universal human capacity for language seems divine, not language itself. He goes on: language, moreover, is not something we are born with. Instead, it is acquired after birth. When a human child is born or grows up in a country foreign to its parents, the child learns and speaks the language spoken there. The human being is not born with language, nor can language be equated with voice (265). For Jacob there is no question that humans created language, and that is why language does not just consist of words and grammar but also bears traces of “our history and our heritage” (265).<sup>6</sup> He closes his argument with the idea that language differentiates us from animals, emphasizing that in Sanskrit only after the acquisition of language does the human being deserve to be called *Manudscha*,<sup>7</sup> or human being.

Grimm is clearly proposing a secular origin of language, without any reference to race or other divisive categories, and he portrays this origin as broad based and not predetermined in its evolution but grown on a wild, pathless course to gain its forms, history, and culture. Indeed, the tone of Grimm’s language and text communicates the magic behind what we take for granted: language. As a scholar he wishes to communicate that the subject of his research is not without a real life of its own. It is noteworthy that in Jacob Grimm’s text there is neither inequality among human beings nor prerogatives in the development of languages. As such, his understanding of the character

of language anticipates Noam Chomsky's generative school of linguistics,<sup>8</sup> which again emphasizes that the goal of linguistics is not the study of one language but the study of the human languages.

Jacob Grimm's interest in philology is not unrelated to his approach to legal history, particularly when it concerns the centrality of the *Volk*, or "people," to his understanding of both areas of study. Although Jacob did not complete his law degree, he greatly contributed to German *Rechtswissenschaft* (jurisprudence), which owes its understanding of law and language to him. In his own words, Jacob Grimm pursued the study of law only because of the wishes of his family and friends (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 1). Despite his reluctance to practice in the field, he became the favorite student of Carl von Savigny.

According to Drüppel, Savigny was famous for his emphasis on the historical nature of law, holding that law is not created by legislation or from a transcendental origin. To become law, ideas have to be accepted by the people. Savigny argued that Roman law was created with the contribution of the *Volksgeist*, or spirit of the people. However, for Savigny the *Volk* meant the educated upper classes. Jacob Grimm agreed with Savigny on the historical evolution of law but openly disagreed with his formulation of the *Volk*, which Savigny limited to the educated elite. Savigny's thesis meant that Roman law became law because it had been accepted by the people; and because (German) people had already accepted it, it could be harmonized with the national law of the emerging nation of Germany. Jacob Grimm differed from this, saying Roman law was not an example of law evolving from general consensus in the German context but was imposed on Germanic peoples and their concepts of law. To understand the evolution of national law, one had to take into consideration both the influence of the *Volk* as well as the imposition of Roman law on Germanic peoples. To study Roman law, one needed to know Latin; but to study national law, one needed to study German language and poetry (Drüppel, 65–67). In his first study on law, *Of Poesie in Law*, written in 1815, right after the KHM, Grimm remarks, "That law and poesie emerged together from one bed is not difficult to believe" (Grimm, "Von der Poesie im Recht," 27; my translation).<sup>9</sup> And still clearer in another part of the same essay, Jacob declares that in times gone by, "the singers preserved the wealth of songs, just as the judges kept up the office and service of law" (29; my translation).<sup>10</sup> His comparison implies that both singers and judges inherit songs or laws and preserve them while practicing them anew everyday.

By equating law with songs, Jacob suggests that law also has its origin in orality and tradition. In law, then, he has a comparable position to the study of

written literature: written literature or written law is only a part of a far older and broader reality of language, culture, and history grounded in traditions of the *Volk*. Jacob also advocated for the integration of Roman law into national law insofar as it had already become part of the folk law in Germany. He opposed the drive for the purification of German law and compared it to the senselessness of trying to remove all Roman-origin words from the English language. Jacob concluded that one should accept all foreign *Kulturgut* (cultural artifacts) that have historically become part of the culture, language, and law of the people. Jacob's method also expressed a clear opposition to the Savigny school. Drüppel notes that law had not been dealt with in the comprehensive manner in which Jacob Grimm thought about it. Jacob's idea of native law, which he did not qualify in terms of a pure German heritage but instead admitted to important influences from other cultures, was also later misused in the context of German right-wing nationalism.

The important point for us at this moment is that Jacob Grimm advocated a process of building national law that was broad based and inclusive of non-Germanic influences as well as orality as sources of law. Once again this is comparable to his understanding of poesy as broad based and not reducible to the written word, of philology not being reducible to grammar and vocabulary, of literature not being reducible to a specifically literary language. In all of his concerns, the idea of folk is central: folk as bearer of literary heritage, of language, and of law. He proposes again and again that in every field of study the source of knowledge should be broad based and inclusive of all social classes, mediums, and cultural influences instead of being based on narrowly defined concepts centered on the intellectual written production of a specific class.

