

See also Anthropological Approaches; Ethnographic Approaches

### Further Reading

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## Naubert, Benedikte (1756–1819)

Author of more than fifty **novels** and numerous fairy tales and **novellas**, Benedikte Naubert was the most prolific German writer of the Age of Goethe. Often using chronicles and **legends** from ancient and medieval Germanic history as sources, she successfully combined the **family** romance with fairy-tale and mythic **motifs**. Her works influenced the German and English Romantics and the development of the historical, Gothic, and detective novel; her tales anticipated many of the themes and motifs of later German **women’s** fairy tales.

In the midst of her novel production, Naubert anonymously began publishing fairy tales: *Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (*New German Folktales*, 5 volumes, 1789–93); *Alme, oder ägyptische Märchen* (*Alme, or Egyptian Fairy Tales*, 5 volumes, 1793–97); and *Velleda, ein Zauberroman* (*Velleda, a Magical Novel*, 1803). Her *New German Folktales*, set in the tenth to fifteenth centuries, was an attempt to heed Johann Gottfried Herder’s call to document the cultural history of the **Middle Ages** and the roots of the German way of thinking. Two of the tales in the collection, “Erlkönigs Tochter” (“The Erl-King’s Daughter”) and “Der kurze Mantel” (“The Short Cloak”; translated as “The Cloak”), hark back to **ballads** and songs Herder had recorded; and although the plan was never realized, Jacob **Grimm** had hoped to include “Otilie” in a German legend collection.

Naubert’s fairy tales typically have a **frame narrative** with a clear female narrator who actively shapes the story. Recurring themes include female communities outside traditional society; the teaching of skills for intellectual and material independence; the interactions within female triads (magical wise woman, biological **mother**, and daughter); and most importantly, the mediation of the female’s rite of passage by a wise woman and through reading. Naubert’s tales suggest the story is not “universal” but rather a subjective experiencing and rendering of events.

Naubert’s critical reception has varied over time. Her contemporaries initially praised her and then criticized that she did not follow Johann Karl August **Musäus’s** model in the *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (*Folktales of the Germans*, 1782–86). The German Romantics embraced and often emulated her work, and scholars have traced her influence on writers from Walter Scott to Thomas Mann. Naubert has also become an important focus for recent feminist research, and that scholarship has led to the recovery of other women (Friederike Helene Unger, Sophie Albrecht, Therese Huber, Caroline de la Motte-Fouqué, Dorothea Schlegel, and Sophie Tieck-Bernhardi) who published individual fairy tales and **saga** reworkings before 1810. Feminist research has also shown how Naubert influenced and informed her female successors.

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