



FROM ORAL TRADITION TO GLOBAL ADAPTATION: THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF CULTURAL MEMORY IN GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES

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Abstract

Through two centuries of adaptation and reinterpretation, Grimm's Fairy Tales have transcended their nineteenth-century German origins to attain global cultural significance. This paper investigates the evolution of cultural memory by tracing the transmission of Grimm's Fairy Tales from the oral legacy to written literature and the retranslations in literature, cinema and global popular culture. The paper uses a qualitative text analysis method to examine some of the Grimm's Fairy Tales and their contemporary adaptations, focusing in particular on interpretations in Disney films and other modern cultural forms. These adaptations often result in changes to the characters, themes, genders and moralities, reflecting the social values of the time, but they do not lose the symbolic patterns and story structures that preserve the cultural memory embedded in the original stories. In addition, the study examines the transformation of Grimm's Fairy Tales from local to transnational expressions of German cultural identity by looking at how they have been disseminated internationally and their ability to transcend linguistic, cultural and geographical barriers without losing their symbolic meaning. Through its focus on the process of adaptation as something more than cultural replacement, this study is making a contribution to interdisciplinary scholarship in literary Studies, folklore, adaptation Studies, and memory Studies. It suggests that the continued vitality of the Grimm's Fairy Tales is in how they have been continually reworked and reinvented, allowing successive generations to reimagine cultural identity in a way that remains grounded in the past. Finally, the paper demonstrates how the global circulation of the Grimm's Fairy Tales, and its continuous re-interpretation, illustrate the dynamic and ever-changing nature of cultural memory in the modern world.

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1. Introduction

Fairy tales constitute one of the oldest forms of narrative literature, serving as enduring cultural artifacts that preserve, transmit, and reshape collective memory across generations. Among the most significant collections in the Western literary tradition are Grimm's Fairy Tales, compiled and published by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm during the first half of the nineteenth century. Far more than simple stories for children, these tales are deeply rooted in the social, cultural, historical, and ideological contexts of their time. This study, *From Oral Tradition to Global Adaptation: The Dynamic Nature of Cultural Memory in Grimm's Fairy Tales*, examines the ways in which these narratives function as repositories of cultural memory while simultaneously constructing imaginative worlds that reflect, reinterpret, and negotiate lived human realities.

The phenomenon of cultural memory, formulated by several researchers, including Jan and Aleida Assmann, offers a helpful theoretical approach for the analysis of timelessness of the tales of Grimms. Cultural memory is defined as a collective body of knowledge, traditions and stories by which societies create a sense of identity and continuity. Cultural memory is also institutionalized and mediated by texts, rituals, and symbols unlike individual memory. Texts such as literature and folklore preserve collective experiences in durable forms, rituals reinforce shared cultural values through repeated social practices, and symbols encode historical meanings and communal beliefs. Together, these media enable societies to maintain and transmit cultural memory beyond the lifespan of individual generations. The fairy tales, especially those of Brothers Grimm, are important carriers of such memory, social norms, moral values, fears and aspirations encoded into the narrative formulations of the fairy tales. The fairytales by Grimm Brothers were published in the times of strong nationalist mood of the early nineteenth century Germany. They did not just want to entertain but to maintain what they believed to be pure German folklore when the national identity was actively being created. As a result, their stories are filled with cultural themes, archetypes, and values, which are subject to the general awareness of their community. Stories like *Hansel and Gretel*, *Snow White* and *Cinderella* are not only fantasy tales, but also the cultural texts which highlight concerns about poverty, gender roles, family set up and social hierarchy.

The interaction between the oral tradition and the written text is an important feature of this study. The stories of the Grimms were initially based on the oral storytelling tradition. Incidentally, by converting these stories into written text, the Brothers Grimm made the stories more permanent texts and changed the role and the consumption of these texts. These aspects of the stories raise certain questions concerning their authenticity and influence of the editors who compiled the stories. How far do the versions of the Grimms give us authentic folklore? Or are the tales the product of the ideological commitments of their editors? Such questions will be analyzed in this paper with regard to the Grimm's part in the creation of these tales. Another important dimension of this study concerns the thematic illustration of women and their roles within these fairytales. In most of the tales,

women are surrounded by confining situations, yet they manifest certain strengths to cope with the situations that seek to oppress them. Furthermore, the inclusion of ethical lessons in many of these stories indicates the values of the society that produced such stories. By analyzing these different facets of the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, this thesis aims to establish the role of cultural memory in the maintenance of social norms.

