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The Jew in the Thorn-bush: German Fairy Tales and Anti-Semitism in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: Musäus, Naubert and the Grimms

The telling of tales is, it seems, as old as the existence of humans: whether they are tales that explain nature and our being in it, tales that explain or justify the social order, tales that inspire one to heroic deeds or at least to admiration of such deeds, tales that merely entertain and pass the evening while one's hands are busy spinning real yarn or performing some other such mundane task. Violence, some would have us believe, is as fundamental to human nature as is the drive to narrate; thus it should be with no great surprise that we confront the existence of so much violence in the tales of very ancient origin that we still tell our children today. The 'purpose' of violence in tales is manifold, if indeed one can speak of a 'purpose' at all. Its effects on reader or listener are hard to predict, and are likewise varied. The changes over time in how violence is portrayed and utilized in tales are to some extent plot-able, while purpose and effect remain harder to pin down.

This essay looks at a particular time and place of the tale-telling tradition, namely the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Germany, at tales recorded or written by the well-known brothers Grimm and by two of their less famous precursors, Johann Karl August Musäus and Benedikte Naubert, with a view to seeing how these writers use violence in their stories. The narratives studied are all *Märchen* – that is, folk or fairy tales. They do not aspire to the cosmology of myth or saga, for example; they are meant for sheer

entertainment, whatever underlying messages or revelations about cultural values one may find in them.

A yet more important substratum underlies these tales written for fun. Already in 1774, Herder had called for a renaissance of German national literature by a cultural remembering of the folk tradition, in order, as he saw it, to save German culture from French ascendancy over it,¹ and the brothers Grimm both answered and gave new vigour to that call in their early nineteenth-century endeavours to collect, annotate and flesh out the *Märchen*, sagas, and legends of German folk tradition (as well as in their half-century work on a definitive German dictionary). Musäus and Naubert were not so outspoken in their allegiance to the Germanic cause, but yet their writing clearly falls in the time when such topics were popular.² Whether or not the folk material can really be said to be authentically ‘German’ (for a modern folklorist would take a very different view, noting the commonality of such material to all cultures and the propensity of it to travel by word-of-mouth or by written source), for these four writers/recorders of *Märchen*, their work had very much to do with a national literature, especially and explicitly in the Grimms’ case.³

An episode of Musäus’s *Legenden von Rübezahl* (in *Volksmärchen der Deutschen*, 1782-86),⁴ a strand of the plot of Naubert’s *Erdmann und Marie: Ein Nachtrag zu den Legenden von Rübezahl* (in

- 1 Johann Gottfried Herder, ‘Vorrede’, in *Werke in zehn Bänden*, ed. by Ulrich Gaier, 10 vols, (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1990), III: *Volkslieder, Übertragungen, Dichtungen*. The ‘Vorrede’ (preface) is to a collection planned in 1774, but Herder did not publish his *Volkslieder* (folksongs) until 1778–79.
- 2 Henn and others show how Naubert can be said to be answering Herder’s call: see ‘Nachwort’ (no author given), in Benedikte Naubert, *Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen*, ed. by Marianne Henn, Paola Meyer and Anita Runge, 4 vols (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001), IV, pp.337–76 (p.357).
- 3 For a thorough account of the collecting of tales in the eighteenth century, see Manfred Grätz, *Das Märchen in der deutschen Aufklärung: Vom Feenmärchen zum Volksmärchen* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1988).
- 4 *Legenden von Rübezahl*, in Johann Karl August Musäus, *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (Munich: Winkler, 1976), pp.171–275.

Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen, 1789–1792),⁵ and the Grimms' tale *Der Jude im Dorn* (in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 1815)⁶ serve as the focal point of this discussion. All three tales concern the nature of being German (and not Jewish or foreign) and include violence done or threatened to the outsider (Jew or foreigner). Furthermore, a broader look at the full range of tales by Musäus and Naubert and at the context of the entire *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* of the Grimm brothers reveals a gendered aspect to this tale-telling which may relate to attitudes towards outsiders and towards violence.

The Nature of Violence and Human Nature

Violence, then, appears to have a fundamental role in human nature; or at all events, it undeniably does in human existence. Violent acts of so-called providence, the forces of nature and the accidents that we meet with will always perplex human understanding.

