ONCE UPON AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS: THE NATURE-CULTURE OF GERMAN FAIRY TALES AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the relationship between German fairy tales and Ecocriticism by examining the similarities and differences in depictions of nature in the tales published by the Brothers Grimm in 1857 and tales written by political activists during Germany's Weimar Republic. "Frau Holle" and "Die drei Schlangenblätter" by the Brothers Grimm present nature as a means to support their bourgeois utopian ideals. On the other hand, the Weimar writers Carl Ewald and Edwin Hörnle's tales "Ein Märchen von Gott und den Königen" and "Der kleine König und die Sonne" (respectively) employ the traditional form of the fairy tale to espouse free-thinking and criticize the weaknesses of the Grimms' utopian ideal. My ecocritical analysis is based on a synthesis of environmental sciences and sociocultural influences.

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For my mother, Anne Hunter, who never once doubted my ability or my passion. Also for my brother, Jacob Hunter, without whom I wouldn't be half the person I am today.

Lastly, for Roald Dahl, whose books first made me question the relationship between Nature and Culture:

> "My dear young fellow,' the Old-Green-Grasshopper said gently, 'there are a whole lot of things in this world of ours you haven't started wondering about yet."
>
> – *James and the Giant Peach*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"*We belong to nature on the grounds of our bodily existence, and to the extent that the totality of our organic life is governed by biological and biochemical processes, we do not differ from other living organisms which partake of the great chain of being. And yet, on the other hand, Nature keeps confronting us with the experience of something completely different from ourselves.*"

– *Atle Kittland,* "Nature: Literature and Its Otherness"

This project has been built on two guiding principles. The first being that nature and culture are inescapably entwined in one another. The second is that Western culture as we know it would be incomplete without the genre of the fairy tale. Timeless worlds created by the tales by various fairy tale writers over the centuries contribute to a rich tradition of the fantastic. However, allowing ourselves to be lulled into idealized landscapes without questioning the image-rich language which has transported us can lead to an undesirable complacency in regard to how literary depictions of the natural world can (and do) affect the cultural perceptions of the actual natural world. The Brothers Grimm tales of "Frau Holle" and "Die drei Schlangenblätter" demonstrate the unavoidable interconnectedness of nature and culture. Not only do these tales cement such an interconnectedness, but they also give the reader a sense of responsibility and moral consciousness in relation to the development of human culture as influenced by

depictions of nature. The emerging school of ecocriticism, in which nature is regarded as an entity instead of a concept, provides a framework for researching this relationship and the impact it has on modern culture. While there are many schools of ecocriticism, this project will focus on the linkage between natural and social practices which leads to cultural transformation as reflected in the Grimms' fairytales and in the antithesis to the Grimm tales – fairy tales written during the Weimar Republic. From an ecocritical perspective, the interactions among the characters in the following tales reveal critical cultural implications about the interactions that humans have with the empirical realm of the environment. These interactions can be categorized into four main topics: the responsibility of humans to take care of nature, the consequences of direct interactions between humans and nature, and nature as a form of punishment, as well as a restorative force. Since, as humans, we live in and interact with nature on a daily basis, a thorough ecocritical analysis of the Grimm fairy tales "Frau Holle" and "Die drei Schlangenblätter" in addition to the Weimar tales "Der kleine König und die Sonne" by Edwin Hörnle and "Ein Märchen von Gott und den Königen" by Carl Ewald adds to the discovery of what it means to be human.

Before beginning the ecocritical analysis of these tales, various definitions and concepts relating to Ecocriticism, as well as my approach, must be established in order to thoroughly discuss this topic. Traditionally, nature and culture have been considered in binary opposition to one another in literature. However, according to prominent ecocritical theorist Peter Barry, there exists a "gray area" in between the two that cannot be disregarded (Barry 246). This "gray area" is more akin to the world in which

we live, since neither extreme – either all nature or all culture – adequately includes the full range of interactions between nature and humans. The examination and analysis of this gray area is the primary objective of Ecocriticism. In order to achieve an ecocritical reading of the above-mentioned tales, it is important to first establish common definitions with which descriptions of the characters' interactions with nature can be more precisely explored. As Peter Barry explains, "ecocritics reject the notion… that everything is socially and/or linguistically constructed." Instead, Barry argues that "for the ecocritic, nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves, not needing to be ironised as a concept, but actually present as an entity which affects us, and which we can affect, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it" (Barry 243). As such, representations of nature in literature are not always mere representations that point to a metaphorical meaning. Rather, representations of nature in literature can be reflections of the concrete world of the environment in which we live. By interpreting these representations as reflections of the world in which we live, they cease to exist as mere representations and instead become depictions of actual relationships between human beings and nature. It is also imperative to discuss the definition of nature as a "place." Lawrence Buell, one of the founding fathers of Ecocriticism as it is known today, defines place as the "perceived or felt space, space humanized rather than the material world taken on its own terms" (Buell 667). Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge that any setting described in literature is already affected by the human perception and invasion of it. The following discussion will consider the humanized space as well as the "material world" of the secondary realities established in each of the tales. Considering the role of

nature in the following tales from the Grimms as well as the Weimar tales by Carl Ewald and Edwin Hörnle aids in forming a thorough understanding of the relationship between nature and culture in Western culture, because “the appreciation, evaluation and use of [the Grimms fairy tales and the genre created by them] determine our cultural heritage” (Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm* 17). Before beginning, an examination of the origin of the tales as well as an examination of the authors is necessary.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE ORIGIN OF LAW TO FAIRYLAND: THE JOURNEY OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM

When the Grimms began their scholarly pursuits as students of Law at University of Marburg, one of their goals was to find the root of Germanic Law. What they found during this search and finally published in addition to their legal-historical findings were the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen,* which first appeared as a scholarly edition in 1812[1]. As mentioned above, I have chosen to quote from the tenth and final edition of their project, which was published in 1857. This is mainly because "the Grimms made major changes while editing the tales. They eliminated erotic and sexual elements that might be offensive to middle-class morality, added numerous Christian expressions and references" as well as "emphasized specific role models for male and female protagonists according to the dominant patriarchal code of that time, and endowed many of the tales with a 'homey' or *biedermeier* flavor" (Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm* 14*).* The original versions of the tales published in 1812 may have retained more of their "folksy" flavor, but the versions published in 1857 contain the ultimate intentions of the Brothers Grimm and were promulgated most widely within Western culture. Therefore, it is this version that best leads the discussion revolving around the influence of nature on culture and vice versa. More specifically, "[the Grimms] were convinced that their tales possessed essential truths about the origins of civilization, and they selected and revised those tales that would best express those truths," which they did "in the name of humanity and *Kultur*: the Grimms were German idealists who believed that historical

[1] Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. Berlin: Georg Andreas Reimer Verlag, 1812. Print.

knowledge of customs, mores and laws would increase self-understanding and social enlightenment" (Zipes, *Complete Fairy Tales* xxxv). Some of these "essential truths" are encoded in the relationship depicted by the interactions and relationship between human and nature.

In fact, with regard to nature, even the Grimms understood the importance of its role from the very beginning. In their "Einleitung" to the 1857 version, which was also included in all of the versions after 1819, they discuss their impetus for writing the tales as well as some of their hopes for their readers. They write, "Wir finden es wohl, wenn Sturm oder anderes Unglück, das der Himmel schickt, eine ganze Saat zu Boden geschlagen, daß noch bei niedrigen Hecken oder Sträuchen, die am Wege stehen, ein kleiner Platz sich gesichert hat, und einzelne Ähren aufrecht geblieben sind" (Röllecke 12). In fact, this is the introductory sentence to their collection. Immediately, the Grimms liken the prologue of their project to a crop which has been damaged by a storm or "some other misfortune." They regarded German heritage as struck by such a "Sturm oder anderes Unglück," and consequently they were left looking at "einzelne Ähren" of this heritage. The preface goes on to speak of the farmers' careful attention to the crop thereafter, which nurtures an even stronger crop for the generations to come. This "crop" refers to the collection of tales. Perhaps history did not favor the German-speaking people, so that their heritage, their roots could be forgotten in the great "Sturm" of history. However, by gathering these tales, the Grimms hoped to combat that forgetfulness and foster not only an understanding of the Germanic past but also a stronger sense thereof for the future. All of these hopes and longings

materialize through a metaphor of nature. This points to the probability that further representations of nature in the tales are not coincidental or added for the "homey or biedermeier" effect as postulated by Zipes. Instead, these images indicate a deep connection between the tales' cultural cultivation and the natural world.

Further along in the introduction, the Grimms stress the importance of the involvement and attention of children in relation to the tales. "Kinder deuten ohne Furcht in die Sterne, während andere, nach dem Volksglauben, die Engel damit beleidigen" (Röllecke 14). Again, the Grimms employ nature imagery to express the significance of an aspect of their work. In this instance, they stress the significance of their children readers. Children, they claim, interpret "into the stars" without fear, while others (non-children) offend or bother the angels with such fear. By using this language, the Grimms hint at the childlike-willingness with which one must read these tales in order to fully understand their significance. Children are independent of religious ideology as they are still forming their opinions of the world. By likening the willingness of their target audience to adventurers fearless of the unknown or of the far-away, the Grimms promptly encourage the non-children readers, freed from religious ideology, to embrace the fairytale worlds and to follow the tales' whimsy simply by referencing "die Sterne" of the night sky. This tactic reflects the importance of "place" as discussed earlier and establishes the juxtaposition of nature vs. religion. Even though readers of that time (nor any ordinary reader of modern times) could ever hope to reach outer space in the literal sense, the Grimms' reference to the stars fosters an atmosphere of familiarity by referencing the image of the night sky, which all humans experience on a

nightly basis, along with all of the dream-like connotations in which such a reference is enveloped. By using this common reference, the preface establishes “die Sterne” as a place that is alternative to ideology. As such, even before the tales themselves begin, the Grimms illustrate the deep-reaching influence that nature has on culture and that culture conversely has on nature. The following analyses will ask similarly of their readers. Even though an ecocritical analysis of fairy tales has not thoroughly been endeavored, in the spirit of the Grimms, the following is an attempt to interpret fearlessly not only the fairy tales of the Grimms but also the later adaptations of the fairy-tale genre by writers during the Weimar Republic.

