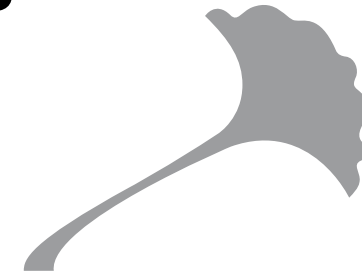


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## Hyping the Grimms' Fairy Tales

Jack Zipes

In the year 2012 there will be many celebrations of the two hundredth anniversary of the first edition of the Grimms' fairy tales, published under the title *Children's and Household Tales (Kinder- und Hausmärchen)*. Perhaps the Brothers Grimm will be happy about all the conferences, books, and papers that will be honoring them and their tales in the coming years. More than likely, however, they will turn over in their graves, if they haven't already, because of the mass-mediated hype of fairy tales too often turned into trivial pulp for the masses by the globalized culture industry. Yet, perhaps the Grimms are to blame for the hype.

There is a fascinating, somewhat ironic tale that needs to be told here, for the Grimms, aided by their first English translator Edgar Taylor, helped pave the way for the modern hyping of the fairy tales. And it all began with the Grimms' total commitment to salvaging the genuine essence of folk tales, their oral authenticity and historical significance, if you will. Moreover, children were *not* the designated audience of their books when they began their project of collecting tales. However, the Grimms were gradually persuaded to appeal to them until publishers and readers dismissed the Grimms' original intentions and branded their collection as children's literature.

But before I discuss how the Grimms became involved in hyping their own tales at the beginning of the nineteenth century to change their reception, I want first to discuss some of the theoretical aspects of hyping and the particular role hyping plays in the media paratexts of the culture industry. Then I should like to review how the Brothers Grimm changed the format and scope of their tales, primarily under the influence of Taylor's 1823 translation, *German Popular Stories*, to make their tales more accessible and popular among the reading public in Germany. Finally, I want to examine some recent filmic adaptations of fairy tales and consider whether



the hyping of these films detracts from the value of the fairy-tale genre and storytelling in general. Underlying my endeavor or essay to understand the hyping of fairy tales is the question whether the historical integrity of any genre or any project such as the preservation of folk tales promoted by the Brothers Grimm can be appreciated and understood as part of our western cultural heritage. Or, what happens to meaning and value in societies where hype is accepted if not celebrated as the norm?

### Hyping and Paratexts

In his recent, highly significant book, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*, Jonathan Gray defines hype as «advertising that goes “over” and “beyond” an accepted norm, establishing heightened presence, often for a brief, unsustainable period of time: like the hyperventilating individual or the spaceship in hyperdrive, the hyped product will need to slow down at some point. Its heightened presence is made all the more possible with film and television due to those industries’ placement – at least in their Hollywood varieties – within networks of synergy». <sup>1</sup> He then notes that within the entertainment industry, synergy «refers to a strategy of multimedia platforming, linking a media product to related media on other “platforms”, such as toys, DVDs, and/or videogames, so that each product advertises and enriches the experience of the other. And whereas hype is often regarded solely as advertising and as PR, synergistic merchandise, products, and games – also called “peripherals” – are often intended as other platforms for profit generation». <sup>2</sup>

Although hype is associated with hyperbole and extravagance, Gray argues that it has become part of business as usual, and what formerly appeared to be uncommon and on the periphery of culture today is actually at its center and more decisive in creating meaning

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2010): 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



than source texts. Whether talking about a book or a film, Gray maintains that the meanings of primary texts or source texts are now determined by paratexts, that is, by all the peripheral products and things that surround or are connected to the texts. Here he is building upon the work of Gérard Genette, who created the term and indicated that paratexts prepare us for other texts; they are gateways to assessing a product or artifact. In the case of literature or a book, the paratexts consist of the cover, the frontispiece, the title page, the format, the type, the bibliography, the index, the blurbs on the back page, the pre-publication advertising, the web-pages on the Internet, reviews, blogs, interviews, talks delivered by the author on tour, and so on. Gray maintains that «paratexts are not simply add-ons, spinoffs, and also-rans: they create texts, they manage them, and they fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them. Just as we ask *paramedics* to save lives rather than leave the job to others, and just as a *parasite* feeds off, lives in, and can affect the running of its host’s body, a paratext constructs, lives in, and can affect the running of the text». <sup>3</sup>

