

German Tales

Germany has been at the center of folktale and fairy-tale research and production since Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's pivotal work, the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*, 1812–15). That collection, which has since gained canonical status, developed at a specific historical confluence of sociopolitical, pedagogical, mercantile, publishing, and theoretical concerns. Since the Grimms' landmark work, folktales and fairy tales have become a fundamental part of German culture.

Fairy Tales and Folktales in Print

Before the Grimms, generic boundaries between **folktale**, **fairy tale**, **saga**, **legend**, and **epic** were fluid. With the 1447 invention of the printing press, reading materials became more widely available, and while there were not fully developed tales as they came to be known later, several fairy-tale **motifs** appeared in these genres as early as the fifteenth century (see **Print Culture**). Literate clergy with access to texts had already been exploiting the tales' didactic potential for religious instruction. The *Gesta Romanorum* (*The Deeds of the Romans*), a collection of **anecdotes** with appended religious **morals**, was an important source for homiletic texts and introduced German-speaking congregants to stories such as "Tales about Toads." "Aschenprödlin" ("**Cinderella**") appeared in a 1521 biblical exegesis by Martin Luther, and others of his sermons contained motifs from "The Brave Little Tailor." Writers of courtly and heroic epics often embedded fairy-tale motifs into those longer, novelistic works.

The most common print vehicle in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the *Volksbücher*, the inexpensive **chapbooks** of short tales expanded into multipage stories; especially popular were tales of wrongly accused **women** suffering trials of patience (Griseldis, Genovefa). By the middle of the sixteenth century, writers, dramatists, and satirists such as Martin Montanus, Hans Sachs, and Johann Fischart were incorporating fairy-tale motifs into their works. In his 1557 "Wegkürztzer" ("The Journey Quickened"), Montanus included the tale "Das Erdtkülin" ("The

Little Earth-Cow"), an early version of ATU 510A, Cinderella, and thereby predating the Giambattista **Basile's** "Cennerentola" by almost eighty years. Motifs in Sachs's dramatized **fables** and **jests** included "The Knapsack, the Hat, and the Horn," "Eve's Unequal Children," "The Seven Swans," and "The Raven," among others. Fischart wrote a version of "Rumpelstiltskin" in 1572. This trend continued into the seventeenth century as baroque writers such as Johannes Praetorius, Jakob Grimmelshausen, Gabriel Rollenhagen, and Johann Michael Moscherosch included fairy-tale motifs in longer works; scholars have identified a version of "The **Frog King**, or Iron Heinrich" already in 1595 in Rollenhagen; "The Mouse, the **Bird**, and the Sausage" and "Godfather **Death**" in Moscherosch in 1650; numerous Rubezahl stories in Praetorius's 1662 works; and "Bearskin" in Grimmelshausen in 1670.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, Europe was in the throes of the Enlightenment, with its insistence on rationality and reason. Nonetheless, or perhaps in response, interest in fairy tales, especially in the French *conte de fées* and **Oriental tales**, boomed in Germany among the literate upper classes. Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's *Les contes des fées* (1697) were circulating in the original, as was Antoine Galland's translation of the *Arabian Nights*, *Les mille et une nuits* (1704–17; German translation, 1711), along with other "pseudo-Oriental" magic tales by Jacques **Cazotte** and Thomas-Simon Gueulette. The bourgeoisie, generally unable to read French, created a demand for translations; by the end of the century, Friedrich Bertuch's twelve-volume *Blaue Bibliothek aller Nationen* (*Blue Library of All Nations*, 1790–96) brought *la bibliothèque bleue* to Germany. Bertuch also planned a less costly edition for broader distribution.

German writers—encouraged by the financial successes of the tales of fairies from France—began to write their own **literary fairy tales** or adapt foreign tales for a specifically German readership, although the generic boundaries remained inchoate. Manfred Grätz has called Gottlieb Wilhelm Rabener's 1755 "Märgen vom Ersten Aprile" ("Fairy Tale from April First") the first true German fairy tale; he considers Georg Christof Weitzler's "Mährchen vom Ritter mit dem Blasebalg" ("Tale of the Knight with the Bagpipe,"

1763) the earliest complete German **wonder tale** for which no foreign source can be established and which foreshadows the Grimms' *Volksmärchen* (folktale) model. Grätz claims Wilhelm Christhelf Mylius's rendition in 1777 of Anthony **Hamilton's** mostly Oriental tales to be the first clear attempt at adapting tales to German popular culture, as well as to address the lower classes rather than the nobility and privileged bourgeoisie.