CHAPTER III

THE GRIMMS' NATURE-CULTURE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

"Once upon a time…" – Western culture as we know it would be incomplete without that phrase and the slew of comforting, nostalgic, and sometimes frightening connotations that accompany our conception of a fairy tale. Relaxing back into the familiar plotlines and rich nature imagery of fairy tales creates a cozy atmosphere in which one can learn life lessons from a talking tree or magical bean seeds. However, slipping into this comfortable world over the centuries can lead to a deep complacency regarding how nature imagery affects us and in turn how we affect the nature in the modern world. For example, the tales of "Frau Holle" and "Die drei Schlangenblätter" by the Brothers Grimm demonstrate the unavoidable interconnectedness of nature and culture. Even though the Grimms' fairy tales were collected during the literary Romantic period, their cultural impact persists to this day. The rich nature imagery in these tales in particular not only cements the idea of the interconnectedness of nature and human culture, it also gives the reader a sense of responsibility and moral consciousness in relation to the development of human culture as it necessarily relates to nature. From an ecocritical perspective, the interactions in "Frau Holle" between the figures of Frau Holle and the two daughters, *die Faule* and *die Fleißige*, and nature reveal critical cultural implications about the relationships and interactions among humans in the empirical realm of the environment. Further investigation of the nature:culture relationship as illustrated in the interactions between *der Jüngling*, *die Königstochter*, and the natural world provide evidence towards this claim. These interactions can be

categorized into four main topics: the human's responsibility to take care of nature, the consequences of human:nature interactions within their respective secondary realities, nature as a punitive force and, in contrast, nature as a form of restoration.

In relation to "Frau Holle" and "Die drei Schlangenblätter" by the Brothers Grimm, the "place" is the natural setting in which the story transpires, as perceived and communicated by the characters' interactions with their natural environment. The literary representation of nature in "Frau Holle" and "Die drei Schlangenblätter" reflects concepts of nature and culture as conceived of during the early and middle 1800s. These conceptualizations help us think about the relationship between nature and culture today as well as point to the cornerstones of Western concepts of nature. The tale of "Frau Holle" in the 1857 publication begins with the introduction of a young girl, *die Fleißige*, who must spin yarn for her widowed stepmother and her lazy sister, *die Faule*. The tale describes how "das arme Mädchen musste sich täglich auf die große Straße bei einem Brunnen setzen und musste so viel spinnen, dass ihm das Blut aus den Fingern sprang" (Grimm 134). This depiction contains two important elements relating to nature: the act of spinning and the location of "bei einem Brunnen." Let's first discuss *die Fleißige*'s chore of spinning and how this relates to nature. It is known that "preindustrial societies, especially those in colder climates, dedicated substantial material resources into the making of clothing" (Ashliman 912). In fact, this process of making clothing was often long and labor-intensive, "beginning with sheep shearing and flax harvesting," followed by "a chain of arduous tasks: washing, carding, spinning, dying, weaving, cutting and stitching; and traditionally, these fell largely to women…

spinning was the most tedious of these tasks" (Ashliman 912). From an ecocritical perspective, depictions of this task in literature become foci of analyses because they indicate an intersection of nature and culture. The wool provided by nature via sheep is appropriated into the culture of humans by the domestic sphere of women. As such, the natural is humanized. In the context of the tale, *die Fleißige* must sit outside on the street by the well and spin until her fingers bleed. Of course, no such task is required of *die Faule*, since she is the favored daughter. The less-favored daughter's laborious assignment by her stepmother of spinning is evidence that "humans, like all other species, try to control their environment and the resources it affords and thus resist acknowledging their apparent insignificance" (Easterlin 102). Even though this perspective refers to a scientific world view, its application to literature provides insight into the biological and perhaps even psychological reasons behind such human behavior. In this case, the stepmother is the clear authority in the household. She is trying to control her resources, namely her stepdaughter's labor and the yarn used to make clothing, while sending a message that she favors her own daughter over *die Fleißige*. By making *die Fleißige* perform the task of spinning, the humanization of nature is depicted as a punishment and exploitation. The natural form of the sheep's wool has been manipulated into yarn and thus into profit, albeit perhaps only within the social/domestic sphere, by leading to the eventual production of clothes for the family. This manipulation of nature for the purposes of human profit points to the process of civilizing nature.

The second way in which the stepmother controls her resources is through *die Fleißige*'s location while she spins the yarn: "auf die große Straße bei einem Brunnen." The mother's blatant separationist tactics contradict the Romantic view of nature as an antidote to the ills of civilization. At first, it may seem that by controlling where her stepdaughter spins the yarn and by placing her in a location outside the comfort of the home, the culture in which these women live and relate to each other determines "outside on the street by a well" to be a place for banishment and pain. Here, an investigation into the cultural significance of wells is needed. During the Middle Ages and even into the modern era in some places, the well was considered "die zentrale Stellung im Leben der Bürger, die dem mittelalterlichen Brunnen als der gemeinsamen Wasserquelle ganzer Stadtbezirke eignete: Hier trafen sich täglich die Frauen und die Mägde beim Wasserholen, und hierher zielten bei den zahllosen Bränden die sorgenden Gedanken der Männer" (Langewieshe 4). As such, historically, the place of "the well" held an important role in communication, information exchange, the coming-together of people from a wider geographic area, as well as a place for reprieve from society where one could gather one's thoughts. Furthermore, "the memory of the mythical gods, satyrs, and nymphs of the ancient times lingers in a few [wells], and in the almost universal declaration… that at the bottom, under the water, dwells a mysterious being" (Parkinson 203). Considering the classification of wells as centers of human communication as well as fulcrums for folk tales, the cultural significance of wells is undeniable. However, wells do not serve a purely cultural function. Since water could be considered a natural resource for purposes of food and in addition to a social hotspot,

the well thrives in the "gray area," as coined by Peter Barry. The contradiction encountered is this: while a well is obviously a human-constructed artifice, the access it provides to the naturally occurring groundwater, as well as its traditional location of outside, allows it to be classified as a naturalized place as well as a place humanized. Since *die Fleißige* is spinning the yarn outside by the well, the outdoors becomes a place of labor but also of mystery. By banishing her daughter there, the stepmother seeks to gain the finished product of her daughter's labor, i.e. the yarn, without engaging in any hard labor herself. In doing so, the tale depicts "auf der großen Straße bei einem Brunnen" as a place of exile. In other words, the stepmother removes *die Fleißige* from the social realm of the home by ordering her to spin the yarn by the well.

This negativity and sense of punishment is mirrored in "Die drei Schlangenblätter" through the descriptions of the war at the beginning of the tale. As the story begins, *der Jüngling* serves in the war on the side of the King who will eventually become his father-in-law. "Zu dieser Zeit führte der König eines mächtigen Reichs Krieg. Der Jüngling nahm Dienste bei ihm und zog mit ins Feld." It is in this field that "Es war große Gefahr und regnete blaue Bohnen, daß seine Kameraden von alle Seiten niederfielen" (Grimm 90). Here, the place of "das Feld," though a naturally innocent setting, becomes a backdrop to a violent "Regen" of "blaue Bohnen." However, there is nothing inherent in *die Fleißige*'s or *der Jüngling's* situation that denotes a negative relationship between human and natural. Through the lens of ecology and evolutionary biology, science-driven ecocritic Nancy Easterlin promotes the emergence of a "bioculture," in which the biology of nature and the biology of humans

inextricably affect one another. In relation to literature, this bioculture is formed by a myriad of interactions between human perception and the natural environment based on the premise that our environment inherently influences everything we do (Easterlin 102-103). The presentation of the place of *die Fleißige's* spinning by the tale influences the readers' perception of the relationship between humans and nature on a contemporary, real level. Thus, it is the stepmother's negative distortion of "auf der großen Straße bei einem Brunnen" as well as the narrator's description of *die Fleißige*'s undesirable chore that alters the perception of nature in order to give it a human meaning. In particular, nature becomes a *place* of exile but does not inherently possess qualities to that effect. Yet regardless of the blatant humanization of nature in the context of *die Fleißige*'s degrading chore or the location of "on the street by the well," the depiction of nature seems at first negative and sends a message to the reader that the outdoors connotes expulsion, loneliness and pain. Similarly, a field is not violent in its natural state just as beans usually do not cause people to die. Instead, the tale appropriates the imagery of the field and the legumes into a images of battle and bloodshed. By portraying nature in such a manner through the negative connotations created by the arduousness of *die Fleißige*'s task, the places of "auf der großen Straße bei einem Brunnen," and "im Feld," and the instrumentalization of the "blaue Bohnen" as a metaphor for lead, the tale establishes nature as a form of punishment.