But are we by nature violent beings? Since Freud, at least, this question seems almost superfluous. According to Freudians, civilization brings about our discontents; in Freud's 'hydraulic theory' of human emotion, we hold in our innate violent urges because we are afraid of the law (read: 'the father') who will punish us for any misbehaviour. We internalize this voice of the father as our own conscience and are unaware of the split in ourselves between the

5 Benedikte Naubert, 'Erdmann und Marie, ein Nachtrag zu den Legenden vom Rübezahl' in *Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen*, ed. by Marianne Henn, Paola Meyer and Anita Runge, II, pp.7–128.

6 Wilhelm Grimm and Jacob Grimm, *Der Jude im Dorn*, in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen gesammelt durch die Brüder Grimm. Vollständige Ausgabe auf der Grundlage der dritten Auflage (1837)*, ed. by Heinz Rölleke (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), pp.466–70, first published 1815.

desires we have and the laws we have thus learned to believe in.⁷ The theory has been compelling, and probably no thinker of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries remains unscathed by it. Konrad Lorenz told us it was in our biological make-up to be violent, B. F. Skinner said it was learned behaviour but that it always happened – so came around, paradoxically, to saying the same thing.⁸ Girard tells us that pressures build up not only in the individual but in the social group, so that the periodic sacrifice of a symbolic scapegoat, acting as a sort of lightning rod for our repressed emotions, is required in order to maintain the general peace.⁹ Another well-known version of innate human turpitude as ‘explained’ or rationalized by science is Dawkins’s so-called selfish gene.¹⁰

There is at least one dissenting voice to this general tendency to give such precedence to human aggression. Erich Fromm, in his *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, gives a different account of our motivations.¹¹ Violence is very much a part of our lives, he admits, but it is wrong to assume that absence of violent behaviour is simply always the result of a repression of a so-called ‘truer’ nature. Fromm resorts to typology to explain that there are some people who are by nature more prone to violence, due to their psychological type, and supplements this theory by stating that only certain social conditions will allow this predilection to become manifest. Thus, under certain conditions certain people will become violent, and the necessary preconditions to incite violent behaviour will vary from individual to individual. There was a famous psychological experiment in the

7 See, for example, Sigmund Freud, ‘XXXI. Vorlesung. Die Zerlegung der psychischen Persönlichkeit’, *Gesammelte Werke*, 18 vols (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1944), XV: *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, pp.62–86.

8 This discussion of Lorenz and Skinner is based on Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973).

9 René Girard, *La violence at le sacré* (Paris: Grasset, 1972).

10 Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976). Whereas Dawkins’s argument does leave room for ‘altruism’ as a goal, it is only by dint of overcoming nature that one can reach it.

11 Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*.

1970s in which behaviourists showed how easily most of their human subjects could be persuaded by an actor posing as a scientist to torture, as they thought, another person, actually an actor in a bogus electric chair. Much was made at the time of the low threshold of resistance these human 'guinea pigs' had to the authoritarian voice instructing them to throw the switch. Fromm looks at the same material and notes instead how deeply upset most of the supposed torturers felt. Most showed signs of severe distress, both immediately and when interviewed later. Even their laughter was nervous, fearful, and unhappy. In fact, says Fromm, only a very small number of the participants remained unperturbed by what they had gone through.

For Fromm, explanations of human violence as outbursts of bestial instincts remain unconvincing: no animals torture their own kind, nor do they commit 'murder' under normal conditions. The most violent of animals, the predators, kill only to eat, and they display none of the gratuitous enjoyment that depraved humans do. Even cats cannot be said to torture in the same sense as humans: they will play with any small and quickly moving object whether alive or not. Attributing malicious joy to them as they play with a mouse is thus sheer anthropomorphism. A look at so-called 'primitive' societies bears out this claim. Some are indeed very violent, but some are not, ergo, it is not a necessary precondition of human social existence that a very strong urge to violence is only barely repressed and always lurking just beneath the surface. Sometimes, it seems, violent feelings are actually very far away, and so the drive to violent behaviour is only one part of our psychological make-up, not the founding and fundamental one. Thus, without resorting to naïve dreams of Noble Savages, Fromm manages to make a space for other human drives and emotions, such as love, affection, the desire to be part of a social group, and to show that while violence is a very real part of our existence, it is not the one defining quality.

