

The Sorcery of Stories:

The Brothers Grimm & the “Golden Network” of Fairy Tales

I am honored beyond words, but on this occasion, *Sprachlosigkeit* is, of course, not an option. Nor is this the time to enact a *Sprachkrise*, and so I want to begin by expressing my deep appreciation to all of you here today, and also to your distinguished President, to Marion Schmaus and her colleagues, and to the Jury for the Prize. I was heartened by the vibrant energy and deep commitment to scholarship on display at the Hard Facts Workshop. The presenters taught me much about swan maidens and selkies, *Stiefkinder* and *Stiefel*, Brentano and Benjamin, disability and agency, as well as about *Das kalte Herz* in its various iterations. I am reminded of the value of what was described by Clemens Brentano in a letter to Friedrich Carl von Savigny. Filled with enthusiastic optimism about the future, he could not wait to inhabit what he described as “ein Haus voller Wissenschaft, Poesie, Liebe und Geselligkeit.”

Brentano’s utopian ideal seemed to be realized in the Workshop led by Marion Schmaus, who fostered in all of us a sense of the possibilities of *Symphilosophie*, collaborative adventures in exploring meaning and making sense of the world. For me this was an especially magical counter-narrative to the hard facts and social realities of daily life in the United States today, a welcome respite from the hermeneutics of suspicion and the challenges of warding off a heightened sense of anxiety about what lies ahead.

Let me continue in a positive vein and say a few words about the Brothers Grimm and why I am particularly honored by a Prize awarded in their name. They have been my cultural heroes since age five, when my sister read me stories from a book called *Die schönsten Kindermärchen der Brüder Grimm*, illustrated by Paul Hey. Neither one of us knew German,

but, inspired by the illustrations, my sister, two years older, told me stories about Little Red Riding Hood, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White. It was only years later, as a graduate student at Princeton, that I began (and I hope you will not think me arrogant) to think of them as kindred spirits, for her were two of the most *bookish* people imaginable, plague by *Lesesucht*, as Wilhelm Grimm once put it. I came across that particular pathology while looking at the marvelous *Grimm Welt* exhibits, and I want to thank Peter Stohler for inviting me to experience the magic of that playground, if I can call it that, in Kassel. It was there that I discovered, on a placard, Wilhelm Grimm's anxiety that he and his brother were both addicted to reading. Being a bookworm myself, I found myself deeply moved by his fears about what in the end was an accomplishment and triumph in many ways. And so this talk is in many ways my tribute to the brothers' commitment to language, to story, and, above all, to the power of the *word*.

Why are we addicted to stories, and especially to fairy tales, with their high coefficients of weirdness? We even tell ourselves stories at night, making things up and creating outlandish fictions that are sometimes not repeatable. And in the morning, we try to make sense of the dreamwork we engage in during the night. As Bruno Bettelheim told us some years ago in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), a book that changed the way adults viewed the violence in fairy tales, we need symbolic stories to help us navigate the real. But stories do additional cultural work. They take us forward, giving us a path into the future, but also show us the way back in time. They offer a way of connecting with our ancestors, with ancestral wisdom, something that Toni Morrison understood when she admonished her readers to "Listen to the ancestor." (She herself drew on that ancestral wisdom in her "talking books," retelling myths about flying Africans and taking up the trope of the sticky figure, in novels ranging from *Song of Solomon* to

Tar Baby.) And most of us are all ears when we hear the stories from long ago and far away, particularly those that are all in the family, as fairy tales inevitably are.

There is a moment in the biopic, *Tolkien* (2019), when a professor of philology at Oxford explains how words work their magic. “A child points, and he’s taught a word.” Over time, that word (“oak” in this case) comes to be invested with meaning. “The boy stands beneath its branches for shelter; he sleeps under it; he passes it on his way to war; a spirit may have dwelt in its trunk; its wood may have been used to build boats; its leaves are carved on monuments.” “All this,” we are told, “the general and the specific, the national and the personal, all this, he knows and feels and summons somehow, however faintly.” In other words, words live, breathe, and resonate—they build worlds. The same holds true for fairy tales, which work their magic as they evolve, adding new layers as they slough off some of the old. Do I need to add here, that no one knew that better than the Brothers Grimm?

