

GRIMM changes

from folk tale to fairy tale

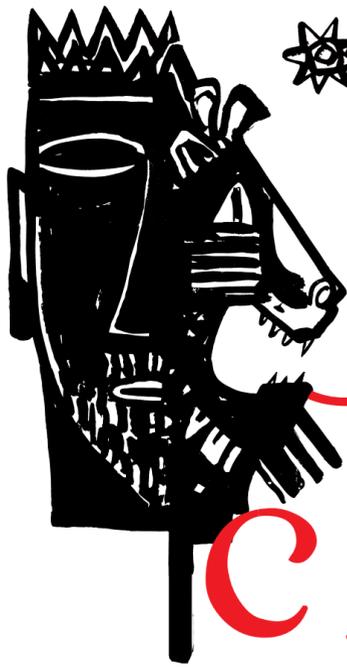
The tale of Rapunzel has gained in popularity over the years, and it is an interesting tale as it demonstrates how the Brothers Grimm altered their work to make them appeal to a broader audience, including children. The basis of the story is that a family is forced to give their child – a daughter – to a fairy in return for a gift she gives them. The child is taken care of by the fairy, and when she comes of age, locked in a tower so as to protect her from the world.

However, a prince hears her singing and devises a way to see Rapunzel by climbing her extremely long hair. The prince and Rapunzel begin meeting secretly, eventually hatching a plan for Rapunzel's escape.

In the first publication, Rapunzel has a secret love affair with the prince. This is discovered by the fairy when Rapunzel asks, "Tell me, Mother Gothel, why do you think my clothes have become too tight for me and no longer fit?" Then, the fairy unleashes terror and trickery on both Rapunzel and the prince. In terms of the tale, originally written for adults, this was a perfect example of what happens when a young woman has sexual relations out of wedlock.

In the 1857 publication, the Brothers changed their tale in significant ways. First, the fairy was transformed into a witch or a sorceress and any evidence of pregnancy and other sexual elements were removed. The text now read, "Mother Gothel, how is that you're much heavier than the prince?" Subsequent editions published after the Grimms' death further emphasized the innocence of the relationship between Rapunzel and the prince.





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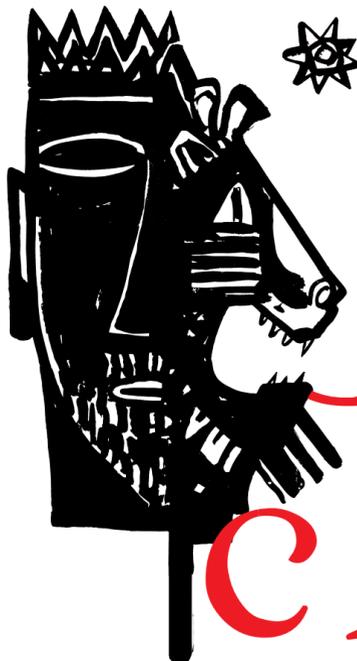
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When the Brothers Grimm began their work collecting material for *Children and Household Tales*, Germany as we know it today did not exist. The ‘country’ was divided into principalities (states), each having their own set of laws and customs. In addition, the country had been invaded and occupied by Emperor Napoleon. Thus, it was a crucial goal of the Brothers to create a work that would unite the German people and create a national identity. By recovering material from esoteric encyclopedias and articles as well as recording various storytellers that came

to their house, the Grimms’ believed they were recovering a German mythology and a German attitude toward life.