Another instance of nature being depicted as a form of punishment occurs after *die Faule* has been staying with Frau Holle and is eagerly awaiting her reward for servitude. However, in the proceeding instance, nature is not conceived of as a place as

has been discussed so far in this paper. Instead, elements of nature are manipulated to become a tool used to punish unsavory behavioral patterns. As *die Faule* prepares to leave Frau Holle's subterranean domain, she stands under the door awaiting her reward. However, since *die Faule* was negligent in her duties, instead of the anticipated shower of gold, "die Frau Holle führte [die Faule] auch zu dem Tor, als sie aber darunterstand, ward statt des Goldes ein großer Kessel voll Pech ausgeschüttelt" (Grimm 137). As the girl returns home covered in pitch, the story ends with the line, "Das Pech aber blieb fest an ihr hängen und wollte, so lange sie lebte, nicht abgehen" (Grimm 137). Before analyzing this passage, it is important to understand what "Pech" is and where it comes from. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "pitch" is defined as "a thick, viscid, black or dark-coloured inflammable liquid, obtained by the destructive distillation of wood, coal or other organic substance" (OED Online). Further investigation into the origins of pitch reveal that the distillation of pitch was invented by humans in the mid-sixteenth century as a means of protecting wooden ships from further undue water damage. The waterproof stickiness of the resin was achieved by applying heat to wood without burning it so that the wood fibers relinquish their liquid. Thus, pitch can only be produced through the human manipulation of organic material, that is, nature. Even though pitch is a human manipulation of organic substances, its composition and origin remain connected to its use, meaning it is essential to "heed the central assumptions of Darwinian Evolution, including the dynamic rather than the fixed nature of natural phenomena" (Easterlin 103). In order for the pitch to be available to Frau Holle, organic material had to be destroyed. Then, that destroyed organic material

was used to humiliate and scorn a young girl who neglected to perform the duties demanded of her. Even if the natural substances in this scene have been manipulated by the human hand, the depiction of pitch as a punishment that can never be removed from visibility conceives of nature as a means of retributive punishment within human society. Frau Holle's act of pouring pitch on *die Faule* as payment for her negligence again depicts nature as a force to be used as punishment and/or a source of shame and pain. In this way, nature loses its ungraspable enormity and instead transforms into an accessible resource which can be engineered to carry out the agency of human intention. In other words, Frau Holle fulfills her intention to punish *die Faule* by pouring a human-manipulated organic substance on her. Again, culture and nature collide in the "gray" area where neither concept has ubiquitous dominance. Frau Holle uses nature to shame *die Faule*, therefore lending nature qualities that it does not inherently possess (just like the mother establishes "outside by the well" as a place of banishment and the King establishes "das Feld" as a site of death). At the same time, the "dynamic rather than the fixed nature" of the pitch indicates that even after the destructive process of distillation, pitch still retains some of its original organic properties. A similar use of nature as punishment is used in "Die drei Schlangenblätter" after *die Königstochter* is revealed as the murderer of her husband. As decided by the King, the proper punishment of his daughter is to be sealed with her lover in a boat full of holes and sent out to sea. The Grimms' tale describes, "Da ward sie mit ihrem Helfershelfer in ein durchlöchertes Schiff gesetzt und hinaus ins Meer getrieben, wo sie bald in den Wellen versanken" (Grimm 94). Here again, a source of water, albeit larger than the contained

"Brunnen," is used to frighten, and in this case kill, one of the characters. The use of pitch to punish *die Faule* for her unacceptable behavior and the use of the ocean to punish *die Königstochter* for her murderous intent depicts nature as a potentially punishing force, as influenced by cultural conceptions of shame in human society.

However, the Grimms' tale does not only depict nature as a source of punishment, banishment, and pain. Upon further analysis of the nature imagery in "Frau Holle," the interactions between the girls and the world beneath the well provide material for an exploration of the various tensions between culture and nature. Each time one of the girls wanders through the meadow after she falls down the well, she hears a voice from an apple tree begging her to shake the tree and let the apples fall[2]. The tale describes the encounter between *die Fleißige* and the tree as follows:

> "Danach ging es weiter und kam zu einem Baum, der hing voll Äpfel, und rief ihm zu:
>
> 'Ach, schüttel mich,
>
> Schüttel mich,
>
> Wir Äpfel sind alle miteinander reif.'
>
> Da schüttelte [sie] den Baum, dass die Äpfel fielen, als regneten sie, und schüttelte bis keiner mehr oben war; und als [sie] alle in einen Haufen zusammengelegt hatte, ging [sie] weiter" (Grimm 134-135).

There are two compelling aspects to note about this interaction: firstly, that *die Fleißige* complies with the tree's request without question, as if complying with the tree's

[2] The girls' encounter with the oven and the talking Brötchen would fit in under this category as well but has been left out of this analysis since it does not directly point to representations of nature.

request is innate for the girl, and secondly, that after letting the apples fall, she gathers them in a pile before leaving. One of the crucial roles of the depiction of nature in literature is "to lead toward an understanding of the inner through its parallel in the outer" and in this way nature affects the lives of humans to an extent more equally impactful to how humans affect nature (Gifford 69). From this point of view, nature and culture have been separated by a modern world in environmental crisis, and they must be reconnected. *Die Fleißige*'s compassionate compliance with the voice's urgent request to let loose the ripe apples reflects a willingness to co-exist in a symbiotic relationship with nature, which in turn fosters Gifford's urgency for reconnection. In this case, it is not necessarily the physical description of the girl's interaction with the tree but more so the empty space between the narrator's description of the tree's plea and the description of *die Fleißige*'s compliance that indicates this symbiotic relationship. *Die Fleißige* does not verbally respond but rather simply acquiesces to the tree's request, which depicts nature as dependent on humans while simultaneously depicting humans as responsible for nature. As for the second compelling facet of this nature-human interaction, *die Fleißige*'s careful leaving of the tree's means of seed-bearing and reproduction lend tones of respect for the continuation of the natural environment. Part of the tree's demand mentions that its apples are "alle miteinander reif." That the tree's apples are ripe indicates the readiness of the fruit to germinate. The generous gesture of shaking the tree and then gathering the fruit into a pile strengthens Gifford's argument that humans and nature affect one another. On the one hand, the tree needed *die Fleißige* to shake loose its apples in order for its fruit to fall to ground and

eventually take to seed. On the other hand, the tale's characterization of *die Fleißige* depends on her kind-hearted behavior. If *die Fleißige* had not stopped to oblige the tree's request, as *die Faule* later does, she could not have been successfully characterized as the "good girl" throughout the story. However, "rather than encourage a vague notion of 'equality' of our species with the rest of the organic world," *die Fleißige*'s handling of the nature she encounters in the meadow "observe[s] differences between all living things, recognizing their individual features and qualities" (Gifford 70). *Die Fleißige* recognizes the need of the tree to reproduce through its seeds contained in the apples. Therefore, she leaves the ripe fruit in a pile so as to foster the genetic continuation of the tree through the eventual spreading of its seeds. Thus, reconnection is only possible through careful attention to ecocritical practices and awareness. This focus on mindful treatment[3] of nature mirrors the careful attention of the Grimms' tale to the interaction between the girls and the world beneath the well and in doing so creates a symbiotic equilibrium between nature and culture; the tree depends on the girls to shake loose its ripe fruit while the girls depend on their treatment of the tree to depict them in a socially favorable light, whether or not the girls are aware of this dependence. This exploration of the tension between nature and culture reveals that both nature and culture affect and can even potentially benefit one another through such a reconnection and/or relationship.

[3] Other analyses of compliance such as this in other tales, i.e. feminist readings from fairy tale scholar Maria Tatar, have focused on the act of obeying as a bourgeoisie value instilled in young women. My interpretation does not deny the instillation of obeying, but rather suggests an additional awareness.

Along a similar vein of thought, the Grimms depict nature in "Frau Holle" in a manner that fosters the sense of responsibility for humans to take care of nature. They do this through the accounts of the girls' interactions with nature and with Frau Holle herself. For instance, when *die Fleißige* agrees to stay with Frau Holle, Frau Holle pointedly tells her, "Du musst nur achtgeben, dass du mein Bett gut machst und es fleißig aufschüttelst, dass die Federn fliegen, dann schneit es in der Welt" (Grimm 135). Ever faithful to her adjectival calling, just a few lines down, the reader sees that *die Fleißige* "besorgte auch alles nach ihrer Zufriedenheit und schüttelte das Bett immer gewaltig, auf dass die Federn wie Schneeflocken umherflogen" (Grimm 135). Crucial to note here is the use of the wie-comparison description of *die Fleißige's* duties. In the first instance, Frau Holle explains the consequence of shaking out her bed well as snow falling in the world; there is no wie-comparison here but rather a statement of direct correlation describing a reality in which the culture of mindful compliance exemplified in *die Fleißige* directly influences the natural world. This lack of wie-comparison indicates the explicit linkage between nature and culture. In the later instance, the use of the wie-comparison "die Federn wie Schneeflocken umherflogen" again creates a metaphorical distance between the natural world and the secondary reality of the world beneath the well. Just as displayed in her interaction with the apple tree, *die Fleißige*'s careful attention to Frau Holle's request and her consequent "Zufriedenheit" depicts the relationship between the human and the natural as mutually beneficial. Stressing the expression of the social and cultural dependence of humans on nature through depictions of nature in literature is crucial because "the liberating power of realized

interdependence of man and natural world provides… the ground for a peculiarly romantic conception of singleness incompatible with isolation" (Kroeber 56). In this way, the Grimms' tale supports the view that nature and culture are inextricably entwined in one another. The idea that nature and culture conceive of a "singleness incompatible with isolation" bolsters the argument for organic connectedness and escalates it to another level of urgency and significance, in turn implying that humans have responsibilities to respect and foster the natural world. Depictions of Frau Holle's dependence on *die Fleißige* and in turn nature's dependence on Frau Holle demonstrate fulfillment of this singleness. By focusing on interpretations of nature in fairy tales as allusion and illusion, the representation of Frau Holle's bed of feathers/snow mirrors how culture is created by human-nature interactions in literature. When *die Fleißige* makes Frau Holle's bed, they see feathers float through the air while in the natural world above the well snow falls. The cultural values of diligence and obedience embedded in this tale directly relate to natural phenomena, namely snowfall. Again, the interconnectedness of humans and nature by way of *die Fleißige*'s respectful treatment of Frau Holle, Frau Holle's consequent treatment of *die Fleißige*, and the manner in which those interactions affect nature find their niche precisely within the gray area where nature and culture intersect.