German writers were only slowly beginning to distance themselves from the French tradition. Christoph Martin **Wieland**, for example, in his *Die Abenteuer des Don Sylvio von Rosalva* (*The Adventures of Don Sylvio of Rosalva*, 1764) made fun of the ludicrous fantastic elements in the *contes*, but also included his own literary fairy tale, "Geschichte des Prinzen Biribinker" ("Story of Prince Biribinker"). Johann Karl August **Musäus** overtly established his work as drawn from an indigenous German **oral tradition** when he stressed his tales were originals from the fatherland (*vaterländische Originale*) and titled them *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (*Folktales of the Germans*, 1782–86). His five-volume collection of Thuringian, Silesian, and Bohemian folk material was hugely successful before the Grimms. In 1789, Benedikte **Naubert** began publishing her four-volume *Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (*New German Folktales*), using English, French, and pseudo-Oriental sources. She anticipated many of the themes and narrative strategies of later women's works. While women had clearly been established as storytellers, Naubert was the first to put women in the role of writer.

With Johann Joachim Schwabe's 1758 German translation of Jeanne-Marie **Leprince de Beaumont's** *Le magasin des enfants* (*The Young Misses' Magazine*), fairy tales clearly entered the realm of **children's literature**. Book production was happening in synergy with debates of philosophers and educators about fairy tales' uses and usefulness for children. Schoolbooks written during the Enlightenment contained predominantly moralizing **religious tales** and fables, but also sundry stories of world history and a few assorted French fairy tales. Two camps had emerged regarding fairy tales as suitable children's reading: one that feared superstitions and fantastic elements

frightened and distracted children from their duties and the teachings of the church, and the other that saw the tales socializing children to be upright citizens and promoting their creative imagination. When translated, child-appropriate selections from the early eighteenth-century *Cabinet des fées* (*The Fairies' Cabinet*) appeared between 1763 and 1766, they bore an appended moral caveat to stress their pedagogical value. Other collections, such as Johann Gottlieb Schummel's *Kinderspiele und Gespräche* (*Children's Games and Conversations*, 1776, containing tales from Carlo **Gozzi**), used the fantastic elements to present religious morals. The author of *Einige Feenmärchen für Kinder* (*Some Fairy Tales for Children*, 1780, mostly translations of child-appropriate *contes*) explicitly stated the tales' didactic and creative potential.

In the years shortly before the turn of the nineteenth century, writers continued to mediate the French tales for children but began turning to indigenous German models. An important hybrid work between translation, adaptation, and revival of German folk materials were Ludwig **Tieck's** *Volksmärchen* (*Folktales*, 3 vols., 1797) and *Romantische Dichtungen* (*Romantic Literature*, 1799). In those collections, he presented tales from Charles **Perrault**, including "Bluebeard," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "The Master Cat, or Puss in Boots." Perrault had already been received positively in Germany for his children's tales; Bertuch, for example, in his introduction to the *Blue Library*, had praised the Frenchman for bringing fairy tales to children, especially young girls, and extolled the tales for their purity and decency, a "catechism for habits of good breeding." In addition to Perrault's tales, Tieck also included stories from German chapbooks and **jests**, such as "Leben und Tod der heiligen Genoveva" ("Life and Death of Saint Genovefa") and "Sehr wundersame Historie von der schönen Melusina" ("The Very Wonderful History of the Beautiful **Melusine**").

