

SPINNING THE WHEEL:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE USE OF FOLKTALES IN NAZI GERMANY
AND IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION FOR YOUNG ADULTS

by

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Abstract

This thesis compares a selection of contemporary Holocaust novels for young adults that rework Grimm folklore to the Nazi regime's interpretation and propagandistic use of the same Grimm folklore. Using the methodology of intertextuality theory, in particular Julia Kristeva's concepts of monologic and dialogic discourse, this thesis examines the transformation of the Grimms' folktales "Hansel and Gretel," "Briar Rose," "Aschenputtel" and "Fitcher's Bird" in Louise Murphy's *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, Jane Yolen's *Briar Rose* and Peter Rushforth's *Kindergarten*.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Brothers Grimm

"The Golden Key" was positioned as the final tale in all original versions of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Nursery and Household Tales* (*Kinder-und Hausmarchen*). Unlike the majority of the Brothers Grimm's tales, especially the best known, which have endings that are conclusive and "consolatory" (J.R.R. Tolkien's third function of the fairy tale¹ [68]), the open-ended nature of "The Golden Key" allows for many interpretations. A little boy discovers a golden key and casket buried in the snow; when he puts the key in the lock and opens the lid, the story ends. As the tale reads: "Now he's started turning it, and we'll just have to wait until he finishes unlocking the casket and lifts the lid. Then we'll know what kinds of wonderful things can be found in it" (Tatar, *Annotated* 354-355).

Folklore theorist Maria Tatar notes that the tale would also have worked well as an introductory text to the Grimms' collection, especially due to the persistent interpretation that the casket contains the stories of the Grimms' collection (Tatar, *Annotated* 353). Children's illustrator Wanda Gag's black and white illustration of the tale visualizes this, showing sheaves of papers spilling from the casket (Tatar 354). The

¹ In this thesis, the term "fairy tale" will be seen as referring to stories about Faerie, "the realm or state in which fairies have their being" (Tolkien, *Tree* 9). The Brothers Grimm's tales will be referred to as folklore, or folktales. The term "folktales" refers to orally told tales, whereas the term "literary fairy tales," on the other hand, refers to fairy tales conceived by single individuals such as those written by Hans Christian Andersen or Oscar Wilde. However, the Grimms' folktales were literary products, too, rewritten and reinterpreted by the Grimms, and should not be viewed as "pure" recordings of the oral tales. The critics cited in this thesis use folktale and fairy tale variously, but I have chosen the more inclusive term "folktale."

beginning of Anne Sexton's poetic retellings of the Grimms' tales in her book *Transformations* also interprets "The Golden Key" this way:

The boy has found a gold key
and he is looking for what it will open ...
He turns the key
Presto!
It opens this book of odd tales
which transform the Brothers Grimm. (2)

But the story itself does not say what the box contains, and so, many other interpretations are possible. I prefer to see the Grimms' stories, in themselves, as golden keys, each of which opens a box of imaginative thoughts within readers.

Indeed, the Grimms' folktales are perceived as golden keys by contemporary young adult novelists like Louise Murphy, Jane Yolen and Peter Rushforth, who use them to unlock the history of the Holocaust. During the Nazi era, including the period of the Holocaust (1939-1945), the folktales were used by the Nazi regime as keys to lock up, rather than unlock, minds and imaginations. Josef Goebbels, the German Reich's Minister of Propaganda (Kamenetsky, *Children's* 31), Alfred Rosenberg, the Chief of the Culture Community Office in the Third Reich (37), Dr. Gross, director of the Racial-Political Office; Bernhard Rust, Reich Education Minister (38), Ernst Kriek, chief theorist of Nazi education (40), Severin Ruttgers, an educator and editor and contributor to folklore publications (14) and Professor Hildebert Boehm, chair of Folk Theory in Berlin (42), all promoted and activated the use of German folklore as propaganda to try to close

minds to any way of thinking other than National Socialist ideology. As theorist Christa Kamenetsky writes:

Even though the Nazis promoted German folktale collections on an unprecedented scale, their brand of “symbolic” interpretation reduced their value to an instrument of National Socialist propaganda. Through the folktale’s emotional appeal they hoped to foster in children not only a love of home and heritage but also a love of heroic virtues that would serve as a basis for indoctrinating them in the values of the Third Reich. (*Children’s*, 81)

Before examining the Nazi regime’s use of the folktales and contemporary authors’ different use of them, it is important to examine the Brothers Grimm’s collecting and re-forging of the ‘keys’ to see how the Grimms’ tales themselves are products of their own socio-political climate, and why the Nazi regime turned to the tales for propaganda material.

Third in the list of all-time bestselling books, just after the King James Bible and the collected works of Shakespeare, the Grimms’ *Nursery and Household Tales* was first published in two volumes, the first in 1812 and the second in 1815. Although the first collection sold well, it garnered several negative reviews from the literary world and from other folklorists such as Johann Gustav Busching and Friedrich Ruhs, the latter emphasizing that “some are likely to disturb children” and thus should not be read to them (Tatar, *The Hard Facts* 15). Albert Ludwig Grimm, a collector of fairy tales himself, criticized the style and tone of the writing (17) and literary critics August Wilhelm Schlegel and Clemens Brentano echoed these points (16). In response to these critics, Wilhelm Grimm, in particular, began to flesh out and edit the texts for the

versions published in 1819, 1825 and 1857. He eliminated bawdy humour and blatant sexual allusions, but kept and, in fact, expanded many violent descriptions (Tatar, *Annotated* xlvi).

Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm's project of compiling German folktales, which began as a scholarly one, was an effort to capture the voice of the German people and conserve their oral literary culture. As Maria Tatar notes,

for the Grimms, the fairy tales published in 1812 and 1815 represented the 'last echoes of ancient myths.' These stories belonged to a pagan past, and it was the duty of scholars everywhere to preserve what had been passed down from one generation to the next as faithfully as possible. (*Annotated* 392)

Intent on capturing a distinctly German cultural heritage, the Brothers Grimm hoped the tales would promote resistance to the Napoleonic French occupation of Germany. By representing shared German heritage, the tales, they believed, would bring German people together, creating a national unity against the French foreign forces. Furthermore, as Wilhelm Grimm writes in his autobiography, "we were not just seeking solace in the past [by collecting the folktales], we also hoped that the course on which we had embarked would contribute somehow to the return of a better day" (Tatar, *Annotated* 392). Although this scholarly, literary resistance did not materialize, especially due to critics such as Johann Gustav Busching, who pointed out that their collection was not purely German and drew upon French and Italian stories (Tatar, *Hard Facts* 14), the political resistance to Napoleon did in 1813, just one year after the first publication of *Children's Stories and Household Tales*. Napoleon retreated from Germany after being

defeated by the Coalition of countries including Russia, the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Prussia and Austria.