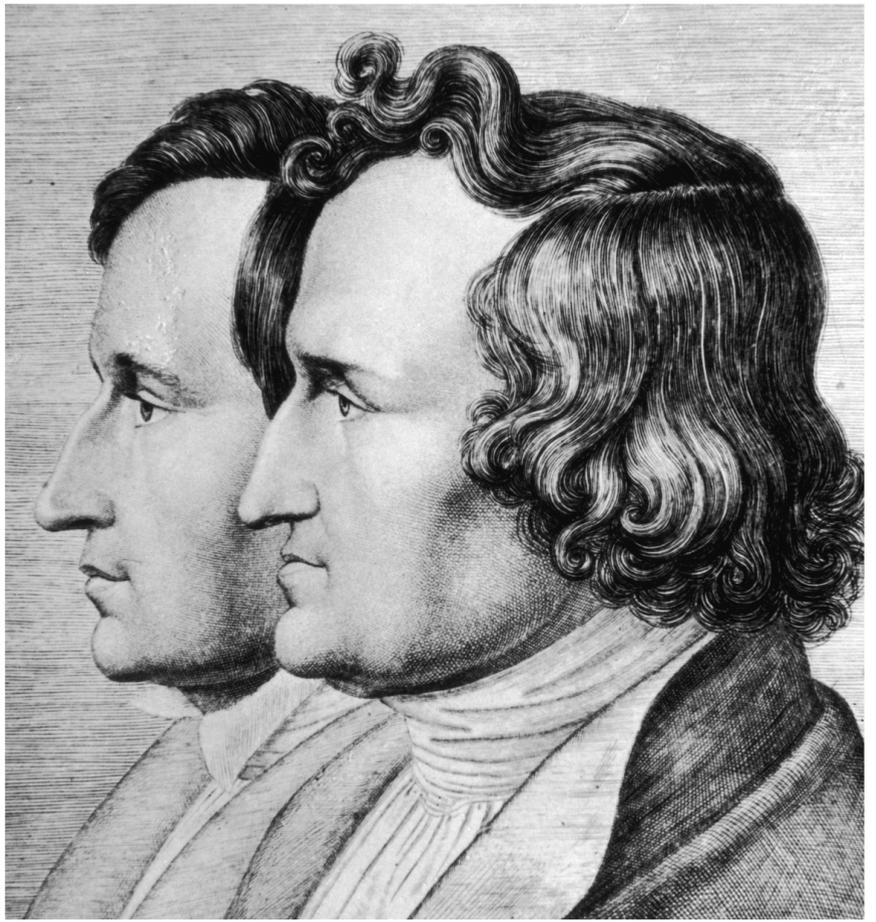
However many of the stories, such as *Cinderella*, were actually hybrids from different cultures. Tales such as the *Clever Little Tailor*, the *Six Swans*, and *Jorinda and Joringel* have particular Germanic qualities in their depictions of power transformation, and are less widely known. Many of these protagonists were like the Grimms’ themselves: individuals who proved their merit, rose in social status, and achieved of success through cunning and industriousness. Indeed, most of the characters that inhabit the tales have what the Brothers Grimm believed to be specific German ideals, namely a belief in Protestantism, industriousness, diligence, cleverness, loyalty, and honesty.



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This year marks the 200th anniversary of the publication of the Brothers Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children and Household Tales*), a collection of folk tales from the oral tradition that were considered to be distinctly German. The first volume was published in 1812 by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, and a second volume was published in 1815. During their lifetime, there were seven editions of *Children and Household Tales*, the last edition appearing in 1857. By this time, Wilhelm Grimm had so heavily altered and edited many tales so that they were hardly recognizable from the first edition.



The original edition of *Children and Household Tales* was published for scholars and members of the middle class. These tales were not published for children, as stated by Wilhelm in the preface to the second volume, “The aim of our collection was not just to serve the cause of the history of poetry [folk tales]. It was also our intention that the poetry living in it be effective, bringing pleasure wherever it could, and that it therefore became a manual of manners. In this context, it has been noted that this or that might prove embarrassing and would be unsuitable for children.”

But by 1819, when Wilhelm began the second edition of *Children and Household Tales*, the Brothers had conceded to the will of the public. Subsequent editions of the *Tales* focused on refining the prose from the oral tradition, as well as eliminating anything unsuitable for children (such as sexual elements). By altering their own work, the Brothers Grimm helped begin the transformation of the *Tales* from folk tales to fairy tales.

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