

THE
BROTHERS
GRIMM



*From Enchanted Forests to
the Modern World.*

JACK ZIPES

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Preface

Four years ago, as the bicentennial celebration of the birthdays of the Brothers Grimm approached, I began planning a critical study of their fairy tales. What particularly interested me at the time was the question of the tales' enduring power and the effect of the tales in modern society. My plans were somewhat altered, however, when LuAnn Walther, then with Bantam Books, asked me to do a completely new translation of the Grimms' tales. At first I refused, for this was not the project I had in mind. But, then, I began to reconsider, and it occurred to me that the process of translating might enable me to understand the Grimms' methods of recording their tales and their concepts of folklore more clearly. So, I decided to undertake the translation, and I shifted the focus of my study to concentrate on textual matters and the history of the Grimms' mode of collecting and revising their tales. As I began to translate the narratives, I returned to questions about the production and reception of oral tales and their transformations through literature from the eighteenth century up to the present.

Questions kept arising in my mind — questions that I had been trying to answer for some years in other studies but never quite to my satisfaction: Why and how did the Grimms revise the oral and literary tales they collected? Why were they so successful in establishing the tales as a literary genre and virtually transforming that genre into an institution? (There were, after all, other writers and collectors of oral and literary tales before them.) What is the tradition of the Grimms' tales? Is this tradition a kind of cultural heritage and is there something specifically *Germanic* about it? Why are the tales so popular throughout the world today, and what shape do they take? Must we resort to psychoanalysis to clarify our disposition and responsiveness to the Grimms' tales and fairy tales in general?

In 1985 and 1986, I was invited to various bicentennial conferences honoring the Grimms, and I delivered talks concerned with these questions. At the same time, I continued working on the translation and analyzing the philological aspects of the Grimms' texts. Once the translation was completed in 1987, I began revising my conference talks with the aim of turning them into the full-length study I had been planning for the past several years. The result is this book — one that

endeavors to treat the above questions and also to correct numerous misconceptions about the Grimms and their tales by placing their work in a socio-historical context. My primary focus is on the factors of production and reception that led to the institutionalization of the Grimms' tales and other literary fairy tales and to the formation of the parameters for their continuous use and interpretation.

The Grimms' tales are "contagious." And to borrow a metaphor used by my friend Dan Sperber, we actually need an "epidemiology" of the Grimms' tales to understand fully why their tales are so memorable and catching. Sperber is more concerned with general questions of representations, which he understands as concrete, physical objects located in space and time. In this regard, distinctions must be made between two types of representations: "there are representations internal to the information processing device, i.e. *mental representations*; and there are representations external to the device and which the device can process as inputs, i.e. *public representations*."¹ For Sperber, "an epidemiology of representations is a study of the causal chains in which these mental and public representations are involved: the construction or retrieval of mental representations may cause individuals to modify their physical environment, for instance to produce a public representation. These modifications of the environment may cause other individuals to construct mental representations of their own; these new representations may be stored and later retrieved, and, in turn cause the individuals who hold them to modify the environment, and so on."²

If we look at the Grimms' tales as types of public representations, that is, as speech utterances formed through intra-subjective processes of thought and memory, we can begin to evaluate how they effect us and our environment and determine why they have become "contagious" in both a positive and negative sense. It appears that we have developed a disposition and susceptibility to receiving and transmitting the Grimms' tales and other fairy tales, and by considering the tales as part of a process of mental and public representation, we can begin to assess their cultural relevance.