To prove that the tales came from a united, strong Germany, the Grimm brothers had emphasized that the tales were told to them by peasants, the *volk*, although most were in fact told to them by women like Dorothea Viehmann, the wife of a tailor who, as Busching pointed out, due to her Huguenot heritage, was probably more familiar with French fairy tales than German folklore (Tatar, *Annotated* xxxiii). As Tatar says,

old myths die hard, and the notion that the Grimms' informants were cheerful peasant women—expert raconteurs who told their tales to children to lift their spirits and stimulate their imaginations—has a powerful cultural tenacity. In reality, many of the storytellers from whom the Grimms transcribed tales were from their own social circle. (*Annotated* xxxiv)

The idea of the *volk*'s power came from Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried von Herder. Rousseau, a Genevan philosopher of the Enlightenment, viewed the peasant as the key to a strong nation. In his essay "Discourse on the Arts and Sciences," he concluded that man is essentially good by nature, a "noble savage" who is corrupted by society and civilization. As Kamenetsky notes, Johann Gottfried von Herder, a German poet, critic and philosopher working in the late eighteenth century, was especially admired by the Grimms for his focus on the study of language and culture as the bonds that create a strong nation (*Children's* 5-7).

Although many folklorists, principally Christia Kamenetsky and Jack Zipes in North America, have studied how the Grimms' tales connect to German Romantic nationalism, as in the heralding of the *volk*, and how they reinforce patriarchal order and

gender specification and were re-written to exclude sexual aggression but to increase violence, fewer have studied the Grimms' anti-Semitism and their anti-Semitic tales, perhaps because this aspect is a black mark on these well-loved figures and those of their well-loved tales which are not anti-Semitic in content.

However, Ruth B. Bottigheimer, in the chapter "Work, Money and Anti-Semitism" from her book *Grimms' Bad Girls and Bold Boys: The Moral and Social Vision of the Tales*, does not shy away from this sensitive issue. Neither does Maria Tatar in the essays she includes in *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*. Both comment on a tale rarely seen in Grimms' collections nowadays, "The Jew in the Brambles," in which a Jewish man is portrayed as a thief and a cheat, and is the target of anti-Semitic scapegoating.

As Bottigheimer notes, the characterization of the Jew in the "The Jew in the Brambles" was not accidental, but "resulted from careful editing through the tale's history" (*Grimms' Bad* 139). The Grimms' own edits changed the lead character from "an old Jew" to "a Jew with a long goat's beard," a physical change intended to link him to the devil (139). Wilhelm Grimm's decisions to place "The Jew in the Brambles" as well as "The Good Bargain," another anti-Semitic tale, in editions of the stories in such a way so they would get maximum exposure, could be related to his friendship with the Christian-German Society, a group whose program was anti-Semitic and misogynistic. As well, a dream Wilhelm recorded in 1810 consists of motifs similar to "The Jew in the Brambles" suggesting that he may have heard the tale as a child or at least "its anti-Semitic cast ... paralleled similar unselfconsciously recorded feelings of his own" (Bottigheimer 141).

One reason for the scapegoating of the Jew reflected in both tales included in the collection is that it “fit neatly into preexisting Romantic anti-Semitic sentiments and meshed with subsequent anti-Semitic sentiments growing out of nationalistic resentment against a French conqueror who had enfranchised Germany’s Jewish population” (Bottigheimer 142).

Although they may have harboured anti-Semitism, the Grimms do not appear to have been motivated by the racism characteristic of the Nazi regime’s propagandistic retellings of the folklore or by interpretations of folklore found in works such as Maria Fuhrer’s *North Germanic Myths and the German Folktale*, as noted by Kamenetsky as a book which analyzes “ninety folktales of the Brothers Grimm from a new ‘symbolic’ perspective that endowed the age-old Nordic Germanic mythical traditions with ideological meanings promoted by the National Socialist Party” (*Children’s* 74). Indeed, it is troubling to find anti-Semitic tales among the Grimms’ collection, and more troubling to discover their racist biases. But there is a great difference between their collection and the Nazi regime’s interpretation and retellings of folktales. For example, unlike the Nazi regime, which promoted the tales as superior to the tales of all other cultures, the Brothers Grimm were interested in and respected the tales of other cultures. As Kamenetsky notes,

The poetic and scholarly contributions of the Brothers Grimm to international and cross-cultural studies are quite remarkable by themselves. Wilhelm translated old Danish and old Scottish ballads while studying their background, and in 1823, just one year after its original publication, he translated, together with Jacob, the *Fairy Legends of the South of Ireland*. (*Children’s* 6)

The Brothers Grimm should not be viewed one-dimensionally. Extremes which may characterize figures within their tales do not characterize them. However, it must be remembered, that not just “wonderful things,” but “horrible things,” too, come out of their iron casket of stories. Their tales are not timeless stories of enchantment, nor are they “pure” recordings. They are recordings that were re-written, influenced by the Brothers Grimm’s beliefs, agendas and by the overall socio-political situation, including their original purpose of collecting the tales for scholarly and political reasons, and their later purposeful tailoring of the tales to children to capture that literary market. As well, as Bottigheimer states,

[i]t was generally held in Wilhelm’s time that social stability rested on a stable family structure, which the various censorship offices of the German states wished to be presented respectfully, as examples put before impressionable minds might be perceived as exerting a formative influence. True to these beliefs, fairy tales consistently depict role constraints in the relationship between the sexes and they offer the growing child behavioral models including a regularly encoded gender antagonism. (*Grimms’* 20-1)

The Grimms’ tales, like all stories, were written in a particular context, for particular purposes, and reflect particular social codes of their times. Furthermore, contemporary authors who reinterpret these tales continue this tradition, as Jack Zipes argues in *Why Fairy Tales Stick*. They, too, have “a particular ideological perspective and style through which they wish to convey their message” (103). Zipes lists a number of feminist authors who are “more or less successful in revising and subverting [the] traditional patriarchal narratives [of the Brothers Grimm]” (103) including Francesca Lia

Block, Priscilla Galloway, Emma Donoghue and Jane Yolen. These authors, he notes, share “a greater awareness of the complexities of sexuality and gender roles and have sought to explore traditional fairy tales with a social consciousness and awareness in keeping with and critical of our changing times” (103).

Although in a later chapter in *Why Fairy Tales Stick* Zipes mentions contemporary authors, such as Tony Kushner and Louise Murphy, who have revised the Grimms’ tales to convey messages of anti-fascism (214-217), he does not say, as he does about the feminist revisions, what or if there is anything these revisions share. So what do these anti-fascist narratives share? Do they share anything at all, other than their anti-fascist messages? These questions have, so far, been unanswered by scholars and researchers in the world of children’s literature.

