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Two Hundred Years After Once Upon a Time: The Legacy of the
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Two Hundred Years After Once Upon a Time

The Legacy of the Brothers Grimm and Their Tales in Germany

The first question to ask when discussing the legacy of the Brothers Grimm and their tales in Germany 200 years after they published the two volumes of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales) in 1812 and 1815 is, Are the Grimms sleeping comfortably in their graves because of the great success of their tales, now considered almost as famous as Luther's translation of the Bible, or are they twisting, turning, and complaining that they have been betrayed by the manner in which their tales have been turned into kitsch entertainment? The second important question is, What is their legacy exactly and what are their tales? Here I must note that the stories in their collection are not strictly speaking all fairy tales, for there is hardly a fairy in any of their tales, which range from fables, legends, and animal tales to folk anecdotes, trickster stories, tall tales, and religious narratives. On the other hand, there is, of course, a great deal of magical or miraculous transformation and moral counterworlds that constitute prime characteristics of the great tradition of fairy tales. Bearing that in mind, the third question, for there must always be three, is, What has happened to the Grimms' tales in Germany since the 1990 reunification of East and West Germany, and why are they still so relevant? Why is there a contemporary fairy-tale boom in Germany, not to mention in the United States and other parts of the world?

Because there have been excellent studies about the influence and heritage of the Grimms' tales up to 1990—I am thinking here of Donald Haase's book *The Reception of Grimms' Fairy Tales*, an informative collection of essays, among others—I want to set the discussion of the legacy of the

Grimms' tales in the German sociocultural context of the last twenty-five years and begin by discussing some of the more recent popular manifestations of their stories. Literally hundreds if not thousands of Grimm fairy-tale products and productions have been created in the cultural fields of literature, theater, fine arts, opera, music, dance, film, television, the Internet, comics, and so on, and it would be impossible to do all of them justice. The same can be said about fairy-tale products in the world of advertising, commerce, and trade. Therefore I focus mainly on literature, including picture books, and filmic adaptations, and even here I must be selective because of the large amount of material. Following my discussion of popular manifestations, I discuss the concept or notion of a Grimm legacy and conclude with an analysis of scholarly studies that, in contrast to popular culture, have grounded the legacy of the Grimms in substantial ways that, I believe, are giving the brothers great peace of mind in their graves. To be sure, I do not believe that the Grimms turn over in their graves all that often because of popular culture and the popularity of their tales, but they must certainly be shocked and, at times, distressed by the massive transformation of the tales, which runs the gamut from banal and infantile kitsch to sublime and profound recreation—something that they had not experienced during their lifetime.

The kitsch has been more or less “celebrated” and certainly exposed in the exhibit “Grimmskrams & Märchendisig: Die Popularität der Brüder Grimm und ihrer Märchen” (Grimms’ Junk and Fairy-Tale Merchandising: The Popularity of the Brothers Grimm and Their Fairy Tales),¹ held from December 2008 to February 2009 in Marburg and organized by the Institute for Ethnology and Cultural Studies of the Philipps-University Marburg. The exhibit was divided into modules consisting of the “German Fairy-Tale Road and Regional Marketing,” “Language and Storytelling,” psychology, pornography and fairy-tale fetishism, fairy-tale illustrations, fairy-tale films, fairy-tale archaeology, Grimm street art in Marburg, and the poetry of boxes. According to the organizers:

The basic idea of the exhibit is to comprehend objects as nodal points that to a certain extent dwell within the popularity of the Brothers Grimm as they manifest themselves today and to comprehend where they are stored and preserved. In this regard the theory of the exhibit is based on the notion that things contain an energy and radiate and they have an effect that harks back to the context of their origins through the network of their forces. (Zimmermann, 16)

Whether this is true—that is, whether the seemingly trivial and everyday objects associated with the Grimms and their tales actually vibrate in their

effect and resonate with traces of their original sociocultural context—is questionable. But it is certainly important to study and analyze kitsch as part of a “culture of experience” (*Erlebniskultur*), which has always been part of the mission of folklore.

Literature and Film

In the field of literature, as I have already mentioned, it is well-known that the Grimms’ tales constitute the most widely published and disseminated books in Germany that can be categorized as fiction. Large and small publishing houses, such as Insel, Reclam, Rowohlt, Goldmann, Fischer, Diederichs, Beltz & Gelberg, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Heyne, Die bibliophilen Taschenbücher, Zweitausendeins, and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, have issued various editions of the complete tales during the past thirty years, many of them with illustrations by contemporary artists. The most significant books are the annotated scholarly reprints of different editions that the Grimms published. For instance, Heinz Rölleke has edited the first edition of 1812 and 1815 for Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, the third edition of 1837 for Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, and the seventh edition of 1857 for Reclam; and Hans-Jörg Uther has edited the second edition of 1819 for Olms-Weidmann and the seventh edition of 1857 for Diederichs.² It is important to bear in mind that, during their lifetime, the Grimms published seven editions of the large edition (*Große Ausgabe*) of their tales from 1812 to 1857, which Wilhelm kept changing and amending after the first edition, and ten editions of the small edition (*Kleine Ausgabe*) of fifty tales from 1825 to 1858, which Wilhelm also constantly changed. In other words, the body of the tales, including the notes, is a vast and never-ending collection that keeps appearing in many different versions. For instance, in the latter part of the twentieth century Rölleke edited three significant volumes of tales that were omitted in the final 1857 edition as well as tales from letters, endnotes, and manuscripts.³

The never-ending aspect of the Grimms’ tales can be seen especially in the variety of the books intended for children and family audiences. Well over 500 different types of Grimms’ books have been published in German in the past twenty-two years, including single volumes for pre- and beginning readers, comic books, graphic novels, picture books, selected tales for young readers, pornographic books, adaptations, and fine art books. Here is a tiny sample—just four examples—of the diverse products that have been cast onto the book market.