This interdependence not only depicts the responsibility that humans have to be mindful of their regard for the environment, but other instances of interdependence directly relate to the depiction of nature as a restorative force. Additionally, this interdependence reflects "the circulation of images and information in nature

literature," proving that such images (or depictions) are "not neutral but contain ideological messages" (Zipes, *Instrumentalization of Fantasy* 102). The tale establishes its ideological message through the depiction of Frau Holle's reward system, which initially depicts nature as a restorative force (and then later as a potentially punitive force). After *die Fleißige* has been taking care of Frau Holle's house, the tale describes that because of her hard work and diligence, „[die Fleißige]… hatte es auch ein gut Leben bei ihr, kein böses Wort und alle Tage Gesottenes und Gebratenes" (Grimm 135). Since *die Fleißige* does all that is asked of her, Frau Holle provides her with rich foods and warm comforts, to which the girl otherwise would not have had access. This all culminates in the description of the reward given to *die Fleißige* by Frau Holle as she leaves the world beneath the well: "Das Tor ward aufgetan, und wie das Mädchen gerade darunterstand, fiel ein gewaltiger Goldregen, und alles Gold blieb an ihm hängen, so dass es über und über davon bedeckt war" (Grimm 136). Just as *die Faule* was covered in pitch as a consequence of her carelessness, Frau Holle covers *die Fleißige* in gold. Just as in the previous discussion of the production of pitch, important for this discussion is knowing that "neutron star collisions are responsible for the formation of virtually all the heavy elements in the universe—a list that includes gold, mercury, lead, platinum and more" (Stromberg 1). The depiction of gold here is in direct opposition to the pitch later used to punish *die Faule*, namely because gold is a naturally occurring substance so inherent to Earth and to the universe that scientists just recently discovered how it is formed in the first place. That Frau Holle showers *die Fleißige* in a naturally occurring substance found within the Earth's mantle and formed by the

building blocks of the universe associates the purity of nature with the cultural notion of rewarding good behavior. Conversely, the purity and naturalness of *die Fleißige*'s "Goldregen" reinforces the negativity of *die Faule's* shower of nature-manipulated-by-human, i.e. pitch. In this way, both of the above examples (*die Fleißige* being rewarding with comfort and gold) reveal nature as a restorative force; through nature, *die Fleißige* is given a health and wealth otherwise withheld from her by her stepmother. Prominent ecocritic Carolyn Merchant discusses the concept of recovery through nature in the seventeenth century based on the ideal of the Garden of Eden presented as an utopian setting. Since the setting of "Frau Holle" is reminiscent of the medieval/early-Renaissance time period, examining depictions of nature during this pre-industrial time period illuminates crucial aspects of the Western conceptualization of nature. According to Merchant, this concept of nature as a source of recovery, "as it emerged in the seventeenth century, not only meant a recovery from the Fall but also entailed restoration of health, reclamation of land, and recovery of property" (Merchant 133). By tracing the culture of Western civilization as a "grand narrative of fall and recovery" as reflected in the ecological history of the Earth itself, Merchant argues that the ultimate goal of portraying nature as a recuperative force is to make Earth a reflection of the biblical Garden of Eden, where nature (and prosperity) ruled supreme. While most ecocritics avoid linking depictions of nature to sweeping ideologies, in this case the direct cause-effect relationship that *die Fleißige* has with Frau Holle regarding her treatment of nature sends a direct message to the readers that the girl's consequences are intimately linked to her consideration for the environment. *Die Fleißige's* situation

mirrors Merchant's idea of literature at this time appropriating nature as a source of "restoration of health" (as with the rich foods Frau Holle feeds *die Fleißige*). Furthermore, in the sense that her "Fall" from her stepmother's favor is reversed by Frau Holle's act of showering her in an earth-bound substance relates to the conception of nature as a source of "recovery of property." This idea further strengthens the depiction of nature as a powerful health- and wealth-giving force.

In contrast, nature in this tale is also depicted as a punitive force with which not to trifle. Just as *die Fleißige* behaves true to her adjectival calling with her dedicated industriousness, *die Faule* exhibits undesirable character traits such as laziness, carelessness and apathy. For instance, when she comes upon the tree after waking up in the world beneath the well, *die Faule's* response to the voice's request was, "Du kommst mir recht, es könnte mir einer auf den Kopf fallen,' und ging damit weiter" (Grimm 137). This reaction directly opposes her sister's reaction. Considering the lack of compassion and respect in this response, her consequence at the end of having pitch poured on her is not surprising nor are the negative depictions of nature-culture interactions therein. In constructing *die Faule's* relationship with nature this way, the Grimms establish the cultural norm of "getting what one gives." *Die Faule's* internal reaction of refusing to shake the tree free of its ripe apples is reflected in the stalemate of the tree's reproductive possibilities since the fruit needs to fall in order for the seed to take to ground and grow. In this way, *die Faule* demonstrates another principle advocated by ecocritics, which states that nature depicted in literature should urge readers to "not merely respect the powerless but to emulate the nonhuman nature as

an example of compassion and harmony and as a means to interrogate and critique social values" (Sigler 149). Thus, it is crucial not to ignore the role of the human in literature but rather to de-center the anthropocentric perspective through which literature is often viewed.

By approaching this tale this way, an emphasis is placed on the interactions with nature as demonstrations of moral goodness. The tree needed to be shaken by a human in order for the apples to fall; *die Faule's* dismissive refusal of this need in conjunction with her fate at the end of the story reflects the dire consequences of ignoring human effects on nature and vice versa. By focusing on the role of the environment, the readers are given the impression that *die Faule's* conflict with her environment cannot be reduced to a focus on human laziness. Rather, the examination of the role of the tree in this conflict solidifies that there can be no conflict without a setting, thus necessitating the motif of nature as the foreground of literary analysis. Another instance of this is the resolution of the stepmother's conflict with *die Fleißige*; when *die Fleißige* returns home drenched in the "Goldregen" bestowed upon her by Frau Holle, "ward es von [der Stiefmutter] und der Schwester gut aufgenommen" (Grimm 136). Frau Holle showered *die Fleißige* in gold as a direct reward for her diligence, obedience, and careful attention to her effects on the environment, i.e., being sure to make Frau Holle's bed so that the snow will fall and her gracious treatment of the apple tree as she passed through the meadow. From this perspective, treating nature in such a respectful way has granted *die Fleißige* an opportunity to earn her mother's approval and in doing so also earn a better life in which she no longer must sit

outside and spin yarn until her fingers bleed. Even though her mother may be just as greedy and selfish as she was at the beginning of the tale, the secondary reality of the world beneath the well liberates *die Fleißige* from her victimization through her stepmother's victimizing exploitation.

This relationship between humans and nature can also be seen in the situation created by *der Jüngling* and *die Königstochter* after the Schlangenblätter are used, but towards a different moral end. The first time the Schlangenblätter are used, "[der Jüngling] hob die Blätter auf und legte eines davon auf den Mund der Toten, die beiden anderen auf ihre Augen. Und kaum war es geschehen, so bewegte sich das Blut in den Adern, stieg in das bleiche Angesicht und rötete es wieder" (Grimm 92). At first, the kingdom rejoices, but it is soon revealed to the reader that "Es war aber in der Frau, nachdem sie wieder ins Leben war erweckt worden, eine Veränderung vorgegangen: es war, als ob alle Liebe zu ihrem Manne aus ihrem Herzen gewichen wäre" (Grimm 92). Even though the Schlangenblätter have been used to restore life, over which an entire kingdom rejoices, appropriating nature to such an unnatural end, i.e. resurrecting someone after their death, ultimately results in the loss of *die Königstochter's* love for her husband. So in this instance, manipulating nature for the purposes of counteracting nature results in a loss, a loss which leads to the death of *der Jüngling* (even though he too is later resurrected without consequence) and to the deaths of *der Schiffer* and *die Königstochter.* At the end of the tale, *der Jüngling's* misuse of nature (the Schlangenblätter) in order to go against the natural death of *die Königstochter* brings about her death at the end of the tale as well as *der Schiffer*'s, who aided in the

unnatural situation by agreeing to aid in murdering *der Jüngling*. On the one hand, nature is depicted as punishing *der Jüngling* for going against *die* Königstochter's natural death, and as punishing her for using nature (the ocean) in order to murder her husband. On the other hand, the later use of die Schlangenblätter by the King's servant and his resurrection of the murdered *der Jüngling* assures the restoration of natural order. Therefore, even though nature can be depicted as a punitive force that humans use in order to seek justice, the tale ends with natural order restored.