What is important about Fromm's thesis in the context of this discussion is the idea that violence is not simply inevitable, or even desirable, as a release that must come sooner or later. Violence for Fromm is always found *within* a social context, that is, the necessary

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preconditions occur when individuals and groups of individuals make certain choices to do certain things. The need to belong to a social group might be said to be more fundamental to human nature: when the drive for sociability goes awry, violence may happen, either 'bad' violence destroying the group or possibly 'good' violence making it cohere, if directed outward. The violence itself, malgré Freud, Lorenz, Dawkins and the like, is not the primal cause. The reason I invoke Fromm is because in the three tales I will discuss, two use violence to exclude the foreigner and one does not. I wish to argue that the two tales of violence are not more 'real' or more 'true', but merely follow from a different decision made as to what is real or true or important. I will make no detailed claims about the effects of violence in literature upon the reader, but I make the assumption of the fundamental and obvious certitude that the stories we tell affect us, just as each teller affects the stories that are told. Just as I will argue that we ought to read Naubert's version of what to do with the foreigner, I argue that we should give credence to Fromm's greater faith in human motivation.

Violence and the Fairy Tale

A modern reader may very well grow up hearing or reading an expurgated version of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, never hearing how Cinderella's step-sisters have their eyes poked out by the doves who have assisted the heroine, for example, or how Snow White's evil step-mother was forced to dance herself to death in red-hot shoes, or of various characters imprisoned in a barrel with nails driven into it and rolled downhill to a gory death, for it is no longer generally considered good for children to read such things, which serve only to frighten and to encourage *Schadenfreude*.

And yet, ever since Bettelheim's famous defence of the fairy tale, the battle has raged about the 'uses' of even such scenes of

graphic physical violence.¹² According to Bettelheim, children ‘use’ the ‘enchantment’ of the fairy tale to work through their own violent feelings, feelings which sometimes – or even usually – concern those nearest and dearest to them. Anger at Mother for denying something one wants, for simply being absent, or for being herself angry, finds expression for the child in the fairy tale’s evil step-mother. The step-mother can be hated while the real mother (in the story) remains loved, and on an unconscious level the child splits his/her own mother into these two figures, and thus allows him/herself to hate Mother as well as love her. Separation anxiety finds expression in a tale like *Hansel and Gretel*: the murderous rage the child feels at the threat of loss of the parents comes out in the punishment meted out to the witch. Moreover, the children in this story successfully learn to become self-sufficient and can bring riches back to their conveniently now-widowed father.

This is the second element of Bettelheim’s theory: the happy ending shows the child how to progress and, what is more important, gives the child the faith to believe that success is possible. In a related type of interpretation, Marie-Louise von Franz, the Jungian reader of tales, describes the function of the fairy tale as enabling the development of the Self through the acceptance of one’s own Shadow.¹³ Violent aspects of one’s own personality are not expurgated or repressed, but worked through by means of fantasy, and thus allowed to exist without being actually acted out in reality. The fairy tale hero or heroine is blessed and destined for success from the start, marriage to a prince or princess, the gaining of wealth, and the like are all symbolic representations of becoming a Self: hence, the form of the classic tale as we know it, where luck eventually brings success, no matter what the hero or heroine says or does.

Yet these accounts do not consider tales that do not fit the pattern set out, and they are certainly not valid, for example, for much

12 Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (London: Penguin, 1975).

13 Marie-Louise von Franz, *Shadow and Evil in Fairy Tales*, revd edn (Boston: Shambhala, 1995).

of what came after the Grimms and was very much inspired by their work (in particular Wilhelm's) on the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* collection during the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Maria Tatar shows how children's literature became extremely moralistic, associating violent punishment with even minor misbehaviour: obey your parents, or you'll become an orphan, do not play with matches, or you will burn the whole house down and kill everyone you love – the kind of narratives Hans Christian Andersen was famous for. This generally backfires, Tatar argues, and mostly because it misunderstands children's delight in the violent. Many children, it seems, simply love scenes of graphic violence, especially when a certain kind of poetic justice seems to accrue to them. I say 'a certain kind', because Tatar shows that it is very difficult to make this punishment in tales align convincingly with a rigid moral code. Children are as likely as not to miss the moral message, she says, and enjoy the violence for its own sake, much as they always have done.¹⁵