First is Dagmar Kammerer’s work as illustrator for *Mein großes Märchenbuch* (My Big Book of Fairy Tales, 2009). Kammerer’s illustrations are typical of the

standard illustrations for children—sweet, cute, literal, nonprovocative. They are basically intended to amuse and divert children, provide brief entertainment, lull them to sleep, or stimulate them to buy similar products. The tendency of most Grimm picture books and small collections for children is to infantilize the texts and to provide illustrations that downplay sensitive but significant social issues. An example of infantilization is Claudia Blei-Hoch's *Das große Märchen Bilderbuch der Brüder Grimm* (The Big Picture Book of Fairy Tales by the Brothers Grimm, 2006). A good example of a witty book for children is Rotraut Susanne Berner's work, actually two books, *Märchen-Stunde* (Fairy-Tale Hour, 1998), which she re-issued as *Märchen-Comics* (Fairy-Tale Comics) in 2008. However, similar to the tradition that George Cruikshank started in 1823, Berner transforms the characters of the tales into funny caricatures that flatten the meanings of the tales.

Second, a large number of books explain how parents and teachers can use the Grimms' tales. These serve as pedagogical complements to the standardized picture books and small collections that tend to trivialize the Grimms' tales. Some examples are Linda Knoch's *Praxisbuch Märchen: Verstehen—Deuten—Umsetzen* (Practice Book for Fairy Tales: Understanding, Interpreting, Transforming, 2001), Cordula and Reinhold Pertler's *Kinder in der Märchenwerkstatt: Kreative Spiel- und Projektideen* (Children in the Fairy-Tale Workshop: Ideas for Creative Play and Projects, 2009), and Ute Hoffmann's *Die kreative Märchen-Werkstatt* (The Creative Fairy-Tale Workshop, 2010).

Third, in my opinion, the most interesting illustrated books of the Grimms' tales are the experimental works of Nikolaus Heidelberg, Susanne Janssen, Květa Pacovská, and Ulrike Persch. Heidelberg illustrated 110 of the Grimms' fairy tales in 1995 in his book *Märchen der Brüder Grimm*. His images are stark and surrealistic, and his folk interpretations of the tales tend to bring out both the deep dark side of the stories and their blasphemous humor. Susanne Janssen has published two picture books, *Rothkäppchen* (2001) and *Hänsel und Gretel* (2008). Both are extraordinary retellings of the tales that use montage, distorted figures, and modern settings to bring out the horrific aspects of the tales. In keeping with the innovative ways that Heidelberg and Janssen tend to fracture fairy tales, that is, to challenge the trivialized and standard depictions of the classical tales with complex and tantalizing compositions, the Czech illustrator Květa Pacovská, who works and publishes a great deal in Germany, has used stunning graphics, paper collages, and bizarre figures. Unlike Janssen, however, she emphasizes the free play of the imagination with fairy tales in her versions of *Rothkäppchen* (2007) and *Hänsel und Gretel* (2009) and lends an optimistic aura to her fairy tales. Perhaps the most optimistic and subversive adaptation of "Little Red Riding Hood" is

Ulrike Persh's *Rotkäppchens List* (2005), which portrays a tiny Red Riding Hood in a contemporary city that often looms as dangerous.

As my last example, although the subversive illustrations by Heidelberg, Janssen, Pacovská, and Persh are clearly intended to appeal to adults as well as young readers, there are a number of books for adults that are highly provocative, if not outrageous. For instance, Unfug-Verlag published a pornographic version of the Red Riding Hood tale, Mart Klein's *Rotkäppchen*, in 2009 that leaves nothing to any reader's sexual imagination. Some other examples of erotic fairy tales are Theodor Ruf's novel *Die Schöne aus dem Glassarg: Schneewittchens märchenhaftes und wirkliches Leben* (The Beautiful Maiden from the Glass Coffin: Snow White's Fabulous and Real Life, 1995) and Anne Kühne's collection of stories, *Der goldene Mörser* (The Golden Mortar, 2000/2008). Less erotic but still subversive are the fractured tales of murder, sex, and gore in René Hemmerling's *Total versaute Märchen: Die Brüder finden das schlimme* (Totally Messed-Up Fairy Tales: The Brothers Grimm Find This Awful, 2006).⁴ Hemmerling calls his parodies "trash fairy tales," and they have titles such as "Hansel and Gretel, & Co. Celebrate Halloween," "Rapunzel Among Druggies," and "The Frog King and the Ungrateful Barber's Daughter."