In his 1936 essay “The Storyteller,” Walter Benjamin praised artisanal craft, emphasizing its layered beauty. “Miniatures, ivory carvings crafted to the point of perfection, stones perfectly polished and engraved, lacquered objects or paintings in which thin, transparent layers are put on top of each other—all of these products of sustained effort required sacrifice and have rapidly vanished.” “Snow White,” “Rapunzel,” and “Jack and the Beanstalk”: these stories all have a long, complex, stratified history. They link us with our past, the ancestors who once told the stories that we now make new so that they become relevant to the lives of the next generation. They are characterized by what literary critics call “palimpsestic memory” and capture traces and smudges of a world that might otherwise be lost to us.

Stories help us navigate the real, and they put us in touch with ancestral wisdom, creating what Benedict Anderson called “imagined communities.” But they also transcend the national,

creating what the American folklorist William Wells Newell described as “the golden net-work of oral tradition,” a complex grid that links the Old World with the New. He understood the value of local traditions, but he was also deeply invested in showing linkages and connections among nations. For him, it was the imagination that united all nations—the British, the French, the Chinese, the Indian. Newell knew where of he spoke, for in the 1930s you might come across a story like the one below, recorded by an African American folklorist. The story is called “The Wicked Mother.”

Once there was a woman and she had three children. And she had a little young baby, it didn't have anything to eat. So she killed the baby. The husband came in. He was in the habit of goin' to kiss his baby first thing. So the wife saw him and said, “Hurry up an' eat.” So she hurried up her husband to the table. He and the two little girls ate the dinner. The father said, “Um-m-m, -- had a nice dinner today.” The wife said, “Yeh.” Finally two little birds came in the room and said, “My mama killed me, my papa eat me, my two little sisters sucking my bones.” Papa said, “What does that mean?” The mother said, “Shoo out o' here, you little birds!” But the birds didn't pay no 'tention. They said the same thing again: “My mama killed me, my papa eat me, my two little sisters sucking my bones.”

Who will not hear strains of “Der Machandelboom,” as it appeared in the Grimms’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*? Just how did the homicidal woman who serves her son up to his father for supper migrate from Pomerania in Germany—where the Romantic painter Phillip Otto Runge wrote it down—to the Deep South of the United States, where people once enslaved told the story of a savage mother who feeds her child to its father. I am reminded here of how the

French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss famously pointed out that “the human mind thinks everywhere alike,” and of course we can think of many mythical analogues with feasts of flesh. The world of mythology is famously round and there is a sort of “intimate solidarity” that appears between “not only all the myths of a single people, but of their myths with those of a neighboring people,” as Lévi-Strauss added.

I want to turn now to a question we ask ourselves in the United States: Just how did German folklore become “our” folklore, even as indigenous tales—Native American lore and African American folktales, which were once “ours,” become “theirs,” orphaned and abandoned until folklorists like Zora Neale Hurston and writers like Toni Morrison took up the challenge of resurrecting the voices of their ancestors. How did this happen and what led to the success of *German* folklore, turning the Grimms into a transnational success story that supplanted local traditions to become culturally dominant?

When the Grimms’ published their collection of fairy tales, not many stood up to cheer the enterprise. One critic denounced the large quantities of “the most pathetic and tasteless material imaginable” (“eine Unmenge der elendesten, abgeschmacktesten Zeuges”). Another cautioned that this was not a book to put into the hands of children. A third (Heinrich Voß) was shocked by the crude language of the folk and denounced the collection as “real junk” (*Schund*). And finally, August Wilhelm Schlegel and Clemens Brentano felt that a bit of artifice would have gone a long way toward making the tales more appealing: “If you want to display children’s clothing, you can do that quite well without bringing out an outfit that has buttons torn off it, dirt smeared on it, with the shirt hanging out of the pants.” (“Will man ein Kinderkleid zeigen, so kann man es mit aller Treue, ohne eines vorzuzeigen, an dem alle Knöpfe heruntergerissen, das mit Dreck beschmiert ist, und wo das Hemd den Hosen herausträgt.”)

Future editions ought to state that the book was for parents, who can select stories for retelling (“Als ein Buch, das Kindern in die Hände gegeben werden kann, darf man jene Sammlung aber keineswegs ansehen”).