None of these contemporary authors, who will be discussed in detail later in this thesis, revise “The Jew in the Brambles.” Instead, authors such as Louise Murphy, Jane Yolen and Peter Rushforth focus on rewriting popular folktales such as “Briar Rose” and “Hansel and Gretel”—tales that, in the Grimms’ collections, do not seem to carry anti-Semitic messages. However, as the next section shows, these tales were indeed used to impart anti-Semitic messages by the Nazi regime before and during the Holocaust.

1.2 Folktales between the Era of the Brothers Grimm and the Nazi Era

In the time between the Romantic era, during which the Brothers Grimm lived, and the period of Nazi rule (1933-1945), literary thought ranged widely in Germany, and variety rather than uniformity characterized German children’s books. In the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) liberal and conservative thinking co-existed (Kamenetsky,

Children's 15-6). Fairy tales and folktales exhibited these different threads of philosophies. A variety of youth groups—the Union of Young Socialist Workers, the Communist Youth of Germany, Hitler Youth and the NS German Student League—many formed by the three political parties in Germany at the time (the Social Democrats, the Communists and the National Socialists), focused specifically on “developing special fairy tales” which would promote their ideas (Zipes, *Utopian* 9). Although it may seem strange that they all turned to folktales and fairy tales as a form of propaganda, as Zipes notes,

The fairy tale has always played a vital role in German politics. The oral folktales told by the peasants over the past centuries have always had a political and utopian aspect, and the literary fairy tales, which originated for adults and children at the end of the eighteenth century, were highly political. For instance, the romantic writers, who wrote mainly for adults, used the fairy tale to comment on the philistinism of the German bourgeoisie and the perversion of the Enlightenment ideals.... Moreover, many of the tales for adults and children contained allusions to the Napoleonic Wars as well as nationalist messages.

(*Utopian* 9)

Left-wing parties of the 1920s and 1930s focused on oral storytelling and emphasized realistic stories depicting actual living conditions of the working class (Zipes, *Utopian* 16). Utopian fairy tales written by progressive writers transformed old tales to fit with the changing times (similar to the postmodern, fractured fairy tales we see today). They also produced new proletarian fairy tales, literary tales that portrayed capitalism as

evil and an ideal future society based on the overthrow of class exploitation (in other words, upholding Marxist ideals).

In Germany, the National Socialist party's use of fairy tales, especially folklore, took root around the same time as Social Democrats' and the Communists'. In particular, the National Socialists' use of fairy tales, especially of the Grimms' fairy tales, was connected to their efforts to target the youth. As Zipes says,

Almost all political parties and groups realized after World War I that Germany's destiny would depend on the education and socialization of the young, and consequently the period between 1919 and 1933 saw the flowering of hundreds of youth groups, along with numerous endeavors to reform the public school system.

(*Utopian 4*)

These youth groups included *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth) which was formed in 1926, and the NS-*Deutscherstudentenbund* (the NS German Student League). There were also Social Democrat youth groups that formed – SAJ – the Union of Young Socialist Workers, and Communist youth groups such as KJD – the Communist Youth of Germany. Interestingly, the literary fairy tales written by Communist supporters and Social Democrat supporters were not “enthusiastically backed by [their] youth organizations” (*Utopian 23*). Instead all the youth organizations, despite political affiliations, consumed more readily and avidly the traditional fairy tales or the National Socialist tales that were chauvinistic and “connected traditional folk symbols and Nazi ideology” (*Utopian 24*). The reasons for this are by no means clear, but surely they were connected to the worldwide economic depression in 1929. The youth in the left wing youth groups, for example, “for the most part could not afford to purchase the books” of

the utopian fairy tales and fables of Germany's democracy, whereas many already owned the traditional tales (*Utopian* 23). And the left wing fairy tale movement was quashed completely once the Nazi regime came to power in 1933 and these tales would not re-surface again in Germany until the 1970s, forty years later.

1.3 Nazi Germany and the Use and Abuse of Folktales

"The Drayonslayer"

The old tales ring forth about a sleeping beauty. They sing about a satanic power and bring reports about witches and spindles.

They tell how a king came one hundred years later. He climbed the walls and took the power away from the curse by kissing Sleeping Beauty awake!

A knight came a-riding through sleeping Germany. He fought with hell and ran through the dragon's heart in the middle of the flaming mountain!

The knight of a special errand was endowed with wondrous power and he lifted the glorious German soul out of the cave of thorns. And all the people cried out: 'Heil!'" (Zipes, *Utopian* 25)

Written by Adolf Holst, one of the best-known poets of Germany's Nazi period, "The Dragonslayer" typifies the trend that began in the 1920s of connecting folktale symbols with Nazi ideology (Zipes, *Utopian* 24). Although they rarely rewrote classic folktales, the Nazis interpreted and strategically employed the Grimms' tales to promote agendas of racial supremacy (Zipes, *Subversion* 141). They manipulated the belief of the German Romantic era that folk tales represented a pure German voice. The peasants in the tales were interpreted by educators, writers and philologists as symbols of rootedness

in the Nordic Germanic past. Witches and other antagonists in the tales, such as wolves, were interpreted as non-Aryans. Positive traits of folktale heroes such as loyalty, courage, honesty, endurance under trying circumstances, and a readiness to fight against enemy forces, were seen as specifically characterizing Germans, since they believed the tales had not grown from a cultural interconnectivity, but from a purely German past. The Nordic Bronze Age, when cultural anthropologists believe German tribes first formed, spreading from southern Scandinavia to northern Germany, is the past they refer to. The folktale was “held up as the ultimate image of blood and ancestral inheritance; it was transformed into a prophetic of imagined national and racial virtues” (Emmerich 45). A Nazi interpretation of “Cinderella,” for example, emphasizes the marriage of the Prince and Cinderella as one of “pure” blood, their union being the perfect Aryan match:

And the prince finds the genuine, worthy bride because his unspoiled instinct leads him, because the voice of his blood tells him she is the right one. (Zipes, *Subversion* 141)

The “unspoiled instinct” is meant to refer to the prince’s Aryan German ethnicity as is the bride’s “worthiness.” She is the “right one” because she, too, is of Aryan German descent.

Particular traits of the Grimms’ tales were promoted during the pre-Nazi Weimar period in conservative magazines and annuals for children, including reinforcement of patriarchal orders, advocacy of “might makes right,” and promotion of the hero as someone “unique, exceptional, rising above all others in the tale” (Zipes, *Utopian* 11). Following the Nazi rise to governmental control, however, not only was progressive experimentation with folktales banned through censorship, these previous traits of the

hero in the tale were emphasized and even manipulated to glorify Hitler. Using the tales as a political tool to promote Nazi thought was the mandate of censors. Educators, under the direction of Bernhard Rust, the Reich Education Minister, and literary theorists were appointed by the Nazi regime to interpret and explore folklore (Kamenetsky, *Children's* 72). Magazines such as *The Application of Racial-Political Teaching*, as Bottigheimer notes, "contained an almost hysterical call to the teaching of fairy tales: 'No German childhood without fairy tales; no folk-specific and racial education without them!'" (*Grimms'* 22).