Though Gray often alludes to hyping as a nuisance, he never explores how pervasive and deleterious it is to the quality or the vacuousness of the product that it allegedly promotes. This is because he does not critique how hyping actually depletes the meaning of a product – just as a parasite can weaken if not kill its host – or conceals its lack of quality through exaggerations and lies. In some respects almost all hypes rely on fairy-tale motifs because they promise us magical transformation if we imbibe it, wear it, touch it, smell it, breathe it, smoke it, drink it, steal it, live in it, or aspire to it. Hypes delude us into believing that the impossible can be realized by some kind of magical transformation, that is, through the product we are to consume. Hypes are tantalizing and frustrating because they keep us trying and wanting to fulfill the impossible. They distract to prevent critical reflection. In effect, hypes celebrate meaningless and wanton consumption. Yet, Gray wants hyping and other peripherals to become more artistic and lend themselves to

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



the quality of the source text. This wish is impossible because the basis of hyping is artful exploitation through untruth; the purpose of hype is to discard and belie the essence of an artwork, to transform it into a desirable commodity, and to make it profitable not necessarily for the author/creator of a work but for the corporation that assumes property rights to the text. Indeed, copyrighting is part of the paratext, for it gives a publisher, for example, the right to create and add as many meanings he wants to the text. If Gray's study is valuable, it is because he explains just how peripherals work, and basically, they follow the standard procedures of advertising in the culture industry and cloud the meaning of an art work in favor of commodification.

### Why and How the Grimms Hyped their Tales

The Brothers Grimm revered all types of tales told by the folk, not just fairy stories or wonder tales. They thought that the stories they collected were innocent expressions and representations of the divine nature of the world. For them, the simplicity of the pristine spoken tales was culturally and historically profound, and the Grimms viewed themselves as cultivators of lost relics whose essence had to be conserved and disseminated before the tales vanished. In particular, they firmly believed that these wondrous tales enabled people to get in touch with their inner selves and the outside world. They fostered hope. This was because "genuine" fairy tales served as moral correctives to an unjust world and revealed truths about human experience through exquisite metaphor.

What fascinated or compelled the Grimms to concentrate on old German literature was a belief that the most natural and pure forms of culture – those which held the community together – were linguistic and were to be located in the past. Moreover, modern literature, even though it might be remarkably rich, was artificial and thus could not express the genuine essence of *Volk* culture that emanated naturally from people's experiences and bound the people together. In 1807, about the time the Grimms began collecting folk songs, wonder tales, proverbs, legends, and



documents – and they were only in their early twenties and very ambitious – their purpose was to write a history of old German *Poesie* and to demonstrate how *Kunstpoesie* (cultivated literature) evolved out of traditional folk material and how *Kunstpoesie* had gradually forced *Naturpoesie* (natural literature such as tales, legends, etc.) to recede during the Renaissance and take refuge among the folk in an oral tradition. Very early in their careers, the Brothers saw their task as literary historians whose task was to preserve the pure sources of modern German literature and to reveal the debt or connection of literate culture to the oral tradition.

By 1809 the Grimms had amassed a large amount of wonder tales, legends, anecdotes, and other documents, and they sent their friend, the poet Clemens Brentano, 54 texts for his private use and made copies for their own work. In 1812, the novelist Achim von Arnim, perhaps Brentano's closest friend at that time, visited the Grimms in Kassel and encouraged them to publish their own collection, which would represent their ideal of "natural poetry". He suspected that Brentano would never use their tales. Thanks to Arnim's advice and intervention, the Brothers spent the rest of the year organizing and preparing 86 tales for publication that formed volume one of the first edition of *Children's and Household Tales*.

Unfortunately, the 1812 volume was not well-received by friends and critics, who thought that the tales were too crude, were not shaped enough to appeal to children, and were weighed down by the scholarly notes. Nevertheless, the Brothers were not deterred from following their original philological and poetical concept. Even though there were some differences between Jacob and Wilhelm, who later was to favor more drastic poetical editing of the collected tales, they basically held to their original principles to salvage relics from the past. Just how important these principles were can be seen in their correspondence with Arnim between 1812 and 1815, when the second volume of the first edition appeared. In a very long letter of October 29, 1810, Jacob wrote to Arnim: «Contrary to your viewpoint, I am completely convinced that all the tales in our collection without exception had already been told with all their particulars centuries ago. Many beautiful



things were only gradually left out».<sup>4</sup> The Grimms wanted to restore this beauty through careful editing.