We are still only at the beginning of this assessment, and by no means have I written an epidemiology of the Grimms' tales. Yet, it is with questions emanating from the need for such an epidemiology that I wrote my study. The first chapter, "Once There Were Two Brothers Named Grimm: A Reintroduction," appeared first in my translation *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, and it has undergone extensive revision and enlargement. My new, more scholarly essay assumes that the Grimms and their work need a "reintroduction" because so many myths have been spread about them, and it provides a general overview of the Grimms' lives and fairy-tale research. Chapter Two, "Dreams of a Better

Bourgeois Life: The Psycho–Social Origins of the Tales,” was held as a talk at the International Conference on the Brothers Grimm in the spring of 1986 at the University of Illinois. It explores some of the underlying psychological factors that led the Grimms to begin their work in folklore. Chapter Three, “Exploring Historical Paths,” was held as a talk at the International Grimm Symposium at Columbia University in November 1985 and then published in *The Germanic Review* in the spring of 1987. It has been vastly changed and expanded here to address the nature of the socio–historical approach in light of the Grimms’ soldier and tailor tales. Chapter Four, “From Odysseus to Tom Thumb and Other Cunning Heroes: Speculations about the Entrepreneurial Spirit,” was a talk that I delivered at the annual MLA Meeting in December 1985, held in Chicago. It is a theoretical endeavor to understand the appeal of the male heroes in the Grimms’ tales from ideas developed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*. Chapter Five, “The German Obsession with Fairy Tales” is a revision of the chapter that I contributed to Ruth B. Bottigheimer’s book *Fairy Tales and Society*, and it develops the notion of fairy tale as institution while trying to grasp the “Germanic” involvement in this institution. Chapter Six, “Henri Pourrat and the Tradition of Perrault and the Brothers Grimm” was a talk delivered in June 1987 at the centennial celebration of Pourrat’s birthday that was held in Clermont–Ferrand. It discusses the nature of the connections between Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and Henri Pourrat in view of M.M. Bakhtin’s notion of speech genres. Chapter Seven, “Recent Psychoanalytical Approaches with Some Questions about the Abuse of Children,” was a talk I delivered at the annual MLA Meeting in December 1986, held in New York. It summarizes recent West German scholarship on the Brothers Grimm and suggests that psychoanalytical approaches to the Grimms’ tales might profit from the ideas of Alice Miller and more interdisciplinary considerations. Chapter Eight, “Semantic Shifts of Power in Folk and Fairy Tales,” was a talk delivered at the annual MLA Meeting in December 1984, held in Washington D.C. It focuses on the patriarchalization of fairy tales with particular attention paid to the Cinderella cycle of tales. “Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale” appeared first in the catalogue of an art exhibition entitled “The Fairy Tale: Politics, Desire, and Everyday Life” that took place from October 30 – November 26, 1986 at the Artists Space in New York City. As Chapter Nine, the essay has been greatly revised and lengthened to focus on *Sleeping Beauty* and its mythic ramifications in light of Roland Barthes’ radical concept of myth.

All of the chapters have undergone extensive changes and revisions during the past year, and I am indebted to a number of friends and colleagues who have made suggestions to improve my work. In particular I

would like to thank: Jacques Barchilon, Bernadette Bricout, Alan Dundes, Hilary Kliros, Wolfgang Mieder, Jim McGlathery, and Heinz Rölleke, all who have helped me either through discussions or ideas developed in their own essays and books. In conducting some of my research at the Brothers Grimm Archives in Kassel, I received generous support and advice from Dieter Hennig and his entire staff, and I am most appreciative for the 1987 Graduate School Summer Research Grant from the University of Florida at Gainesville that enabled me to complete my book by the winter of 1987. Finally I would like to express my gratitude to Diane Gibbons and Bill Germano for their helpful editorial suggestions and advice that enabled me to put the final “modern” touches on the book.

1

Once There Were Two Brothers Named Grimm: A Reintroduction

Many are the fairy tales and myths that have been spread about the Brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. For a long time it was believed that they had wandered about Germany gathering tales from the lips of doughty peasants and that all of these tales were genuinely German. Although much of what had been believed has been disproved by recent scholarship,¹ new rumors and debates about the Grimms keep arising. For instance, one literary scholar has charged the Brothers with manufacturing the folk spirit of their tales in order to dupe the general public in the name of a nefarious teutonic nationalism.² Certain other critics claim to have found racist and sexist components in the tales and argue for their expurgation.³ A number of psychologists and educators are engaged in battle over the question as to whether the tales have possible harmful or therapeutic effects.⁴ Curiously, most of the critics of the Grimms' tales say very little about the Brothers themselves or their method of collecting and revising the tales — as though the Grimms were incidental to their tales. Obviously, this is not the case, and in view of their 200th birthdays, celebrated in 1985 and 1986 with much ado throughout the world, it is time to set the record straight.⁵

Just who were the Brothers Grimm and how did they discover those tales, which may now be the most popular in the world? Why and how did the Brothers change the tales? And what is the significance of the “magic” of those tales today?