The fairy tale became tremendously successful as children's literature in the nineteenth century for sociopolitical, publishing, and pedagogical reasons. The middle class was burgeoning; the development of the bourgeois nuclear family and the genesis of the children's room around the turn of the century

precipitated major social changes within the family structure. Mandatory schooling led to a need for reading materials and to greater literacy: in 1830, the literacy rate in Germany was only 30 percent; by 1850, it was 50 percent, and 90 percent by 1890—a growth rate of approximately a half-million new readers per year. Some educators, folklorists, and writers were already penning collections specifically for children, such as Albert Ludwig Grimm’s *Kindermärchen* (*Children’s Fairy Tales*, 1808) and Johann Gustaf Büsching’s *Volks-Sagen, Märchen und Legenden* (*Folk Sagas, Fairy Tales, and Legends*) in 1812—nine months ahead of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimms’ collection. It was at this juncture that the Grimm brothers would compile the *Children’s and Household Tales*, their self-proclaimed *Erziehungsbuch* (educational primer). It would become the best-known German book internationally and the most published book in German after the Bible; it would go through seventeen editions in almost forty years, in a three-year cycle alternating between ten abridged and seven complete editions. By the 1830s and the publication of their third edition, many of the Grimms’ tales were part of the school reading curriculum. The *Children’s and Household Tales* set into motion a flurry of collecting, writing, tale-swapping, and pirated editions of various market-successful collections.

Female writers and **collectors** also played an important part in the German folktale and fairy-tale tradition. Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women published at least 800 fairy tales and collections, far outnumbering male authors and compilers of fairy-tale books. By 1800, the family and romance novel had become the domain of female writers; by 1810, writers such as Sophie Albrecht, Julie Berger, Caroline Auguste Fischer, Therese Huber, Caroline de la Motte Fouqué, Caroline Pichler, Dorothea Schlegel, Sophie Tieck-Bernhardi, and Johanna Isabella von Wallenrodt had published individual fairy-tale and legend reworkings that struck a compromise between the generic demands of the fairy tale and the narrative structure of the romance novel. Starting with Naubert’s *New German Folktales*, women also participated in the documentation of tales from the Germanic past and became avid collectors of local tales and legends, often adapted for children. Other

writers mediated the tales written by French women in the late seventeenth century or produced translations and compilations from the *Arabian Nights*.

The fairy tale as children’s literature and the popular reception of the Grimms continued unabated into the twentieth century. In the first third of the century, the fairy tale had been established indisputably as appropriate children’s reading and was the best represented genre. Most collections were of nineteenth-century provenience (Grimms, Ludwig **Bechstein**, and Hans Christian **Andersen**), along with the *Arabian Nights* and the Romantics’ *Kunstmärchen* (literary fairy tales). At the turn of the century, floods of tales and newly arranged anthologies came to bookshelves; the *Gesamtverzeichnis des deutschsprachigen Schrifttums* (*The Registry of German-Language Literature*) shows that between 1911 and 1965, approximately twelve new fairy-tale books appeared each year, including translations from other linguistic and cultural traditions. New media such as radio, **television, film, and video** broadened the audience, often bowdlerizing the originals. Those media made fairy tales the stuff of advertisements, commercials, and children’s films. Fairy tales were now firmly established in the school curriculum.

Folklore and Fairy Tales in the Service of Nation-Building and Sociopolitical Ideologies

The history of the fairy tale and folktale in Germany has been intertwined with sociopolitical, pedagogical, folkloristic, and ideological agendas since the Enlightenment. In 1778, the literary critic and philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder espoused the ideas of the *Volk*—the **folk** united by common culture and language—and *Naturpoesie*, the natural poetic creations that bubbled up from the folk, in contrast to *Kunstpoesie*, the artificial poetry of individual writers. Herder called upon his countrymen to recapture the folk’s poetic artistry from the Nordic-Germanic past in all its forms, including mythology, legends, sagas, and folktales. When Herder was named school superintendent in Weimar in 1790, his folkloristic interests became pedagogical and he began making plans to integrate fairy-tale and fable collections into the school curriculum. His

notions about **folklore** had a lasting impact on collecting and publishing activities long after.