There are, of course, more serious adaptations of the Grimms' tales, such as Cornelia Funke's *Reckless* (2010) and *Fearless* (2012), Karin Duve's *Grrrimm* (2012), and Florian Weber's *Grimms Erben* (2012). It is obvious that these works were timed to appear during the bicentenary celebrations of the first edition of the Grimms' *Children's and Household Tales*, and all of them have a critical edge to them. Funke's two novels are part of a trilogy, the Mirror World series, in which she depicts the Brothers Grimm as Jacob and Will Reckless in their early 20s. They enter a nineteenth-century fantasy world through a mirror, and in the first novel, *Reckless*, Jacob must rescue his brother, who is transformed into a Goyl, a humanoid race with stone skin. In this fast-paced narrative Jacob encounters dwarfs, wicked and good fairies, and a female shape-shifting fox. Motifs from several Grimms' tales, such as "The Frog King," "Rapunzel," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Snow White," are thrown into the brew to enliven the plot. In the end Jacob can save his brother only by sacrificing his own life. He sends Will back to the "real" world and has only a year to live unless he finds a cure to his curse. Of course, this ending leads to a new beginning in *Fearless*, in which Jacob falls in love with the shape-shifter fox, also called Celeste, while seeking to obtain an antidote to the deadly moth implanted in his heart. Again, motifs such as a miraculous apple, water of immortality, and magic blood are used as possible cures for Jacob's curse. Whether he will ultimately find peace and happiness will be determined in the third novel, which is being written. This process includes a critical revision

of the Grimms' tales, which Funke called somewhat reactionary in a 2010 interview: "Fairy tales play with many kinds of wishes, sometimes for revenge, sometimes for power. They often appeal to everything other than what is good in us. When one reads a fairy tale, one is astonished by how reactionary we often are. Indeed, often fairy tales merely reinforce existing norms. In addition when one regards what the Grimms did with the female figures, then one is really horrified" (Freund; translation mine).

Yet, although the female figures, even the evil fairies, in Funke's novels tend to be more politically correct, the character portrayal of women (and men) is somewhat thin and predictable in her novels, which are intended for a young adult audience. In contrast, Karin Duve's characters in her five unusual tales that make up *Grrrimm* are highly complex and original. Using different narrative voices that are blunt, colorful, and idiomatic, she retells five of the Grimms' tales ("Snow White," "The Frog King," "Sleeping Beauty," "Brother Listig," and "Little Red Cap") to explore hidden meanings that add greater social and philosophical depth to the stories. For instance, "Zwergenidyll" (Dwarf Idyll) is told in the first person by a dwarf who is in love with Snow White and tries to seduce her. However, despite his unsuccessful and somewhat comic attempts, she is carried off by the prince, marries, and then divorces within a year because the prince considers her beneath him. Consequently, Snow White becomes the mistress of a series of members of the royal court and finally drifts off to nowhere, whereas the dwarf becomes rich after discovering gold and waits for her, lonely and longing, in the cottage where Snow White used to clean and cook. In the title story "Grrrimm," a tour-de-force retelling of "Little Red Cap" combined with "The Boy Who Set Out to Learn about Creeps," Duve sets the tale in a contemporary village in the mountains of some apparently Slavic country, where conditions are primitive. The entire tale focuses on shape shifting and desperate survival.

Survival also plays a major role in Florian Weber's extraordinary novel, *Grimms Erben* (Grimms' Heirs), which concerns the fate of writers of fairy tales, or storytelling in general, in the post-Holocaust era. The novel, filled with gallows humor and strange coincidences, is divided into three parts, which take place in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943, in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century in Lower Bavaria, and then in the contemporary world of the Austrian Alps. The plot is based on an oath that two brothers, Ignaz and Zacharias Buchmann, sons of a shoemaker in a tiny village in Bavaria, make to each other at the beginning of World War II, when they decide to avoid serving in the German army; they want to live in a hut in the Austrian Alps until the war ends and publish a book of Ignaz's fairy tales under the title "Grimms' Heirs." Before they seek refuge in the mountains, Ignaz

wants to publish his book as a sign of resistance to the Nazis and as a gesture for a peaceful world. Zacharias is to be the publisher. However, they become separated in Warsaw, where Ignaz had hoped to find a printer for the book. Ignaz is captured by the Nazis and sent to Treblinka as a Jew. Zacharias is recruited into the German army as a truck driver, and unfortunately, he experiences the execution of his brother when he is sent to pick up supplies in Treblinka. Nevertheless, he is able to save five of his brother's tales, and thereafter his mission in life is to fulfill the oath that he made to Ignaz. To do this, he changes his identity and becomes Zacharias Locher, and the rest of the novel focuses on how this oath is passed on to his grandson August in postwar Germany, and the difficult conditions under which August, also a writer of tales, must learn like Job to suffer and prove himself "worthy" to carry out the oath after his grandfather commits suicide. The final part of the novel includes a fairy tale written by Ignaz that exemplifies the morality behind the oath: Night challenges Day to a duel to determine who will dominate the world for all twenty-four hours instead of sharing each day for twelve hours each. As their armies are about to engage in war, the Tides, Ebb and Flow, appear and talk sense to Day and Night so that they realize it would be too much work to control the world for twenty-four hours. So they settle their conflict peacefully. The result is that "Ebb and Flow still continue to ensure that there will be chaos in human emotions—because they have not expired" (Weber, 411; translation mine).

Aside from the fairy-tale novels of Günter Grass, Weber's work is one of the few narratives that deepen the ethical legacy of the Grimms' tales, and his novel sets out to explore the morality of writing fairy tales as a mission in light of the Nazi past without being overly didactic. Weber's unusual approach shows how entangled the Grimms' heritage is, and this is what makes the novel so significant.

