

# **Fairy Tales: Cultural Identity and Collective Memory under Threat**

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## **Abstract**

This paper traces the waves of European folk tales that have been washed ashore through the ages: from Viking imagery to Baroque satires, from the Brothers Grimm's representation of medieval corporal punishment to Walt Disney's reenactment of Biedermeier sensibilities.

Which is the authentic version of a fairy tale, the urtext of cultural identity, the true national heritage? A condition for such a referral would be a certain general familiarity of the folk text.

Is it the variant found in an old, dusty volume from the fifties of the last century, rediscovered in the house libraries of our parents' generation, with its lanky-grotesque illustrations, and the time-conditioned, politically correct post-war selection of stories? No, this is at least not the exact reproduction of the text corpus from the pen of the Grimms or Bechstein. So, do we need to address an historico-critical edition of the text and return to the strong dative case inflection of adjectives of Musäus, or the finite subordinate constructions of Bechstein, in order to claim a share of the true cultural heritage? Or do we need to admit that, after all, these texts are simply miscarried attempts of revitalising old, long forgotten legends in a restorative sense that allowed new ethnic identities to be constructed?

What if, as it seems to be the case with "Sleeping Beauty", a Disney version surpasses Perrault's or Grimms' version in terms of popularity? In such a case, must we speak of a threat to any local and national heritage? Is this some sort of a cultural imperialism that exploits and destroys cultural heritages, handed down orally or in writing, or is the globalisation of the fairy tale the logical continuation of its tradition and the only way of keeping the tales alive?

Key words: Fairy Tale, Cultural Identity, Collective Memory, Globalisation