Herder's ideas exercised a great influence on the Romantics at the turn of the century, when Germany was in the grips of the Napoleonic occupation and intellectuals sought means to assert the superiority of the Germans over their occupiers. The Romantics looked back to the **Middle Ages** and even farther, to the Nordic-Germanic, pre-Christian times when, they believed, a unified German identity existed. Lionizing the poetic soul of the folk, they began recovering the cultural remnants the Enlightenment had scorned: folk songs and folktales, chapbooks, Nordic-Germanic mythology, sagas, legends, and fairy tales. The Romantic movement, at its core nationalistic, heralded the fairy tale's emancipation from the French influence that had dominated German literature: the Romantic literary fairy tale was born. Important Romantic writers include Achim von Arnim, Clemens **Brentano**, Joseph Freiherr von **Eichendorff**, E.T.A. **Hoffmann**, Friedrich von Hardenberg (**Novalis**),



An engraving of Friedrich von Hardenberg, known as Novalis, who wrote innovative literary fairy tales during the Romantic period in Germany. (Corbis)

Ludwig Tieck, Friedrich de la Motte **Fouqué**, Adelbert von **Chamisso**, Amalie von **Helvig**, Bettina von **Arnim**—and the Brothers Grimm.

The *Children's and Household Tales* did not develop in a vacuum but at a confluence of nationalistic, philological, and political agendas. The Grimms believed that the cultural concept of a nation hinges on a common language, a common set of beliefs, and a common cultural heritage shared by a people. That ideology prompted their work on reconstructing that identity and a national consciousness through the recovery of the pre-Christian, Nordic-Germanic pagan mythic world, as evidenced in the tales they believed were remnants of that world. Their theorizing precipitated a flurry of collecting, as other collectors set off to document tales, sagas, and legends claiming provenience in the oral tradition and to recapture the common bonds of language and culture in far-flung German lands—German-speaking Switzerland, Austria, Silesia, Bavaria, Lower Saxony, Transylvania, and many others.

In the conservative restoration period after the failed 1848 revolution, educators, folklorists, and writers took up the cause of the Grimm heritage, and fairy tales were called upon increasingly to play a role in defining the national identity. In an essay in the patriotic journal *Germania*, Ludwig Bechstein (whose own two fairy-tale collections actually outpaced the Grimms' in sales until the 1890s) praised Jacob Grimm for making the connection between tales and Germanic mythology and suggested that the youth of the nation needed fairy tales to distract them from contemporary political realities. In 1851, Friederich August Wilhelm Diesterweg, one of the century's most influential educators promoting universal public education, argued for uncovering the treasures of the German national language in folk songs, fairy tales, folk epics, and proverbs, and declared them important tools in the German national upbringing. Heinrich Pröhle, the most important folklore researcher in northern Germany, opined: "Oh, how lovely when you can so easily teach children to love their fatherland, to hold its borders holy, to respect their folk, and never to forget the heroic deeds of their fathers."

The fairy tale's fate in the twentieth century was most dramatically impacted by the two world wars

and the subsequent division of Germany into two independent nations. Early in the century, the Grimms' collection and other folktales continued to be considered essential for the development of the German national identity. As in previous centuries, some educational reformers opposed fairy tales; while they praised the folktale, they argued new tales had to be told that would address contemporary events from the child's view. After the horrors of World War I, writers such as Hermynia **Zur Mühlen** began penning socialist and proletarian fairy tales for children.

The ground was already being tilled during the Weimar Republic for the *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) folk literature to come in the National Socialist regime. Already in the 1920s, "folklorists" Werner von Bülow, Karl von Spieß, and Georg Schott were harking back to Herder and the Romantic ideas of the pre-Christian Nordic-Germanic religion to validate their racist and xenophobic attitudes. Two titles from 1925 made clear the direction their folklore research would take: von Bülow stressed the connection between fairy tales and Germanic religion in *Märchendeutungen durch Runen: Die Geheimsprache der deutschen Märchen; Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der deutschen Religion (Fairy Tale Interpretations with Runes: The Secret Language of the German Fairy Tales; A Contribution to the Evolution of German Religion)*. Schott found prophetic messages for Germany's destiny in the tales in his *Weissagung und Erfüllung in deutschen Volksmärchen (Prophecy and Fulfillment in German Folktales)*; among other outlandish interpretations, he compared "Cinderella" to the dire situation of the Germans during the Depression and claimed the unhappy ending of "The Companionship of the Cat and the Mouse" was due to nature's abhorrence of unions between different races.