The Nazis ignored contributions such as that of the Grimms to comparative folklore and international mythic understanding. The Grimms' international understanding respected Herder's notion of *Urpoesie*, the study of the ancient poetry of many lands; the Nazis did not. As well, although many Grimms' tales do not have consolatory, conclusive or happy endings, the Nazis did not promote these unhappy endings, choosing to emphasize happy endings because they only wanted tales that "project[ed] the eternity of the German nation" (Kamenetsky, *Children's* 94). Happiness, in this context, meant following Hitler and his fanatical belief in Aryan German superiority. Censors chose from among the Grimms' tales, insisting that only the ones they selected and recommended for discussion in schools, at home, and in literary publications were genuine German folktales. As Emmerich notes, tales like "The Jew among the Brambles" became a favourite to promote (46). By promoting particular tales, and not allowing any other interpretations or literature with contrary opinions to circulate, the Nazi regime made it seem as if their versions and interpretations of the folktales were the only valid ones. They claimed their interpretations were truthful and natural, hiding

the fact that their process of manipulation of the folktales was anything but natural. In fact, what they refused to recognize is that no literature is pure or contains absolute or total knowledge. Even the tales collected by the Brother Grimms are social products, with agendas and manipulations, not pure recordings of an oral tradition.

In the short term the Nazi regime's effort to establish a link between their racist politics and the Grimms' folktales had some impact. In the long term, it was doomed to fail, for folktales are as ever-changing as the societies that produce them, constantly reforming to carry new messages and beliefs. These messages can be many things including hateful and racist, such as those of the Nazis, or redemptive, such as the liberating reworked folktales of some of today's contemporary authors.

1.4 Holocaust Literature for Children and Young Adults

In Germany following the war, due to the connection between folktales and the Nazi regime, the American Allies occupying Germany in 1945 banned the Grimms' fairy tales for a brief period of time (Zipes, *Utopian* 25). As Zipes notes,

the association of fairy tales in general and the Grimms' fairy tales in particular with the Third Reich was so strong that the Allied occupation forces banned those tales during a brief period for contributing to the barbarity of the Nazis.

Consequently, for a long time after World War II, there was little production or experimentation with fairy tales. (25)

Folktales and fairy tales were not viewed in this period as a potentially useful way to promote anti-fascist messages. Even now, with the publication of children's novels that do use folktales to convey anti-fascist messages and a sympathetic understanding of the

Jewish experience during the Holocaust, there is still much controversy over whether or not this is a healthy way to make sense of the Holocaust for children.

Whether or not there is *any* way to make sense of the Holocaust for children has been the debate among many children's literature theorists including Sylvia Solomon, Judith P. Robertson and Nadene Keon and Zohar Shavit.

Solomon, an education officer with the Ministry of Education and Training in Ontario, and the daughter of Holocaust survivors, writes from the perspective of a elementary-school aged child: "Please wait with these stories. Please wait until I know for sure that life is filled with joy, that people can be trusted, that I don't need to be afraid of the dark or of the neighbours.... Please wait with these stories until I am strong enough to hear them" (52).

Robertson, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education and the Institute of Women's Studies at the University of Ottawa, and Nadene Keon, graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa, take a different stance in their article, "'The Question Child' and Passing on Intergenerational Tales of Trauma: A Conversation with Elaine Kalman Naves," which discusses Naves' children's Holocaust novel, *Journey to Vaja*. They recognize parents' and educators' "desires to repress and desires to elaborate [the] difficult knowledge" of the Holocaust. However, their interview of Naves and their subsequent conclusions hint that, although there may be no one right "access key" to the horror of the Holocaust (47), indeed, dialogues and narratives about the history are necessary, since "the reality of the occurrence of the Holocaust in the world continues to cast a long shadow over the historical imperatives of the present" (47). Furthermore, it was through the creative process of writing her book that Naves herself

was able to come to terms with her family's history of the Holocaust, and to create for her children a way that "they can meet and love their ancestors through story form, and not just through the legacy of their loss" (47).

Similar to Robertson and Keon, Shavit, a professor in the School of Cultural Studies, Unit for Culture Research at Tel Aviv University, in *A Past without Shadow: Constructing the Past in German Books for Children*, believes that stories about the Holocaust should be written and told to children. She is very critical, however, of what kinds of stories are being told. In particular, she analyzes the award-winning German novels for children about the Holocaust from 1961 to 1999 and is highly critical of these books, arguing that too much attention is given to German suffering and that depictions of the true cruelty and suffering of Jews and others targeted by the Nazi regime are "dumbed" down, so as not to frighten children (287-8).

If these are not appropriate books due to their maligning of history, what kinds are? What kinds of Holocaust narratives have been commended by children's literature theorists? Have children's literature theorists found ways of measuring these narratives' value or appropriateness?

Elizabeth R. Baer in her article "A New Algorithm in Evil: Children's Literature in a Post Holocaust World" discusses how one can measure the effectiveness of such literature. In the face of Holocaust deniers, and educators who are worried that meaning or knowledge of the Holocaust "will be badly met with excessive distrust, easy empathy, resentment, voyeuristic obsession, impatience with pain, indiscriminating identification, or trivialization based on comparison" (Robertson 47), the combination of fact and fiction and how they work together have become crucial issues to look at in Holocaust literature

for children. Theorists have studied forms of narration used by authors to impart Holocaust knowledge. How do authors represent the reality of historical facts in a fictional narrative? Why might they consider doing so? These become especially pertinent questions when the fictional narratives use fairy tales or fantasy as a device to impart knowledge about the Holocaust, especially in light of how the Nazi regime used Grimms' folklore.

As Lydia Kokkola says, in *Representing the Holocaust in Children's Literature*, "the last two decades have seen an upsurge in attempts to make the Holocaust comprehensible to young people through novels, picture books and autobiographies" (1). In general, she observes, these stories take many forms and use many different techniques to "introduce the child to a world in which parents are not in control, [where] survival does not depend upon one's wit but upon pure luck, [and] where evil is truly present" (11).

In particular, a number of children's authors in America and Britain have told Holocaust stories, using and rewriting the Brothers Grimm's tales to do so. This combination of rewritten folk tale and Holocaust narrative (a narrative that makes antagonists of Nazis and sympathizes with Jewish suffering) has resulted in a new way of depicting the Holocaust. Whether this approach is successful or not has been the debate among many children's literature theorists studying Holocaust narratives, including Adrienne Kertzer, Evelyn Perry, Lydia Kokkola, Ellen Weil and Maria Tatar. As Tatar notes in her preface to *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*,

If the Grimms' volume was denounced, in the aftermath of the Second World War, as a book that promoted "bloodletting and violence" and that endorsed

“cruelty, violence, and atrocity, fear and hatred for the outsider, and virulent anti-Semitism,” it has, in an odd twist of fate, also become a book whose stories have been used, both in German-speaking countries and in the Anglo-American world, to work through the horrors of the Holocaust. (xx)

But why have the folktales been used, as Tatar says, “to work through the horrors of the Holocaust”? According to Tatar, the powerful association between the folktales and the cultural notion of Germany, as well as the folktales’ ability to “capture human drama and emotion in its most extreme forms and conditions” makes them an “appropriate narrative vehicle for capturing the melodrama of historical events that defy intellectual comprehension” (xxii). Others, however, do not see folktales as appropriate narrative vehicles for such sombre history.