This study extends beyond the literary analysis of Brothers Grimm's tales and offers vast perception identity, cultural memory and social norms. In the current age of globalization, individuals are becoming increasingly fluid and disputable in terms of their cultural identities. Therefore, revisiting some of the traditional narratives, such as fairy tales, written by the Brothers Grimm, may offer valuable insights for the preservation of culture. These tales serve as the link between the past and the present, connecting the present audience of these tales to the past experiences and the creation of those stories. Through analyzing these tales and the intersection between fantasy and cultural memory, this paper will help to gain a better understanding of the role of literature in the construction of cultural identity. This thesis intends to be an interdisciplinary study, employing theories from the fields of literary studies, cultural studies, and memory studies. The methodology of this study involves a close reading of selected Grimms' fairy tales, an examination of their adaptations and variants, and the application of cultural memory theories to analyze their meanings and functions.

The main aim of this research is to prove the idea that the Grimm's fairytales were created not as a product of the bygone epoch in which they were compiled, but as a living text that could be traced through to the modern culture and its stories. By restoring the connection of these fantastical tales to the cultures in which they were created, it becomes evident that fantasy and reality are deeply intertwined and readers get influenced by it. Particular attention is also given to the role of globalization in facilitating the dissemination of these stories. The fairy tales of Grimms, as they cross cultures, are influenced by other cultures and worldviews and give rise to a hybrid of storytelling. This intercultural dialogue not only brings out the universality of some of the themes but also the cultural specificity. The thesis also considers how contemporary audiences interpret these stories, ranging from moral instruction to entertainment, illustrating broader shifts in cultural consumption and value systems. Thus, this paper illustrates that the value of the fairytales of Grimm is in their versatility. These narratives keep changing and thus they retain their relation to the cultural memory but in the process, create new meanings. The process as dynamic as it is, highlights the timeless importance of fairy tales as forms of writing which connect the past and the present.

This research brings to literary studies, folklore, adaptation studies, and memory studies the consideration of Grimm's Fairy Tales as dynamic cultural memory texts of adaptation and global circulation. It is based on the Cultural Memory Theory of Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann, and illustrates how cultural memory is constantly being shaped and re-constructed rather than simply preserved. The study provides a focus on the

way Disney and other modern retellings of stories are reworking traditional narratives while retaining their symbolic and cultural meanings. It also examines how Grimm's Fairy Tales have evolved beyond their German setting to become transnational stories that help to maintain cultural continuity across a variety of societies. This study connects adaptation to the development of cultural memory, thus providing a multidisciplinary approach to the continued significance of fairy tales in a globalized world. Finally, it supports scholarly reflection on the ability of literary narratives to maintain cultural memory and to be adapted to new social, historical and cultural settings, so that they continue to have meaning for current audiences.

2. Literature Review

Grimm's Fairy Tales have received much scholarly attention in folklore, literary, adaptation, and cultural memory studies. These stories were first gathered by the brothers Grimm and have become popular stories worldwide, which have been adapted into books, movies, theater and online games. As a result, the tales have been studied more and more as dynamic cultural artifacts that are constantly evolving and changing over time in light of shifting historical, social and cultural contexts. Previous research has examined their folkloric origins, symbolism, ideological aspects, and various adaptations, including Disney productions and current adaptations. Simultaneously, the Cultural Memory Theory of Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann offers a helpful model for understanding how such stories both preserve, transform and transmit cultural meanings from generation to generation. This review illuminates the major scholarly debates about Grimm's Fairy Tales, adaptation, and cultural memory in order to develop a theoretical matrix for the study and to locate a gap in the literature regarding the dynamic interaction between adaptation and the evolution of cultural memory in the fairy tales that circulate in the global community.