Again employing nature as a restorative force, the tale uses nature imagery, especially the depiction of the meadow beneath the well, to reflect the possibility of a better life. As *die Fleißige* tumbles down the well in pursuit of the bloodied spindle, "[Die Fleißige] verlor die Besinnung, und als [sie] erwachte und wieder zu sich selbst kam, war [sie] auf einer schönen Wiese, wo die Sonne schien und viel tausend Blumen standen" (Grimm 134). This romantic depiction of nature as an open space with thousands of flowers where the sun shines is the antithesis to the earlier depiction of *die Fleißige*'s alienation and banishment. Such a romantic depiction of the meadow is part of the Romantic tradition of the pastoral. However, before continuing, the "Romantic tradition of the pastoral" must be defined. Even though communicating through representations about man's relationship to nature can be seen in a myriad of time periods dating back to ancient cave drawings, continuing on through the Renaissance, and even today in popular media such as the video game "Flower," Romanticism's conception of the Pastoral remains unique. The industrialization that began in the late 18th century gained increasing momentum throughout the 19th

century. This industrial boom led to a literary boom in pastoral poetry and prose, which presented, "an ideal, highly stylized country" that served as "a foil in order to construct an image of the court, often as duplicitous and treacherous" (Hiltner 68). Therefore, historically, Romanticism has been described as an ideology; in turn, this ideology "displaces and idealizes, it privileges imagination at the expense of history, it covers up social conditions as it quests for transcendence" (Bate 6). When *die Fleißige* wakes up "auf einer schönen Wiese, wo die Sonne schien und viel tausend Blumen standen," the tale does not explicitly state that her life becomes infinitely better, but rather presents an idealized, positively-charged space. Unlike the place of "auf der Straße bei einem Brunnen" where *die Fleißige* must tirelessly labor or the "Feld" on which "viele niederfallen" by means of "blaue Bohnen," the tale presents the place of the world beneath the well as a sun-lit meadow lively with flowers. Incidentally, it is from this instant in the tale that *die Fleißige*'s life steadily improves. In this way, nature is depicted as a curative force as well as an imagined ideal. This imagined ideal can be linked to conceptualizations of nature as an idealized pastoral, as outlined by Merchant earlier in this project.

That nature is a curative means for the ills of life as well as being a source of meaning creation focuses through the lens of the shared cultural experience of Romantic landscapes (like the one that *die Fleißige* finds herself in). In this case, both of the girls walk through this meadow and in doing so allow themselves the possibility of creating a shared culture between one another or creating a shared culture through the telling of their story, as the Grimms have done. Acknowledging landscape as a source of

meaning creation in the fairy tales advocates the symbiotic relationship between nature and culture while urging readers to be mindful of the representations of nature and their impact on cultural perceptions. This concept of recovery, "as it emerged in the seventeenth century, not only meant a recovery from the Fall but also entailed restoration of health, reclamation of land, and recovery of property" (Merchant 133). By tracing the culture of Western civilization as a "grand narrative of fall and recovery" as reflected in the ecological history of the Earth itself, the ultimate goal is to make Earth a reflection of the biblical Garden of Eden. The tale of "Frau Holle" achieves this goal through its depiction of the romantic meadow into which the two girls fall from the well. These depictions highlight the Romantic and Renaissance elements as key establishers of culture as related to nature in literature. More importantly, the tale emphasizes the significance of such idealized landscapes in German identity and formation of culture. For *die Fleißige*, the "schöne Wiese" into which she falls depicts and contributes to the formation of this identity as well as perpetuates the tradition of the Renaissance pastoral.

An ecocritical reading of fairy tales such as "Frau Holle" and "Die drei Schlangenblätter" provides a deeper insight into the relationship between the culture created by popular children's literature and the natural environment. This relationship is categorized by four main topics: the responsibility of humans to take care of nature, the consequences of direct interactions between the girls and the secondary realities depicted in the tales, nature as a form of punishment and in contrast, nature as a restorative force. Through this lens, "once upon a time…" becomes a welcome placard

into the realm of human-nature interactions masked in innocence yet nonetheless undeniably influential to modern environmental interactions and perceptions of nature. These perceptions of nature affect the treatment of nature by a culture. Considering an ecological viewpoint in the context of the fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm is especially beneficial due to the enormous and almost latent cultural impact that these fairy tales have had on Western culture over the past two centuries. As humans, we necessarily live in and interact with nature. As such, a thorough analysis of nature in literature, including “Frau Holle,” “Die drei Schlangenblätter” and perhaps other tales, is necessary for the discovery of what it means to be human. While relaxing back into the familiar natural settings of fairy tales – such as “auf einer schönen Wiese,” “auf der Straße bei einem Brunnen” or “ins Feld” – fosters a cozy atmosphere in which one can learn life lessons from an insistent apple tree or talking bread, allowing ourselves to become too comfortable in such a perception can lead to a complacent understanding of the ways in which nature and culture affect one another. The Brothers Grimms’ tales “Frau Holle” and “Die drei Schlangenblätter” not only reveal the interconnectedness of nature and humans but also indicate the possibilities of a diverse and lasting cultural impact of literary depictions of nature. In addition, the rich nature imagery in within both tales gives the reader a sense of responsibility and moral consciousness in relation to the development of human culture as it necessarily depends on the environment and human interaction with that environment. This sense of moral responsibility and moral consciousness toward nature is exactly what the ecocritics of today are urging for. An

ecocritical analysis of tales such as those presented above display an addition to the already vast and carefully built scholarship of fairy tales that already exists.

CHAPTER IV

ANTITHESIZING THE GRIMMS: NATURE-CULTURE IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

To be sure, the Grimms were not the first nor the last to utilize the fairy-tale genre as a means of endorsing a certain moral awareness. Unbeknownst to the Grimms, the establishment of the fairy-tale genre in the German culture would have a resounding impact on Germans and Westerners for generations to come. Most pointedly influenced by the Grimms are the writers of political fairy tales during the Weimar Republic. Admittedly, "to a certain extent, the Grimms made an 'institution' out of the fairy-tale genre: they established the framework of the genre, one that has become a type of realm in which various writers convene and voice their personal needs and a social need for pleasure and power under just conditions" (Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm* 79). It is upon this established framework that the Weimar writers drew for inspiration. Not only did the fairy-tale genre appeal to the youth of their present, but it also could be seen as a way for the writers to reappropriate a traditional form in order to serve their contemporary needs. This reappropriation proved a powerful tool in the field of culture. According to Zipes, "In seeking to establish its rightful and 'righteous' position in German society, the bourgeoisie, due to its lack of actual military power and unified economic power, used its 'culture' as a weapon to push through its demands and needs" (Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm* 21). While culture as a "weapon" might exaggerate the violence of the situation, the middle-class writers of the Weimar Republic nonetheless wielded their tales as a tool of change as well as a source of hope.

The following analysis examines two of the Weimar tales which epitomize the goals of the Weimar writers at the time. In the Grimm tales, nature is equated with utopia; the Weimar tales present the antithesis to this equation by depicting nature as an allegoric critique of a society already in place. While the tales vary widely in content, "the purpose of all the writers was to instill a sense of hope that a new, more egalitarian society could be realized if people recognized who the true enemy was – namely, capitalism in its various disguised forms and learned to work to defeat the enemy" (Zipes *Fairy Tales and Fables* 20). During a time when the former traditionally monarchical Germany was forced by the Allies in the Treaty of Versailles to adopt a democratic form of government, these writers in some ways upheld the Grimm ideal of preserving a semblance of German identity. However, the writers of the Weimar Republic did not urge for a harkening-back to roots as the Grimms did. Rather, they projected a radical hope for a different future which would "reveal how social class exploitation worked and how it could be stopped" and in doing so, "bring an end to all suffering" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and Fables* 20). In order to accomplish such lofty goals, the Weimar writers had to achieve a balance between drawing upon and steering away from tradition. In doing so, the tales they formulated embody the antithesis to the Grimm fairy tale agenda. Recall that in the Grimm tales, social order is restored by the end of the tale. In both "Frau Holle" and "Die drei Schlangenblätter," the protagonist's dire situation is brought to a fortunate close, in which problems have been rectified. The Weimar tales pose a different schema: they often begin with a seemingly happy society, which is revealed to have a subtle yet deeply-rooted evil and by the end of the tale, the

society has been upturned and the evil revealed without traditional closure or the restoration of order. In this way, the Weimar tales pose as an antithesis to the Grimms' tales both in content and in form. They do this by combining traditional fairy tale imagery, especially nature, with their own modern ideals as established during Germany's tumultuous transition into a democratic state.

CHAPTER V

HAPPILY NEVER AFTER: AN EXAMINATION OF FAIRY TALES IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

Even though when approached by the concept of a "fairy tale," while one might immediately think of the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, Perrault, or even the Arabic collection *One Thousand and One Nights* gathered sometime during the Islamic Golden Age, the tales written for a more modern audience also deserve attention. Surely, these traditional tales are well-known throughout the world for their encoding of time-honored morals and careful warnings against the bad behavior of children or of citizens in general. Less well-known, but not in any way lacking, are the fairy tales written during the tumultuous period of Germany's Weimar Republic. The politicization of the fairy tale in German culture has been happening for centuries. However, avant-garde writers in the Weimar Republic politicized their tales with a burning intent to upset the system and not just influence the behavior of small children[4], making this period in German fairy tale writing necessary to analyze. If the fairy tale functions as a "shared referential system" that gives readers "a means to identify themselves with important aspects of… culture," then the fairy tales produced during any given time period serve as a lens into the political, social, and cultural structure of the past (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and Fables* 10). Critical readings of Carl Ewald's "Ein Märchen von Gott und den Königen," first published in a book meant for

[4] While it was not the intention of the Grimms' 1812 (scholarly) edition to create a "shared referential system," this is how the tales ultimately functioned.

Kindergartners in 1921[5], and Edwin Hörnle's "Der kleine König und die Sonne,"published in 1920[6], demonstrate how even children's literature was politicized during the Weimar Republic. In both tales, the kings represent the traditional power structure of German politics while the subjects no longer depict just the poor, but rather an egalitarian and open-ended future for Germany. The tales' emphasis on free thinking undermines traditional authority and mirrors the political unrest of their time.