A fairy-tale writer could not have created a more idyllic and propitious setting for the entrance of the Brothers Grimm into the world. Their father Philipp Wilhelm Grimm (1751–1796), a lawyer, was ambitious, diligent, and prosperous, and their mother Dorothea (née Zimmer, 1755–1808) was a devoted and caring housewife, who tended at times to be melancholy due to the familial burdens that were at times overwhelming. Initially the Grimms settled in the quaint village of Hanau, and during the first twelve years of their marriage, Dorothea gave birth to nine children, of whom six survived: Jacob Ludwig Grimm (1785–1863), Wilhelm Carl Grimm (1786–1859), Carl Friedrich Grimm (1787–1852), Ferdinand Philipp Grimm (1788–1844), Ludwig Emil Grimm (1790–1863), and Charlotte Amalie (Lotte) Grimm (1793–1833). By 1791 the family had moved to Steinau, near Kassel, where Philipp Grimm had obtained an excellent position as district magistrate (*Amtmann*) and soon became the leading figure of the town. He and his family lived in a large comfortable home there and had servants to help with the domestic chores. As soon as the children were of age, they were instructed in reading, writing, and mathematics by a private tutor and then sent to a local school, where they received a classical education. They were also given strict religious training in the Reform Calvinist Church and throughout their lives, Jacob and Wilhelm remained deeply religious and set high moral standards for themselves. They were bright, hardworking pupils and were clearly fond of country life. Their familiarity with farming, nature, and peasant customs and superstitions would later play a major role in their research and work in German folklore. At first, though, both boys appeared destined to lead secure, successful lives, following in the footsteps of their father, whose seal was *Tute si recte vixeris* — “He cannot go wrong whose life is in the right.” To be sure, this was the path that Jacob and Wilhelm did take, but it had to be taken without the guidance of their father.

Philipp Grimm contracted pneumonia and died suddenly in 1796 at the age of forty-four. The suddenness of his death was a traumatic shock and led to great familial hardships. Within weeks after his burial, Dorothea Grimm had to move out of the large house and face managing her six children without servants or much financial support. From this point on, the family was totally dependent on outside help, particularly on Johannes Hermann Zimmer, the Grimms’ grandfather, and Henriette Zimmer, their aunt. Jacob was compelled to assume the duties of head of the family, and both he and Wilhelm “lost their childhood,” so to speak, because of their heavy responsibilities. Their correspondence with their grandfather and aunt between the ages of eleven and thirteen reflects a remarkable degree of maturity and seriousness.⁶ Clearly, they were under great pressure to succeed in all their endeavors for the sake of the family and its reputation. For instance, by 1798 their aunt Henriette, who was a lady-in-waiting for

the princess of Hessa–Kassel, arranged for Jacob and Wilhelm to study at the prestigious Lyzeum (high school) in Kassel and obtained provisions and funds for the family. On this occasion, their grandfather wrote: “I cannot repeat enough to you to keep in mind the reason for which you are in your present position. This means, that you should apply yourselves as industriously as possible in and outside the classroom so that you may prepare your future welfare, gain honor, and provide pleasure for your mother, me, and the entire family. Therefore, avoid bad company, try to associate with reasonable men from whom you can always gain some profit, and above all, fear God, who is the beginning and end of all wisdom.”⁷