Filmic Adaptations

Whether there is such a strong moral aspect in the adaptation of the Grimms' tales for the cinema remains to be seen. The quantity, quality, and variety of these films, made mainly for the television and DVD markets, are vast. First, it should be noted that the reunification of Germany allowed all the East German DEFA, Czech, and Russian fairy-tale films to be marketed in the former West Germany, and today many of these films have been shown on television and in theaters and are readily available as DVDs. Most of them are live-action films, although one should not forget that numerous excellent animated fairy-tale films were also created in Eastern Europe from 1945 to 1990.

DEFA (Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft) produced twenty-three live-action fairy-tale films from 1956 to 1989 based on the Grimms' tales, not to mention other films based on the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen and Wilhelm Hauff and coproductions with Czech filmmakers.⁵ Intended for young viewers, the DEFA fairy-tale films were directed by some of the best filmmakers in East Germany and included many of the country's foremost actors. Moreover, the manner in which the Grimms' tales were adapted to emphasize class struggle, the radical transformation of society, industriousness, and social and political justice makes it clear that the filmmakers and their crews did a thorough study of the ideology of each tale and sought to highlight their contradictions as well as the contradictions of the East German state and party. For the most part the aesthetic quality of the films is quite good, even when the plots and themes are overly didactic. What is interesting today is that, although DEFA sought to demonstrate how the Grimms' tales were part and parcel of a socialist heritage, the films as DVDs circulate in a reunified capitalist Germany and must compete with other German series of fairy-tale films that are ideologically more in keeping with patriarchal and capitalist ideas.

For instance, Greenlight Media introduced the animated series *Simsala Grimm* in 1999 and produced fifty-two episodes through 2010 based largely on the Grimms' tales and several tales from the works of Hauff, Andersen, and Joseph Jacobs. The format of each 25-minute episode calls for two charming characters, a zany mischief-maker named Yo Yo and the more serious and studious Doc Cro, to become involved in a revised tale. Their major function is to provide comic relief as they intervene in the action, always to help the good characters. For the most part the directors of these skits have simplified the tales in an effort to provide commercially digestible amusement for children between the ages of 4 and 10 without questioning the ideology of the original Grimm texts, as the DEFA films always did to address political conflicts. To a great extent the focus tends to be on the two comic characters Yo Yo and Doc Cro rather than on exploring the Grimms' tales in any critical or creative depth. For this reason, despite the good reception of *Simsala Grimm* by young viewers, two important societies, the Europäische Märchengesellschaft and the Märchen-Stiftung Walter Kahn, along with numerous independent storytellers, educators, and film critics, initiated a controversial debate in 2000 about the denigration of the Grimms' legacy that continues up to the present day. According to Daniel Drascek, the critics of *Simsala Grimm* (and also other fairy-tale television series) accuse the producers of falsifying the folklore tradition of the Brothers Grimm, commercializing the tales irresponsibly, and harming the imagination of children by visualizing tales that were created to be told.

Diverse opinions were presented in the book *Märchen—Kinder—Medien* (Fairy Tales, Children, Media), edited by Kurt Franz and Walter Kahn (2000),⁶ and reveal how critics are seriously concerned about the Grimms' legacy of folktales and how differently they assess the filmic adaptation of the tales. Some critics, such as Christoph Schmitt, Joachim Giera, and Lutz Röhrich, suggest that the questionable or nonauthentic fairy-tale films keep the Grimms' tradition alive and that their legacy will remain resilient no matter how differently it is interpreted or transformed. Despite or because of the critical reception, the *Simsala Grimm* series continues to enjoy popular success; it is well funded, widely disseminated throughout the world, and accompanied by toys, puzzles, coloring books, games, and other peripheral products. To a certain extent, the success of this series has spawned two live-action fairy-tale series for television, *Märchenperlen* (2005) and *Sechs auf einen Streich* (2008). Both series are modernized interpretations of the Grimms' tales and are intended for older children and families. Thus far, more than twenty different adaptations have been made; they vary greatly in quality and draw large audiences. Although the producers of these series tend to modernize the meanings of these tales and at the same time preserve their so-called original messages, it is clear that the films are bound by the demands and ideologies of German television codes and prescriptions.

It seems as though the success of the fairy-tale films for television has discouraged filmmakers from producing films for the cinema. Aside from various foreign films, relatively few fairy-tale films have been produced by German corporations. Two films are noteworthy for their high kitsch factor: *7 Zwerge: Männer allein im Wald* (7 Dwarfs: Men Alone in the Forest, 2004) and the sequel *7 Zwerge: Der Wald ist nicht genug* (7 Dwarfs: The Forest Is Not Enough, 2006). Both live-action films were directed by Sven Unterwaldt and had great success at the box office. The comedies are loosely based on the Grimms' "Snow White" and depict the absurd adventures of seven men—Brummboss, Sunny, Cloudy, Tschakko, Cookie, Bubi, and Speedy—who have decided to live deep in a forest without women because they have all had mishaps with the female sex. Indeed, they are all misfits, and when Red Riding Hood and Snow White wander into the forest, the blundering men are at first flustered but eventually save Snow White from the evil queen. In the sequel they rescue her once again, this time from Rumpelstiltskin. Both films are insipid, the gags are infantile, and the slapstick acting is worse than the acting of the Three Stooges.