Jacob Grimm's philology has been seen as unruly, an understanding that is not applied to his brother Wilhelm (Wyss). The difference between the two personalities of Jacob and Wilhelm has been well noted by scholars, and it has been generally agreed that Jacob was the innovative scholar and that Wilhelm was the disciplined editor. The manuscripts of the KHM show that most of the alterations in the later editions were carried out by Wilhelm. It is Jacob Grimm's scholarship that has been considered wild and unruly, challenging scholarly norms. Jacob Grimm's language has also been analyzed for its metaphors that come from nature and human anatomy (Krapf). In the history of the disciplines of literature and folklore too it is Jacob Grimm who redefined the horizons by not succumbing to the rules.

Regarding the view of Jacob Grimm as a free spirit and an innovative thinker, linguist Ulrich Wyss characterizes his work in terms of "wilde Philologie" (wild philology) and argues that Jacob himself constructed his

wild image.<sup>11</sup> As evidence, he cites from Jacob Grimm's *On Wilhelm* and *On Lachmann*. In his talk on Wilhelm, Jacob presents a comparison between his brother and himself in which he remarks that he has the capacity for hard labor, whereas Wilhelm is prevented from it because of his weak health; Jacob is the discoverer, whereas Wilhelm is the analyzer. Jacob sees the overarching principles and movements, whereas Wilhelm concentrates on detail. And of course, Jacob appreciates the expression of the folk, whereas Wilhelm touches it all with refinement through his editing.

Jacob Grimm's difference from his contemporary Karl Lachmann has been the subject of several studies, including those by Wyss and Italian Germanist Carlo Bontempelli. Bontempelli's study is one of the most interesting, told with all the elements of a thriller. Bontempelli relates that when the first chair of *Germanistik* was instituted in Berlin, both Jacob Grimm and Karl Lachmann were in the running. The position went to Lachmann, who was a proponent of the classical philological method and who domesticated German philology along the lines of classical philology. Lachmann's approach was based on producing learned editions of older texts. Jacob Grimm's orientation was obviously different, and he was well aware of this difference. For Bontempelli, "Jacob Grimm was the representative of an unruly philology, deeply sensitive to nature in all its nuances, Lachmann was the great normalizer" (Bontempelli, 16). In his *Talk on Lachmann* Jacob Grimm states, "All philologists who have achieved anything worth the name, can be divided into two categories: first, those who study words for the love of things, and second, those who study things for the love of words" (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 151; my translation). Lachmann, Jacob argued, belongs to the second type—those who love words over things—whereas he himself belongs to the first type—those who love things over words. There is no ambiguity in his words, and Bontempelli takes it as a sign of Jacob's attack on the "normalizing violence" (Bontempelli, 16) of Lachmann's philology. Although I agree with Bontempelli, I would also like to point out that in the same writing Jacob establishes the value of Lachmann's work clearly and appreciatively, just as he is able to appreciate both Goethe's and Schiller's literary language.

To understand Jacob's philology, I have taken into consideration several of his writings and shown how in every field of research he opts for the broad base of knowledge as reflected in the language of the people and the texts. This is the unruly, or even "wild" side to Jacob Grimm's scholarship. Some have seen it in his own language, and others have seen it in his difference from his brother Wilhelm Grimm and contemporary Karl Lachmann. As for myself, I believe Jacob Grimm's philology is wild, if wild is understood as an uncharted territory, with no prelaid paths, the possibility of free exploration that is not

exempt from the risk of the wild. German philology was an undefined field in the early nineteenth century, and Jacob Grimm explored it with an open mind. Although others would lay a path first and then move, Jacob entered the wild from an everyday entrance and saw that the wild growth was far more vibrant than the cultivated flowers of the royal gardens. But instead of setting up these two forms of nature or two approaches as opposites, Jacob saw them both as part of nature. Philology for him was not the study of the language of a certain class but of language in its broadest understanding. Oral and written narrative and poetry were differentiated because they represented different mediums of communication, but they were not essentially different. Jacob Grimm's philology is wild not because it is full of metaphors from the natural world. In fact, those metaphors in themselves are limited; as Donald Haase says, "The organic metaphors of European Romanticism and the stubborn dichotomies of oral-literary, primitive-civilized and colonizer-colonized are inadequate to the task of explaining the full complexity of fairy tale textuality" (23). Jacob Grimm's philology is wild because he dared to explore what was at the time a wild territory and to develop his method based on what he discovered about the subject of his study, instead of establishing his method first and researching the subject later.