The main novel studied in depth by a wide range of children’s literature theorists is Jane Yolen’s *Briar Rose*. The conclusions about folktales and holocaust narratives that emerge from the studies of *Briar Rose* can be grouped into two categories.

The first group sees the folktale function as a comedic and consolatory narrative device to introduce readers to horrific history as easily as possible. This approach establishes the folktale as a light and consolatory device. This is the viewpoint of theorists like Adrienne Kertzer. Kertzer states that the folktale as a device is used by Yolen to trick her readers:

Yolen’s readers want stories that they recognize, soothing tales that do not threaten their understanding of themselves. To get their attention, Yolen in essence must trick them, must risk telling Holocaust truth through telling a fairy

tale lie and then deconstructing that lie.... Manipulating our desire for the happy ending, Yolen teaches us why it is unavailable ... (*My Mother's Voice* 68)

For Kertzer, the folktale narrative represents unavailable reality, diametrically opposed to the Holocaust's reality. She concludes that folklore is an appropriate way in which to lure readers into greater understanding of a horrific subject. However, she is wary of the fantasy of folklore obscuring the truth of the horror of the Holocaust.

Her belief in the fairy tale as a consolatory device clearly stems from her own past. Her mother, a Holocaust survivor, told her story to Kertzer as if it were a fairy tale. As Kertzer states in her article, "My Mother's Voice: Telling Children about the Holocaust," "in the way I remember my mother's story, my grandfather remains forever a tragic noble figure, and my aunt, Magda, is still the fairytale heroine, the youngest child, who ensures that the sisters and mother survive" (21). However, she is unsure what lessons these stories teach about the Holocaust; she is unsure whether the fairy tale style of telling the stories, or if any style of telling the stories, teaches a lesson. As she says,

We can indeed tell children stories about the Holocaust, but I remain ambivalent about the result. My memories caution me that children's need to protect themselves, a need reinforced by the adult storyteller's desire not to recreate in the child listener the fear that the Nazis created in her, may mean that the only way children can and will hear these stories is through strategies that inevitably diminish, distance, and distort. (23)

But does the strategy of using folklore really "diminish, distance, and distort" the Holocaust narratives? Does it have positive effects other than being consolatory? Do

authors who use the folktales in Holocaust narratives do so in particular ways to impart particular messages about the Holocaust and the future?

The second view of the folktale in Holocaust narrative sees the folktales as having positive effects, but those who take this view do not answer all the questions posed above. Theorists such as Evelyn Perry, Kenneth Kidd, and Donald Haase view the folktale as a psychological aid for reader and author. According to them, since the folktale is a form that is so open to personal revision, it can allow for transmission of experiences and is thus therapeutic for trauma victims. Also, because its motifs are so flexible, folktales can “represent and interpret the landscapes of a violent childhood” (Haase, *Children* 372). Furthermore, they see the folktales as historically valuable narratives, and the folktale as an oft re-written literary genre that captures part of the society and time in which it is retold, or the society and time it tells about.

None of the above-mentioned academics, however, study how the use of folktales in Holocaust novels compares or contrasts with how folktales were used during the Holocaust by the Nazis. No one (except Tatar and she does so only briefly) discusses the contradiction between the banning of folktales after the Holocaust because of their horror, and the use of folktales to come to terms with and understand the horror of the Holocaust in contemporary fantasy. Nor do the literary studies consider folktale use in more than one children’s Holocaust novel in order to see if the novels share approaches of reinterpreting the folklore, which may or may not impart particular messages about the Holocaust.

More than one Holocaust children’s narrative uses folktales to communicate meaning. These are often award-winning books. They include Maurice Sendak’s *Dear*

Mili, Tony Kushner and Maurice Sendak's *Brundibar*, Sonia Craddock and Leonid Gore's *Sleeping Boy*, Roberto Innocenti and Christopher Gallaz's *Rose Blanche*, Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*, Louise Murphy's *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, Peter Rushforth's *Kindergarten* and Jane Yolen's *Briar Rose*. The first four, although in picture-book format, are intended for older, even adult, audiences; *Number the Stars* for a middle-aged child reader; and *Briar Rose*, *Kindergarten* and *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* for teen readers and adults.

Sleeping Boy is a re-written "Sleeping Beauty," in which the curse is the war and the blessing is that the boy and his family sleep through its entirety rather than fighting, killing or being killed. The characters are unaware of their presence in a folktale. The opposite holds true for *Number the Stars*, in which the main character Annemarie Johansen, at the climax of the story, must travel through the dark woods in order to deliver a basket of important goods (namely a handkerchief with a chemical on it that ruins tracking dogs' sense of smell) to a boat secretly rescuing some of Denmark's underground Jews and transporting them to neutral Sweden. In the woods she encounters a group of Nazi soldiers from the German force occupying Denmark. The entire scene is an allusion to Little Red Riding Hood's encounter with the wolf and she realizes how similar it is, recounting the tale in her mind. *Rose Blanche*, about a young girl who secretly delivers food to children in a concentration camp, also pays homage to "Little Red Riding Hood" in pictorial details such as *Rose Blanche*'s red hair bow and in scenes depicting her walking alone through the woods. Similar to Charles Perrault's 1697 "Little Red Cap" (or "Le petit chaperon rouge"), in which Little Red Cap is gobbled up by the wolf, the heroine in *Rose Blanche* dies. *Number the Stars*, however, is closer in spirit to

the Grimms' tale, in which Little Red Riding Hood lives happily ever after, although, in the novel, Annemarie's ending is more hopeful than happy.

However, *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, *Kindergarten*, and *Briar Rose* are distinct from the books discussed above. Firstly, they are all clearly young adult or crossover young adult and adult narratives that have received positive reviews, and in the case of *Briar Rose*, a great deal of theoretical inquiry (studied by over five children's literature academics). Secondly, they all specifically use Grimms' folktales. Finally, they depict characters who actively use folktales to cope with the Holocaust.

1.5 Holocaust Novels by Louise Murphy, Jane Yolen and Peter Rushforth

Louise Murphy's *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* (2003) begins in a moment of despair and desperation in 1943 in Eastern Poland. A Jewish father and stepmother, certain their children will die if they stay with them, desert them in the Bialowieza Forest, the oldest forest in Europe. Hide in the woods, they're told. Pretend you aren't Jewish. Forget your past. You are Hansel and Gretel.