Fairytales have been widely discussed in regard of their structural significance. In contrast to scholars, who pay attention to psychology, ideology, or cultural memory, Vladimir Propp studies the formal form of folktales and believes that fairy tales maintain the same narrative patterns despite the cultural differences. In his work *Morphology of Folktale*, it is demonstrated that “beneath the superficial distinctions between characters, setting, and symbols, there exist a high number of folktales that have the same basic narrative template” (Propp 12). This approach helps explain why fairy tales remain memorable, easily recognizable, and readily transmitted across generations as well as across different cultural contexts. Propp researched Russian folktales, and found that “stories can seem different, but are frequently constructed with a small set of repeated narrative functions” (Propp). He distinguishes thirty-one functions that emerge in a consistent order, like departure, prohibition, violation, struggle, rescue, return, and reward. These functions are not related to particular characters but to actions that advance the story. Indicatively, it does not matter whether the villain is a witch, giant, wolf or stepmother, the role is the same: the villain poses a conflict and threat to the hero. It is this structural

consistency which lends folktales their well-known form as it makes an interpretive assertion about the structural function of villains in folktales rather than stating a verifiable fact. It generalizes across different narratives to argue that despite varying forms, the antagonist consistently serves the same narrative role in creating conflict for the hero.

Benedict Anderson's work on the construction of imagined communities provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding how German cultural identity was shaped and reflected in the Grimm fairy tales. In his groundbreaking work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Anderson states that "nations are not natural or permanent but instead are communities of people created by a set of symbols, language and shared cultural experiences" (Anderson 4). He states that "individuals in a country visualize themselves as belonging to a bigger group, yet they will never know most of the other members of that group personally" (Anderson 21). This feeling of belonging is achieved by common texts, print culture, education and collective historical narratives which enable individuals to identify themselves as part of a broad national identity. Anderson's idea is particularly helpful in the analysis of the fairy tales of Grimm since such stories were regarded as cultural texts in which the German identity was projected prior to the political unification of Germany.

Another valuable approach to analyze the role of Grimms fairy tales in the formation of the cultural memory and national identity is the idea of invented traditions, developed by Eric Hobsbawm. According to Hobsbawm in *The Invention of Tradition*, "most of the traditions that are said to be old, natural, and authentic are new inventions that are made by people socially and politically to gain advantages" (Hobsbawm 5). Such traditions are usually created in a way that they form continuity with the past, reinforce group identity, and reinforce authority or national unity. They seem to be ancient and eternal, yet in truth, they are fashioned very carefully to fit the requirements of the present. The relevance of this concept is established by the analytical framework of the present study, which seeks to interpret Grimm's fairy tales as culturally constructed narratives rather than purely preserved oral traditions. Through the critical application of Hobsbawm's theory, this thesis effectively explains how notions of "authentic" tradition were shaped through editorial and ideological processes. The stories were not merely documented in an identical manner in which they were in oral story telling societies. Rather, the Grimms selected the stories to include, edited language and content, and adapted the story to suit moral, cultural, and nationalist ideals of Germany of the 19th century. Their work gave the impression of a pure and unified German folklore, although the stories were based on the various regional origins, and were frequently informed by French, Italian and European traditions.

This study highlights the transnational circulation and interpretive flexibility of Grimm's fairy tales beyond national boundaries. Donald Haase, a distinguished researcher, in his work, *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches*, underlines international spreading of the fairy tales of Grimm and demonstrates that "the stories cannot be

interpreted exclusively in terms of German national culture” (Haase 16). Although initially the stories were gathered and published by the Brothers Grimm as a project related to German folklore and national identity, the stories soon transcended the context in which they were originally collected and became a part of world literature. Haase states that “fairy tales are transnational memory texts” (Haase 32), i.e. they move through languages, countries and through time and still maintain symbolic meaning. Their cross-cultural mobility does not nullify their origin, on the contrary, it gives them the opportunity to acquire new meanings without losing their emotional and narrative strength. Haase writes that “fairy tales live on because they are adaptable and flexible (Haase 24). Tales like *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *Little Red Riding Hood* have been translated, rewritten, filmed, and reinterpreted in many cultural contexts, innumerable times. Every adaptation varies the details based on the local values, social issues, and historical conditions, but the main symbolic patterns are still identifiable. Fear, survival, justice, transformation, and reward are some of the themes that resonate with the audience across the cultures. This adaptability underscores the role of fairy tales as effective vehicles of cultural memory, as their meanings remain relevant even when they are displaced across different temporal and spatial contexts.