Citing Herder's notion of the folk and the revival of the folk spirit during the Romantic movement, the Nazis promoted German folk education and saw the folktale as a means to their racial and political ends. Hitler regarded the "folkish" state as the central point of his political thought. In 1934, the minister of science, education, and folk culture decreed school teachers focus on Nordic-Germanic folklore and organize the school curriculum around "a unified worldview" that reflected the old Germanic peasant

culture and Nordic-Germanic roots. During the 1930s, as a means to support the idea of a super race united by language, culture, and tradition, a mass of folklore and fairy-tale literature was published in Germany, with titles such as *German Heroic Tales* and *Germanic-Nordic Fairy Tales*. The Grimms' collection figured prominently in this effort. Nazi folklorists' works also proliferated: von Spieß called for "purifying" the German folktale of "foreign influences" to reveal the "true mirror of the German folk soul," while Friedrich Panzer suggested all previous folklore theories should be abandoned in favor of the singularity of the German folktale. Matthes Ziegler, director of the Working Group for German Folklore, described in his book *Die Frau im Märchen (The Woman in Fairy Tales, 1937)* the German folktale heroine as the ideal Germanic woman, ready to serve and obey, with a "healthy peasant spirit," while Josef Prestel declared the *Children's and Household Tales* "the most important of our holy scriptures."

The Anglo-American occupational forces after World War II believed that the German love of Grimms' fairy tales had contributed to Nazi atrocities. The British limited the exposure to the tales in schools and imposed a prohibition on publishing new fairy-tale editions; whole library collections of fairy tales were shipped off to England and America. In the first years of the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the dominant discourse among Germans affirmed what the Allied forces had contended: the classic German fairy tales were profoundly repressive, fueled prejudices and xenophobia, and glorified cruelty and militarism. After 1945, critics in both countries debated how fairy tales could play a role in a new children's literature.

The GDR—with its goal of educating the new socialist citizen—had special concerns, and folktales were once again pressed into service to meet political and ideological needs. Initial discussions took a critical stance toward tales. One argument echoed those of centuries past: that the tales were full of archaic superstitions and prejudices. The second tack maintained that tales' use of fantastic elements overstimulated children's imaginations and encouraged utopian longings—things not conducive to the new socialist consciousness. The third argument was that

Grimms' tales had fostered German chauvinism and militarism and should be abandoned. The fourth consideration was that their antiquated language and unconventional grammar made tales inappropriate in the classroom.

In the 1950s, partially because of the reception of folklore research in the Soviet Union (which saw folklore as weapons of class conflict), GDR folklorists were working to uncover the "emancipatory democratic character" of the social criticism in folk literature and the national cultural heritage in the artistic creations of the proletariat. When Arnold Zweig assumed the presidency of the German Academy of the Arts in East Berlin, his critique of "The Knapsack, the Hat, and the Horn" paved the way for the Grimms' rehabilitation in East Germany. He argued that fairy tales were not necessarily reactionary, but needed simply to be suffused with the correct ideology. He envisioned ways in which the tales could contribute to the "progressive socialist vision of the future," and made connections to the socialist children's fairy tales of Hermynia Zur Mühlen, Berta Lask, and Lisa Tetzner in the 1930s. Their tales became the standard for children's fairy tales in the GDR in the 1950s.

Between 1945 and 1951, no complete collection of the *Children's and Household Tales* appeared in East Germany, but a new, "improved" edition came out in 1952 with less violence, more happy endings, and no nighttime prayers. The first unexpurgated version was released in 1955; it was to serve as the main source for the motifs and constellations of figures for new, antiauthoritarian fairy tales that socialist writers were expected to produce. The fantastic elements of the fairy tales were to be superimposed on realistic representation of social realities.