The move to Kassel brought about a momentous change in the lives of the Brothers Grimm. Not only did it mean the final abandonment of an idyllic childhood in the country, but their initiation into manhood was also complicated by the absence of a primary male protector — i.e., their father, who could explain the class system and codes that set arbitrary obstacles and barriers blocking their development. The result was that the Grimms became acutely aware of class injustice and exploitation. To compound matters, just as they entered the Lyzeum and were about to prove themselves as gifted students, their grandfather, whom they had greatly admired, died, and they were virtually left to themselves to determine their future and that of their family. Although the Brothers were different in temperament — Jacob was introverted, serious, and robust; Wilhelm was outgoing, gregarious, and asthmatic — they were inseparable and totally devoted to each other. They shared the same room and bed and cultivated the same work habits: in high school the Grimms studied more than twelve hours a day and were evidently bent on proving themselves to be the best students at the Lyzeum. That they were treated by some teachers as socially inferior to the other “highborn” students only served to spur their efforts. In fact, the Grimms had to struggle against social slights and financial deprivation during a good part of their lives, but they never forgot their father’s motto, *Tute si recte vixeris*, and they were to become famous in Germany during their own time not only because of their accomplishments as scholars but also because of their great moral integrity and political courage.

Although each one was graduated from the Lyzeum at the head of his class, Jacob in 1802 and Wilhelm in 1803, they both had to obtain special dispensations to study law at the University of Marburg because their social standing was not high enough to qualify them for automatic admission. Once at the university they had to confront yet another instance of injustice, for most of the students from wealthier families received stipends, while the Grimms had to pay for their own education and live on a small budget. This inequity made them feel even more

compelled to prove themselves at Marburg — which at that time was a small university with 200 students, most of whom were more interested in the social activities at fraternities and taverns than their studies. Jacob spent his first year acquainting himself with the university routine and the best professors, and he continued to apply himself “industriously” in a manner that would make his dead grandfather proud of him, as did Wilhelm when he arrived one year later.

By this time Jacob’s intellectual abilities and keen mind had drawn the attention of Friedrich Karl von Savigny, the genial founder of the historical school of law, who was to exercise a profound personal and professional influence on the Brothers throughout their lives. Savigny argued that the spirit of a law can be comprehended only by tracing its origins to the development of the customs and language of a people who share them and by investigating the changing historical context in which the laws developed. Ironically, it was Savigny’s emphasis on the philological–historical aspect of law that would eventually lead Jacob and Wilhelm to dedicate themselves to the study of ancient German literature and folklore. During their early school years, at Kassel, the Brothers had already become voracious readers, particularly of novels and romances, and had begun collecting books in an endeavor to classify literature according to aesthetic and historical standards. At Marburg, they learned from Savigny how a historical method can help determine the origins not only of law but of literature as well in relation to the culture of a particular nation.

In 1805 Savigny invited Jacob to accompany him to Paris as his assistant on a project concerned with the history of Roman law. While in Paris, Jacob collected documents and material that were related to German customs, law, and literature, and felt more drawn to the study of ancient German literature than anything else. Upon returning to Germany in 1806, Jacob made the final decision to abandon the study of law to see if he could somehow earn a livelihood as a scholar of philology and literature. He left the university and rejoined his mother, who in the meantime had moved to Kassel. Given the pecuniary situation of the family, it was Jacob’s duty, as head of the family, to support his brothers and sister, and he found a position as secretary for the Hessian War Commission, which made decisions with regard to the conflict with France. Fortunately for Jacob, he was able to pursue his study of old German literature and customs on the side, while Wilhelm remained in Marburg to complete his legal studies.

The correspondence between Jacob and Wilhelm during this time reflects their great concern for the welfare of their family.⁸ With the exception of Ludwig, who later became an accomplished painter and also illustrated some of his brothers’ fairy tales, the other children had difficulty establishing careers for themselves. Neither Carl nor Ferdinand displayed

the intellectual aptitude that the two oldest brothers did or the creative talents of Ludwig. Carl eventually tried his hand at business and ended up destitute as a language teacher, while Ferdinand had many different jobs in publishing and later died in poverty. Lotte's major task was to assist her mother, who died in 1808. After the mother's death, which deeply upset each member of the family, Lotte managed the Grimm household until she married a close friend of the family, Ludwig Hassenpflug, in 1822. Hassenpflug became an important politician in Germany and eventually had a falling out with Jacob and Wilhelm because of his conservative and opportunistic actions as statesman.