3. Theoretical Framework

Jan Assmann, in *Memory and Culture*, navigates the concept of collective memory and argues that “the theory of collective memory by Maurice Halbwachs offers one of the most important theoretical bases on the study of cultural memory and serves to explain how societies maintain and pass shared meanings to the next generation” (Assman 21). Halbwachs challenges the idea of memory as an individual or purely personal phenomenon and instead maintains that memory is always formed within social frameworks, meaning that individuals remember through the influence of family, religion, class, community, and other collective structures rather than as isolated consciousnesses. He further emphasizes that even personal memory is socially reconstructed, as individuals rely on shared language, cultural practices, and symbolic references to interpret and narrate past experiences. Memory, therefore, is not a fixed record of events but a continuously reconstructed and socially organized interpretation of lived experience. This idea is particularly significant for literary studies, as literary texts often function as repositories of collective memory, preserving and transmitting the values, beliefs, and traditions of societies across generations. In my view, this highlights literature as not only artistic expression but also a cultural process that sustains historical awareness and establishes collective identity over time. Building on Halbwachs, Jan Assmann develops the theory of cultural memory, which “transcends the daily social memory to the long-term preservation of symbols” (Assman 45). She distinguishes between communicative and cultural memory, explaining that communicative memory refers to the living, everyday transmission of memories through interpersonal communication, typically lasting about three generations or eighty to one hundred years, expressed through conversation, oral

storytelling, and shared personal accounts. In contrast, “cultural memory outlives succeeding generations, as it is archived in non-volatile forms such as texts, rituals, monuments, festivals, myths and artistic representations” (Assman 23), enabling societies to preserve and transmit essential meanings across centuries and ensuring the continuity of cultural identity over time.

According to Assmann, “cultural memory offers what he refers to as knowledge with an identity-index, i.e. it does not merely conserve information but assists communities to establish who they are” (Assman 34). Cultural memory provides continuity with the past and a sense of collective identity to the societies. It identifies significant events, values, and narratives that a group emphasizes as part of its collective self-understanding. By doing so, memory is directly associated with power, tradition, and cultural authority since societies determine what is to be remembered and what is to be forgotten. Assmann also presents the concept of the difference between canon and archive in cultural memory. She narrates that “the canon is a set of texts, narratives, and symbols, which are still actively remembered, repeated, and circulated in the life of the people” (Assman 54). Here are the aspects of memory that still influence current identity. The archive, however, is the stored memory but not necessarily used. It can be recovered and reinterpreted in future. This difference is very pertinent to the analysis of fairy tales of the Grimm brothers. The fairy tales of Grimm fall in both categories. They are canonical in so far as Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel and Snow White remain circulated in literature, education, film and popular culture and influence culture imagination in different countries. Simultaneously, they are archival in way that they maintain older strata of oral folklore, mythical symbols, and pre-modern social values that otherwise would have been lost. In this way, the collection of the Grimms is a living cultural memory and a historical museum of European folk tradition.

Aleida Assmann, in her work, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, broadens the theory of cultural memory by targeting the media, institutions, and cultural practices, in which memory is enshrined and passed down across generations. Where Maurice Halbwachs stresses the social structures of collective memory and Jan Assmann states the differences between communicative and cultural memory, Aleida Assmann is more concerned with the practical processes that enable the existence of long-term remembrance. In *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, she maintains that “cultural memory is neither preserved naturally, nor automatically, but that societies are making an investment in preserving their memory, which is accomplished in the form of writing, visual representation, monuments, rituals and performative traditions” (Assman 32). These forms offer permanency and perseverance, enabling meaningful memories to go beyond the lifespan of people, and even generations. Aleida Assmann defines cultural memory as institutionally preserved by the means of education, literature, religion, museums, archives and artistic production. Schools teach the chosen texts, libraries maintain written archives, monuments influence collective memory, and rituals strengthen collective identity. In this

respect, “memory is not only the issue of individual or shared memory but also an organized cultural initiative assisted by institutions” (Assman 45). These institutions decide on which narratives will be perpetuated and which ones are negated or overlooked. Thus, memory is closely related to cultural authority and social values.