For it was not until the Grimms that the alignment between crime and punishment came to be seen as a necessary component. The tales the Grimms found incorporated violence in abundance, much of it random. The moral message behind them was sometimes quite unclear or unacceptable to their bourgeois ideals, and so they started to change the tales to conform with accepted pedagogy. A remnant of the random violence of older folktales (not necessarily intended for children) remains, however, in the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. Grimms' tales thus form a bridge between an older, oral tradition, where violence might be the expression of sheer *Schadenfreude*, or more frequently, involved the comeuppance someone met with for obstructing the hero or heroine, and a new type of tale, which had a

14 The Grimms' collection, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* went through various editions from 1812 to 1857. It is generally acknowledged that Wilhelm Grimm revised the tales over the years, making them conform increasingly to contemporary ideas of what was appropriate for children. The original collection was not however aimed at children.

15 Maria Tatar, *Off With Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

strongly didactic tone. Unfortunately, not only does the increasing moralizing backfire, as Tatar shows, (if the grown-up world is viciously retributive, the child is unlikely to learn a sense of justice and proportion), but it is also one-sided, punishing girls more harshly than boys. Ruth B. Bottigheimer demonstrates how in Grimms' tales, girls have to be obedient, silent and docile in a way that boys do not.¹⁶ Instead of producing the freeing sense of facing and overcoming adversity that Bettelheim and von Franz describe, these tales are seen as quashing children's inquisitiveness and their drive towards independence.

Thus, violence in folk tales has always existed, though its forms and purposes (where these can be determined or guessed) are various. The Grimms participated in a misplaced attempt to rationalize the violence, but not only did a remainder of un-rationalized violence persist, the brothers might be said to have perpetrated a kind of social violence by imposing their increasingly rigorous moral vision on children, in the guise of innocent entertainment.

The Jew in the Thorn-bush

The foregoing discussion has sought to place the tales to be studied in a historical and theoretical context. The nature of the so-called folk-tale was changing dramatically during the period when Musäus, Naubert and the Grimms were writing, and these changes are in part reflected in the three tales investigated: Musäus and Naubert do not exhibit the increasingly overt moralizing the Grimms do – they were not writing for children – nor do they follow the later ideas of 'authenticity', where the writer of the tale tries, as did the Grimms, to

16 Ruth B. Bottigheimer, *Grimms' Bad Girls and Bold Boys. The Moral and Social Vision of the Tales* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) and 'Silenced Women in the Grimms' Tales: The "Fit" Between Fairy Tales and Society in Their Historical Context', in Bottigheimer, ed., *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion and Paradigm* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), pp.115–32.

become as invisible as possible. On the other hand, Naubert stands out from her precursor and her team of successors in her portrayal of violence.¹⁷ This is where that the theoretical context may help us. Discussions of violence in the arts have in recent years ranged across the media and genres (usually, these days, focussing on film and television), but current scholarship on fairy tales studies provides, in a nutshell, some of the salient issues: does represented violence bring about a catharsis, does it incite to violence, does it inhibit freedom by making one fear to live, or is it completely harmless? While these questions will not be finally answered in this essay, the background may inform the assertion that Naubert's resolution of violence within her tale provides a different model from the supposedly humorous tales by her male counterparts.

I will take the last-published of the three tales first, the Grimms' *Der Jude im Dorn* (The Jew in the Thorn-bush). It is a simple tale, easily told. A naïve young man works diligently for little money; when he is finally paid, he goes out into the world and gives his money away to the first beggar he meets. The beggar grants him three wishes: a weapon for shooting birds which never misses, a fiddle that will make everyone hearing it dance uncontrollably, and the ability to have any request he makes impossible to deny. So far, so good: the simple but generous soul is a figure often found in fairy tales, and we expect he will now be rewarded beyond his wildest dreams. But things develop differently, quickly disintegrating into random and unprovoked racist violence. The young man comes across a Jew