In another letter written on January 28, 1813, Jacob wrote: «My old saying, which I have already defended earlier, is still valid: one should write according to one's ability and desires and not adapt to outside forces and comply with them. Therefore, I don't consider the book of tales (*Märchenbuch*) as being written for children, but it does suit them very well, and I am very happy about that. However, I would not have worked on it with pleasure if I hadn't believed in its importance for the most serious and adult people as well as for poesy, mythology, and history».<sup>5</sup>

Though the Grimms made it clear in the second volume of the first edition of *Children's and Household Tales*, published in 1815, that they would follow the agenda of their first volume, they also explained the important difference they made between a book for children and an educational manual (*Erziehungsbuch*) in their preface: «In creating our collection we wanted to do more than just perform a service for the history of poesy. It was our intention at the same time to enable poesy itself, which is alive in the collection, to have an effect: it was to give pleasure to anyone who could take pleasure in it, and therefore, our collection was also to become an intrinsic educational manual. There have been some complaints about this latter intention because there are things here and there (in our collection) that cause embarrassment and complaints that the collection is unsuitable for children or indecent (such as the references to certain incidents and conditions, also children should not hear about the devil and anything evil). Accordingly, parents should not offer the collection to children. In individual cases this concern may be correct, and thus one can easily choose which tales are to be read. On the whole it is certainly not necessary. Nothing can better defend us than nature itself, which has let certain flowers and leaves grow in a particular color and shape. Whoever does not find them whole-

<sup>4</sup> Reinhold Steig and Herman Grimm, eds., *Achim von Arnim und die ihm nahe standen*. Vol. 3 (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1904): 237.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.



some, suitable for their special needs, which nobody knows, can easily walk right by them. But he cannot demand that they should be colored and cut in another way».<sup>6</sup>

After the publication of the second volume in 1815, however, the Grimms were once again disappointed by the critical reception. They were convinced that they were being misunderstood. Although they did not abandon their basic notions about the origins and significance of folk tales in the second edition of 1819, there are definitely significant indications that they had been influenced by their critics to make the tales more accessible to a general public and more considerate of children as readers and listeners of the stories. There had been 156 tales published in the first edition, and the number now grew to 170 without the extensive scholarly notes, which appeared in a separate volume in 1822. Wilhelm did most of the editing and often made changes to avoid indecent scenes such as Rapunzel's pregnancy, eliminated tales that might be offensive, and stylized them to evoke their folk poetry and original virtues. Yet, despite these changes, it was clear that the Grimms continued to place great emphasis on the philological significance of the collection which was intended to make a major contribution to understanding the origins and evolution of language and storytelling. The layout and contents of the two volumes of 1819 make it abundantly clear that the Grimms were still dedicating the tales to the perusal of adults. The preface in the first volume of the second edition is long and academic and is followed by a scholarly introduction "About the Essence of Tales" («Über das Wesen der Märchen»); the second volume begins with Ludwig Grimm's portrait of Dorothea Viehmann, as the exemplary, genuine peasant storyteller, and is accompanied by an academic essay *The Essence of Children and their Customs* (*Kindervesen und Kindersitten*). The 1822 third volume of notes, which completes the second edition, is only for scholars. In short, although many changes were made in the texts of the second edition, including the addition of religious legends, and

<sup>6</sup> *Kinder- und Hausmärchen gesammelt durch die Brüder Grimm* [1812/1815, Erstausgabe]. Ed. Ulrike Marquardt and Heinz Rölleke. Vol. 2. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986): VII-X.



although the Grimms now wanted to include children more directly as part of their audience, they remained ideologically and philologically true to their principles. Their book, *Children's and Household Stories* was not a book for children. Not yet.