4. Textual Analysis

The enduring popularity of the Grimm brothers’ fairy tales across centuries demonstrates the capacity of such narratives and other cultural expressions to adapt to changing circumstances while remaining meaningful and relevant to people from different historical periods. Grimms’ Fairytales were published originally by authors Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in the early 19th century as a means of collecting the folklore of their German culture and its people. Beyond their original language and culture, Grimms’ Fairytales have become global tales recognized by people of many cultures and time periods alike. As a result, the stories have remained popular since their original publication, and are recognized as tales that have the ability to connect the experiences of the past with the experiences of the present day. Beyond existing in their original forms, Grimms’ Fairytales have adapted to various cultures over time. One of the theories that can help to explain the adaptation of stories like Grimms’ Fairytales is the Cultural Memory Theory of authors Jan and Aleida Assmann. Cultural Memory Theory suggests that societies rely on certain symbols to maintain connections with their past, and that these symbols endure over time through their continuous reinterpretation and adaptation by successive generations. In other words, the adaptation of these tales ensures that their cultural memory remains alive.

A review of the adaptation theories of scholars such as Linda Hutcheon and Julie Sanders, alongside the Cultural Memory theories of Jan Assmann, Aleida Assmann, Astrid Erll, Marina Warner, and Cristina Bacchilega, demonstrates that the Grimm brothers’ fairy tales have remained relevant into the present because of their continual adaptation and reinterpretation, as well as their enduring capacity to resonate with the experiences, values, and memories of the societies from which they emerged. In examining the tales of *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* in particular, and the adaptations of those tales in the modern world, it becomes clear that Grimms’ Fairytales have adapted to the societies from which they developed. The changing representations of female characters within those tales indicates the changing views of gender within the society of the present day (and beyond) regarding equality of those of either gender. Furthermore, the adaptations of tales regarding the changing values of society of the present day reflect the reinterpretation of those tales in ways that ensure that their cultural memories remain alive and connected to the experiences of the societies from which they originate.

The process through which Grimms’ Fairytales and other stories have adapted over time and survived into the present day can be explored by reviewing theories of adaptation created by a variety of scholars. For example, author Linda Hutcheon published a study of adaptation entitled, *A Theory of Adaptation*, in which she stated that “adaptations of

stories are often a means of creating repetition without the need for replication of those original tales” (Hutcheon 7). Furthermore, Julie Sanders authored a publication entitled, *Adaptation and Cultural Memory: The Relevance of Change and Continuity*, in which she explained that “tales often adapt as a means of preserving their connection with the cultures from which they originate, as well as with the tales that have existed within those cultures throughout time” (Sanders 26). Authors Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann developed the Cultural Memory Theory, which states that “cultures survive over time through the creation of symbols that represent and connect their societies to its past; however, the theory also specifically explains that these symbols must be continually reinterpreted to survive over time” (Assmann 37). Astrid Erll published a study entitled, *Literature and Memory: The Functioning of Literature in the Creation and Preservation of Cultural Memory*, in which she explains that “many societies create stories that act as mediums of cultural memory, particularly if those stories are adapted to different media or cultures” (Erll 4). Furthermore, authors Marina Warner and Cristina Bacchilega have published studies regarding modern adaptations of fairy tales and Grimm’s Fairytales in particular. Warner, for example, stated that fairy tales are able to endure over time due to their adaptations to the culture and society of different time periods. Finally, Bacchilega published a study of modern adaptations to Grimm’s Fairytales, stating that the adaptations often include the reinterpretation of the tales’ ideologies to reflect the changed views of society of the present day.

Jan Assmann’s Cultural Memory Theory suggests that the memories of a culture are often represented through certain symbols, and that these symbols are passed along to new cultures through storytelling. Assmann suggests that there are two different forms of memory of a culture: communicative memory and cultural memory. Within communicative memory, individuals remember and share the memories of their culture with other individuals that still alive; in contrast, “cultural memory is represented through symbols, maintained through time, and often includes tales of that culture” (Assmann 36). Therefore, the Grimm brothers’ fairy tales can be understood as a form of cultural memory that preserves and transmits the values, experiences, and traditions of the culture from which they originate. Beyond preservation, the theory also suggests that cultural memory of a society must transform over time. If these tales remained unchanged across different cultures and historical contexts, they might lose their relevance to those societies and their members. Therefore, adaptation is essential to their continued survival and significance.