Two other films, Christoph Hochhäusler's *Milchwald* (In This Very Moment, 2003) and Doris Dörrie's *Der Fischer und seine Frau* (The Fisherman and His Wife, 2005), are to be taken much more seriously. In a clear reference to the

Grimms' "Hansel and Gretel," Hochhäusler's bleak but brilliant film concerns the accidental abandonment of two children, Lea and Constantin, or the incapacity of parents in our postindustrial world to provide the young with the nurturing and care that they need. The plot is simple and straightforward: a young woman named Sylvia has become a stepmother by marrying an older man named Joseph, a widower who has two children. They are clearly well-to-do in the former East Germany and have recently moved into a suburban house still in the midst of a renovation. Everything is white, sterile, and unfinished inside the house, and Sylvia has obviously not adjusted to the house and the two stepchildren who resent her. The house is undergoing renovation, and the unprepared young wife married to a rich professional can easily be interpreted as a representation of contemporary East Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The young stepmother is not up to the task of raising children who do not belong to her. After she picks them up and drives them to do her shopping in Poland, where goods are cheaper than they are in Germany, she has an argument with Lea and abandons both children temporarily on the road to the shopping center. The abandonment turns out to be permanent when the children wander into a forest and become lost and eventually are taken to a Polish city by a worker who delivers cleaning fluid to different hotels in the region. At first the worker wants a reward for finding the children, but he too eventually abandons them on a highway because they cause him so much trouble.

There is no happy ending in this film; the family has degenerated and cannot hold itself together in a cruel world. The children are left to their own resources because anxiety and alienation cannot create bonds of support for the young. The film reflects how misunderstanding is the way people communicate, whether it in the former East Germany or Poland, and certainly the language and cultural misunderstandings contribute to the conflicts concerning the children. Silence and repression are also contributing factors to the dilemma of the family. Certainly, the children are not willfully abandoned in this film, but they have been psychologically abandoned, and although they head for home at the end, it is questionable whether they can find home in a world of lies and miscommunication.

Such is Hochhäusler's comment on the Grimms' legacy, whereas Dörrie is much more optimistic even if somewhat reactionary. Her film is a comedy based on the Grimms' dialect tale "The Fisherman and His Wife," and it begins first in Japan where a young German "fish doctor" named Otto accidentally meets a lovely young fashion designer named Ida. They fall in love and decide to have a blitz marriage in Japan. When they return to Germany, they live in a shabby caravan where Otto makes a living curing and dealing in exotic fish. Ida designs unusual scarves and dresses. As they begin to prosper, Ida insists on moving to

more comfortable and luxurious places—an apartment, a condominium, a huge mansion with servants—and she also changes her looks to become more stylish and fashionable. Her ambition leads to marital strife and separation until they lose all their money and wealth. Ida realizes how much happier she was with Otto when they were living in a caravan and struggling. Consequently, she returns to Otto in a grand, sentimental gesture of reconciliation.

The film is framed by two talking fish, Otto's pets, so to speak, who comment on the relationship between Otto and Ida. They appear to be humans living under a curse and will be released from the spell if Otto and Ida stay together three years. Ironically, the fish are then transformed into frogs, supposedly Dörrie's lighthearted joke about the Grimms' tale and fairy-tale expectations. But it is not a joke to depict a young contemporary woman punished because she is too ambitious while her tender young man tries to preserve the integrity of their marriage. Although not as banal as the Snow White filmic adaptations, Dörrie's film is a superficial interpretation of the Grimms' tale with stereotypical Hollywood touches.

With films such as *The Fisherman and His Wife*, *7 Zwerge*, and many other kitsch uses of the Grimms' tales in the past twenty-five years, it is a wonder that the Grimms' legacy has survived. However, as I have already suggested, there are always conflicts and disputes over legacies and heritage. There are always valid and invalid claims. Now, I would like to turn to what I believe are the more serious and legitimate claims to the Grimms' legacy in Germany, and I want to begin a brief discussion of the meaning of legacy before turning to Günter Grass and some important scholarly endeavors to preserve and deepen the Grimms' contribution to folklore.

The Legacy and Heritage of the Brothers Grimm

The general meaning of legacy is associated with a bequest, generally money, that is handed down by an ancestor or predecessor. A bequest may be anything—property, articles, jewelry, letters, documents, and so on. The bequest is generally recorded in a will or is legally determined by the courts. It is frequently based on a conscious decision by the bequeather before his or her death. Sometimes a legacy is connected to a heritage or inheritance, what the Germans call *Erbe*. From 1948 to 1990, during the existence of the two states, East and West Germany, there was a continual debate about which nation was entitled to inherit the great cultural tradition of the German humanities. In the case of the Brothers Grimm and their tales, there are no written testimonies that indicate exactly what they wanted to bequeath or pass on as a heritage to the German people. Yet their intentions are clear; that is, they were clear almost from the beginning of their careers as scholars when they were still in their

early 20s, especially after they began studying with their mentor Carl von Savigny at the University of Marburg at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Broadly, the Grimms sought to collect and preserve all kinds of ancient relics—tales, myths, songs, fables, legends, epics, documents, and other artifacts—as though they were sacred and precious gems. They intended to trace and grasp the essence of cultural evolution and to demonstrate how natural language, stemming from the needs, customs, and rituals of the common people, created authentic bonds and helped forge civilized communities. This is one of the reasons that they called their collection of tales an educational primer (*Erziehungsbuch*): the tales recalled the past foundation of the Germanic people and also other European groups. Yet the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* is only a small part of the Grimms' legacy, and to understand the role that the tales played in their bequest to the Germans, we must bear in mind the following points.