Cleaning up the *Kinder und Hausmärchen* was a task that the Grimms took seriously over the decades, as they progressively adapted, revised, edited, polished, standardized and miniaturized the stories to develop what came to be known as a fairy-tale style, a child-friendly way of telling a story. They mastered the art of the compact form, taking baggy stories from an oral tradition (often filled with redundancies, repetitions, and lapses in logic) to create a *Buchmärchen*, something between the *Volksmärchen* and *Kunstmärchen*--a hybrid genre that captured oral traditions in a literary style.

Over the years through successive editions, the two brothers took the advice of critics and removed allusions to pregnancy (Rapunzel’s clothes no longer “don’t fit” or get “tight” after visits from the prince) and Hans Dumm, who can impregnate women just by looking at them, is banned from the collection. The cruel, biological mother in “Hansel and Gretel” was turned into a stepmother to preserve the sanctity of motherhood. The brothers no longer insisted on fidelity to oral traditions, but admitted that they had taken pains to remove “every phrase unsuitable for children.” Furthermore, they expressed the hope that their stories could serve as a “manual of manners” (*Erziehungsbuch*).

What the Brothers Grimm had begun as a project with distinctly nationalistic aspirations ironically turned into a cultural heritage that moved in the direction of creating an international repertoire, a shared body of stories that acquired a recognition factor beyond the Grimms’ wildest dreams of commercial success. The decision to reorient the tale to young audiences was,

whether consciously or not, a bid also to take early advantage of the rise of print capitalism –(one of the constitutive features of Benedict Anderson’s imagined communities) and the growing market for child-friendly books designed less to warn and punish than to expand the imagination.

German Popular Tales, the first British translation of tales selected from the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, appeared in 1823 with a frontispiece showing a man reading from a book to a multi-generational audience. The “popular” tales in the collection were, in a sense, for the people, designating adults as much as children as the implied audience. What we see is a communal setting with a responsive audience absorbed in the humor and burlesque violence of the stories. But the frontispiece also implies that stories from an oral tradition have migrated into print culture, now part of a set literary script rather than an improvised public performance. The frontispiece for the second volume spoke volumes about the afterlife of the Grimms’ tales. We are not in an inn or tavern, but in a domestic space, with a granny figure sitting by a roaring fire, telling tales to an enraptured audience of children. Laughter and mirth have vanished, along with the adventurous, inventive, and imaginative excitement of the “What ifs?” that animated the scene in the frontispiece for volume one. Suddenly we are in the domain of “Or else!” witnessing a moment when fairy tales are recruited less for entertainment than for disciplinary and educational purposes, as we discover when we look at nineteenth-century scenes of storytelling with crones pointing their finger to make a moral point to a group of children who are rarely smiling or laughing and often cowering in fear or just plain bored. These scenes tell us much about the implied audience for the tales as well as the implied source for the lore conveyed in the printed pages that follow.

German Popular Stories, brilliantly illustrated by George Cruikshank, inspired the Grimms to produce a compact edition of the tales, which appeared in 1825. The success story of

the British volume was deeply gratifying for scholars who were accustomed to sales in the double digits for books like *Die deutsche Heldensage* or *Über deutsche Runen*. Miniaturization paid off, and the compact edition quickly outpaced the sales figures for its multi-volume rival. Meanwhile, in the United States, a version of *German Popular Stories* was published in Boston in 1839: *Gammer Grethel; or, German Fairy Tales and Popular Stories, from the Collection of MM. Grimm and Other Sources*. “Gammer Grethel,” a farmer’s wife who lives in Germany according to the book’s preface, becomes the source of the tales, with her budget of “strange stories.”

Just two decades later, *Grimm’s Goblins* was published, with the subtitle: “a collection of fairy tales for the young.” The preface highlighted the importance of imagination and the emphasized that the stories could be “adapted” for children. Fairy tales had found a new home in culture of childhood. The power of the nationally distinctive German *Märchen* now resided in their *transnational* status—your folklore became British folklore and then North American folklore. This was a move shadowed by the even more powerful annexation of the tales in the United States, once Walt Disney developed & refined a new visual delivery system for fairy tales, a portal that has attained global dominance.