While Ludwig, Carl, Ferdinand, and Lotte were young, they were chiefly the responsibility of Jacob, who looked after them like a stern, but caring father. Even Wilhelm regarded him as such and acknowledged his authority, not only in family matters, but also in scholarship. It was never easy for Jacob to be both brother and father to his siblings — especially after the death of their mother when they barely had enough money to clothe and feed themselves properly. It was also during the period 1806–1810 — when each member of the family was endeavoring to make a decision about a future career and concerned about the stability of their home — that Jacob and Wilhelm began systematically gathering oral and literary tales and other materials related to folklore. Clemens Brentano, a gifted romantic writer, who became a good friend, had requested that the Grimms help him collect tales for a volume that he intended to publish some time in the future. The Grimms responded by collecting oral tales with the help of friends and acquaintances in Kassel and by selecting tales from old books and documents in their own library. However, the Grimms were unable to devote all their energies to their research and did not have a clear idea about the significance of collecting folk tales in this initial phase.

It was during this stage, in 1807, that Jacob lost his job on the War Commission — when Kassel was invaded by the French and became part of the Kingdom of Westphalia under the rule of Jérôme Bonaparte. Soon thereafter came the death of their mother, and it was imperative that Jacob find some new means of supporting the family. Although he had a strong antipathy to the French, he applied for the position of King Jérôme's private librarian in Kassel and was awarded the post in 1808. This employment enabled him to pursue his studies and help his brothers and sister. Wilhelm had to undergo a cure for asthma and heart disease in Halle. Ludwig began studying at the Art Academy in Munich, and Carl started working as a businessman in Hamburg, while Ferdinand was looking for a job.

From 1809 to 1813 came a period of relative stability for the Grimm family, and Jacob and Wilhelm began publishing the results of their

research on old German literature: Jacob wrote *Über den altdeutschen Meistergesang* (*On the Old German Meistergesang*), and Wilhelm, *Aldänische Heldenlieder, Balladen und Märchen* (*Old Danish Heroic Songs, Ballads, and Tales*), both in 1811. Together they published in 1812 *Die beiden ältesten deutschen Gedichte aus dem 8. Jahrhundert: Das Lied von Hildebrand und Hadubrand und das Wessobrunner Gebet*, a study of the *Song of Hildebrand* and the *Wessobrunner Prayer*. Of course, their major publication at this time was the first volume of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*) with scholarly annotations, also in 1812.

The Napoleonic Wars and French rule were most disquieting for both Jacob and Wilhelm, who were dedicated to the notion of German unification. Neither wanted to see the restoration of oppressive German princes, but they did feel a deep longing to have the German people united in one nation through customs and laws of their own making. Thus, in 1813 they were relieved when the French withdrew from Kassel and were defeated in battles throughout Central Europe. In 1814 Jacob was appointed a member of the Hessian Peace Delegation and served as a diplomat in Paris and Vienna, where he was also able to gather significant books and materials for his and Wilhelm's scholarly work on ancient German literature and customs. During his absence Wilhelm obtained the position of secretary to the royal librarian in Kassel and concentrated on bringing out the second volume of the *Children's and Household Tales* in 1815. When the peace treaty was concluded in Vienna, Jacob, who had been writing political articles for a journal criticizing the petty disputes among the German princes, returned home and was further disappointed to find that the German sovereigns were all seeking to reestablish their narrow, vested interests in different German principalities and had betrayed the cause of German unification.