17 Naubert named her collection (*Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen*) after Musäus's *Volksmärchen der Deutschen*, which was complete three years before her first volume appeared. The tale of *Erdmann und Marie* is the only one in which she explicitly refers to her precursor: *A Supplement to the Legends of Rübezahl* must refer to Musäus's version. The Grimms collected their tales from middle-class women such as Naubert: Wilhelm Grimm visited her in 1809, knowing her to be a writer and researcher into written legends and sagas, and he most probably would have read her published works. See 'Sich rettend aus der kalten Wirklichkeit': *Die Briefe Benedikte Nauberts. Edition. Kritik. Kommentar*, ed. by Nikolaus Dorsch (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1986), p.228.

listening to a bird singing, and generously offers to shoot the bird down for him. When it falls into the thorn-bush beneath the tree, the Jew crawls in to get it – and the young man begins to play the fiddle. Only when the Jew is reduced to a bloody state and his clothes are torn to shreds does the young man stop, and then because the Jew offers him all the money he has on him. In the next town, the Jew accuses the young man of highway robbery, a charge that seems reasonable to the officials there, and the young man is condemned to hanging. He asks for a last chance to play his fiddle and makes everyone dance to exhaustion until the judge promises him freedom if only he will stop. The Jew then unaccountably confesses to having stolen the money, which he says the young man has now ‘earned honourably’ and the Jew is hanged instead.

It is clear that this sort of tale would not be suitable for Bettelheim or von Franz to analyze in terms of the development of the Self, at least not without some considerable effort. Our young man is not slaying a dragon or overcoming a nasty witch, and it would be difficult to make a case for saying the Jew is a representative of something in the world or in the hero himself that must be overcome in order for the hero to develop. Unlike the step-sisters in *Cinderella*, or the witches in *Rapunzel* or *Snow White*, the Jew does not stand in the way of the hero’s happiness, and so it is hard to see why he needs to be removed. Instead of the acceptance and working through of one’s own violent tendencies in order to move beyond them which Bettelheim and von Franz describe in many tales, this tale appears to be an incitement to violence. Thus, not all of the Grimms’ tales will fit the same mould.¹⁸

The Jew in the Thorn-bush, interestingly, was chosen by the cultural historian Robert Darnton to show how German tales differ

18 It is possible to argue that any negative character is simply an aspect of the hero as such figures are in any individual’s dreams. However, the kind of racism exhibited in *Der Jude im Dorn* makes this tale much less susceptible of a positive psychological interpretation than tales which do not make the marginalized the butt of jests.

from French tales.¹⁹ In France, he says, the motif of three wishes, including an instrument to make people dance (or some other way to control their actions) has, as the butt of the joke, people in positions of power, such as priests or step-mothers – not marginalized scapegoats such as the itinerant Jew in the Grimms' story. In one tale, *Les trois dons*, the boy hero can make his step-mother suffer from flatulence every time he sneezes, much to her chagrin and his own amusement; when the priest tries to find out how the boy is doing this, the boy makes him dance in a thorn-bush with his magic flute. Darnton makes a case for describing the entire *mentalité* of two nations on the basis of this and similar comparisons. French tales feature characters like the trickster Jacques, the sly devil who overcomes the forces of authority; they are homey and fun. German tales tend towards the dark, mysterious and violent – the last of which tendencies we find here.²⁰

Musäus, writing in the 1780s, some thirty years before the Grimms, uses this same tale in an episode of his five *Legends of Rubezahl*. Rubezahl is a giant who lives in the *Riesengebirge* (Sudeten Mountains, literally 'Giant' or 'Giant's Mountains').

19 Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (London: Allen Lane, 1984), pp.9–72.