But, as I have explained, there were clear signs that they wanted to attract younger readers and their families and convince them of the great value of their work. Two important paratexts indicate that the Grimms were leaning toward hyping their collection of tales: the first is the preface; the second is the use of Dorothea Viehmann's portrait. In the preface to the 1819 edition, they state that «these stories are suffused with the same purity that makes children appear so wondrous and blessed to us; they have the same bluish-white, flawless, shining eyes, which are as big as they will ever get, even as other body parts remain delicate, weak and awkward for use on earth. That is the reason that we wanted, through our collection, first of all to serve the cause of the history of poetry and mythology, but it was also our intention that the poetry living in it be effective and bring pleasure wherever it could, and also that the book serve as a manual of manners (*Erziehungsbuch*). To that end we are not aiming at the kind of innocence achieved by timidly excising whatever refers to certain situations and relations that take place every day and that simply cannot be kept hidden. In doing that you can fool yourself into thinking that what can be removed from a book can also be removed from real life. We are looking for innocence in truth of a straightforward narrative that does not conceal anything wrong by holding back on it. Nonetheless, in this new edition, we have carefully eliminated every phrase not appropriate for children».<sup>7</sup>

This statement repeats many things that the Grimms wrote in their correspondence with Arnim, but it is more striking for its hyperbole, especially the flowery language, and apparent concession to critics who wanted them to include children as readers or listeners. Moreover, it is clear that they are trying to exaggerate and persuade readers about the profound authenticity of the tales. To do this more effectively, they introduced Dorothea Viehmann as the type of ideal

<sup>7</sup> In Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Tales* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987): 216-17.



storyteller that can be found among German peasants: «Frau Viehmann was still quite vigorous and not much over fifty. Her features were firm, intelligent, and pleasant; her eyes were bright and clear. She had the old stories clearly in mind, and she herself said that not everyone had this gift and that most people could not keep things in the right order. She narrated carefully, confidently, and in an unusually lively manner, taking pleasure in it. At first she spoke spontaneously, then, if one asked, she repeated what she had said slowly so that, with a little practice, it could be transcribed. In this way, much was taken down verbatim and no one will fail to recognize its authenticity... Devotion to tradition is far stronger among people who always adhere to the same way of life than we (who tend to want change) can imagine. For that very reason, oral narratives, which have stood the test of time, have a certain intimacy and inner effectiveness than other things, which may on the surface seem more dazzling, rarely attain. The epic basis of folk poetry resembles the color green as one finds it throughout nature in various shades: each satisfies and soothes without ever becoming tiresome».<sup>8</sup>

The hyping of the purity of the tales and the ideal “peasant” storyteller, Dorothea Viehmann, conceals the strong editing of the tales by Wilhelm Grimm and the real identity of Viehmann. In two very important essays,<sup>9</sup> the scrupulous German philologist, Heinz Rölleke has demonstrated that Grimm added Christian references to make their “educational manual” more explicitly Christian and strengthened the “pure” moral quality of the tales. In addition, he points out that Dorothea Viehmann was by no means a peasant or illiterate. She was the wife of a tailor and stemmed from a French-Huguenot family and knew French. That is, she was not a “typical” peasant storyteller, although she certainly told her tales in a modified Hessian dialect and was exceptionally talented, so much so that she made a great impression on

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 218-19.

<sup>9</sup> See Heinz Rölleke, “Daß unsere Märchen auch als ein Erziehungsbuch dienen” and *Von Menschen, denen wir Grimms Märchen verdanken*, in Heinz Rölleke, *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm - Quellen und Studien: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2000): 278-288 and 23-36.



the Grimms. Symbolically, her portrait meant a great deal to them because she appeared as a genuine representative of the *Volk* and spokesperson for all the types of tales in their collection.

What is fascinating about the peripherals of the 1819 edition, especially the preface and the portrait of Viehmann, is that they convinced Edgar Taylor to take a few steps further in hyping the first English edition, *German Popular Stories* (1823). Taylor's adaptations of the Grimms' tales are extraordinary and significant because his ideological and poetical premises were based on the ideals and myths about the origins and dissemination of the folk tales that the Grimms perpetuated. Indeed, he fulfilled them to such an extreme that he subverted the Grimms' hyped intentions even though he thought he was following them. In addition, to this ironic case of misunderstanding, the Grimms praised Taylor's *German Popular Stories*, when they received a copy in 1823, and they were highly impressed by George Cruikshank's illustrations and communicated their pleasant impression to Taylor: «The added copper engravings are an original advantage of your book. They are lightly and cleverly worked out and suit the subject matter. Here in Germany at this time, we don't know of any artist who possesses a similar talent. Perhaps Chodowiecki, who died in Berlin, had such high quality. We had only wished that you might have made use of the portrait of Frau Viehmann for your readers that was on the front of our second volume because it makes a pleasant impression in and of itself. They would have liked very much to have seen one time the face of such a smart, German peasant».<sup>10</sup>

