II.
Articles and Essays

THE SLEEPING SCRIPT:
MEMORY AND FORGETTING IN
GRIMMS' ROMANTIC FAIRY TALE (KHM 50)

Donald Haase

The role of memory in the classic folk and fairy tale has never appeared to be an urgent issue. Although Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature dutifully registers various motifs based on memory and forgetting, other handbooks of folklore have little or nothing—certainly nothing substantive—to say on the subject. The Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens offers only a few scattered references, while the Wörterbuch der deutschen Volkskunde and Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore have no entries at all. The discontinued Handwörterbuch des deutschen Märchens includes a three-column article on the specific motif of "reawakened memory," but notes that the motif is of little importance for the development of the fairy-tale plot. The Enzyklopädie des Märchens has no entry for memory under Erinnerung because it has opted to pair memory with forgetting under the heading Vergessen und Erinnerung. This is a perfectly logical decision, but one that means the discussion of memory will be further deferred until the publication of the "V" volume.

That memory should be temporarily forgotten is, perhaps, appropriate. After all, its role in the folk and fairy tale appears secondary. In the "Frog King," for example, the selfish princess may conveniently forget the frog once he has rescued her golden ball, but the crucial factor in the tale's unfolding is the arrogance of the princess, not her forgetfulness. Little Red Riding Hood remembers her mother's instruction to say good-morning when she arrives at her grandmother's house, but she arrives too late because she had momentarily forgotten her grandmother while picking flowers. However, here again, the central issue is not memory and forgetting, but disobedience.

In genuine works of memory—especially Romantic works like Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," Goethe's Faust, or Rousseau's Confessions—memory is both a central theme and the generative power behind the work itself. This holds true for the literary fairy tale of
Romanticism as well. In Ludwig Tieck’s “Der blonde Eckbert,” for example, obsessive memory drives the frame story and even generates the internal fairy tale told by one of the characters. In such works the act of creatively remembering and the theme of memory are driven by phenomena essentially absent from the traditional fairy tale. The centrality of the self, a sine qua non of Romantic works of memory and all confessional literature, is essentially foreign to the fairy tale. Unconcerned with introspection, the fairy tale is normally not related by a self-conscious first-person narrator. Although the narrator may in some cases purport to narrate an event he or she has witnessed or may speak occasionally in the first-person, the narrative voice of the classic fairy tale is generally objective and does not reflect self-consciously on past personal experience. It is, in other words, not a self-reflexive autobiographical or confessional voice; in fact, it is more often thought of as a collective voice.

Yet the “once upon a time” of the fairy tale is an invocation of memory. For Jungian readers this recollection of the allegedly timeless past attests to the fairy tale’s role as a repository of humanity’s collective memory. For anthroposophic readers, fairy tales supposedly communicate “enduring memories of the prenatal world.” And for the Brothers Grimm, their collection of folk tales was a re-collection of the German past. The purpose of their Kinder- und Hausmärchen was to recall and preserve a people’s myths, beliefs, values, and customs, which were in danger of being lost from memory. Wilhelm Grimm’s preface to the second edition of their fairy tales (1819) summarizes well the fate of the genre, its relation to the past, and the need the brothers felt to re-collect and memorialize it:

Wir finden es wohl, wenn von Sturm oder anderem Unglück, das der Himmel schickt, eine ganze Saat zu Boden geschlagen wird, daß noch bei niedrigen Hecken oder Sträuchern, die am Wege stehen, ein kleiner Platz sich geschaufelt hat und einzelne Ähren aufrecht gebilbet sind. Scheint dann die Sonne wieder günstig, so wachsen sie einsam und unbeteachtet fort: keine frühe Sichal schneidet sie für die großen Vorratskammern, aber im Spätsommer, wenn sie reif und voll geworden, kommen anre Hände, die sie suchen, und Ähre an Ähre gelegt, sorgfältig gebunden und höher geachtet als sonst ganze Garben, werden sie hineingetragen, und winterlang sind sie Nahrung, vielleicht auch der einzige Samen für die Zukunft.