By 1984, the mature socialist was ready to have the entire Grimms' collection (although some schoolteachers worried about how to handle certain non-socialist characters, such as **kings**, **princesses**, and other royalty). Besides the classic tales, East German publishing houses also released tales from other countries, predominantly Russia and the peoples of the Soviet Union; they thereby promoted the international heritage of folk literature with the tales of the "socialist brother nations" (*sozialistische Brudervölker*) and dispelled the Nazi hegemonic notion that there was only

one true tradition, that of the Nordic-Germanic ancestors and the Grimms.

In contrast to the GDR, where the new political ideology drove folktale and fairy-tale scholarship, West Germany was much slower to question the theoretical premises and scholarly practices of traditional studies. In the East, folklore was conceived of as an independent historical discipline; in the West, folklorists came mainly from German philology, which was deeply indebted to the Grimms and had little contact with the social sciences. Whereas East German scholars had been attempting since the founding of the GDR to elevate the proletariat's experiences and artistic outpourings as represented in folklore, West German scholars often were still in the thrall of Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl's conservative approach, which deliberately excluded the proletariat and focused instead on the landed peasantry. Radical change did not come in the West until the student revolts at the end of the 1960s, which ended in a reorientation of the discipline; West German scholars began to move away from collecting and cataloguing material and focus instead on the meaning of the material for the producers and the recipients. The "folk" was replaced by "culture" in all its varied manifestations.

Evolution of Theories and Methods of Folktale and Fairy-Tale Scholarship

The science of folklore really began with the Grimms, and since their time, German-speaking scholars have fundamentally shaped the discipline. Some scholars have focused specifically on the Grimms' work, while others have expanded the theories and methods the Grimms developed. The brothers have been credited with making folktales worthy of scholarly and literary attention; the tales they assembled and refined in the *Children's and Household Tales* have come to define the generic parameters of the folktale and wonder tale. Their editorial practices and socializing agenda have undergone years of critical scrutiny. Their work with that collection and Germanic **myths**, sagas, and legends established the methodology for mining literary and oral sources; their critical apparatus created the framework for the **comparative method** of literary and folklore research. The Grimms also laid the

groundwork for **mythological approaches** by suggesting that folktales were remnants of pre-Christian religion and myths from Indo-European peoples. Wilhelm Grimm argued for an oral source but did not completely discount the possibility of literary influences on tales.

In 1859, Theodor **Benfey** postulated a written rather than oral tradition for folklore/fairy tale origins, the Indian theory. After studying the *Panchatantra* (c. 200 CE), he argued the tales had been disseminated through texts at the time of the Crusades, migrating from India westward over the next centuries. Benfey's theory was overshadowed when older collections from earlier and geographically distant cultures surfaced, although the idea of a literary tradition is still of current scholarly consideration.

At the same time, scholars from multiple disciplines attempted to explain the similarities between tales from geographically divergent cultures and languages. These attempts led to the theory of **polygenesis**—that tales had sprung up independently around the world, due to commonalities in the human experience and psyche. Wilhelm Grimm had already anticipated this theory, which was supported by numerous disciplines in the social sciences. Adolf Bastian, for example, worked from an ethnological position and posited the idea of the *Elementargedanke* (primal thought), while proponents of **anthropological approaches** and **psychological approaches** argued that all primitive people viewed the world in the same way and hence created the same basic stories.

The twentieth century saw a refinement and expansion of approaches and theories. The early twentieth-century cataloging of the vast amounts of oral and print material collected in the previous century facilitated some of this scholarship. The comparative method produced a large number of reference works. The seminal work for the European narrative tradition is *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography* (started in 1910 by Antti **Aarne**, twice revised by Stith **Thompson**, and again in 2004 by Hans-Jörg Uther). Johannes **Bolte** and Jiří **Polívka**'s five-volume *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm* (*Annotations to Grimms' Children's and Household Tales*, 1913–32)

includes all of the known international variants of the Grimms' tales to 1918.