After securing the position of second librarian in the royal library of Kassel, Jacob joined Wilhelm in editing the first volume of *Deutsche Sagen* (*German Legends*) in 1816. During the next thirteen years, the Grimms enjoyed a period of relative calm and prosperity. Their work as librarians was not demanding, and they could devote themselves to scholarly research and the publication of their findings. Together they published the second volume of *German Legends* (1818), while Jacob wrote the first volume of *Deutsche Grammatik* (*German Grammar*, 1819) and *Deutsche Rechtsaltertümer* (*Ancient German Law*, 1828) by himself, and Wilhelm produced a translation of *Irische Land- und Seemärchen* (*Irish Elf Tales*, 1826) and *Die deutsche Heldensage* (*The German Heroic Legend*, 1829).

In the meantime, there were changes in the domestic arrangement of the Grimms. Lotte moved out of the house to marry Ludwig Hassenpflug in

1822, and a few years later, in 1825, Wilhelm married Dortchen Wild, the daughter of a Kassel pharmacist. She had known both brothers for over twenty years and had been part of a group of storytellers who had provided the Grimms with numerous tales. Now it became her task to look after the domestic affairs of the Brothers, for Jacob did not leave the house. Indeed, he remained a bachelor for his entire life and never cared much for socializing. The Grimms insisted on a quiet atmosphere and a rigid schedule at home so that they could conduct their research and write without interruptions. Although Wilhelm continued to enjoy company and founded a family — he had three children with Dortchen — he was just as much married to his work as Jacob, and nothing could ever come between Jacob and him. Since Dortchen had been well-acquainted with the Brothers before her marriage, when she assumed her role in the family, she fully supported their work and customary way of living.

In 1829, however, when Ludwig Völkel, the first librarian of the royal library, died, and his position in Kassel became vacant, the Grimms' customary life style and domestic tranquillity were broken. Jacob, who had already become famous for his scholarly publications, had expected to be promoted to this position. But he did not have the right connections and the proper conservative politics, and his application for the vacant position, as well as Wilhelm's request for a promotion, was rejected by the Kurfürst of Kassel.⁹ In reaction to this slight, he and Wilhelm resigned their posts, and one year later they traveled to Göttingen, where Jacob became professor of old German literature and head librarian, and Wilhelm, librarian and, eventually, professor in 1835. At that time the University of Göttingen was considered one of the finest institutions in Europe, and such noted scholars as Wilhelm Albrecht (law), Friedrich Dahlmann (political science), and Georg Gervinus (German literature) taught there and became close friends of the Grimms. Both brothers soon established themselves as stimulating and capable teachers, and they broke new ground in the study of German literature, which had only recently become an accepted field of study at the university.¹⁰ Aside from their teaching duties, they continued to write and publish important works: Jacob wrote the third volume of *German Grammar* (1831) and a major study entitled *Deutsche Mythologie* (*German Mythology*, 1835), while Wilhelm prepared the third revised edition of *Children's and Household Tales*. Though their positions were secure, there was a great deal of political unrest in Germany due to the severely repressive political climate throughout Central Europe since 1819. By 1830 many revolts and peasant uprisings had erupted, and a movement comprised mainly of intellectuals known as Young Germany (*Jungdeutschland*) pushed for more democratic reform in different German principalities. For the most part, however, their members were persecuted and silenced, just as the peasants, too, were

suppressed. Some leading writers, such as Ludwig Börne, Heinrich Heine, and Georg Büchner, took refuge in exile. The Brothers Grimm were not staunch supporters of the Young Germany movement, but they had always sided with the liberal cause in all parts of Germany and were greatly affected by the political conflicts.

In 1837, when King Ernst August II, a man who carried a notorious reputation with him from England, succeeded to the throne of Hannover, he revoked the constitution of 1833 and dissolved parliament. In his attempt to restore absolutism to the Kingdom of Hannover, of which Göttingen was a part, he declared that all civil servants had to pledge an oath to serve him personally. Since the King was nominally the rector of the University of Göttingen, the Grimms were obligated to take an oath of allegiance, but instead they, along with five other renowned professors, led a protest against Ernst August and were summarily dismissed. In their stand for civil rights against the tyranny of the King, the “Göttingen Seven,” as they were called, were strongly supported by the student body and by numerous influential people outside the Kingdom of Hannover. Nevertheless, Jacob was compelled to leave Göttingen immediately,¹¹ and he returned to Kassel, where he was joined by Wilhelm, Dortchen, and their family a few months later.