Thus begins the children's adventure to save their lives. Soon they encounter a witch's home, a tiny hut heated by an enormous baker's oven, located on the outskirts of the Polish town, Piaski. The children lose their true identities in the identities of the folktale figures, and the story is as much about trying to retain a sense of self during traumatic, horrific times as it is about the physical and psychological brutality of the Holocaust, and the love that can survive even in those worst of times.

Louise Murphy, an American author, is the winner of a Writer's Digest Award for poetry and author of *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, *The Sea Within* and *My*

Garden. Born in 1943, the same year in which *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* is set, Murphy hoped in writing *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* that “by showing the darkness of the Holocaust to our young adults, we will teach them to reject racism and war” (Murphy, *Penguin* 8). Haunted by the tale “Hansel and Gretel,” she created her novel in an attempt to capture the horror of the tale and the horror of the year in which she was born. Although Murphy speaks of the book as if young adults are its target audience, it has appealed to more of an adult audience, as is apparent from its being shelved in adult fiction sections of local bookstores and libraries.

On the other hand, Jane Yolen’s *Briar Rose* (1992) was first published as adult fiction and then re-printed as a young adult title. Jane Yolen has won numerous awards for her books and stories, including two Christopher Medals, the World Fantasy Award, two Nebula Awards, the Caldecott Medal, three Mythopoeic Fantasy Awards, the Golden Kite Award and the Jewish Book Award. *Briar Rose* was a Nebula nominee and won the 1993 Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature. It was also a nominee for the 1994-6 South Carolina Junior Book Award (Yolen, *The Book on Jane Yolen*, n. pag).

Yolen says that the idea for a novel on the subject of the Holocaust came to her while watching a documentary that described the Chelmno concentration camp, a camp in a castle, suggesting “Sleeping Beauty” in the most horrible way (Stone n.pag). She had recently completed her young adult novel *The Devil’s Arithmetic*, another book about the Holocaust that incorporates the fantasy element of time travel. Yolen did not want to return to the subject but was convinced by editor and author Terri Windling, who was editing a series of folktale retellings, the “Fairy Tale” series (Yolen, *The Book on Jane*

Yolen n. pag). The series, which began in 1987, includes titles by Tanith Lee, Pamela Dean and Patricia C. Wrede. Yolen's *Briar Rose* is part of this series.

Yolen's *Briar Rose* takes place in 1970s America. It is clearly adult in some of its appeal, primarily because the main character, Becca, is twenty-one, beyond her teenage years. Enchanted by her grandmother's story of "Sleeping Beauty," a different version than Disney's, Becca is the only one of her family who believes her grandmother Gemma's dying words: that she, Gemma, is truly the Sleeping Beauty of her story. Thus begins Becca's journey to Poland to make sense of the folktale and her grandmother's past, including her discovery of her grandmother's internment in a concentration camp.

Similar to *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, the narrative focuses on separating folktale identities from those of real historical and contemporary lives, and the fairy tale world and story from the harsh reality of the Holocaust. However, the two tales differ in that one novel takes place during the Holocaust, whereas the other, *Briar Rose*, visits the history of the Holocaust from the vantage point of the 1970s.

Peter Rushforth's *Kindergarten* (1979) shares both the re-visiting of Holocaust history found in *Briar Rose*, and the mystery of family history, a family history linked to folktales. An English teacher and novelist who died in 2005, Rushforth published only two novels, separated by a quarter of a century. *Kindergarten*, his first, was kindled by his discovery of a cache of letters from Jewish parents of the pre-war years pleading for their children's safe passage from Germany to England.

Kindergarten incorporates this discovery into its plot, as British teenager Corrie discovers a similar cache of letters and begins using the Grimms' folktales as his guide to understand the horror of the Holocaust and his grandmother's past. The novel includes

retellings of “Hansel and Gretel,” “Bluebeard,” and “The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids.” Winner of the Hawthornden Prize, the oldest literary award in the UK (awarded for the best work of imaginative literature), the book combines the imaginative fairy tale world with the contemporary world of terrorist attacks and the historical world of Holocaust horrors, a juxtaposition that highlights the fantastical horror of the Holocaust, and points to the healing power of creative storytelling. The novel is shelved in young adult and adult sections of local libraries, and has just been reprinted in 2006 where it is shelved in adult sections of local bookstores.

All these authors approach Holocaust history with great sympathy regarding the Jewish trauma, choosing in their folktale reworkings to place Jewish characters in the folktale hero and heroine roles and the Nazi figures and the war in the antagonist roles, a complete reversal, a deconstruction, of the Nazi fairy tale interpretations of the Grimms’ tales.

1.6 Principal Research Questions

Considering the fundamental ideological association between German folklore and the Nazi regime’s interpretation and use of the folklore in literature for children, how does this selection of contemporary folktale revisionist novels use the same Grimm folklore in relation to the Holocaust, and how does this use differ from book to book? Do these narratives share methods of revising folklore to impart anti-fascist messages? What kinds of messages are these, other than anti-fascist? Furthermore, is there something about this form of literature, “the folktale,” that is perfectly suited to teaching profound lessons, both negative and positive in outcome?

This research is especially pertinent today since folktales are still being used for many purposes from commercial propaganda to promotion of religious ideologies. As Linda Degh notes, in propagandistic advertising, folktales are found everywhere, from soap ads to ads for coffee grounds (*American Folklore* 36-7).

Folktales are also continually being rewritten by contemporary authors, such as Francesca Lia Block, Emma Donoghue, Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling, Priscilla Galloway and Peter Cashorali, who fuse the narratives to explorations of current harsh social realities and contemporary issues, including drug use, rape, prostitution, and homophobia. The result is fiction that promotes a greater understanding of these issues and conveys messages of empathy toward underdogs. These messages are, in my opinion, positive ones compared to the commercial motivations of advertisers or the Disney fairy tale-based films. Similarly, the themes and ideas in Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth's novels are strongly anti-fascist and life-affirming.

Ironically like the Nazi regime, which fused folktale symbols to real people and situations, the contemporary novels create significations. Signification, a term coined by semiotician Roland Barthes, refers to a sign (such as the witch in "Hansel and Gretel") that is given a second meaning (becoming representative of the Jewish people) (*Mythologies* 114). In *Kindergarten*, for example, the witch in "Hansel and Gretel" comes to symbolize the Nazi soldiers. If the only difference between the Nazi publications and the contemporary novels is the switch in significations, that means that the only difference between the two groups' use of folktales is in the messages and agendas they convey – fascist or anti-fascist.