The Gordian knot of much scholarly debate has to do with the tales' age, their transmission through oral or print sources, and their dissemination routes. The **historic-geographic method** proposed a wave-like oral tradition rippling from a central point of origin over an ever-larger geographical area; the greater the area in which a tale was found, the more likely that it appeared independently. Since this method assumed an oral tradition transmitted from the folk to the upper classes, printed tales were considered contaminated oral versions. Other folklorists and scholars have argued instead for the primacy of print versions in the dissemination of tales. In 1922, Hans Naumann posited dissemination not from the folk to the upper classes, but rather in the opposite direction (*gesunkenes Kulturgut*). Albert **Wesselski** expanded this view in the 1920s and 1930s, arguing in favor of a book history for the dissemination of fairy tales, believing that the literary sources played a more significant role than oral versions in the transmission of tales.

Other branches of folklore and fairy-tale scholarship, using various historical approaches, have focused on what tales reveal about the times and societies in which they evolved. In 1956, for example, Lutz Röhrich explored to what extent tales give evidence of the magical beliefs, relationships between humans and animals, customs, space and time, and the social milieu in early Europe. **Sociohistorical approaches** situate individual tales in a specific time and place that tell about social conditions and the people who wrote and told them.

Folk-narrative theory has shifted the focus from the told to the teller and addressed issues of working with **informants**. Friedrich Ranke did pioneering work in 1933: he was interested in how the tales functioned for their contemporary tellers. Ranke argued for an exact recording rather than editorial interventions. Later developments in narrative theory have introduced the ideas of **performance** and **context** to include information about the names, ages, professions of the informants, and their attitudes about what they are narrating.

Psychological approaches tend to be hermetic because they typically focus only on tales in the Grimms'

collection. Freudian interpretations explore sexual and maturation symbolism and employ tales in the analysis of various neuroses, while Jungian analysts work from Carl Gustav **Jung**'s idea of the collective unconscious, a theory built on Bastian's postulates.

There has also been extensive scholarship conducted under the broad umbrella of recovery work. Heinz Rölleke and others have created a huge amount of scholarship on the editorial and collecting histories of the Grimms. Based on his exhaustive research on the Grimms' informants and sources, Rölleke has dispelled myths that the tales were collected in the field and that they were from an illiterate peasant oral tradition. Feminist recovery work has focused on documenting women's contribution to the German fairy-tale tradition.

There is often a symbiotic relationship between theories and methods, and theories and ideological positions. The debates over the age of the tales (ancient or relatively modern); about **monogenesis** versus polygenesis; oral versus print **diffusion**; and the direction of transmission from the upper classes to the lower classes, or vice versa, continue to occupy scholars and researchers.

Shawn C. Jarvis

See also DEFA Fairy-Tale Films; Romanticism

Further Reading

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Gesta Romanorum

The title of the *Gesta Romanorum*—*Deeds of the Romans*—might suggest events tied to Roman history, but many of the deeds included in this medieval collection come from later chronicles both in Latin and in German. Although the earliest manuscript dates from 1342, the tales were very likely already being collected and recorded in the late thirteenth century. Taken together, the diverse printings and manuscripts of the *Gesta Romanorum* comprise a collection of 283 stories. Various called a collection of **exempla**, **anecdotes**, allegories, or **fables**, the *Gesta Romanorum* was created mainly to supply medieval European preachers with a group of tales that elucidated particular moral lessons. In time, the moralizations of the tales became of secondary importance while the tales themselves grew in literary significance. Accordingly, the *Gesta Romanorum* is recognized both as a collection of early European tales in its own right and as an important and popular source for such authors as Giovanni **Boccaccio** (in *Decameron*), Geoffrey **Chaucer** (in "The Man of Law's Tale"), John Gower (in his version of *Apollonius of Tyre* within his *Confessio amantis*), and William **Shakespeare** (in *King Lear*).

The collection has no clear originary context, and scholars continue to debate the manuscript's history as well as the existence of subgroupings of tales within the whole. It seems most likely that early collections of the tales became so popular that they were circulated from region to region, where local additions were probably made. The first printed edition may therefore include selections from a number of manuscripts. The popularity of the work is evidenced by the knowledge of more than 200 Latin manuscripts plus numerous reworkings of the tales in English and German. The first English edition was issued by Wynkyn de Worde around 1510, and the 1824 edition by Charles Swan (updated with revisions and commentary by Wynnard