Once again, they were in desperate financial straits. Despite the fact that they received funds and support from hundreds of friends and admirers who agreed with their stand on academic freedom, the ruling monarchs of the different German principalities prevented them from teaching at another university — either because they did not want to offend Ernst August or because they did not want to set a precedent concerning the constitutional rights of civil servants. It was during this time, to a large degree out of necessity, that Jacob and Wilhelm decided to embark on writing the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (*German Dictionary*), one of the most ambitious lexicographical undertakings of the nineteenth century. Though the income from this project would be meager, they hoped to support themselves through this work and other publishing ventures as well. In the meantime, Bettina von Arnim, a close friend and remarkable writer, to whom the Grimms dedicated the first edition of *Children's and Household Tales*, was trying to convince the new King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, to bring the Brothers to Berlin.¹² She was joined by Savigny, who was now a professor of law in Berlin, and other influential friends. Finally, in November 1840, Jacob and Wilhelm received offers to become professors at the University of Berlin and to do research at the Academy of Sciences. It was not until March 1841, however, that the Grimms took up residence in Berlin and were able to continue their work on the *German Dictionary* and their scholarly research on other subjects. In addition to some

teaching, the Grimms played an active role in the establishment of German literature as a field of study at other universities, and they did not shy from entering into political debates.

When the Revolution of 1848 occurred in Germany, the Grimms were elected to the civil parliament, and Jacob was considered to be the most prominent among the representatives at the National Assembly held in Frankfurt am Main. However, the Brothers' hopes for democratic reform and the unification of the German principalities dwindled as one compromise after another was reached with the German monarchs. Both Jacob and Wilhelm retired from active politics after the demise of the revolutionary movement.¹³ In fact, Jacob resigned from his position as professor in 1848, the same year he published his significant study entitled *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache* (*The History of the German Language*). Wilhelm retired from his post as professor in 1852. For the rest of their lives, the Grimms devoted most of their energy to completing the monumental *German Dictionary*, but they got only as far as the letter F. Symbolically, the last entry was the word *Frucht* (fruit).

Though they did not finish the *German Dictionary*, a task that had to be left to a multitude of scholars in the twentieth century, they did produce an astonishing number of significant books during their lifetimes: Jacob published twenty-one, and Wilhelm, fourteen. Together they produced eight. In addition, there are another twelve volumes of their essays and notes and thousands of important letters. The Grimms made scholarly contributions to the areas of folklore, history, ethnology, religion, jurisprudence, lexicography, and literary criticism. Even when they did not work as a team, they shared their ideas and discussed all their projects together. When Wilhelm died in 1859, the loss affected Jacob deeply, and he became even more solitary than ever before. Nevertheless, he did not abandon the projects he had held in common with his brother. In addition, the more he realized that his hopes for democratic reform were being dashed in Germany, the more he voiced his criticism of reactionary trends in Germany. "How often the sad fate of our fatherland keeps coming to my mind and makes my heart heavy and my life bitter. It is impossible to think about salvation without realizing that it will necessitate great dangers and revolts. . . . Only ruthless power can bring help. The older I have become, the more democratic my inclinations have become. If I were to sit in the National Assembly once again, I would side much more with Uhland and Schroder, for there can be no salvation if we force the constitution onto the track of the existing conditions."¹⁴ Both Jacob and Wilhelm regarded their work as part of a social effort to foster a sense of justice among the German people and to create pride in the folk tradition. Jacob died in 1863 after completing the fourth volume of his book

German Precedents. In German the title, *Deutsche Weistümer*, connotes a sense of the wisdom of the ages that he felt should be passed on to the German people.

Though the Grimms made important discoveries in their research on ancient German literature and customs, they were neither the founders of folklore as a study in Germany, nor were they the first to begin collecting and publishing folk and fairy tales. In fact, from the beginning their principal concern was to uncover the etymological and linguistic truths that bound the German people together and were expressed in their laws and customs. The fame of the Brothers Grimm as collectors of folk and fairy tales must be understood in this context, and even here, chance played a role in their destiny.