So ist es uns vorgekommen, wenn wir gesehen haben, wie von so vielem, was in früherer Zeit gebührt hat, nichts mehr übriggeblieben, selbst die Erinnerung daran fast ganz verloren war, als unter dem Volke Lieder, ein paar Bücher, Sagen und diese unschuldigen Hausmärchen. Die Plätze am Ofen, der Küchenherd, Bodentreppen, Feiertage noch geästert, Triften und Wälder in ihrer Stille, vor allem die ungetrübte Phantasie sind die Hecken gewesen, die sie gesichert und einer Zeit aus der andern überliefern haben.

Es war vielleicht gerade Zeit, diese Märchen festzuhalten... 

When an entire crop is destroyed by a storm or some other mishap sent by heaven, it is reassuring to find that a small spot on a path lined by low hedges or bushes has been spared and that a few stalks remain standing. If the sun favors them with light, they continue to grow, alone and unobserved, and no scythe comes along to cut them prematurely for huge storage bins. But at the end of the summer, once they have ripened and become full, poor devout hands come to seek them out: ear upon ear, carefully bound and esteemed more highly than entire sheaves, they are carried home, and for the entire winter they provide nourishment, perhaps even the only seed for the future.

That is how it seemed to us when we discovered that nothing was left of all those things that had flourished in earlier times; even the memory of them was nearly gone except for some songs, a few books, legends, and these innocent household tales. The places by the stove, the hearth in the kitchen, attic stairs, holidays still celebrated, meadows and forests in their solitude, and above all the untrammeled imagination have functioned as hedges preserving them and passing them on from one generation to the next.

It is probably just the right time to collect these tales. 

Because their collection of fairy tales was to become itself a “hedge” against forgetting, memory appears as a primary motivation behind the entire collection.

This is not to say, of course, that memory is consciously and consistently thematized in Grimms’ tales individually. But if we take Wilhelm’s poetic preface, replete with its nature Imagery and its themes of memory, forgetting, and Imagination, as a kind of frame for the collection, then the “once upon a time” invocation becomes an echo of those themes. In fact, the opening words of “The Frog Prince,” the first tale in the Kinder- und Hausmärchen, are often cited as a signal of the collection’s reaching back into the past. In the third edition of that initial tale (1837), Wilhelm replaces the usual “es war einmal” (“once upon a time”) with a more striking and significant formulation: “in den alten Zeiten, wo das Wünschen noch geholfen hatte...” (“in olden times, when wishing still helped...”). This nostalgic opening echoes the theme of loss intoned in Wilhelm’s preface and invokes the romantic memory of forgotten times. It is a
fitting beginning for a collection that seeks to protect and preserve the memory of a narrative tradition.

Closer consideration of the nature imagery Wilhelm used in the preface suggests an even more intriguing parallel to a specific fairy tale text and opens up a new perspective on the theme of memory in the fairy tale. Wilhelm’s metaphorical language identifies the folklore and other endangered forms of the folk past with a crop largely destroyed by the storm of modern, enlightened civilization. The stalks—or tales—that have survived this storm of technology, reason, and rationality are protected by “low hedges or bushes,” behind which “they continue to grow, alone and unobserved” until they are re-discovered and harvested. The hedges that protect these valuable remnants of the past are identified with the places, occasions, and faculty of storytelling: “The places by the stove, the hearth in the kitchen, attic stairs, holidays still celebrated, meadows and forests in their solitude, and above all the untrammelled imagination have functioned as hedges preserving them...” Wilhelm’s language is not only poetic, but in the context of the fairy tale collection as a whole it is self-consciously allusive; for the hedge protecting an unobserved life from the past until it is ripe for harvesting recalls vividly the Grimms’ tale of “Brier Rose,” better known as “Sleeping Beauty” (KHM 50). Cursed to sleep for a hundred years from her fifteenth birthday, Sleeping Beauty enjoys the same protection as the vulnerable stalks threatened by storm. Put to sleep by the prick of a spindle, Sleeping Beauty—and with her the entire court—is “overcome by a deep sleep”:

Rings um das Schloß aber begann eine Dornenhecke zu wachsen, die jedes Jahr höher ward und endlich das ganze Schloß umzog und darüber hinaus wuchs, daß gar nichts mehr davon zu sehen war, selbst nicht die Fahne auf dem Dach. Es ging aber die Sage in dem Land von dem schönen schlafenden Dornröschchen, denn so war die Königstochter genannt, also daß von Zeit zu Zeit Königssöhne kamen und durch die Hecke in das Schloß dringen wolle. Es war Ihnen aber nicht möglich, denn die Dornen, als hätten sie Hände, hielten fest zusammen, und die Jünglinge blieben darin hängen, konnten sich nicht wieder losmachen und starben eines jämmerlichen Todes.