In order to discuss how Hörnle's and Ewald's tales accomplish all of this, it is important to first discuss how these Weimar tales relate to the Grimms' tales. In his 1936/7 essay "The Storyteller: Reflections on Nikolai Leskóv," Walter Benjamin points out that "the fairy tale… is the first tutor of children because it was the first tutor of mankind" (11). In this sense, the fairy tale is charged with being the instructor and mankind its pupil. Such a role grants the fairy tale (and their writers) an enormous power with potential for education, persuasion and latent moral imprinting. Further in his essay, Benjamin also claims that "the liberating magic" in the fairy tale "does not bring nature into play in a mythical way, but points to its complicity with a liberated man" (Benjamin 11). As such, man and fairy tale together are pitted against the world, since the fairy tale is the only way that man can again be in touch with the child-like

[5] Ewald, Carl. "Ein Märchen von Gott und den Königen." Proletarischer Kindergarten. Ed. Ernst Friedrich. Berlin: Buchverlag der Arbeiter-Kunstausstellung, 1921.

[6] Hörnle, Edwin. "Der kleine König und die Sonne." *Die Occuli-Fabeln.* Stuttgart: Oskar Wöhrle Verlag, 1920.

sense of wonder. Furthermore, Benjamin emphasizes the link between fairy tales and "the liberated man", which becomes especially important for Ewald and Hörnle in their tales as they urge their readers to break free of societal norms. In the Grimms' tales, nature functions the same way but strives towards a different goal or several different goals, depending on the tale and the edition of the publication. Most commonly in the Grimms' tales, nature aids the common man and aristocrats alike but for the purpose of preserving familial or social hierarchies already in place. Based on the representative tales by Ewald and Hörnle, the Weimar tales aimed to upheave the traditional hierarchies and replace them with a still-unconceived system of values, which the Weimar writers leave up to people (their readers) to decide. On the contrary, the complicity between man and nature in the tales by Ewald and Hörnle serve as representative examples of similar tales written during the Weimar Republic.

However, while the Grimms' tales and the Weimar tales differ greatly in some areas, the many similarities they share are also worth noting. In addition to their connection with nature, the Grimms' tales created "a body of tales through which all Germans, young and old, could relate and develop a sense of community" (Zipes, *Cross-Cultural Connections* 867). While there was not necessarily anything inherently "German" about the Grimms' tales, the community that gathered around their telling helped shaped a cultural and linguistic German identity otherwise held together only through loose political ties within the Holy Roman Empire. Developing a sense of community is also a goal of Ewald and Hörnle's tales, but while the Grimms' tales "espouse conservative values [through their depiction of family conflicts]," as we will

see, the writers of the literary fairy tale during the Weimar Republic seem more concerned with forming a community of free thinkers who question the social order around them (Tatar 121). Given the tumultuous political atmosphere of the Weimar Republic, educating and inspiring young generations was extremely important for the writers and artists of that era. In fact, both Ewald and Hörnle, as well as many other authors of Weimar fairy tales, were Communist party members who were actively involved in political struggles. After being drafted into the German military during World War I and being wounded on the Front, Hörnle steadfastly dedicated himself to Marxist Communism and began publishing newspaper articles to that effect as early as 1914; later on in his life, he would become a proud asset of the Deutsche Democratische Republik (DDR) (Hörnle, et al. 56). Ewald, on the other hand, grew up mostly in Denmark under German rule and vowed to break away from his father's traditional conservatism; he became famous for his fairy tales that relied heavily on the concept of social Darwinism (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and Fables* 194). Ewald's grim realism gained from an intimate and yet outside understanding of German politics coupled with Hörnle's dedication to Communism and Pacifism reflect the anti-utopian ideals shared by many during the time of the Weimar Republic. The lessons learned due to the generations lost in World War I, which was a war waged by monarchs at the expense of the common people, find a niche in the Weimar fairy tales. Instead of the emphasis on working hard to uphold social order and respect the leaders, Ewald and Hörnle send a message of shared effort, accountability, and power in the masses. However, they have also idealized the masses to consist of rational individuals who are capable of breaking free

from monarchical structures and traditional societal constructs, and therein lies the soaring hope that writers of Weimar fairy tales wished to instill in the future generations. So while the tales have been criticized for their "grim realism" or their lack of resolution in comparison to the traditional Grimm tales, the tales contain both some of the traditional structural elements of the Grimm tales as well as the instillation of hope.

If the plot development and diction in the Weimar tales are an imitation of the Grimms' romantic fairy tales, the main critical difference between the Grimms' tales and the tales written during the Weimar Republic are the endings and the moralistic values contained within those endings. Of course, the famous Grimm ending that was not added until later editions leaves the reader with a vague sense of content timelessness with the words, "Wenn sie nicht gestorben sind, dann leben sie noch heute" (or "… and they lived happily ever after" – as translated by Disney), which presents to the reader a light-hearted and humorous tautology and hints at a certain sentimentality. Other endings induce comparable feelings of contentment, such as, "Da war große Freude überall, und der König und die Königin hielten noch einmal Hochzeit, und sie lebten vergnügt bis an ihr seliges Ende" or "Da ward die Hochzeit gehalten und... ward gejubelt und getanzt, und wenn sie nicht aufgehört haben, so tanzen sie noch" (Grimm 168, 204), which also have no tangible ending at all but contain the same sense of sentimentality. With some exceptions, the Grimms' tales end with the restoration of social (or at the very least familial) order, which urges readers to trust in the possibility of respect and the restoration of the social order in their own lives. In contrast, the

endings of the Weimar tales, while holding the tradition of the openly vague ending, are left so open-ended that the readers must construct an ending for themselves. For example, at the end of "Der kleine König und die Sonne," Hörnle finishes with, "Und die Sonne lachte hoch oben am blauen Himmel" (Glaskowa 113). Just as in the Grimms' tales, this ending is just vague enough to connote contentment and yet also hints at a certain comedic distance maintained by the sun. Significantly unlike the Grimms' tales, Hörnle's ending is not solid and clear enough to reinforce a social order. Rather, his ending leaves readers wondering what it means for the sun to still be laughing as well as what the people are doing while the sun is laughing. It is not immediately obvious what Hörnle wants to impress upon his readers, but rather the readers must deduce for themselves their own message based on the themes contained in the tale. For instance, the distance maintained by the sun in order for it to laugh could be interpreted as a disjunction between nature and culture. As long as the people continue to let *der kleine König* rule with such absolute, unquestionable and irrational authority, nature and culture cannot achieve an utopian egalitarianism as seen in the Grimms' tales. However, it is also possible that the comical distance the sun keeps from the people allow them to gain perspective on their ludicrous king and in doing so create a harmony of their own, with or without the help of or symbiosis with nature. Either way, nature in this tale is represented not as a unifying force as in the Grimms, but rather it is depicted as an externalized entity distinctly distanced from humanity. Also unlike the Grimms' tales, the readers of Ewald's tale are left to decide for themselves the meaning without a neatly packaged moral. While his ending contains a more direct message, it still follows

the Grimm-prescribed open-ended style: “Die Könige sind eure eigene Erfindung, und wenn ihr überdrüssig seid, so müßt ihr selbst sehen, wie ihr sie euch vom Halse schaffen” (Rottensteiner 131). The tale stresses the responsibility of the self. According to Ewald, it is through the self that man gains liberation from his burdens, and neither entirely through natural order (*der liebe Gott*) nor through societal constructs (*die Könige*). *Der liebe Gott* delivers the message of self-responsibility and free-thinking, but it is ultimately the decision of the people to free themselves of *die Könige*; whether intentional or not, just as *der liebe Gott* leaves the fate of the people to the people themselves, Ewald leaves the solution to the problem of uneven power in society to the readers’ discretion.

Thus, at the ends of both Weimar tales, the readers are faced with decisions to make for themselves. The readers’ experience splits into the world created by the tale and the world recognized by their own rationality. As Theodor Adorno defines this split in his essay “Expressionismus Und Künstlerische Wahrhaftigkeit: Zur Kritik Neuer Dichtung" of 1958, “Diese Wahrhaftigkeit [des Erlebnisses] aber ist zweifach… Ihre Komponenten sind Welt und Ich – ausgedrückt durch typisches und individuelles Erlebnis” (609). Even though Adorno was writing on the subject of expressionist poetry, his explanation of the difference of experiences just as seamlessly applies to the fairy tales of the world. Everyone in the tale is part of the “typical experience,” which in this context establishes the natural and societal orders. However, only each individual reader constitutes their own “individual experience,” in which they form the moral of the story. While the same could be said in relation to the Grimms’ fairy tales, the tales

written during the Weimar Republic differ because they were rarely or never circulated in oral form. Rather, the tales written by Hörnle and Ewald were published solely as literature, changing both the typical and individual experiences of the readers considerably. The social classes to which the Weimar tales were available affected their audience and narrowed it to those who could afford to buy books. Still, their (lack of) availability made them no less relevant, because "die Katharsis erfordert Wahrhaftigkeit des Welterlebnisses" (Adorno 610). Since the Weimar tales contained a less cathartic ending than the Grimms' tales did, they necessitated that their readers design their own catharsis and in doing so directly influenced the typical experience in ways the Grimms' tales never could. After close examination of the interactions between man and nature as well as representational elements in the Weimar fairy tales from Ewald and Hörnle, it becomes apparent that fairy tales as a genre still serve to inspire and engage the minds not only of the youth but people of all ages. They are able to accomplish this despite any differences and similarities between the Grimms and the German writers of the 1920s.