First, before they began collecting folktales in 1806, the Grimms had begun gathering all kinds of sagas, epics, legends, songs, and manuscripts and were writing about their historical significance. As Steffen Martus demonstrated in his recent significant biography of the Grimms, the brothers were diligent and ambitious workaholics, determined to prove themselves as the foremost scholars in the new fields of philology, ethnology, and folklore and bent on uncovering the mysteries of the origins of older texts. They were competitive and ambitious.

Second, when the Grimms decided to focus on collecting folktales to assist their friend Clemens Brentano, an important Romantic poet and writer, they had no plan to publish their own collection. It is almost by accident—and with the encouragement of their other friend Achim von Arnim, another significant Romantic writer—that they decided to publish the first two volumes of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in 1812 and 1815.

Third, in a copious correspondence with Arnim and other friends from 1810 through 1823, both Jacob and Wilhelm made it clear that their collection was *not* intended for children but primarily for other scholars and adults. Although they appreciated that their collected tales appealed to children, they were most concerned that the tales animate adult readers and scholars to learn about the present by understanding the past.

Fourth, in the period from 1812 to 1826 Jacob Grimm defended the title of their collection—Children and Household Tales—against Arnim's critique (and others' as well):

Have children's tales really been conceived and invented for children?
I don't believe this at all just as I don't affirm the general question.
What we possess in publicized and traditional teachings and precepts

is tolerated by old and young, and what they do not grasp about them, all that glides away from their minds is tolerated until they are ready to learn it. This is the case with all true teachings that ignites and illuminates everything that was already present and known, not teaching that brings both wood and fire with it. There is, however, in all special teaching an individual case without which the teaching cannot be accomplished. A book with crude, moralizing examples for children is not only boring but also feeble. It is more suitable that the kernels be spread unconsciously so that they can blossom sooner or later whenever, wherever, and how it is suitable, or not at all according to human freedom. (Steig and Grimm, 270)

Indeed, the complex format of the first and second editions of the *Children's and Household Tales* indicates that the Grimms sought primarily to address adults and perhaps cultivate the minds and tastes of children; these editions are accompanied by erudite notes and in the second edition by a long scholarly essay on children's customs.

Fifth, it was not until 1819, when Wilhelm took complete charge of editing all future editions of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, that there was a noticeable change in the Grimms' consistent adaptation of their tales and publishing policy. Under the influence of Edgar Taylor's translation, *German Popular Stories* (1823), the Grimms decided to have their tales illustrated and to publish a small edition of fifty tales more dedicated to family reading and children, and they decided not to publish footnotes or notes with the tales in the larger edition.

Sixth, it is also important to acknowledge that, although the Grimms' focused on tales that had a clear Germanic lineage, they never called their tales German, as did Ludwig Bechstein; nor did they label them Tyrolean or Austrian or Hessian or Swiss, as other collectors of tales did. The more they collected, the more they realized that their tales were part and parcel of a large and extensive European oral and literary tradition.

Last, by 1837, that is, with the publication of the third large edition, Jacob paid little attention to the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, and even Wilhelm, who kept refining the tales to find the appropriate oral folk mode, did not devote much research or time to expand and revise the collection. They turned their attention to collecting notes for the great project of their mature years, *The German Dictionary*, and other philological projects. The tales, if anything, were part of a huge body of the Grimms' philological works that formed their legacy to the German people. The significance of the tales cannot be understood without grasping their significance to the development of German language and culture, that is, to the German civilizing process.

Günter Grass and the Grimms

This last point is made significantly clear in Günter Grass's most recent work, *Grimms Wörter: Eine Liebeserklärung* (Grimms' Words: A Declaration of Love, 2010). Indeed, Grass's sprawling declaration is a thought-provoking book with an unusual interpretation of the legacy of the Brothers Grimm that has little to do with fairy tales and much to do with politics and the usefulness of words. Indeed, what else could be expected from Günter Grass, the most famous, if not most notorious, writer of postwar Germany? Despite the fact that he has written two fairy-tale novels, *Der Butt* (The Flounder, 1977) and *Die Rättin* (The Rat, 1986), as well as *Die Blechtrommel* (The Tin Drum, 1959), which has clear parallels with "Tom Thumb" tales, his book about the Brothers Grimm and their words does not focus on their tales and their influence on his own writing.

Grass weaves together three strands of history in this remarkable book: (1) a sociopolitical biography of the Brothers Grimm, Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm (1886–1859); (2) a chronicle of the development of the *German Dictionary* (*Das deutsche Wörterbuch*, 1838–1961), first edited by the brothers, who were able to complete only four volumes up to the letter F during their lifetime; and (3) pungent memories of Grass's lifetime (1927 to the present), which are linked to his two more recent memoirs.

The most important strand in *Grimms Wörter* is the second one. It demonstrates that it is the *Dictionary* and the other philological works published by the Grimms that provide the basis for their legacy in Germany. Grass traces the remarkable and contradictory history of the *Dictionary* through the Nazi period to 1961, when all thirty-two volumes finally appeared together, and he explains how work on German words in a revised *Grimms' Dictionary* continues today.