Disney’s appropriation of the fairy-tale corpus coincides with a new emphasis on the role of imagination in the agenda of education in the United States. In the preface to *Fairy Tales Every Child Should Know* (1905), a collection that included many Grimm tales, US educator Hamilton Wright Mabie argues that German fairy tales should be brought into the orbit of the educational curriculum: “Fairy tale outranks arithmetic, grammar, geography, manuals of science; for without the aid of the imagination none of these books is really comprehensible.” Fairy tales also give us “the young imagination of the race,” and they have a special appeal for

children who have “not only a faculty of observation and aptitude for work . . . [but] also the great gift of imagination.”

Imagination is also, of course, precisely the term that Disney Studios used over a century later to validate the uses of enchantment and to create, through what is now termed Imagineering,” a new portal to the world of wonderlore. Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, inspired by a German fairy tale, was the first feature-length animated film and was dubbed into ten languages and distributed to forty-six countries, including Germany, where it became one of the Führer’s favorite film.

Reviewing the film shortly after its premier in 1937, *The New York Times* commended the genius of “Mr. Disney’s Snow White and her quaint little friends”: “In their innocence it never occurred to them that there were such things as national boundaries, opposing systems of government, wars or threats of war.” Instead, as “basic folklore,” they generate “a universal human sympathy.” They have become “folk-films,” the article adds, without a flash of recognition that the folk-film aimed for something diametrically opposed to the intentions of the *Volk-Film*. “As folktales were once passed from tribe to tribe and nation to nation, so that few societies have lacked something resembling the Cinderella story, or the Aladdin story, so we may have folk-films.” In other words, American folklore was made new *and universal* with an animated film that had as its source a German fairy tale.

It is not surprising that the colossal commercial success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* also gave rise to competition, with new spins on the Snow White story springing up in a range of media, each seeking to establish its own niche. The Disney film offers a spectacular example of transmediation, with the story migrating to new platforms, taking advantage of multiple delivery systems. There are Snow White musicals, such as *Snow White and the Three*

Stooges, X-rated productions ranging from *Snow White and the Seven Perverts* to *Stories Our Nannies Don't Tell*. There are animated sequels such as *Happily N'Ever After* (2007) and there are fairy-tale productions for children, along with parodies, prequels, reboots, and sequels. The Walt Disney Company exploits its own success on a regular basis, with productions such as Rupert Sanders's *Snow White and the Huntsman* and the ABC series *Once upon a Time*. There are nostalgic re-creations of the story as it was once told, but also a host of critical and creative adaptations, often aiming for the multi-generational audiences captivated by fairy tales in times past.

In 1943, Warner Brothers released a short cartoon parody of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, one that has been disavowed and repudiated today but that enjoyed some success when it was released. Bob Clampett's *Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs* (the original title was *So White and de Sebben Dwarfs*) disrupts and subverts Disney's film in a way that shocks viewers, for the film traffics in and perpetuates racist stereotypes of African Americans. Clampett's film defamiliarizes Disney in ways that make it impossible to see the 1937 film as culturally innocent. Among many other things, it calls attention to the formulaic, seemingly fixed color-coding of the story. It is here that we would do well to emphasize that Disney added "skin" to the "white as snow" attribute, ensuring that the innocent heroine would be enshrined as a young white girl and that the color of her skin would be a prominent feature of her beauty.

The deeper irony of Disney highlighting, in the 1930s, whiteness by fetishizing a fair-skinned heroine from a Nordic pantheon should not be lost on us. By changing Snow White to Coal Black, Clampett's film, almost like the negative of a photograph, reveals just how profoundly our understanding of that figure is shaped by the girl's name and the attributes ascribed to her. Suddenly it dawns on us that it is no coincidence that the Disney film found

favor with political leaders of the Third Reich. As we shall see, the movie was appealing to them not just on aesthetic grounds but also for ideological reasons, for here was an innocent, white-skinned heroine preyed on by the forces of darkness and evil. The name Coal Black is charged with intense meaning, and a look at the cultural meaning of blackness goes far toward unpacking the complexities of a cartoon parody so deeply offensive that Warner Brothers tried hard to bury it.