In 1806 Clemens Brentano, who had already published an important collection of folk songs entitled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*The Boy's Magic Horn*, 1805) with Achim von Arnim, was advised by Arnim to seek the aid of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm because they were known to have a vast knowledge of old German literature and folklore, even though they were quite young. They were also considered to be conscientious and indefatigable researchers. Brentano hoped to use whatever tales they might send him in a future publication of folk tales, and he was able to publish some of the songs they gathered for him in the second and third volumes of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* in 1808. On their side, the Grimms believed strongly in sharing their research and findings with friends and congenial scholars, and between 1807 and 1810 they began collecting tales with the express purpose of sending them to Brentano, as well as using them as source material for gaining a greater historical understanding of the German language and customs.

Contrary to popular belief, the Grimms did not collect their tales by visiting peasants in the countryside and writing down the tales that they heard. Their primary method was to invite storytellers to their home and then have them tell the tales aloud, which the Grimms either noted down on first hearing or after a couple of hearings. Memory played an important role in the Grimms' transcriptions. Most of the storytellers during this period were educated young women from the middle class or aristocracy. For instance, in Kassel a group of young women from the Wild family (Dortchen, Gretchen, Lisette, and Marie Elisabeth) including their mother (Dorothea) and from the Hassenpflug family (Amalie, Jeanette, and Marie) used to meet regularly to relate tales they had heard and remembered from their nursemaids, governesses, and servants, or tales they may have read.

In 1808 Jacob formed a friendship with Werner von Haxthausen, who came from Westphalia, and in 1811 Wilhelm visited the Haxthausen estate and became acquainted there with a circle of young men and women (Ludowine, Marianne, and August von Haxthausen and Jenny and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff), whose tales he noted down. Still, the majority of tales came from Hessia: Dorothea Viehmann, a tailor's wife from nearby Zwehrn, who used to sell fruit in Kassel, would visit the Grimms and tell them a good many significant tales; and Johann Friedrich (*Wachtmeister*) Krause, a retired soldier, gave the Brothers tales in exchange for some of their old clothes.¹⁵ Many of the tales that the Grimms recorded had French origins because the Hassenpflugs were of Huguenot ancestry and spoke French at home. Most of the Brothers' informants were familiar with the oral and literary tradition of tale-telling and combined motifs from both sources in their renditions. In addition to the tales of these storytellers and others who came later, the Grimms took tales directly from books, journals, and letters and edited them according to their taste, preference, and familiarity with different versions.

In 1810, when Brentano finally requested the collection of tales that the Grimms had gathered for him, the Brothers had copies made and sent forty-nine texts to him. They had copies made because they felt that Brentano would take great poetic license and turn them into substantially different tales — whereas they were intent on using the tales to document basic truths about the customs and practices of the German people and on preserving their authentic ties to the oral tradition. Actually, there was never any great need for the Grimms to worry about Brentano's mistreatment of their tales since he never touched them. At one point in his life — the exact date is uncertain — he left them in the Ölenberg Monastery in Alsace without ever informing anyone that he had done this. Only in 1920 were the handwritten tales rediscovered, and they were published in different editions in 1924, 1927, and 1974. The last publication by Heinz Rölecke is the most scholarly and useful, for he has carefully shown how the Grimms' original handwritten manuscripts can help us to document their sources and reveal the great changes the Brothers made in shaping the tales.¹⁶

As it happened, after the Grimms sent their collected texts to Brentano, who was unreliable and was going through great personal difficulties, they decided to publish the tales themselves and began changing them and preparing them for publication. They also kept adding new tales to their collection. Jacob set the tone, but the Brothers were very much in agreement about how they wanted to alter and stylize the tales. This last point is significant because some critics have wanted to see major differences between Jacob and Wilhelm. These critics have argued that there was a dispute between the Brothers after Wilhelm assumed major