The Grimms' legacy is therefore never-ending, just as Grass's interventions and play with words in his book are never-ending and form the third strand of his book. More than 90 percent of the Grimms' work involved profound philological research into the history and vitality of words and how and why we speak them. And so Grass's verbosity and immodest celebration of his personal debt to the Grimms should help us alter our perspective as to why the words of their tales are so meaningful.

Scholarly Endeavors to Preserve the Grimms' Legacy to Folklore

This shift in perspective does not mean that we should spend more time analyzing the *Dictionary* and other philological works of the Brothers Grimm. It means that that we should be paying more attention to the interrelationship

between philology and narratology in the Grimms' collection of folktales. Indeed, German scholars have been at the forefront of the historical and philological scholarship that deals with the Grimms' voluminous works. The Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft in Kassel and the Europäische Märchengesellschaft have sponsored conferences and exhibits and published annuals, magazines, and monographs for more than fifty years. Some of their work is tedious and in need of critical revision, but for the most part the scholarship is dependable and useful. It is also not by chance that the monumental *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, the most significant and resourceful encyclopedia of folktales and fairy tales in the Western world, is housed in Göttingen and edited by some of the foremost scholars of folklore, who also contribute to *Fabula*, the leading European journal of folktales.

Amid all the remarkable work of German folklorists, linguists, and literary critics, it is, in my opinion, Heinz Rölleke who has been crucial for understanding the Grimms' legacy in the past fifty years. Rölleke began to make a name for himself as the most eminent scholar of the Grimms' tales when he published *Die älteste Märchensammlung der Brüder Grimm* in 1975, the first and most thorough annotated edition of the Grimms' written manuscript of 1810, usually referred to as the Ölenberg manuscript. This work enabled scholars to examine how the Grimms vastly changed the tales before they went into print in the first edition of 1812–1815. Rölleke followed this book with *Märchen aus dem Nachlaß der Brüder Grimm* (Tales from the Unpublished Papers of the Brothers Grimm, 1977), selected tales from the Grimms' posthumous papers; *Wo das Wünschen noch geholfen hat* (Where Wishing Still Helped, 1985), a collection of his shorter essays; and *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm* (The Tales of the Brothers Grimm, 1985), an exceedingly informative introduction to the Grimms' tales, which he revised in 2004.⁷ Altogether Rölleke has published well over sixty books that deal with the Grimms' tales, and he has also edited reprints of the first, third, and seventh editions of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* as well as the Grimms' correspondence. In short, Rölleke's careful philological work has laid the basis for most of the important scholarly work on the Grimms' tales in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

His most recent book, *Es war einmal . . . : Die wahren Märchen der Brüder Grimm und wer sie ihnen erzählte* (Once Upon a Time . . . : The True Tales of the Brothers Grimm and Who Told Them to Them, 2011), is a collaboration with the talented German illustrator Albert Schindehütte, a notable Grimm specialist in his own right, who provided highly unusual illustrations. The purpose of this edition—and to a certain extent Rölleke has come full circle in his research—is to uncover and pay tribute to the people who provided the Grimms with different kinds of tales in their earliest versions before the tales

were changed and honed, largely by Wilhelm Grimm. It is commonly known that the Grimms did not provide detailed information about their informants and exactly when, where, and how they passed on the stories that the storytellers either told to the Grimms or wrote down for them. Even when the Grimms did indicate the sources of the tales, some of their information was misleading.

Rölleke has made it his mission during the past thirty-five years or so to trace the history of the informants. During the course of these years, his voluminous essays have clarified how the Grimms obtained their tales and what their sources were. Finally, in *Es war einmal* he has published selected tales from twenty-five informants that can be found in the Ölenberg manuscript or the 1812–1815 edition. These tales are truer to the authentic storytelling tradition of their time and are quite different from the same tales that the Grimms gradually edited until they reached their polished form in the seventh edition of 1857.

In *Es war einmal* we gain a more comprehensive understanding of the background of the tales and how the Grimms worked. Despite certain contradictions in their work, Rölleke maintains that the Grimms managed to uncover numerous mythological motifs, parallels, and explanations, important for the study of folklore and the German language. At the same time, they artfully reconstituted the tales they received in accordance with their philological concept and growing awareness that the tales were widespread in Europe. Moreover, as Rölleke stresses, these so-called Hessian or German tales owed more to a greater European literary and folklore tradition than most people realize. And perhaps this is the reason that the tales never belonged to the informants or to the Grimms and why they are so globally popular today. Whatever the truth, Rölleke's spadework adds luster to the accomplishment of the Grimms as great *European* folklorists, who bequeathed their tales to Europe and the world.

Rölleke is, of course, not the only major German scholar who has made a great contribution to our understanding of the multicultural legacy of the Brothers Grimm and their tales. For instance, after making a significant contribution to the field of international folklore by revising Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson's *Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography* in 2004, Hans-Jörg Uther performed another notable and useful deed by producing *Handbuch zu den "Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm: Entstehung—Wirkung—Interpretation* (Companion to the Children's and Household Tales of the Brothers Grimm: Origin, Reception, Interpretation), the most thorough handbook of annotations to the Grimms' collection of folktales to date, including all the tales that the brothers had deleted or omitted in the course of

publishing seven editions from 1812 to 1857. This is a major accomplishment; Uther provides a plethora of references and sources to scholars and students who might be interested in the origins, impact, and criticism of the Grimms' tales, and he covers a wide range of scholarship (most of it German) with élan and perspicacity. Aside from this *Handbuch*, Uther has written numerous essays about the Grimms' tales and has also edited reprints of the Grimms' second and seventh editions of the *Children's and Household Tales*.