We can begin unpacking the cartoon's color-coding with Greco-Roman associations of black with death and the underworld as well as of Christian hermeneutic traditions that affiliated blackness with sin and with the devil. That legacy is still with us today. "From the simplistic, but readily accepted idea that black is the sign of death and therefore of sin, it was easy to go on to the more dangerous idea that the man whose color was black was a menace, a temptation, a creature of the Devil," David Goldenberg writes in a classic essay on racism, color symbolism, & color prejudice. The Grimms themselves, given the intellectual surround and spiritual circumstances in which they grew up, were hardly immune to these cultural associations. In their commentary to "The White Bride and the Black Bride"—a tale in their collection that polarizes chromatic oppositions in stark terms—they refer to the "simple opposition of blackness and whiteness for ugliness and beauty, sin and purity," as well as for the contrast between night and day. Moral and aesthetic categories are collapsed and chromatically coded, with the result that Snow White's name immediately broadcasts innocence and beauty, notwithstanding the fact that she is not fair-haired but rather has hair black as ebony wood.

Combining "snow" with "white" produces an excess of meaning that serves as a buffer for the girl's black hair. Red, white, and black are not only the colors of poetry, as Jacob Grimm put it, they also operate as powerful signals for constructing meaning in a fairy-tale universe

that aligns whiteness with beauty, innocence, and light and blackness with what is ugly, sinful, and dark. Instead of opening by pointing to the cultural authority of a written source (as is the case in Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, with pages turning as a voice-over reads the story), Clampett's cartoon situates "Mammy" before a roaring fire, responding to a child's request for a story. With off-color gags, ribald language, and riotous sexuality on display, the film is meant less for the young than for war-weary adults craving distraction in anarchic humor. It unsettles and disturbs, and it does so in ways that dare to question the story as it has been handed down to us. At the same time, it reveals that a war fought against Nazi aspirations for a master race triggered a host of anxieties in the United States about skin color and racial superiority. Wartime cartoons, as the film historian Norman Klein puts it, had "more black caricature even than cartoons from the thirties, ripe as they were." Fighting German racism somehow immunized against awareness of homegrown racism: "Lazy 'negroes' and cute piccaninnies mixed in with the patriotic barrage against buck-teethed Japs and bulldog-necked Nazis," as one critic put it.

This burst of energy in the Snow White landscape left hardly a trace, for the banning of *Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs* (it was withdrawn from circulation) proved effective in making the cartoon virtually disappear. It would take several decades before serious and thoughtful efforts would be made to interrogate and complicate the color-coding in canonical versions of "Snow White."

Let me turn now to the afterlife of Disney's Snow White film and how it effaced what folklorists call oicotypes, or local variants, to become culturally dominant. Is it a good thing when we have a global Snow White narrative? Does that unite people around common values? "Story homogenizes us," Jonathan Gottschall writes in *The Storytelling Animal*. "It makes us

one,” he adds, creating what Marshall McLuhan described as a “global village.” After all, “technology has saturated widely dispersed people with the same media and made them into citizens of a village that spans the world.”

I want to use this opportunity to challenge Gottschall’s view by looking at dark side of the Disney film—how it made its way into poetics, politics, and philosophy. The renowned Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, who improbably actually knew Walt Disney (“we met like old acquaintances”), was one of the first to develop what could best be summarized as a love/hate relationship with Disney and his animated films. On the one hand, Eisenstein saw in the films “a joyful and beautiful art that sparkles with a refinement of form and dazzling purity.” But the filmmaker was also quick to perceive a dark side to Disney’s cult of beautiful forms --for much as the cinematic artworks produced in Hollywood seemed remote from politics, their very commitment to pure entertainment as well as their promotion of a culture of distraction raised a red flag, making them deeply suspect in ideological terms. The American filmmaker, Eisenstein declared, bestows on viewers, “through the magic of his works,” a strong dose of “obliviousness, an instant of complete and total release from everything connected with the suffering caused by the social conditions of the largest capitalist government.” Disney has created pure entertainment in its most sinister form, a “drop of comfort” in the “hell of social burdens, injustices, and torments, in which the circle of his American viewers is forever trapped.” Art has become a narcotic, an opiate for the masses as powerful as what Marx saw in religion.