20 Bolte and Polívka, in their discussion of the tale, cite two written sources, from 1618: Albrecht Dietrich's *Historia von einem Bawrenknecht vnd München, welcher in der Dornhecken hat müssen tanzen* and Jakob Ayers's *Fastnachtsspiel von Fritz Dölla mit seiner gewünschten Geigen*. Both have a monk as the butt; only a later oral source has a Jew instead. Other examples cited – including, but not limited to tales in Germany – have monks, Jews and step-mothers as the butt. This undermines Darnton's claim that German *mentalité* tended irrevocably towards anti-Semitism and abuse of underclasses. Johannes Bolte and Georg Polívka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, 5 vols (Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), II, pp.490–503. It is interesting to note that *Der Jude im Dorn* is in the so-called *Kleine Ausgabe* (Small Edition) of 1825, a selection the Grimms thought appropriate for children (see Bolte and Polívka, IV, pp.475-76). See Hermann Hamann, *Die literarischen Vorlagen der Kinder- und Hausmärchen und ihre Bearbeitung durch die Brüder Grimm* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1906), pp.37–44 and pp.141–47 for changes made by the Grimms in the various editions.

Alternately kind and destructive, he is a natural or supernatural force for the humans to contend with. Musäus undertakes to explain how Rübzahl came to be so fed up with humans: it has to do with a vain, selfish woman who has betrayed him. Having been sorely disappointed in Emma, he next meets Klärchen who restores his faith in womankind (and thus, strangely, in mankind), for Klärchen is weeping for her fiancé, the tailor Benedix, whom she thinks has committed a crime for her sake. But Rübzahl himself has made the maligned young man look guilty, because the latter had called out insults at the spirit as he wandered through the mountains, mocking him, in particular, for his unrequited love of Emma. By enacting the role of the simple young man later found as the 'hero' in the Grimms' tale, Rübzahl makes an unprovoked attack on a Jew, whom he robs and beats within an inch of his life. He then reappears to the Jew disguised as a 'good Samaritan', and takes the man to an inn, where Rübzahl knows the real Benedix to be staying. He plants the Jew's money on Benedix, and when the Jew has the young tailor arrested, the innocent man looks very guilty. The mountain spirit only happens to come upon Klärchen, whose tears move him to plot the escape of Benedix and the couple are rewarded by Rübzahl for their love of each other. What happens to the Jew in the end is not told.

What is important for our purposes is how Musäus integrates this tale of Jew-baiting into the broader story of a bumbling, somewhat irascible but generally loveable giant. The episode recounted in this context is clearly meant to show what an amusing fellow Rübzahl is: exposed to the wiles of a canny woman, heroically protecting a defenceless one, Rübzahl off-loads his aggression (at Emma, for not loving him) against other defenceless people, first Benedix, then the Jew. For Benedix, it all turns out happily, at least, although he is the one who might be said to have provoked the attack, whereas the Jew just happens to have come by. For Musäus, it seems, the attitudes, the same as those expressed later in the *Jew in the Thorn-bush*, are wholly acceptable, and apparently quite entertaining. As a simple, good-natured spirit of the German landscape, Musäus's Rübzahl clearly sees women as objects of lust, affection and anger (and not as

individuals in their own right)²¹ and Jews as fair game for his aggression, without need for compensation. National and gender definitions are clear, distinct, and, for those not included in the inner circle of male Germanness, repressive.

Naubert does something very different in her tale, *Erdmann und Marie: Ein Nachtrag zu den Legenden von Rübezahl* (Erdmann and Marie, a Supplement to the Legends of Rübezahl). She is writing just after Musäus and clearly borrowing his title both for her four-volume collection and for this particular tale. There are two major differences between Naubert's narrative and that of her predecessor. Focussing on humans rather than the giant, Naubert has a heroine and a hero of equal importance, and each has a supernatural helper. Erdmann has Rübezahl, Marie has one named Mother Ludlam. Each therefore has a story to tell.²² Secondly, the theme of anti-Semitism grows from a minor episode in Musäus to one of the main sub-plots of *Erdmann und Marie*. Marie is, in fact, a foreigner, though English, not Jewish. She has to live in the Jewish quarter of Schweidnitz, however, and so is accused of being 'one of them'. She responds to Erdmann when he asks if she is Jewish, as follows:

'Es ist wahr, daß meine Herrschaft, fast so arm wie ich, genötigt war, eine kleine Wohnung in dem gastfreien Teil von Schweidnitz zu nehmen, der vor hundert Jahren denen aus Breslau vertriebenen Juden Zuflucht gab, aber muß ich darum sein was meine Nachbarn sind? – Ach so müßte ich ja besorgen, in meinem Erdmann einen Gespan von Meister Melchior, den Gastwirt, zu sehen, und dann fürwahr hätte er mir, wenn auch alles wahr wär, wessen man mich

21 I have discussed in detail elsewhere the gendered attitude in Musäus's tale. See Laura Martin, 'The Rübezahl Legend in Benedikte Naubert and Johann Karl August Musäus', *Marvels and Tales* 17.2 (2003), pp.197–211.