In a much different and incisive theoretical study, *Das Buch, das wir sind: Zur Poetik der "Kinder- und Hausmärchen, gesammelt durch die Brüder Grimm,"* Jens Sennewald develops Rölleke's notion of the Grimms as modernist and romantic cultivators of folktales, not just fairy tales. Following Jacob Grimm's debate about natural and artistic poetry and the meaning of fairy tales with Achim von Arnim, Sennewald makes clear what the Grimms' intentions were, and he quotes Jacob Grimm:

Here my old phrase that I have already used earlier to defend myself [is significant]: One should write according to one's ability and internal drives and not orient oneself to outside forces and adjust comfortably to them. Thus the folktale book has not been written for children, but it is welcomed by them, and that makes me very happy. I would not have worked on the folktales with pleasure if I had not believed that the most serious and oldest people such as I myself would consider it poetry, mythology, and history and regard it as important. (Steig and Grimm, 271; translation mine)

It is to Sennewald's credit that he explores and explains the intentions and conceptions of the Grimms as Romantic writers and philologists, just as Jacob sought to clarify his and his brother's beliefs and methods to Arnim.⁸ Sennewald emphasizes that there was not just one edition of their tales but seven and that the narratives, consisting of fairy tales, animal tales, legends, religious stories, fables, and anecdotes, were constantly edited and changed over the course of forty-seven years. According to Sennewald, these seven editions were influenced by the Grimms' other linguistic and philological works. Given the Grimms' great erudition and concerns, Sennewald maintains that the editions of the tales need to be considered as a collective whole, which, according to the Grimms, originated in antiquity and continued to be formed and reformed in a flowing process of remaking that sought to make words come alive, to resuscitate relics of the past and silenced words, so that they could speak for themselves in tone and structure. As part of the process, the Grimms saw themselves as excavators and cultivators who wanted to make the past livable for all people so that they could become at one with the words of the tales.

Such a task that the Grimms set for themselves demanded great artistry and philological knowledge.

Indeed, the Grimms paved the way for research—the collecting of tales and the gradual development of setting Romantic precepts of folklore—that numerous folklorists were to follow in the nineteenth century. This is not to say that the Grimms were idealistic visionaries who misrepresented the folk and folktales by claiming they all emanated from a pristine past or mysterious divinity. The German Romantics were experimental, innovative, and highly educated. The Grimms intensely studied words, sayings, etymologies, themes, plots, and history and pieced together hundreds of versions and variants of folktales and fairy tales to understand their core. This is why it is so difficult to talk about a single Grimm legacy, even if we limit ourselves to discussing just the tales that they collected. As Donald Haase has astutely pointed out:

The problem has to do with the extraordinarily difficult nature of Grimms' text. Identifying Grimms' collection as a published text—as a book—is, perhaps surprisingly, a formidable task. While we speak without qualification and generously generalize about "Grimms' Fairy Tales," as if the referent of that phrase required no elaboration, the textual and editorial history of that title makes it impossible to speak definitively of a single text. In fact, Grimms' fairy tales constitute not simply a book but many books. As Grimm scholarship over the last twenty-five years has stressed, the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* is a dynamic publishing phenomenon that existed in seventeen different authorized editions in the Grimms' lifetime alone. ("Framing the Brothers Grimm," 59)

As pioneers who issued a call for more collecting of folktales in the nineteenth century, the Grimms helped to open the dikes that had dammed the oral folktales from being spread and kept them from being known among the general population of Germany and European countries, and consequently hundreds of unusual collections of folktales appeared during their lifetime throughout Europe. By the 1870s the great Sicilian folklorist Giuseppe Pitre, who came from a poor fisherman's family, collected fairy tales in dialect from illiterate lower-class women and men. These storytellers knew large repertoires of tales, as did many of the peasant storytellers in France in the collections of François-Marie Luzel, Jean François Bladé, Paul Sébillot, and Henry Carnoy and in other countries, such as Russia in the collections of Alexander Afans'ev and Czechoslovakia in the collections of Karel Erben. The Grimms' "German" legacy of tales was always much more than German, and for the most part the Grimms can sleep peacefully because the profound multicultural origins and

essential historical meaning of their tales have been acknowledged, whether through popular kitsch and comics, artistic adaptations in literature, theater, opera, ballet, and film, or in thorough historical and philological research. Their “German” tales mean more to the world than words can articulate.

Notes

1. See Franke and Zimmermann.
2. See Marquardt and Rölleke; Uther, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen gesammelt durch die Brüder Grimm*; Rölleke, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen gesammelt durch die Brüder Grimm*; Rölleke, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen gesammelt durch die Brüder Grimm letzter Hand mit Originalenanmerkungen*; and Uther, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen: Nach der Großen Ausgabe von 1857*.
3. See Rölleke, *Märchen aus dem Nachlaß der Brüder Grimm*; *Grimms Märchen*; and *Die wahren Märchen*.
4. See also Hemmerling and Grosser.
5. See Shen and Zipes.
6. Also see the book review of Franz and Kahn's *Märchen—Kinder—Medien* by O'Sullivan.
7. See also Rölleke, *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm: Quellen und Studien*.
8. For a full account of the exchange with Achim von Arnim, see Chapters 5 and 8 of Steig and Grimm.

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