Returning to Benjamin's conception of the relationship between man, fairy tales and nature, if fairy tales contain hints of the complicity between man and nature, then the nature in Hörnle's and Ewald's tales, while mirroring the Grimms' diction and plot development, hint to a much different nature than that described in the Grimms' tales. In both tales, the kings are depicted as the authority figures, while nature is depicted as the people's source of liberation (as in *Der kleine König und die Sonne*) or at least as a path to that liberation (as in *Ein Märchen von Gott und den Königen)*. In Hörnle's tale, the sun represents the natural order of the world. Even though "Der [kleine König]

wurde immer zornig, wenn die Sonne über den Berg stieg," *die Sonne* does not heed *der kleine König's* anger nor his command for the sun to wait until he calls for it (Glaskowa 113). Instead, "die Sonne hörte den kleinen König nicht und stieg wieder im Himmel hinauf" (Glaskowa 113). Day after day, *die Sonne* rises without regard to *der kleine König's* angry demands. The unchanging stability of the rising of the sun reinforces the concept of timelessness that is key in the fairy tale genre, while at the same time presenting a polar opposite to the societal construct of the monarchy. On the other hand, der kleine König embodies the traditional feudal, monarchical power structure in Germany before the proclamation of the Weimar Republic. Der kleine König's irrational desire to control a force outside of human control, i.e. the rising of the sun, because of his desire to be taller than the sun displays the unnatural order created by monarchical authority figures of the time. Furthermore, *der kleine König's* frantic attempts to stop the sun from rising reflect the sociopolitical unrest in the time of the Weimar Republic. While Germany was grasping for solutions to their losses and suffering under the harsh conditions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, the rest of the world continued without much recourse. The dichotomy of *die Sonne* and *der kleine König* echo the polarization of monarchy and democracy, past and present, for the people of the Weimar Republic. *Der kleine König* represents the previously accepted power structure that the German people must overcome in order to restore natural order and rationality, while *die Sonne* represents the natural order to which the people must return. In this sense, the tale by Hörnle reflects the cultural, political and social struggles of the Weimar Republic and

offers a vision of the future as a restoration to a non-monarchical structure in which the people possess the power.

More importantly, the way the subjects react to *der kleine König's* efforts reveal Hörnle's communist ideals as well as his urging of the people of the Weimar Republic towards freedom from traditional power structure. Initially, as *der kleine König* screams at *die Sonne* from his tower, "Alle schweigen!" as if they fear him (Glaskowa 113). However, in the next lines, a child begins to laugh, which prompts all of the other townspeople to laugh until laughter was "wie ein riesiger Sturm" (Glaskowa 113). As *der kleine König* climbs down from his tower, "die Leute gingen zur Arbeit. Die Kinder liefen auf die Weise, tanzten und sangen. Und die Sonne lachte hoch oben am blauen Himmel," (Glaskowa 113). *Der kleine König's* anger and need for control changes nothing in the end, but rather his irrational need for control leads the people to realize how absurd he is and disregard his authority. While the "riesiger Sturm" of laughter does not explicitly dispose *der kleine König*, the people's light-hearted reaction to his serious mission gives the reader an impression of power in the masses as well as the notion that the power of kings pales in comparison to the power of nature and the power of the people. In this way, Benjamin's concept of man's complicity with nature again leads to the "liberated man", which in the time of the Weimar Republic meant freedom to express oneself without fear and without oppression in a democratic (or even socialist) setting. As such, Ewald and Hörnle embody the ideals of "expressionistic and apocalyptic visionaries," because their tales "[have] also idealized nature and posed it as an alternative to the evil world of capitalism and urban modernity. They identified

nature not with man, but with his creator… entreating man to return to it" (Fisher 194). In relation to Hörnle's tale, it is through the idealized nature of *die Sonne* that the tale calls for "an alternative to the evil world," as instated by the Western Allies through the Treaty of Versailles. The crumbling of *der kleine König's* authority mirrors the crumbling of the monarchical ideal in Weimar Germany as it was being replaced by a democracy. Furthermore, the common people's static existence mirrors the complacency of the German people as seen through the eyes of Weimar writers such as Hörnle. However, it is ultimately left in the hands of the people to make the decision to laugh with *die Sonne* and in doing so overcome their fears of the obsolete *kleiner König*. In this way, the nature distancing itself from civilization is no longer a complete alienation but rather a comedic distancing drawn to show the people the error of their respect for the king.

Also of import are man's interactions with the natural order in the tales and not only how that nature is represented but also the possible consequences wrought from those representations. This again relates back to Benjamin's idea the fairy tale being one of the last avenues which reveals man's complicity with nature. In Ewald's tale, *der liebe Gott* "fühlte Mitlied mit [den Menschen]" twice after denying *die Deputation* help and advice (Rottensteiner 130). As mentioned before, while *der liebe Gott* is not a direct depiction of nature in the biological or scientific sense, he still embodies the unchanging order of the world in a theoretical, faith-based sense. Even though *der liebe Gott* tells *die Deputation*, "Ihr müßt in der Tat unverrichteter Sache heimreisen," and that there is nothing he can do to spare the people the burden of *die Könige*, he still empathizes with the common people and advises them to find the power and wisdom within themselves

in order to free themselves from the oppression of *die Könige* (Rottensteiner 131). In this way, nature (in the form of God) offers a way in which man can understand and strive towards his own liberation from the unnatural order of socially constructed power structures, which in this case is either the literal *Könige* in the tale or the metaphorical representation of Germany's actual sociopolitical structures of the time. On a stylistic note, the choice of Ewald to use the name *der liebe Gott* each time he refers to God reflects a distinctly sarcastic tone. This address refers to the Vaterunser prayer traditionally taught to all Christian children in church. Since his tale was meant for children, one could argue that such a naming is not sarcastic but rather just Ewald being aware of his target audience. However, already in the naming of the characters, his ideas of the tale's moral impact have been established. By taking a sarcastic stance towards natural order, Ewald stresses the distance established between nature and culture and urges the readers to rely on themselves instead of a pre-established natural order.

The interactions between nature and man in Hörnle's tale are subtler than in Ewald's tale. While *die Sonne* ignores *der kleine König* every morning, it does not interact directly with the subjects of *der kleine König* either. In fact, it is unclear whether *die Sonne* wishes to interact with humanity at all. Instead of the direct interaction in Ewald's tale, Hörnle's tale suggests liberation through its own behavior. The most telling instance of *die Sonne* leading by example is at the end of the tale, when it rises yet again but this time while laughing. While *der kleine König* climbs solemnly down from his high tower and the townspeople carry on with their daily routines, "die Sonne lachte hoch

oben am blauen Himmel" (Glaskowa 113). Since laughter is a specifically human characteristic, what does Hörnle aim to portray by making the sun laugh as the tale ends? By portraying *die Sonne* as laughing after *der kleine König* has resigned from his tower and the people have resumed their daily lives, Hörnle's tale reveals the timelessness that not only exists in nature, but the timelessness that also exists in the human spirit regardless of socially constructed authority figures. Because *die Sonne* does not laugh until the townspeople have laughed themselves and their lives have resumed normalcy, the tale implies that *die Sonne* is mirroring the well-being and light-heartedness of the people. As such, the comedic distance maintained by the sun in order for it to be able to laugh at the king presents the people with a reminder of the own timelessness in their soul. Thus, the initial disjunction between nature and culture due to the sun's laughter leads to the dissolution of fear and the re-installment of complicity. However, this complicity is most decidedly a critical complicity which allows the people enough freedom from their overbearing king. In turn, this freedom grants the people (and the reader) the distance to form their own thoughts and opinions in relation to the king. Thus, Hörnle's tale achieves a complicity between human and nature but unlike the Grimms' tales, this complicity antithesizes a utopian ideal while promoting social equality in a practical way.

Similarly, Ewald's tale questions the authority of kings but in a subtler manner than Hörnle's tale. In "Ein Märchen von Gott und den Königen," Ewald employs three main forces to send his message: *die Könige*, *die Deputation*, and *der liebe Gott*. The tale begins with a description of a people who "ihrer Könige überdrüssing [wurden]" and

therefore send *die Deputation* to the gates of heaven in order to plea to *der liebe Gott* on behalf of the people (Rottensteiner 130). As a representative of the people, *die Deputation* symbolizes not only the static condition of the ruled but also the dynamic hope for the future. After *der liebe Gott's* insistence that he has no idea what kings are, "die Depuation setzt sich vor die Pforte des Himmels und weinte bitterlich" (Rottenstein 130). At this point in the tale, the people are in despair because of their overbearing kings, and they consider themselves trapped since not even *der liebe Gott* can understand their problems. This situation mimics the situation in Germany for the centuries up to the beginning of the Weimar Republic; while the new democracy promised certain freedoms, many Germans were apprehensive about the new political system and wanted their Kaiser back, fearing such a drastic change. For instance, the Constitution of the German Republic of 1919 proclaims, "All Germans are equal before the law. Men and women have the same fundamental civil rights and duties. Public legal privileges or disadvantages of birth or of rank are abolished. Titles of nobility… may be bestowed no longer" (Chap. 2, Sec. 1, Art. 109). Other provisions included the right to private property, the establishment of free public education, and "full religious freedom and freedom of conscience" along with the prohibition of a state-sanctioned church (Chap. 2, Sec. 1-5). While some of these "freedoms" had been long-established within German borders, the deprivation of seemingly arbitrary details of German identity was obvious, such as the stripping of the ability to bestow titles of nobility and the equalization of all citizens in the eyes of the law regardless of birth rank. Activists like Ewald and Hörnle offered alternative ways of thinking about the tension caused in this

structural shift. Solutions to this problem can be seen in their fairy tales. The people in the tale despair because they have no source of help, just as the German people felt helpless after the trauma of World War I. Zipes writes, "Though many of the tales [written during the Weimar Republic] deal with the grim situation of the common people and their apparent helplessness, they are founded on the principle of hope" (*Fairy Tales and Fables* 21). Through the figure of *die Deputation*, Ewald displays to his readers how neither a representative (the new democracy) nor God Himself (the natural order) will bring about the wanted change; the common people must free themselves without either and with their own sense of self-determination.