22 See also Anita Runge "'Legenden von Rübezahl'" und "'Erdmann und Marie, ein Nachtrag zu den Legenden von Rübezahl'" in Runge, ed., *Literarische Praxis von Frauen um 1800: Briefroman, Autobiographie, Märchen*, (Hildesheim: Olms, 1997), pp.185–200, for a comparison of Musäus's and Naubert's tales with regard to gender balance.

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beschuldigt, wenig vorzuwerfen.' Marie, die sonst so sanftmutige Marie, ward bitter!²³

Marie looks after an old Jewish man she has found in the wilderness outside the town, despite the repercussions at the hands of her fellow townspeople, who eventually drive her out. When the man dies, she makes Erdmann help her bury him, against her fiancé's wishes. But this is the fairy tale good deed that brings the good fortune in the end. The Jew is actually Rübezahl in disguise, and so it is Marie who reintegrates Erdmann with his natural, supernatural spirit. The two protagonists now marry and live happily ever after, moving to England to live there in a pleasant, helpful, welcoming community. The German community has been rejected as too xenophobic and unneighbourly. Whereas Marie's home community helps newlyweds, forgives debtors and gamblers if only they will change their ways, and celebrates communally and often, Erdmann has had to contend since childhood with greedy and nosey neighbours and later with a miserly, selfish boss, and not only Marie but the entire Jewish community is driven out by mob violence.

The 'pogrom against the Jews a hundred years ago in Breslau' is mentioned several times throughout the tale, constituting an underlay to the occurrences in the narrative present. The incident is actually repeated in Schweidnitz on an insignificant pretext when the Jews become angry because they think that Marie has lied to them. Her 'fellow Christians' do not call Marie to account, and they do nothing to try to ameliorate the situation. They seem only too glad for the pretext, as Marie's fellow citizens, with the exception of her now-

23 'It is true that my master and mistress, nearly as poor as myself, were forced to take a small dwelling in the hospitable area of Schweidnitz, which gave asylum 100 years ago to the Jews driven out of Breslau, but must I be what my neighbours are? – Ah, then I would have to worry that I see in my Erdmann a comrade of Master Melchior the innkeeper [a particularly unlikeable, selfish and miserly character], and then he would have, even if all the things they accuse me of were true, little to rebuke me for.' Marie, usually so sweet-tempered, grew bitter! (Naubert, *Neue Volksmärchen*, II, p.46).

dead landlady, have all been described in uncomplimentary terms. Naubert is not generally so anti-German. More usually 'Teutschland'²⁴ is the place of honest, hard work and diligence in her tales (as opposed to frivolity associated with France, for example), but she never supports xenophobia, and here positively takes steps to condemn the attitude, apparently in response to Musäus's very different take. Inclusivity and openness are what prevail in Naubert's tale: Erdmann and Marie go to live happily ever after in England, where they find a warm welcome amongst Marie's people. They do, however, come back to visit the few kind people who had worked at Melchior's inn with Erdmann. They represent a sort of fairy-tale cosmopolitanism not usually found in the genre.

Conclusion

I have compared three narratives – or four if Darnton's discussion of *Les trois dons* is included – in order to highlight different ways violence can function in tales. The basis for comparison is perhaps not entirely valid, in terms of genesis, because whereas the French tale and the Grimms' story are by and large products of the people, Naubert's and Musäus's, though based on folk material, are clearly authorial concoctions. Darnton's example shows an underdog who wins out: the kind of 'good violence' that Bettelheim so liked. The Grimms and Musäus have a different scenario, where violence perpetrated against someone lower on the social scale is presented as acceptable and even amusing. Naubert is closer to Darnton in having the underdogs win out in the end, but admittedly her literary product is a far cry from a simple folktale, and the psychological rounding she can provide in her tale of some one hundred and twenty pages cannot

24 An archaic spelling of *Deutschland* (Germany), now perceived as overly nationalistic.

really compare with the simple versions of the folklorists. She thematizes violence and it becomes in the *Neue Volksmärchen* a serious issue to come to terms with in a way it *could* not in the succinct products of folklore, and *does* not in Musäus's similarly longer tale.