Even though the Grimms knew English quite well, they had no idea whatsoever just how greatly Taylor transformed the Grimms' tales of the second German 1819 edition into a collection of moralistic English stories for children, freely adapted the tales, celebrated their genuine antiquarian quality, and eventually included Viehmann as the major character in the second revised edition of his tales, *Gammer Grethel or German Fairy Tales, and Popu-*

<sup>10</sup> Otto Hartwig, *Zur ersten englischen Übersetzung der Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, «Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen» 15.1/2 (January-February, 1898): 8.



*lar Stories* (1839). Moreover, the marvelous comic illustrations by George Cruikshank gave the tales a certain framework of levity that they did not possess in the German editions.

Indeed, from 1839 onward, two different editions of Taylor's adaptations were published throughout the nineteenth century and competed with one another: *German Popular Stories*, generally produced in one or two volumes, and *Gammer Grethel or German Fairy Tales, and Popular Stories*, which provided a totally different framework for a smaller selection of tales once again heavily revised by Taylor.

What is significant about the 1839 title is the paratextual addition of the character "Gammer Grethel" and the term fairy tales to give the impression that the stories were ancient and magical and taken straight from the mouths of peasants. In fact, the entire book is shaped around the figure of a fictitious storyteller, based on a fictitious representation of Dorothea Viehmann by the Brothers Grimm, as an authentic peasant storyteller. In addition, emphasis was now placed on *fairy tales* thanks in part to Taylor's introducing fairies into the Grimms' tales that did not have them.

Altogether there were 42 tales in the *Gammer Grethel* book selected from the 1823/1826 editions for this book, and they were organized in a different sequence within a frame. There are twelve evenings with three or four tales told each evening. The anonymous collector and translator of the tales informs his readers that he had gathered the tales in Germany from Gammer Grethel, an honest farmer's wife, and asked her permission to write them down for the benefit of young friends in England. With this dramatic paratextual change, Taylor obviously hoped to gain and influence more young readers. Indeed, all his different editions gained in popularity especially since his works were the only collections of putative Grimms' tales on the market that began using the latest forms of advertising to sell them. Success came in different forms of reprints and advertising.

In 1869, thirty years after Taylor's death, Taylor's widow granted the publisher John Camden Hotten permission to combine the first two editions of *German Popular Stories* into one book with the original prefaces by Taylor, an introduction by the famous critic John Ruskin, a letter endorsing the book by the even more famous author,



Sir Walter Scott, and a new advertisement. (Incidentally, this was the first edition in which Taylor's name as translator appeared on the title page). All these peripherals added to the meaning of Taylor's adaptations, not to the integrity of the Grimms' collections.

In another example of how the Grimms' tales were hyped in strange intertextual and intracultural ways, Taylor's distant cousin, John Edward Taylor, published his own free translation called *The Fairy Ring: A New Collection of Popular Tales* in 1846 with illustrations by the gifted Richard Doyle. This volume contained 55 newly translated tales from *Children's and Household Tales*, and they were just as bowdlerized as the tales in Edgar Taylor's collections. What is astounding is that the different Taylor editions and publications, many of them pirated, disseminated false impressions of the Grimms' tales in English-speaking countries throughout the nineteenth century because these selected adaptations were the only versions available until the translations by Mrs. H. B. Paull in 1882, Lucy Crane in 1882, and Margaret Hunt in 1884. Nevertheless, it was Taylor's translation that held sway even up through the late twentieth century when Puffin Classics reprinted *German Popular Stories* in 1948 without mentioning Edgar Taylor anywhere in the book but making full use of the Cruikshank illustrations.