The tale of *Snow White*, for instance, begins with the lines:

“Once upon a time in the middle of winter, when the snowflakes were falling like feathers from the sky...” (Grimm 214).

By utilizing these opening lines, the story is immediately understood as a timeless tale. It does not adapt to the societies in which it is shared or told, but its symbolic content allows for the tale to be adapted to different cultures and societies. Furthermore, the content of the tale includes themes and meanings that are often preserved and connected

to the cultures from which the tales originate; they may change over time, but they are often symbolic representations of the experiences of those cultures' people. In telling such tales, societies are simultaneously preserving memory of their culture and adapting those tales to preserve their connection to their society. Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, for instance, suggests that "adaptations preserve and transform tales to connect the past with the present" (Hutcheon 8). As such, modern adaptations of tales like *Snow White* include elements of the original tale but also introduce changes to those tales that ensure that those tales continue to reflect the experiences of those societies of the present day and beyond. Similarly, the argument of Aleida Assmann of adaptation theory suggests that "memory of a culture only remains alive and strong through the reinterpretation of those tales" (Assmann 32). In other words, the reinterpretation of Grimms' Fairytales by those societies today is one of the ways in which that memory of that culture continues to survive over time.

In many respects, *Snow White* is one of the clearest examples of how Grimm's fairy tales have been adapted over time. The tale originally published by the Grimms often reflects the views of the females of their culture and society of the early 19th century. For instance, the tale refers to Snow White as a girl whose physical appearance is "as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony" (Grimm 214). Additionally, the Queen who kills Snow White states the following lines of dialogue in the tale

"Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?" (Grimm 216).

These types of references of physical beauty of women of the past and to the ways of the society that valued such beauty are one means of preserving the memory of that culture and society. However, many modern adaptations of the tale of *Snow White* work to reverse the views of these elements, continuing to preserve the memory of the tale but with reinterpretations of that memory through the understanding of the modern world society. For instance, author Cristina Bacchilega published a study of modern adaptations of fairy tales which suggested that those modern adaptations expose and question the ideologies of those tales while preserving their memories of those societies. Therefore, the adaptations of tales like *Snow White* help to ensure the survival of their memory within their cultures, as they adapt the tales to preserve their connection to their cultures of the past, present, and future. Additionally, tales like *Cinderella* have undergone similar adaptations. In the tale of *Cinderella*, for instance, the role of Cinderella in relation to the other characters of the society as a whole (particularly the way in which she is among the ashes) reflects the social structure of society of the past. Additionally, Cinderella's role as a character who is initially mistreated by society but later becomes recognized and respected reflects the narrative emphasis on an individual's ability to achieve recognition and success despite social disadvantages. Such reinterpretations of tales like *Cinderella*, help to ensure the survival of those tales' memories within their societies and their connections to their cultures as a whole.

Another of the Grimms' tales that demonstrate the concept of adaptation and preservation of symbolic significance is the tale of *Sleeping Beauty*. As with many of the Grimms' fairy tales, *Sleeping Beauty* has undergone numerous adaptations yet still maintain its symbolic significance. In *Sleeping Beauty*, the princess is cursed by an offended fairy to sleep for a period of one hundred years. Within the tale, the princess sleeps in her bed, as does the king, queen, and the remainder of the royal court:

"The princess lay sleeping on a bed, and the king and queen slept beside her, and the whole court slept too" (Grimm 332).

The sleeping of princess and the entire court is symbolic of the sleeping of the nation and the dormant nature of cultural memory. Cultural memory is often in a state of sleep, preserved in time until it can be awakened for new circumstances in which it can be utilized. Jan Assmann believes that "cultural memory exists in these latent forms, as well as within the cultural practices and representations that relate to that memory" (Assman 39). The sleeping kingdom and the princess of *Sleeping Beauty* represent the dormant cultural memory of the nation. Additionally, the awakening of the princess represents the continuity of that cultural memory between the generations of the nation. However, many modern adaptations of *Sleeping Beauty* work to change the morals of the tale. In *Sleeping Beauty*, the princess is passive throughout the tale; she does not have any control over her destiny within the fairy tale. In an era in which many value power and the ability of individuals to control their own destinies, *Sleeping Beauty* is considered to be problematic when viewed from these modern perspectives.