Bringing to light the mere existence of a Naubert in the same place and at the same time as the other German authors discussed does throw into relief any conclusions drawn about their productions with regard to the nature of German *mentalité* or to the 'true' nature of tale-telling. Naubert's tales may at times be dark and mysterious, as Darnton said German tales are, but they do not have the attitude to violence he ascribes to them. Nor is a serious concern with violence restricted to this one tale by her. There is not scope here to develop these ideas fully, but other tales in Naubert's *Neue Volksmärchen* deal with violence in various and insightful ways. She describes the effects of violence on the weak and powerless, for example on women whose husbands are violent robber barons (in *Ottolie* and *Genoveve oder die Träume*) or, conversely, on women and children who are dependent on men who are not strong enough to use violence appropriately to defend them in a harsh world, as in *Das oldenburgische Horn*. This tale traces the growth of a young boy to manhood, whereby he must learn to use physical power and political authority to good ends, not for selfish gain or vainglory. His mother and aunt are anxious that he learns to be a hero, for their lives are at stake, due to the father who will not battle, but only fast and pray.

Violence in Naubert's tales always concerns the community, whether the family or a wider group. It never degenerates into laughter at the weak: the dehumanizing victimization of *The Jew in the Thorn-bush* and of the *Legends of Rübezahl* is simply the kind of episode that cannot happen here. Nor is it the case that Naubert's work is didactic, in the way Tatar describes for later children's literature. Whereas Naubert concedes the omnipresence of violence and the need for humans to cope with using it or being subjected to it, the violence itself is never a virtue, as it might be, say, in the case of supposedly just retribution against naughty children. It is a part of

reality, it definitely exists, but it is never justified, nor is it ever presented as *the* defining human characteristic.

Violence is the usurping of the right of the other to be an other. It is imposing one's own will on another; it is ignoring his or her subjectivity, and removing or preventing from coming into being the other's sense of 'Self', perhaps always in a pathological attempt to assert one's own self and sense of subjectivity – as man instead of woman, for example, or as German rather than Jew. Violence is always a reminder of our existence as bodies.²⁵ Torture makes excruciatingly clear that we are an arm that can be chopped off, skin that can be flayed, holes that can be raped, and so on. This reminder of our materiality is the reminder, too, of our mortality, and of our subjection to the laws physics and the passage of time. In Naubert, the fact of we exist as a 'mortal coil' is the fate to which we must submit, whilst doing our best to further the needs of the social group. Anger at this fate is never taken out on the body of an other, one on whom we might seek release or escape from the thought of our own mortality by flaying or murdering a scapegoat in our stead. Naubert's tales represent *humanity*, both in the sense of the generality of 'humans', (that is, the larger social group) and of 'humane-ness' (the beneficent behaviour within the social group). They do not ever seek to define the rightness of one person's existence by denying that of another. Despite a modicum of nationalism, it is never significant that someone is a German rather than an outsider, such as Jew; despite an adherence to contemporary notions of the proper roles of men and women, no one is ever defined as better – or worse – because of being a man instead of a woman.

To return to the discussion of Fromm at the beginning of this essay, I would say that Naubert does what Fromm does: namely she represents a world in which violence exists, but so do other human attributes, and the use of violence is by choice, not because it is inevitable. Human society is not built on the repression of the natural

25 See John Fraser, *Violence in the Arts* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

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drive to do violence, but by the affirmation of the will to live together. It is true that hers are not the simple but powerful fairy tales the Grimms recorded, but rather psychologized precursors of literary realism. However, Musäus wrote tales in a style similar to Naubert's, and yet he shares the primitive attitude expressed in Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. A choice is made, by author, by recorder, by the 'folk' as author, by reader, by society as readers, as to what constitutes an appropriate attitude towards violence in human interactions: is it a drive we cannot (and perhaps need not) resist, or the reality which we might as well learn to cope with? Benedikte Naubert chooses the latter.