All the changes that Taylor made in his 1823 edition of *German Popular Stories* and later editions of his so-called translations did not only have huge cultural consequences in the United Kingdom and North America, but also in Germany. The Brothers Grimm were so impressed by the format of Taylor's book that they decided to publish a shorter version of their Large Edition (*Grosse Ausgabe*) in 1826 which contained 50 of their most popular tales.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after receiving *German Popular Stories*, Wilhelm wrote to the Grimms' publisher Reimer in Berlin on August 16, 1823: «A translation of *Children's and Household tales* has appeared in London with the title *German popular stories, translated from the Kinder- und Hausmärchen collected by M. M. Grimm with twelve plates by George Cruikshank*. It has received

<sup>11</sup> See Hermann Gerstner, ed., *Grimms Märchen: Die kleine Ausgabe aus dem Jahr 1825* (Dortmund: Harrenberg, 1982).



such widespread praise that it has already, that is, after three quarters of a year, been reprinted. Now I wish to organize a *small German edition*, which, like the English edition, would contain only a selection (of the large edition) and which would include the tales only in *one volume*. It seems to me best if it would have a pocket book format... and would be sold as a pocket book at Christmas. You could have the witty and pleasant engravings of the English edition very easily copied on stone because they are completely suited to this and then would also be cheap. My brother [Ludwig Grimm] could also add an engraving to the book, sort of a Christmas present with a Christmas tree. Most of all I wish the book would be quite cheap, if it is possible, and would cost only a Thaler. In this way, I believe, the book would become more accessible because not everyone can buy the three volumes of the large edition. Naturally, we would also dispense with the notes, the introductions, everything that is scholarly». <sup>12</sup> Indeed, there were no notes or a preface in the first German Small Edition of 1826, but there were now seven illustrations by their younger brother Ludwig Grimm, very realistic and serious. In contrast to the Large Edition, which concluded with a tale that kept storytelling open, the Small Edition ended conclusively with *The Star Coins* (*Die Sternthaler*), a boring tale about a good and pious girl, an orphan, who goes into the countryside trusting in God. She gives everything away to needy people until she is naked in the dark woods. All at once, coins fall from the sky, a reward from heaven, and she remained rich for the rest of her days. No comment is needed about the pathetic morality of this story intended to appeal to children and their families. However, it is important to note how hype has seeped into the contents and format of the collection to produce a happy end to a product that originally wanted to keep ends open.

In no way, despite the Grimms' creation of the Small Edition in 1826, did they want their German tales to be treated as tales for children. In no way did they, or Taylor for that matter, want the philological and historical attributes of *Children's and Household Tales* to be neglected. Yet, this was exactly what happened throughout the

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.





nineteenth century in Germany and in English-speaking countries: the Grimms' different kinds of folk tales, derived allegedly from ancient German sources, became "fairy tales" for the entertainment of children. And it was not until the latter part of the twentieth century that the mis-reception and misunderstanding of the Grimms' tales were rectified in English-speaking countries. Of course, the "rectification" has been limited due to the hyped disneyfication and infantilization of the tales, processes that became dominant in the twentieth century and continue into the twenty-first.

### Contemporary Hying of Fairy Tales

The Grimms promoted the collecting of all sorts of folk tales throughout the nineteenth century, and they were certain that if other educated men and women began gathering tales from the common people, these stories, especially the fairy tales, would resonate among young and old from all social classes. Indeed, to a great extent, they were right. The nineteenth century, especially in Europe and North America, became the golden age of fairy-tale collecting that led to the foundation of folklore societies. As I have argued in my book, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*, the classical fairy tales have become memes, cultural bits of relevant information, and the paratexts of fairy tales have formed memplexes, that is, groups of variants that add to the meaning of the meme. In correspondence with Michael Drout, who has written a significant book about memes, *How Tradition Works: A Meme-Based Cultural Poetics of the AngloSaxon Tenth Century*, he has suggested: «In memetic terms, I think a para-text is a meme-plex that forms around a text, and the para-textual material can provide extra data about how to interpret what's inside the text. That material, because it stays in its own form, can become separated from its original cultural context, which evolves more quickly than something in a fixed form can. The para-text, then, provides meta-data about how ambiguities in the main text should be interpreted. The most obvious place where this happens is when we get a particular image of an actor or actress (or animation) of a traditional tale, and that



image is thereafter fixed in place even when some of the written descriptions might be more ambiguous, but I'm thinking that material like toys, posters, etc., also works to form around the text in this way (I have a box in the basement filled with my daughter's Disney princesses; these dolls lock into place a particular look for fairy tale characters whose descriptions are not quite as fixed as the icon designed to sell merchandise to little girls)».<sup>13</sup>