Contemporary authors have sought to reinterpret this aspect of *Sleeping Beauty* in light of changing social and cultural perspectives. Author and critic Marina Warner believed that fairy tales often change over time, reflecting the values of the society from which they emerge. Recent adaptations of *Sleeping Beauty* have replaced the sleeping princess with princesses that focus upon themes of empowerment and self-discovery. A modern example of *Sleeping Beauty* that has changed the morals of the story is the 2014 Disney film entitled *Maleficent*. In this film, the once-bad fairy is given a modern retelling of her motivations and the reasons for her actions and beliefs. The narrative shifts from a simple conflict between good and evil to one centered on forgiveness and the process of healing emotional wounds between individuals. Cristina Bacchilega argues that "most modern fairy tale adaptations work to challenge the assumptions of the fairy tales of the past, while still preserving the elements of the tales themselves" (Bacchilega 15). Such changes to *Sleeping Beauty*, therefore, demonstrate that cultural memory within *Sleeping Beauty* is still alive and active within the modern age.

The examination of adaptations of *Sleeping Beauty* inevitably draws attention to the role of Disney and its reinterpretations of Grimm fairy tales. During the 20th century and even into the 21st century, Disney has become one of the most important and influential mediators of the cultural memory of Grimms' Fairytales. Disney tales are arguably more familiar to most audiences than the original tales of the Grimms themselves.

Disney is responsible for the adaptation of many of Grimms' tales to the modern world. For instance, many scenes of violence within fairy tales such as *Snow White* have been removed from Disney versions of the tales. For example, in the original tale, the queen who kills the princess's mirror is forced to dance in heated iron shoes until she perishes from the effort. This scene is omitted in the Disney tale, leading to a less disturbing ending to the tale.

The alterations to the original Grimms tales are indicative of how cultural memory has changed over time, as they generally work to reflect changing attitudes towards aspects like children's entertainment and morality. However, the inclusion of many symbols of the original fairy tales is still present in the Disney films, such as the poisoned apple, the magic mirror, and the two princesses involved in the story. Astrid Erll was of the belief that "cultural memory is often conveyed through media, and that those media often alter the memory of that culture of the past" (Erll 6). Thus, Disney's adaptations of Grimms' Fairytales are one of the best examples of this phenomenon. Furthermore, even tales like *Cinderella* have undergone alterations by Disney. For example, while the original Grimm tale focused upon the suffering of the characters and the eventual justice of the higher powers, Disney's adaptation of the tale works to change the focus to the dreams of the characters, their ability to pursue the life of their dreams, and the importance of romance in society. As author Linda Hutcheon stated about these adaptations, "they often work to create an idea of adaptation without replication of the original tales" (Hutcheon 7). While Disney's adaptations of Grimms' Fairytales are not copies of the original tales, they still work to reflect them appropriately for modern audiences. Moreover, because of Disney's global influence in the publishing and distribution of their films and media, Grimms' tales have become a part of global popular culture. As Grimms himself collected these tales as a part of the German culture, they have become a part of global cultural diversity.

As society continues to globalize, Grimms' Fairytales have developed into tales that are shared globally and adapted for various cultures around the world. These tales have become global cultural narratives due to the increase in globalization of the world's societies. Perhaps one of the first adaptations of Grimms' tales is that of the translation of the tales into other languages. Each translation of the tales into another language involves the adaptation of those tales to the language and culture of the audience. Aleida Assmann explains that "the circulation of cultural memory across time and space is actually one of the factors that ensures its survival" (Assmann 129). Grimms' tales are among the most globalized stories to survive into the modern world. As a result, their meanings have broadened to incorporate the cultural contexts with which they have become associated. For example, tales of *Cinderella* exist in cultures across the world, from the Chinese to the African, Middle Eastern, and Europeans. Each of these tales have adapted to their cultures and have incorporated elements of those cultures into their stories. However, they retain the same themes of injustice and reward for the minor contender.