Soon a brier hedge begun to grow all around the castle, and it grew higher each year. Eventually, it surrounded and covered the entire castle, so that it was no longer visible. Not even the flag on the roof could be seen. The princess became known by the name Beautiful Sleeping Brier Rose, and a tale about her begun circulating throughout the country. From time to time princes came and tried to break through the hedge and get to the castle. However, this was impossible because the thorns

clung together tightly as though they had hands, and the young men got stuck there. Indeed, they could not pry themselves loose and died miserable deaths.

In both the preface to the Grimms’ fairy tale collection and in their text of “Brier Rose,” hedges act as memory to preserve and protect something of value until the time is right for it to be re-discovered. The vivid parallel suggests that contrary to what we might expect in the folktale, Wilhelm Grimm has in fact thematized memory in his collection and in this fairy tale specifically.

Looking at the variants of the “Sleeping Beauty” tale that the Grimms had before them, we find that the themes of memory and forgetting have always informed the tale, which appears to have originated in a literary rather than an oral tradition. In both Basile’s “Sun, Moon and Talia” from the Pentamerone and Perrault’s “Sleeping Beauty of the Woods,” forgetting functions as a central motif. In Basile’s tale, the king closes off his palace to obliterate the memory of his apparently dead daughter; whereas in Perrault’s story, forgetfulness is both the cause and effect of the fairy’s curse. Perrault’s aged eighth fairy arrives in a bad temper after the child’s christening and subsequently bestows her gift of death because “no one had thought to invite [her]—the reason being that for more than fifty years she had never quitted the tower in which she lived, and people had supposed her to be dead or bewitched.” To be sure, the curse is softened by another fairy, but even this fate might have been avoided had the parents—“on pleasure bent”—not forgotten the evil fairy, her curse, and the vulnerability of their daughter. As a consequence of the court’s forgetfulness, the young girl is herself ultimately condemned to an extended period of oblivion—a sleep of one hundred years in a castle surrounded by a dense wood. She is even forgotten by the people, for the tales they tell of the great forest are all inaccurate and relate nothing of her fate. Only one old peasant remembers the true tale, which he had heard from his father, and his telling of it inspires a young prince to find the Sleeping Beauty and be there when she awakes. So while forgetfulness brings on the curse, it is memory, revived by the traditional storyteller, that contributes to the happy fulfillment of the spell.

The storyteller’s role in the service of memory is suggested also in Basile’s version of the tale, or rather in the frame story that introduces it. Unlike either Perrault or Grimm, Basile’s earlier collection of folktales follows the literary tradition of the Decamerone and even earlier texts by seeking to imitate the social context of storytelling—that is, by constructing a frame story in which the individual tales are told by one or more tellers. In Basile’s “Sun, Moon and Talia,”
Popa—the narrator of this tale—observes that she is about to begin a "story which I shall draw from the cask of my memory with the girlet of my tongue." The king's attempt to "entirely obliterate the memory of his sorrow and suffering" by shutting his daughter's corpse away in the abandoned palace is thus implicitly contrasted with the power of the storyteller's memory, which has made the memory—the story—of the king's daughter unforgettable.