If this were the case, then indeed I would share the concern of those children's theorists such as Kertzer who are apprehensive regarding the use of folktales in novels about the Holocaust. The only function of the folktale would then seem to be to impart messages about the Holocaust to children in the most comforting manner possible, and this is too similar to the use of the folktale by the Nazi regime, even if the messages themselves are opposite. However, the narrative techniques in which the messages are conveyed differs substantially.

Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth's books all illuminate how they and their characters are using folktales as tools. By tools, I mean that these thematic texts are being used as a means of imparting a message, belief or idea but in a way far different than propaganda. A propagandistic text, also a means of imparting a message, is often deliberately misleading, emphasizing one side of an issue and repressing another, using stereotypes and glittering generalities, claiming its message to be global and totalizing and denying the existence of contrary messages. On the other hand, thematic texts do not claim their messages are the "rightful" or "truthful" ones, nor do they deny the existence of other conflicting messages.

Furthermore, whereas propaganda conceals the fact that it has been constructed, these particular thematic texts by Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth exteriorize (or expose) the process of using a folktale to convey a message. It is this vital difference between their use of folktales and the Nazis' use of folktales, that makes their approach to folktales powerful, positive and liberating – advocates of freedom of speech – antithetical to Nazi propaganda. They transform the tales from the monologic or didactic tales of the Nazi era into dialogic folktales, or imaginatively liberating tales which Jack Zipes so

often advocates as effective “means of enlightenment so that the repressed dreams, wishes, and needs of children and adults alike can be realized in a mutually beneficial way” (*Breaking* 199).

1.7 Methodology

The principal methodology chosen for this thesis, since it examines narratives that are being reused and re-interpreted, combines intertextuality and semiotics. As Allen notes, intertextual examinations look at how texts’ meanings are shaped by pre-existing texts (35). The intertextual examination of this research will look at the re-shaping of the Grimms’ folktale elements in Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth’s novels as compared to the Nazi regime’s use of the same Grimms’ fairy tales, in particular “Hansel and Gretel,” “Asheputtel,” “Briar Rose,” and “Fitcher’s Bird.” By examining how the folktale signifiers are woven into the novels by Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth we can see how their choices and shaping of the signifiers and motifs, and the very presentation of the folktale itself, differ dramatically from the Nazi regime’s presentation and shaping of the folktales. To carry out this comparison, the texts will be interpreted through close readings that follow the tenets of semiotic deconstructionism: “[to] explore the tensions, the loose threads, the little ‘openings’ in the text” (Caputo 76) in order to discover, recognize and understand the assumptions, frameworks and messages from which the text is constructed.

In this investigation of how Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth transform the Grimms’ folktales, what aspects of the tales their texts incorporate and what this might mean, a range of folklorists’ studies will be drawn upon, especially those of well-known

folklorists such as child psychologist and psychoanalytic critic Bruno Bettelheim and cultural historian Jack Zipes. Key works in the semiotic and intertextual movements such as the writings of Roland Barthes will also be considered. Principally, however, semiotician and philosopher Michael Bakhtin's theories of monologic and dialogic texts and Julia Kristeva's work constructing the differences between these texts will be applied to determine the differences between the Nazi and young adult authors' use of folklore. These theories are fully explained in the methodologies chapter, Chapter 3.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This literature review assesses the Grimms' folktales from a number of theoretical viewpoints: studies of Grimms' tales by different folklorists; the use of the tales by the Nazi regime during the Second World War; the analysis by critics who investigate the Nazis' fascist use of the folktales; and theoretical perceptions by critics in reviews and articles on Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth and their retellings of the Grimms' tales. This literature review also examines how theorists have discussed Holocaust literature for children, in particular Holocaust fiction that uses folktales as an element of their narrative.

2.2 Folktale Discourse and the Brothers Grimm

"A fairy-story is one which touches on or uses Faerie, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy," says J.R.R. Tolkien in his essay "On Fairy Stories" (4). "A lively fossil that refuses to die," argues Jane Yolen in her book *Touch Magic* (15). "Narratives predicated upon magic," assert folklorists Murray Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjaer (157).

The very multitude of definitions of the fairy tale/folktale demonstrates how it has intrigued academics for many years. The Brothers Grimm themselves were not only collectors but also folklore theorists, making conclusions based on the shape of the tales, the different types, and possible roots. As Tatar notes, these conclusions were outlined in the prefaces to various editions of their *Nursery and Household Tales*, especially their

meditations on pagan origins of the tales, and, in particular, German inflections (*Annotated* 399-427).

The plethora of academics who have subsequently studied the Grimms' folklore have employed a variety of approaches to their subject. The competing discourses include the postmodern, the cultural-historical, the psychoanalytic and the structural. Although many of the theorists, especially the cultural-historical/socio-political and postmodern commentators, combine many modes of theory, as I will be doing in my close reading deconstructions, they are also the most vigorous in critiquing the structuralist and psychoanalytic approaches—approaches which are less likely to include combined paradigms. Bettelheim, Luthi and Propp do not situate the tales socially at all, and they also do not critique those who do.

A thoughtful critique is necessary to assess deficits in specific theories, and so I will argue that theory itself is a myth-making process. Like folktales themselves, theories and histories of folktales are written with agendas and goals, and they are structured in the archetypal language of the academy. Each theory has something valid to say about folktales and can illuminate reasons why Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth have transformed the tales in the ways they have. In particular, why and how the tales are used by characters as coping-mechanisms can be illuminated by structural and psychoanalytic theories; how the tales become touchstones to the Holocaust history can be illuminated by cultural-historical theory; and, more generally how the tales are transfigured and transformed to reflect contemporary problems can be illuminated by postmodern theory. In order to use the theories, one must understand them. This next section touches on some

of the major folklorists of structuralism, postmodernism, cultural historicism and psychoanalysis.

2.3 Structuralism

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell uses the Jungian principle of the collective unconscious to trace the classic hero's journey in a cross-cultural study of mythology and folklore including the Grimms'. Heroes, according to Campbell, leave the known, ordinary world, the "real" world, and overcome the trials and tasks set before them in the secondary world, the world of conflict, adventure, and often fantasy, as referred to by Tolkien (52-3). When they return to the ordinary world, they are masters of both worlds and free of the fear of death, free to live in the moment, neither anticipating the future nor regretting the past. Campbell sees this plot structure as universal to all religion, myth, legend and folktale. Vladimir Propp, Max Luthi and even J.R.R. Tolkien all accept this structure, with slight differences.

Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, for example, applies a morphological approach (the study of how words are formed and interact) to the fairy tale (in particular Russian fairy tales) in order to study the genre like a science. His thirty-one functions of the fairy tale include identifying villainy as the fueling force of the plot and viewing every function as a lack, paired with the promise of the absolution (or "liquidation") of that lack. His notions of the archetypal plot parallel J. R.R. Tolkien's widely respected four-fold defining features of a folktale: fantasy, escape, recovery and consolation—especially the notion of consolation. Tolkien's vision of the happy ending, or

eucatastrophe, is joy at deliverance from evil, such as the kiss at the end of "Briar Rose," which, according to Propp's morphology, would be considered the liquidation of the lack.