Instead of a blatantly natural element, such as *die Sonne*, natural order in Ewald's tale is represented by *der liebe Gott*. This natural order functions similarly to Hörnle's die Sonne in that *der liebe Gott* also possesses an unchanging constancy free from human influence. *Der liebe Gott's* innocent ignorance can be compared to *die Sonne's* seemingly nonchalant attitude towards *der kleine König*. For instance, when *die Deputation* first asks *der liebe Gott* for help with *die Könige*, *der liebe Gott* replies, "Ich verstehe kein Wort, von dem was du da sprichst. Ich habe euch niemals Könige gegeben" (Rottensteiner 130). Even after *die Deputation* cries bitterly outside the gates of heaven and *der liebe Gott* hears his plea a second time, his response remains the same: "Ich weiß nichts von den Königen. Lebt wohl!" (Rottenstein 130). *Der liebe Gott* has sincerely never heard of *die Könige* and as such, he does not understand how they are a problem that he could solve. After one of his archangels pours through the Bible and finds nothing related to *der liebe Gott* creating *die Könige*, he tells *die Deputation*

his final decision, that "Ihr müßt in der Tat unverrichteter Sache heimreisen. Ich kann nichts für euch tun. Die Könige sind eure eigene Erfindung, und wenn ihr überdrüssig seid, so müßt ihr selbst sehen, wie ihr sie euch vom Halse schaffen" (Rottensteiner 131). Because *die Könige* are "the invention" of the people, *der liebe Gott* leaves it up to the people to free themselves from the overbearing kings. Thus, the moral of the story is portrayed through *der liebe Gott's* puzzled refusal to solve the people's problems and the open ending to Ewald's tale serve to empower the readers to think for themselves. Just as *der liebe Gott* tells the people in the story that they must create their own freedom, so the readers of this tale are urged to take control of their own society.

The other powerful figures woven throughout Ewald's tale are the ominous and yet inactive Könige. The only instances in which they appear in the text are when *die Deputation* brings its complaint to *der liebe Gott* and when *der liebe Gott* denies his involvement in their existence. As *der liebe Gott* declares, "Ich habe euch alle gleich geschaffen, nach meinem Bilde schuf ich euch" (Rottensteiner 130). *Der liebe Gott's* repeated claim of ignorance begs the question: if not from the natural order of the world, then where do kings get their power? The possible answers to this question imply that either *die Könige* created their own power or that the common people created the power of *die Könige*. In either case, the power that *die Könige* have is a societal construct that exists outside of the natural order. Usually, "in a [Grimm] fairy tale… the paternalistic authority of the kings is sacred" (Tatar 121). However, Ewald's tale belongs to the order of tales that "attack the sanctity of [the prevailing social order] and subvert the very essence of the work ethic" (Tatar 122). By bringing into question the source of

die Könige's power, Ewald causes his readers to question the sources of power within their own individual experiences as they relate to the typical experience. That *die Könige* have no active role in the tale also points to how little power they possess in comparison to *der liebe Gott* and the common united people. Just as in the tale of "Der kleine König und die Sonne," the power of the kings pale in comparison to the power of the common people, as long as the common people unite in their goals. This type of ending differs greatly from the traditional Grimm ending that preserves the monarchical power structure with a marriage of the prince and princess. By keeping with the traditional form of fairy tale while altering key components of the content, Ewald succeeds in writing a tale that is magical and inspirational yet simultaneously critical and applicable to the lives of his readers. Instead of being subjected to the authorities of their past, the endings of these tales seek to inspire their readers to become subjects of their own rationality by urging their readers to question the secular authority of their present. By becoming at once the ruled and the ruling, the common people take solace in the power of their unity and solidarity as a democratic people who are created equal.

Once upon a time, two brothers named Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm set out to study law and found that the roots of the law were buried deep in folk tales. Since the Grimms popularized the genre of the fairy tale (völkische Märchen) in the West, the tales have been used to inspire, frighten, inculcate, and educate children and adults, peasants and aristocrats, as well as Germans and other Europeans alike. During the time of the Weimar Republic, avant-garde writers like Carl Ewald and Edwin Hörnle adopted the form of the fairy tale to instill in their readers a hope for the future which many

thought had been destroyed by World War I. The tales written during the Weimar Republic urged free thinking, undermined traditional authority structures, and mirrored the political unrest of the time. So while the Brothers Grimm are well-known throughout the world for their fairy tales and the moral code sometimes not-so-obviously encrypted within them, the fairy tale writers of the Weimar Republic carried the fairy tale tradition to new heights and towards new ends. While highly politicized and arguably hard for children to understand, the fairy tales of the Weimar Republic, particularly "Ein Märchen von Gott und den Königen" by Karl Ewald and "Der kleine König und die Sonne" by Edwin Hörnle, allow their readers to create "happy endings" both within their own individual experiences and their typical experience by how they choose to shape the world. The tales' emphasize personal accountability, reason, and empowerment through free-thinking make the Weimar Republic an intriguing era begging for closer examination. The burning intent with which Ewald and Hörnle depict the complicity between man and nature, the concept of laughter, and the powerlessness of traditional authority allows them to achieve their goals of inspiring a generation who would otherwise be devastated by World War I. As fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes describes, this "shared referential system" created by fairy tales enables people to relate to one another and establish an identity as a community. In the minds of Ewald and Hörnle, a community of free-thinking, self-liberated individuals has limitless power to shape the world around them to their benefit. As Benjamin explains, "A mature man feels this [complicity with the world around him] only occasionally, that is, when he is happy; but the child first meets it in fairy tales and it makes him happy"

(Benjamin 11). Investigating the content and morals of a fairy tale during any period helps us understand what values the contemporary writers considered missing, weak, and/or important in their society. Only through the lens of the fairy tale can man feel in compliance with the world around him, and this complicity liberates him in a way which is usually only accessible by children. Therefore, a critical reading of fairy tales from Germany's Weimar Republic is necessary to understand what fueled the people of that time to rebuild their country in the time of a turbulent upheaval of tradition.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this project, the dualism of nature and culture have been brought under careful scrutinization in order to determine the precise meaning of such a relationship and the consequences it has on both nature and culture. On the one hand, the above analysis of the Grimms' tales has revealed that "… Nature is tropologically transformed into culture and, consequently… the traditional opposition between the two is annihilated" (Kittland 52). The tales lend themselves to a utopian pastoral ideal in which nature and culture exchange with one another on a similar if not equal level. On the other hand, the tales by Carl Ewald and Edwin Hörnle display the alienation of nature felt by the people of a post-industrial society in crisis in relation to both cultural and moral identity. Still, even with the comedic or sarcastic distance created by the writers of the Weimar tales, culture and nature are irrevocably entangled in one another. The guiding principles with which this project began have proven not only to be correct but have also led to the proof that throughout the tradition of German fairy tales, the boundaries between nature and culture dissolve and form a whole a single, albeit sometimes untidy, entity. This entity incorporates lessons from secondary realities as well as connotations from contemporary realities in order to achieve a channel of exchange instead of maintaining the nature-culture dualism. As depicted in the Grimm tales and believed by German philosopher Walter Benjamin, children experience a complicity with nature that adults seldom experience except in times of happiness and through the fairy tale. As the Weimar writers and the Grimms were well aware, the

children of a state or a country control the future. As such, embedding morals, hope, or warnings against the evils of capitalism within images of nature in children's tales serves to foster a generation (or generations) of people who are morally conscious not only of their own humanity but also of the world around them.

Various fairy tale writers over the centuries have endeavored to accomplish what the Grimms, Hörnle and Ewald intended. Through the examination of nature imagery in "Frau Holle" and "Die drei Schlangenblätter" by the Brothers Grimm as well as "Der kleine König und die Sonne" and "Ein Märchen von Gott und den Königen" by Hörnle and Ewald, the binary opposition that nature and culture have to one another is highlighted and dissipated. From an ecocritical perspective, these tales depict the various manipulations of nature by humans, the moral consciousness formed by the symbiosis and dissonance between nature and culture, the responsibility of humans to respect and nurture nature (as well as the consequences of disrespecting the natural order), in addition to the power of nature to restore and damage human existence. While the disharmony of nature at some points in the Weimar tales distance the reader from nature, the distance created ultimately urges the people in the tale to realign themselves with nature, especially in Hörnle's tale "Der kleine König und die Sonne." Interactions between the characters and nature in the time of the Grimms as well as during Germany's Weimar Republic illustrate the sometimes fortuitous, sometimes dangerous, but always inseparable nature of the relationship between humans and their natural environment. I have categorized the interactions into four main topics: the responsibility of humans to take care of nature, the direct and indirect consequences of

interactions between nature and culture, and nature as a form of punishment, as well as a form of restoration. The interactions in the above-discussed texts point to the complicated yet integral unity of culture and nature which ecocritics urge readers of today to acknowledge and honor. Since, as humans, we live in and interact with nature on a daily basis, understanding the traditional dualism of nature and culture contributes to our understanding of the meaning of being human in an ever-expanding and modernizing world. Even though nature has been radicalized as "the Other," literature such as the German fairy tales tackles this Otherness, abolishes the abyss separating humans and their culture from nature, and replaces the abyss with an irremovable relatability between humans and the environment in which they live.

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