Although Grimms' collection lacks this traditional frame, I think their tale of "Brier Rose" has this literary self-consciousness and thematizes memory in a way typical of German Romanticism. The self-consciousness exists in part in the metaphorical parallels that Wilhelm establishes between this tale and his preface, which functions as a significant if non-traditional frame. And it exists, too, in the way Wilhelm treats the motif of storytelling within his tale. As in Perrault's tale, Grimms' version also relates that in the surrounding countryside the protected castle became the object of storytelling among the people. But in Grimms' tale it is not merely the castle that is the object of popular speculation; it is specifically Sleeping Beauty herself. And whereas Perrault seems to mock the ignorance, superstition, and forgetfulness of the peasants by informing us that they told many erroneous versions, Wilhelm reveres the oral tradition of the folk by writing that there was essentially only one tale in circulation: "Es ging aber die Saga in dem Land von dem schönen schlafenden Dormröschchen." The singularity of this tale is not meant to suggest the literal uniformity of the oral tradition—Wilhelm knew better than that. Rather, it symbolically attests to the power of the popular memory embodied in the folk tale. Wilhelm consequently gives a much greater importance to the tale and the act of storytelling than does Perrault. Whereas Perrault's prince is curious to hear stories of a mysterious forest after he first sees the still visible castle towers rising above the trees, Wilhelm Grimm has his prince learn directly of the enormous hedge and the legend of the Sleeping Beauty by *listening* to the tale of the old storyteller. So when the old man of Grimms' tale relates the story of the Sleeping Beauty to the prince, the young man is so inspired by the tale and possessed by its memory of the princess that the old man's subsequent words of reason cannot dissuade him from venturing to the once forbidden castle, where his kiss awakens the Sleeping Beauty, whose one hundred years of solitude—not oblivion—have come to an end.

Readers of Romantic literature will recognize in this tale not only the self-conscious technique of the story within a story, but also the heightened self-consciousness of the story told about itself. The tale implicitly related by the old man in Grimms' "Brier Rose" is, after all, "Brier Rose" itself. So, with Romantic irony, Grimms' tale reflects itself and recalls its own origin. But even beyond this self-conscious self-reflection, "Brier Rose" indulges in self-praise, for the memory embodied in the old man's tale has the power literally to revive the past. In the words of Wilhelm's preface, his is the "untrammeled imagination" that functions as a hedge "preserving and passing on" the story "from one generation to the next." So in depicting the power of imagination and memory, the Grimms have produced a self-reflexive literary tale in the Romantic tradition.

They have also used their preface to frame the story in such a way that it reflects their own role as storytellers and conservators of memory. At a minimum the old man typifies for the Grimms the classic storyteller. The one actual storyteller that Wilhelm Grimm singles out for attention in his preface to the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Dorothea Viehhmann, merits his attention precisely because of her remarkable memory:

Die Frau Viehmann war noch rüstig und nicht viel über fünfzig Jahre alt. Ihre Gesichtszüge hatten etwas Festes, Verständiges und Angenehmes, und aus großen Augen blickte sie hell und scharf. Sie bewahrte die alten Sagen fest im Gedächtnis und sagte wohl selbst, daß diese Gabe nicht jedem verliehen sei und mancher gar nichts im Zusammenhange behalten könne.

Frau Viehmann war 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.

Of course, unlike the Grimms' fictional storyteller, Dorothea Viehmann was a woman, as were the majority of their informants—including Marie Hassenplug, the primary source of "Brier Rose." Since the teller of the Sleeping Beauty tale implicitly told within KH M50 Itself is not a woman but a man, it is possible that the Grimms may have seen themselves reflected in this old storyteller, this conservator of the public memory. This would not have been the first time that Jacob and Wilhelm broke through the illusion of folk tale naïveté with ironic self-reflection.

In the preface to the *Alteutsche Wälder* (Old German Forests, 1813-16), Jacob Grimm described the brothers' desire to keep alive the memory of the past with an image that clearly alludes to the Sleeping Beauty:

Wir wollen dazu beitragen, wie ein alter dichter so schön sagt, dass die schlafende schrift wieder erweckt, die süße lehre, die beschattet war, wieder aufgedeckt werde.
We want to contribute, as an old poet so beautifully says, to the reawakening of the sleeping script, to the rediscovery of the sweet teaching that has been overshadowed.22

As the storyteller’s tale sustained the memory of the Sleeping Beauty and contributed to her reawakening, so was the Grimm’s re-collection of the nearly forgotten memories of the past to precipitate a reawakening of the sleeping script. It is a revealing irony of their mission that the tale symbolizing their harvesting of the oral tradition should itself become self-reflective and thematize memory, thereby aligning itself more with the script—the self-conscious literary tradition—than the oral folktale tradition it sought to preserve.23

NOTES


13. Robinson 3; Perrault 132 (“étant allé à une de leurs Maisons de plaisance”).

14. For a good discussion of the frame story in such collections and the problem of determining its origin, see The Pantemeron of the Glissant Basset, ed. and trans. N.M. Penzer (1932; Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979) 2: 275-78.