Today we are inundated by fairy tales that are not only present in the home but are also taught from pre-school through the university in the UK and North America. They are in all walks of life, and to some degree, we even try to transform our lives into fairy tales. They have become second nature, or as Roland Barthes might say, fairy tales have become "mythic". They appear to be universal and natural stories of the way life should be while concealing their artistic constellations and their basic history and ideology. In my book, *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale*, I remarked that it is impossible to grasp the history of the fairy tale and the relationship of the fairy tale to myth without taking into consideration the manner in which tales have been revised, duplicated, adapted, and manipulated to reinforce dominant ideologies and often to subvert them. To be more precise, the evolution of the fairy tale as a cultural genre is marked by a process of dialectical appropriation involving imitation and revision that set the cultural conditions for its mythicization, institutionalization, and expansion as a mass-mediated genre through radio, film, television, and the Internet. For the most part, the history of this memetic process is obscured if not negated today by hying newly produced fairy-tale films, books, musicals, and other products as extraordinary achievements that actually cheapen the meaning of fairy tales that the Brothers Grimm and other nineteenth-century collectors sought to preserve. Hying is the exact opposite of preservation and involves, as I have argued, conning consumers and selling products that have a meager cultural value and will not last.

<sup>13</sup> Email letter with Michael Drout on July 1, 2011. See his book for a further discussion of memes: *How Tradition Works: A Meme-Based Cultural Poetics of the AngloSaxon Tenth Century* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006).



Some recent fairy-tale films produced by the mainstream culture industry reveal how filmmakers and producers hype to sell shallow products geared primarily to make money. They use the mass media to exploit the widespread and constant interest in fairy tales that has actually deepened since the nineteenth century. For instance, in December of 2010, the Disney corporation dubbed the Grimms' "Rapunzel", called it *Tangled*, and announced: «Disney presents a new twist on one of the most hilarious and hair-raising tales ever told».<sup>14</sup> Actually, the Disney promoters should have called the film "Mangled" because of the way it slaughtered and emptied the meaning of the Grimms' and other "Rapunzel" folk tales. When viewed closely, *Tangled* is yet another inane remake of Disney's *Snow White*. The major conflict is between a pouting adolescent princess and a witch. The Disney films repeatedly tend to demonize older women and infantilize young women. Gone are any hints that "Rapunzel" might reflect a deeper initiation ritual in which wise old women keep young girls in isolation to protect them.

Gone, too, are any hints in Catherine Hardwicke's recent 2011 film, *Red Riding Hood* that *Little Red Riding Hood* is a serious and complicated tale about rape. Here much of the hype, which cost millions of dollars, began long before the film was even shown. For instance, last November *The Los Angeles Times* proclaimed: «Catherine Hardwicke understands impetuous teen heroines the way George Lucas reverse-engineers robot sidekicks. In March, the director of *Twilight* and *Thirteen* will unleash her newest troublemaker upon the world with a dark, sensuous spin on "Red Riding Hood".<sup>15</sup> However, the only thing that Hardwicke demonstrated is that she understands neither teens nor fairy tales, and her theme-park sets, stereotyped characters, and father-turned-werewolf gave rise to a ridiculous, convoluted plot that bored audiences. The only thing she understands is how to hype and sell herself and all the products connected with the film. Writing on March 8, 2011 in *The Los Angeles Times*,

<sup>14</sup> <http://adisney.go.com/disneypictures/tangled/> (Accessed last on Mai 4, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/2010/11/16/red-riding-hood-director-catherine-hardwicke-explains-the-big-bad-sexy-secret/> (Accessed last on Mai 4, 2012).