One might argue that Jacob Grimm's methodological openness was operative in the nature of the nineteenth-century discipline of philology itself, in that it combined several fields of study that later became independent and separate disciplines. But at this historical juncture, the start of the nineteenth century, the discipline of philology was in the process of being defined more narrowly. Were it not so, Jacob Grimm not only would have been recognized as a scholar but also would have academically defined the larger discipline of *Germanistik*. In Jacob Grimm's philology, folk language was the basis of literature, law, and culture. Considering that he is the one who coined the term *Germanistik* for German philology, it is ironic that folklore studies actually remain largely outside *Germanistik* and are marginalized within literary disciplines in other European languages. Today *Germanistik* is still understood as the study of German language and canonical literature only, whereas folklore is the subject of cultural anthropology or ethnology. Karl Lachmann was not alone in believing that cultural texts of a language produced by its educated elite in a refined language were the proper objects of study within the discipline of philology. As the nineteenth century progressed and the context of colonialism encompassed the entire world in one way or another, Europe came to be known through its printed literature and the colonized continents became the perceived storehouses of orality. The domestication of philology, the love of words over and above things, came to rule imperially, pushing the wilderness

full of knowledge into the margins of the academy. If we take Jacob Grimm's own marginalization into consideration, that of our discipline of folkloristics should not come as a surprise to us. Nor should it deter us from reevaluating the potential of the field we study.

Therefore it is worth a speculative question: What would have been the fate of philological studies, including the study of folklore, literature, and culture, had Jacob Grimm been appointed the first chair of German studies in Berlin? It seems possible that under his leadership an interconnected field for the study of language, literature, folklore, and culture could have developed. The dividing line between literature and folklore may not have been so deeply etched in academia. The same goes for the dividing line between literary and nonliterary language. And perhaps, the elitist nature of philology might have been democratized.

For yet another confirmation that this speculation may be correct, let us turn to an article by Jacob Grimm that has received little critical attention: *School, University, and Academy* (1864). In this essay, he discusses the three levels of educational institutions. He sees the school system as necessary for human beings who do not learn instinctively the way birds learn to fly. With respect to university studies, he believes that the choice of subjects and plan of work should be completely left to the students. He thinks that too many regulations have been established to keep the bad students out, which only makes things difficult for the brighter students. The third and the highest level of educational institutions, the academy, is for abstraction and philosophy. After a long philosophical discussion on educational and research institutions, Grimm discusses the place where knowledge is produced, and it is not in these institutions: "All sciences glow in the human soul and can be ignited into flames directly from there" (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 254; my translation).<sup>12</sup> For Jacob Grimm, the source of knowledge is out there in the wild reality, but knowledge is produced within by human beings, and in this way Grimm connects the empirical and reflective schools of research. The distance his thought covers is across time, space, and the wild field of knowledge. The wild field is diverse and varied not only in terms of the sources of knowledge but also in terms of the methods of gaining knowledge. The difference in methods should not divide the field of knowledge itself as valid or invalid, scientific or unscientific, but lead to considering knowledges in the plural.

The purpose of my current speculation is to ask, What can Jacob Grimm's wild philology do for us today, particularly for the discipline of folklore studies? Donald Haase's long engagement with the Brothers Grimm and their fairy-tale collection has led him to theorize that the "coalescing of the

critical and the creative in folktale and fairy-tale collections" (23) cannot be discounted in the process of analysis. In his article "Decolonizing Fairy-Tale Studies" Haase opposes a kind of interdisciplinarity that is based on borrowing methods from other disciplines and applying them without reference to the complexities involved in the making of folktale and fairy-tale collections. Haase emphasizes the need to relate to other disciplines to widen the horizons of folktale and fairy-tale studies and to recognize the simultaneous existence of the local and the transnational in the complex texts created by collectors and scholars. To my mind, it suggests that folklore studies should go a little wild in seeking alliances with other fields and subjects of study. The discipline of folklore studies should reestablish or reinvigorate its relationship with the disciplines that Jacob Grimm concerned himself with: literature, language, law, and history. Perhaps we need to ask, Which higher truth do we reach by studying folklore today?

Needless to say, our field is quite different from the one that Jacob entered, but his spirit of exploration within and without the boundaries laid by academic institutions provokes us to think afresh, to think wild. This comparative reading of Jacob Grimm's wild and interdisciplinary philology tells us a few things about the power of a wild philology. In my view Jacob Grimm's method has a renewed relevance in our time, when we are seeing the collapse of boundaries that were hitherto considered permanent; the boundaries of nation, language, and culture have lost their former meaning as a result of technological breakthroughs and the increasing globalization of economies. They have simultaneously gained new meanings because of changing social realities. Canons of knowledge stand challenged by knowledge that ordinary people create (as in the case of established encyclopedias versus Wikipedia). Languages are changing and transforming at a never-before-reached speed, and, above all, ex-colonials and migrants are creating linguistic, literary, and cultural phenomena that challenge those who insist on explaining and analyzing any cultural phenomenon from a position of methodological or disciplinary purity. The realities of languages and cultural expressions are far more complex today than in the past, and these realities are compelling us to think in hyphenated categories such as Turkish-German and Indian-English or in transcategories such as transnational and translocal, or to deal with the influence of cinematic and new media technologies on languages and with the texts of digital literature. Hyphenated identities, transcultural phenomena, and new media cultures cannot be located within classical philological methods. Once again, perhaps a wild philology based on the love of things, not the love of words, is required to see beauty in contemporary cultural complexities.