15. The Pantemeron 2: 129. Penzer notes that this introduction to the tale was probably “added by later editors to fill the obvious gap in the argument of the introductory moral” sometime after 1654 (2: 129n1).


18. In all of this Wilhelm Grimm is building on the version of the tale told by his literate bourgeois informant, Marie Hassenpflug: “Nach langer langer Zeit kam ein Königssohn in das Land, dem erzählte ein alter Mann die Geschichte, die er sich erinnerte von seinem Großvater gehört zu haben...” (“After a long, long time a king’s son came to the country and was told the story by an old man, who remembered having heard it from his grandfather...”) (Heinz Rolleke, Die älteste Märchensammlung der Brüder Grimm: Synopsis der handschriftlichen Urfassung von 1810 und der Erstdrucke von 1812 [Cologny-genève: Fondation Martin Bodmer, 1975] 106; emphasis and translation mine); see de Vries 111.


20. Marie Hassenpflug’s retelling of “Brier Rose” constitutes the Grimms’ earliest version of the story and is the basis of the text written in Jacob’s hand and found in the Ölenberg manuscript of 1810 (Rolleke, ed., Die älteste Märchensammlung der Brüder Grimm 106-11 and 359).


23. The themes of memory and forgetting in the Sleeping Beauty tale do not cease with Grimms' "Brier Rose." Several twentieth-century literary variants of the tale also capitalize on the themes, as demonstrated by the following poems included in *Disenchantments: An Anthology of Modern Fairy Tale Poetry*, ed. Wolfgang Mieder (Hanover: UP of New England, 1985): Mary Hutton, "The Sleeping Beauty" (127); Douglas Knight, "Sleeping Beauty: August" (134); Howard Nemerov, "Sleeping Beauty" (137); and Maxine Kumin, "The Archaeology of a Marriage" (138-39).

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Déesse ou sorcière?

REPRÉSENTATIONS DE LA FEMME DANS

DER GOLDNE TOPF D'E.T.A. HOFFMANN

Bettina Adank

Contrairement aux personnages hoffmanniens masculins qui, comme Anselmus, Nathanaël, Medardus ou Kreisler révèlent un caractère complexe, les personnages féminins sont figés dans un mode de comportement et de pensée. C'est cela qui fait dire à Ricarda Schmidt qu'elles sont "one-dimensional (and) static" et que la misogynie de Hoffmann « imprisons women in the realm of being and denies them any conflict of identity ». Cette représentation unilatérale des personnages féminins explique pourquoi elles apparaissent par paires d'opposés: Serpentina-Veronika, Olympia-Clara, représentation idéalisée-contrepartie négative. En raison de la ressemblance entre Serpentina et Veronika, elles peuvent être interprétées comme deux facettes d'un même personnage. Représentation diamétralement opposée ou personnages féminins déchirés entre deux extrêmes... pourquoi cette mutilation ? Vu l'ambivalence d'Anselmus lui-même, il faudra se demander s'il n'y a pas là une relation de cause à effet.

La représentation bipolaire de Veronika-Serpentina n'est qu'une fraction des dédoublements de personnages dans *Der goldne Topf*. En voici quelques autres exemples: Paulmann, en tant que figure de père, de veuf qui a des filles à marier, ressemble à Lindhorst. Anselmus a un double en Heerbrand; tous deux sont des prétendants de Veronika et des "Hofrätte" potentiels. Une division des personnages en deux groupes — Paulmann, Veronika et Heerbrand/Lindhorst, Serpentina et Anselmus — met en évidence la confrontation de deux systèmes de valeurs: le monde "bourgeois" et rationnel opposé au monde "poétique" et fantastique.

Or, la représentation bipolaire des personnages n'est qu'un aspect d'une con-fusion qui traverse toute l'oeuvre hoffmannienne. Je nomme con-fusion ce phénomène qui ébranle la structure narrative, le monde représenté et les personnages. Le terme rend l'idée de deux choses/personnes distinctes en même temps que leur union en une entité nouvelle; il englobe donc aussi bien la différentiation de ce qui est un, que l'union de ce qui est séparé.

La con-fusion semble particulièrement attirer les lecteurs contemporains et a donné naissance à de nombreuses études. Certains critiques littéraires parlent du dualisme du monde hoffmannien, ou de l'interpénétration de la « réalité » et de « l'irréalité » du monde appré-

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