Susan Carpenter reported about the novel and e-book which were issued before the film: «The book debuted at No. 1 on the *New York Times* children's paperback bestseller list when it was released in late January, serving as a sort of multimedia prequel and pump-primer for the film, directed by Catherine Hardwicke. As an e-book, *Red Riding Hood* includes video interviews with Hardwicke and her many collaborators, an animated short film, audio discussion about the set design and props, costume sketches and Hardwicke's hand-drawn maps of the world where *Red Riding Hood* takes place, among other things... To novelize *Red Riding Hood*, Hardwicke got the OK from her publisher, Little Brown. She just needed an author to write it. For that, she turned to a 21-year-old graduate of Barnard's creative writing program named Sarah Blakely-Cartwright».<sup>16</sup> Neither the print novel nor the e-book are worth the paper or screen on which they are printed or beamed. Somehow, however, the celebrity Hardwicke and her producers had to keep trying to make money, and of course, there was a DVD issued in June with special features including an alternate ending to the film, which depicts Valerie alias Red Riding Hood with a newborn child in her arms at her grandmother's house where her lover unites with her. If this were not enough, there was a sequel book to the film and prequel to the DVD, *Red Riding Hood from Script to Screen*, written by Hardwicke and David Leslie Johnson and published April 12, 2011. It contains an introduction, notes, and sketches by Hardwicke; the screenplay by Johnson; 96 pages of color concept art, storyboards, and costume evolution and illustrations; and behind-the-scenes photographs. The synergy was completed later in June by the DVD. Profits for a planned blockbuster which was a critical flop and commercial fiasco had to be obtained several weeks after the premiere. But nothing could save Hardwicke's film, not even her vapid comments about the tale nor the ridiculous hyperbole to foster consumerism.

As for other ridiculously hyped films, there is *Hoodwinked Too!*

<sup>16</sup> Susan Carpenter, *Red Riding Hood' movie is already a hot as a novel and e-book* «Los Angeles Times» (March 8, 2011). <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/mar/08/entertainment/la-et-red-riding-novel-20110308> (Accessed last on Mai 4, 2012).



*Hood vs. Evil*, touted on one of the official websites on October 28, 2009, a year and a half before the film was even released: «This is a film that all children should watch! A fun, exciting movie with a lesson to be learned by the end. The animation is quite exceptional, and the actors as well as actresses do a great job in displaying their roles within the film. The story is a must have for those who enjoy good happy endings. Not to reveal too much but the story of Hood vs. Evil is a very attractive one. Keep your eye on this film because it could be something to talk about for sometime».<sup>17</sup> Yet, this computer-animated film is nothing less than an uninspired sequel to the 2005 *Hoodwinked*, which features Red Riding Hood and the wolf as sleuths, called upon to work together to rescue Hansel and Gretel from a witch. As the AP reporter Jake Coyle has written, «Such mash-ups of fairy tales have become commonplace since “*Shrek*” and children’s books like David Wiesner’s “*The Three Pigs*”».<sup>18</sup>

What is also commonplace, of course, is hype. Ever since the end of World War II, advertising and publicity have exaggerated and distorted the value of all products. We live in a world of hype, but it is also a world that manages to produce works of art that take fairy tales and the Brothers Grimm seriously – and not only the Grimms but many of the writers of classical fairy tales such as Charles Perrault, Madame d’Aulnoy, Hans Christian Andersen, Collodi, and Lewis Carroll. Their works continue to resonate with us not because of hype, but because of their integrity: they have tapped into our utopian need for the “corrective” worlds of fairy tales. In respecting the integrity of past fairy-tale artworks, numerous contemporary filmmakers such as Michel Ocelot and Catherine Breillat in France, Hayao Miyazaki in Japan, Christoph Hochhäusler in Germany, Yim Phil-Sung in South Korea, Garri Bardin in Russia, and Guillermo del Toro and Tim Burton in the US have re-created fairy tales with such verve and imagination that, though they need

<sup>17</sup> *Hoodwinked Too! HOOD VS. EVIL*, April 28, 2009. <http://www.hollywoodgo.com/movie/hoodwinked-too-hood-vs-evil-3396/> (Accessed last on Mai 4, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Jake Coyle, ‘*Hoodwinked Too!*’ - *More Polished, Less Funny*, *Associated Press* (April 29, 2011): [http://www.mercurynews.com/movies-dvd/ci\\_17949919](http://www.mercurynews.com/movies-dvd/ci_17949919) (Accessed last on Mai 4, 2012).



advertisement, they do not depend on hype to appeal to audiences. They depend on our hope for changing the world in a meaningful way. The same can be said for some of the remarkable fairy tales written by such talented authors such as Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie, A. S. Byatt, Marina Warner, Tanith Lee, Philip Pullman in the UK, Margaret Atwood in Canada, and Robert Coover, Jane Yolen, Donna Jo Napoli, John Barth, Francesca Lia Bloch in the US. They do not need hype to be recognized as storytellers who are keeping the profound tradition of the fairy tale alive. Thanks to them the Grimms can rest peacefully in their graves, for hype can never destroy the substantial quality of meaningful fairy tales.