The transnational circulation of fairy tales demonstrates their remarkable ability to accommodate varying cultural values and social realities. Julie Sanders narrates that “the ability of stories to adapt to different cultures is one of the reasons that they are able to spread across the world and become globally recognized” (Sanders 31). Thus, Grimms’ Fairytales have become a part of the global culture due to their adaptability to other cultures. Furthermore, globalization has also enabled the creation of different adaptations of the tales that challenge the assumptions of the tales of the past. For instance, many modern adaptations of Grimms’ tales include diverse adaptations of fairy tales, incorporating diversity into those tales that had previously excluded such characters. Through analyzing *Sleeping Beauty* and various other Grimm fairy tales as they have been adapted over time by various authors, companies, and cultures, it becomes evident that the adaptation of tales is a form of cultural dialogue between those cultures of the past and those cultures of the present.

The reinterpretation of fairy tales in contemporary literature creates a dynamic relationship between traditional narratives and modern cultural concerns. Vanessa Joosen was of the belief that “the inclusion of modern fairy tales into past enables audiences to form a dialogue between those tales of the past and the modern tales of the present world” (Joosen 42). Thus, adaptations of Grimm fairy tales work to enable audiences to form a dialogue between the tales themselves. For example, many of the modern adaptations of tales such as *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* work to change the role of the female characters within the tales. These adaptations work to reflect the changing attitude towards women and the importance of feminism in the modern world. The preservation of elements of those tales, however, enable audiences to still recognize those tales and the cultural memory of the audiences of the past. Thus, adaptations work to preserve elements of tales while also allowing for change to occur as a result of adaptation. As author Jan Assmann explained this form of adaptation, “tales and cultural memory must have both continuity and change; they are elements that survive due to their ability to adapt and change over time” (Assmann 41). Thus, Grimms’ Fairytales are able to survive into the modern world due to their adaptation to the modern world and modern audiences.

The analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates that Grimms’ Fairytales are reliant upon adaptation and transformation in order to continue surviving into the next generations of the readers of these tales. The tales continue to influence culture in the present day as a result of these adaptations to the tales. Through these analyses of the various adaptations of tales like *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty*, the findings indicate that these tales are able to retain their importance despite the changes in their stories. The themes that exist within these tales continue to correlate with the survival of cultural memory as discussed by Jan Assmann. Additionally, it was also discovered that many of these tale adaptations included changes to the gender roles of many characters in the stories, as well as changing the morals that were featured within the tales. Furthermore, many of these tales have spread across the world through translation, indicating the

globalization of these tales and their shared cultural memory with the remainder of the world.

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that Grimms' Fairytales have endured into the present day due to their ability to transform and adapt to the world in which they are read. Grimms' Fairytales' survival is reliant upon the ability of their tales to be adapted into different forms and to remain active and meaningful for each of the generations of readers. Thus, the verdict of this chapter indicates that Grimms' Fairytales continue to endure as tales that can transform and adapt to the cultures from which they emerge, ensuring the preservation of those tales and memories across time and cultures.

5. Conclusion

This study has shown that Grimm's Fairy Tales are representative of the dynamic character of cultural memory as they are continually transformed from the oral tradition into culturally adapted and globalized narratives. The study was analyzed with the Cultural Memory Theory of Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann which indicated that cultural memory is not static but is a process that is formed through adaptation and reinterpretation. This is particularly significant because these stories have been passed down from German folklore into literature and on to Disney movies and modernized versions, showing that narratives can maintain their symbolic basis while adapting to new cultural norms and audience desire.

The study also shows that adaption is not a process of cultural replacement but of cultural continuity. Today, themes, characters and moral views are often altered and transformed, but themes, characters and moral views are still passed on from the original tales. As they spread around the globe, they have become transnational memory texts linking a variety of societies and retaining traces of their cultural origins. In conclusion, this study shows the timeless nature of Grimm's Fairy Tales as an ongoing process of reinterpretation and adaptation across time and place, to reveal the vitality of cultural memory in the context of an ever more interconnected world.

Moreover, the results reveal that the durability of Grimm's Fairy Tales is due to their high level of adaptability which allows them to exist in the present while still connecting with the past. The new adaptations are a reflection of social, ideological and aesthetic issues of their historical era, and demonstrate the dynamic process of how narrative and culture are interconnected. In this study, it is also strengthened that Cultural Memory Theory is an appropriate tool to analyze the way in which literary texts handle continuity and transformation at the same time. The focus on the relationship between preservation and reinterpretation opens the door to wider debates on the possible evolutionary trajectory of cultural heritage in the context of adaptation, and invites further comparative analyses of the global development of traditional narratives in different cultural contexts.

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