### Notes

1. This paper was presented as a plenary talk at the conference “Grimm Today: Kinder- und Hausmärchen and Its Legacy—200 Years After,” sponsored by the Instituto de Estudos de Literatura Tradicional, University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal, June 21–23, 2012.
2. For a translation of the preface to the KHM, see Tatar 203–220.
3. “Es war vielleicht gerade die Zeit diese Märchen festzuhalten.”
4. “Wie aus drei gegebenen puncten eine figure zu bilden, aus den verhaeltnissen dreier unter sich verwandter sprachen ihr lebendiges gesetz zu finden ist” (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 257).
5. “Ob wir die spache als ein erschafenes oder unerschfen anerkennen” (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 260).
6. “Sie ist unsere geschichte, unsere erbschaft” (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 265).
7. Jacob Grimm’s *Manudscha* is a Sanskrit word, written in English as *Manuj*, literally “Manu-born.” Manu is understood as the progenitor of humanity and therefore *Manuj* can be understood as human-born or born of human being.
8. For a wider discussion on the history of linguistics and the place of Rasmus Rask, Jacob Grimm, and Noam Chomsky, see Campbell.
9. “Dass Recht und Poesie miteinander aus einem Bette aufgestanden waren, hält nicht schwer zu glauben” (Grimm, “Von der Poesie im Recht,” 27).
10. “Die Sängere verwalteten das Gut der Lieder, die Urteiler verweseten Amt und Dienst der Rechte” (Grimm, “Von der Poesie im Recht,” 29).
11. In a recent e-mail communication, Ulrich Wyss told me that when he coined the term *wilde Philologie* in 1979, he was thinking of Lévi-Strauss’s *pensée sauvage*.
12. “In der menschlichen seele glimmen alle wissenschaften und können unmittelbar aus ihr zur flame aufschlagen” (Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, 254).

### Works Cited

- Bontempelli, Pier Carlo. *Knowledge, Power, and Discipline: German Studies and National Identity*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2004.
- Campbell, Lyle. “The History of Linguistics.” *The Handbook of Linguistics*. Ed. Mark Aronoff and Janie Rees-Miller. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002. 81–94.
- Drüppel, Hubert. “Jacob Grimm und die deutsche Rechtswissenschaft. Kuchinke-Bach, Anneliese.” *Würzburger Hochschulschriften zur neuen deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, v. 10, *Die Brüder Grimm: Eine Würzburger Ringvorlesung zum Jubiläum im Rahmen des studium generale*. Ed. Anneliese Kuchinke-Bach. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1987. 61–69.
- Grimm, Jacob. *Kleinere Schriften*. Band I. Berlin: Dümmlers, 1864.
- . “Von der Poesie im Recht.” *Zeitschrift für geschichtliche Rechtswissenschaft und Kleinere Schriften*, Band 2, Heft 1 (1815): 25–99. Reprinted in *Kleineren Schriften*, Band 6 (1864): 152–91.
- Grimm, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm. *Vorrede zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. Pittsburgh, 1819. Available at [www.sagen.at/texte/maerchen/maerchen\\_deutschland/maerchen\\_bruedergrimm/vorrede.html](http://www.sagen.at/texte/maerchen/maerchen_deutschland/maerchen_bruedergrimm/vorrede.html) (accessed November 28, 2013).
- Haase, Donald. “Decolonizing Fairy-Tale Studies.” *Marvels & Tales* 24.1 (2010): 17–38.



- Krapf, Veronika. "Sprache als Organismus." *Metaphern: Ein Schlüssel zu Jacob Grimm's Sprachauffassung*. Ed. Veronika Krapf. Kassel, Germany: Brüder Grimm Gesellschaft, 1993. 1–8.
- Kuchinke-Bach, Anneliese, ed. *Die Brueder Grimm*, v. 10, *Würzburger Hochschulschriften zur neueren deutschen Literaturgeschichte*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1987.
- Tatar, Maria. *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*, bicentennial ed. New York: Norton, 2012.
- Wyss, Ulrich. *Die wilde Philologie: Jacob Grimm und der Historismus*. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1979.