Eisenstein was undoubtedly onto something big. It was precisely the power of Disney films to entertain, distract, and comfort that made them so popular in Germany during the second World War. The apparent lack of political or social baggage—their “cultural innocence”—meant

that these movies could travel with ease, crossing borders without incident from one country to the next. But Mickey Mouse and the *Führer*? Joseph Goebbels as a fan of Disney films? As unlikely as it seems, both the chancellor and the propaganda minister of the Third Reich deeply admired the cinematic imagination of Walt Disney. On February 5, 1938, Hitler asked his adjutant to secure a copy of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* for a private screening. It would later be publicly screened in Berlin and other German cities, and it is said that Hitler valued the film almost as much as did Goebbels, who declared it to be a “magnificent artistic achievement.”

The propaganda minister had made no secret of his infatuation with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, for the film was “a fairy tale for grown-ups, thought out into the last detail and made with a great love of humanity and nature. An artistic delight!” It is hard to imagine that ideals about Aryan purity did not play into Hitler’s and Goebbels’s appreciation of a film with an innocent white-skinned heroine as the “fairest of them all.” Ironically, Disney’s “skin white as snow,” more than the Grimms’ “white as snow,” was an ideological bonus for Nazi leaders, who also applauded the revival of folktales from agrarian “Volk” cultures.

It took Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer to recognize just how tightly controlled and agenda-driven Disney’s “magnificent artistic achievements” really were. The two German sociologists believed that the films made by the Hollywood studio were as much about social engineering as what The Disney Company now calls Imagineering. For the two German sociologists from the Frankfurt School, mass culture exists only to distract, soothe, and appease, offering “the freedom to choose what is always the same.” In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), Adorno and Horkheimer made a compelling case for the US film industry operating in the same way as the entertainment arm of fascist regimes, with monopoly capitalism creating passive viewers who mindlessly consume cultural products created by hegemonic institutions. Offering

the illusion of freedom and escape, mass culture, in a series of cleverly calibrated calculations, reinforces its own power by accommodating within it resistance to its own system: “The escape from everyday drudgery which the whole culture industry promises may be compared to the daughter’s abduction in the cartoon: the father is holding the ladder. The paradise offered by the culture industry is the same old drudgery. Both escape and elopement are pre-designed to lead back to the starting point. Pleasure promotes the resignation which it ought to help to forget.” Pleasure, in other words, has its perils, for it has designs on viewers, doubling back and perpetuating acceptance of the status quo even as it purports to offer an escape hatch.

The demonization of Disney as a tranquillizing agent feels in some ways exaggerated and ignores how the film also wakes us up, startling viewers with its special effects and jolts of melodramatic family conflicts. It gets us talking (patently so in the US, in a culture attuned to race and gender politics). *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is also a pioneering work in the field of animation, one that kept alive, at a global level, the tale of a beautiful girl and her stepmother. Which is told around the world even in cultures with people of color. The story also offers a meditation on competition in general, on the way the new supplants the old and how the next “version” is always more beautiful and attractive than the one before it, displacing its precursors. In a sense, the Grimms’ “Snow White” triumphed for over a century as our master narrative about mother-daughter rivalry, while Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* later became culturally dominant, a kind of global metanarrative that aimed to liquidate the competition and monetize the folktale for all it was worth.

Despite the cultural dominance of Disney, the story of a beautiful girl and her vain, jealous mother continues to surface in a seemingly endless parade of variants, in some ways as a form of resistance to a mass-culture phenomenon that insists on telling the same old story in the

same old way. Maybe the global village, which erases the local in favor of the global is not such a blessing after all. Each new of version of “Snow White,” after all, engages in what fairy-tale DNA does so well, endlessly replicating itself—in endless forms most beautiful and most wondrous—and producing new stories that compel us to think thru the psychological stakes in them.

I began with the Grimms, and I want to close with another genius, Albert Einstein, whom we admire not just for his intelligence, but also for his irreverence and willingness to challenge the *status quo*, to think more and to think harder as well as talk back. In a story that is apocryphal but that rings true in every way, Einstein responded to a woman who asked him about what was best to read children today. “If you want intelligent children,” he is said to have declared, “read them fairy tales.” And then he added, “If you want more intelligent children, read them more fairy tales.”