Max Luthi accepts lack/liquidation, fantasy/escape/recovery/consolation in his structural studies, *The Fairytale as Art Form and Portrait of Man* and *Once Upon a Time*. Beyond plot, he also identifies archetypes and motifs universal to all folktales. For example, in *Once Upon a Time*, he uses "Briar Rose" (which he refers to as "Sleeping Beauty") to identify the form and meaning of all folktales (21-34). He studies the Grimms' tales, as well as others, to disseminate basic components and motifs of the folktales which build all folktales, like the brilliant pieces of colored glass that make up a mosaic. Danger and redemption, paralysis and rejuvenation, death and resurrection are some of the themes that build the mosaics of many tales. Luthi, however, contrary to his representation by other theorists, is not naïve to historical forces that change folktales. In fact, as he says, "the fairytale itself is not a-historical; it is subject to the tastes of the times" (*Fairytale* 159). Although Luthi recognizes social forces in folktales, he does not examine them, especially not the social agendas of the Brothers Grimm.

However, the elements that Luthi identifies as motifs and archetypes of tales, for example, depthlessness, isolation, intensification and abstraction of beauty, tripling formulas and repetition, linear plots, and shared themes [such as "appearances are deceptive" (*Fairytale* 125)], are valid to the extent that they can be found universally in folklore. Even contemporary literary re-tellings use these motifs and archetypes, experimenting with them and even, at times, subverting them.

Looking at structuralist thought and folktales helps to identify the reasons why folktales have been so popularly retold. As Anna Altmann and Gail de Vos say in their

book *New Tales for Old*, “the universal themes and spare, clean outlines of the folktale” as well as “the depthless, typical characters and undeveloped settings” and “the spaces between the extremes” (15), as identified by the structuralists in their posited universal plots, are some of the reasons why rewritten tales have had such mass appeal, especially in the folktale boom of North America and Western Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.

In her article, “Fooling with Folktales: Updates, Spin-offs and Round-ups,” Susan Helper outlines reasons for so many retellings: human nature wishes to recast what is familiar and loved; authors and illustrators wish to shape a tale to fit their cultural sensibilities; and some individuals, intrigued by their fears, want to shape a tale of familiar form to reflect those fears.

In other words, the folktale form allows for a myriad of opinions and agendas to be imparted. The motifs, tale types and basic plots of the stories are similar, as Altmann and de Vos say, to the qualities of a sponge:

The living animal, harvested from its aquatic home, is dried out and cleaned. Its tough, elastic skeleton can be squeezed in any kind of liquid, which it absorbs as it expands to its original shape. Squeeze it again, full of empty spaces but always recognizably itself. (*New Tales* 15)

The same motifs, as seen in this study, can be used to symbolize opposites. An evil witch can represent dictatorship and war, or, in the view of the Nazi regime, a person representative of a culture that needs to be eradicated through dictatorship, war and genocide.

2.4 Grimms' Retellings – Postmodernism

As the Brothers Grimm themselves were rewriters of the oral folktales that they collected, contemporary authors who play with the motifs and plot structures of these tales are simply continuing this process. In particular, in this postmodern world, a world defined by de-naturalization and re-valuation of history, self-reflexivity, intertextuality, materialism, speed and rootlessness, it makes sense that authors are experimenting with fairy tales. A tenet of postmodernism is that it is impossible to create something new. Even the most respected works draw on ideas that came before them. Thus, works created in the postmodern era are always, whether the author intends it or not, reusing ideas of previous literature and incorporating what the author aims to contest.

Cristina Bacchilega, for example, in *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*, examines how authors have used Grimms' folktales, holding "mirrors to the magic mirror of the fairy tale, playing with its framed images out of a desire to multiply its refractions and to expose its artifices" (23). According to Bacchilega, by exploring the tales, writers can unmake the spells the Brothers Grimm created, and illuminate the postmodern world we live in now (24). However, Bacchilega's study, specific to gender issues, does not discuss retellings that unmake other spells in the Grimms' tales like those of race or dictatorship rule. However, her theories of splitting the mono-myths of the Grimms' tales in order to allow for questioning of truth and divergent, polyphonic voices, will be a focus in this thesis.

In *New Tales for Old: Folktales as Literary Fictions for Young Adults* and *Tales Then and Now: More Folktales as Literary Fictions for Young Adults*, Anna E. Altmann

and Gail de Vos annotate a myriad of Grimms' folktale retellings, including those that combine Holocaust stories with the magic of fairy tales. In the preface to *Tales, Then and Now*, they note that retellings can take many forms including stories that de-centre the original folktale, add a sequel, or change the expected outcome of the traditional story, replace the magic with rational explanation, or simply fill the gaps of the story, adding character motivations and specific settings (*Tales Then* xxi). Filling the gaps of the story and replacing magic with rational explanations do not necessarily make postmodern tales, since they do not always subvert notions of "truth" or the "happily-ever-after" ending.

Altmann and de Vos's study of reworkings is comprehensive in its scope, but not in the details of particular tales. Instead, their summaries have a two-fold purpose: to give a reader a taste of what the story is about, and to expound the motifs and tale types on which the new versions are based. They describe picture books like *Sleeping Boy*, *Rose Blanche*, and novels like *Kindergarten* and *Briar Rose*, but they do not draw any deep conclusions about the conflation of the Holocaust imagery and folktale imagery in these works.

2.5 Cultural Historicism

Whereas postmodern folklorists study how folktales have been rewritten to reflect our current postmodern climate, cultural historical folktale theorists situate folktales historically and socio-politically.

In her essay, "Reading the Grimms' Children's Stories and Household Tales," Maria Tatar places the Grimm Brothers within their historical, socio-political context, giving an overview of the Grimms' tales, how and why they were constructed, and to what uses

they have been put. The rich book in which this essay is found, *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*, contains a sample of the tales collected by the Grimms in their 1857 version. Tatar annotations to the tales illuminate intertextual, polyphonic aspects, archetypal patterns, folklore and fairy tale theorists' perspectives, and historical commentary. As well, she includes the prefaces to the first two editions of the Grimms' collections and a biographical essay on Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. In this essay, Tatar paints a picture of the Grimms and the times in which they lived.

The study of historical development and the socio-political situating of the Grimms' folktales has been the focus for a number of other academics in addition to Tatar, including Marina Warner, Ruth Bottigheimer and Jack Zipes.

In *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairytales and Their Tellers*, Marina Warner weaves a history of the female in folklore, from the mythical oracle Sibyl, to the gossiping Mother Goose, to the art and tales of French female surrealists, showing how the tales "opened an opportunity for [women] to exercise their wit and communicate their ideas" (xxiii). Women as storytellers hold very important places in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, *Kindergarten* and *Briar Rose*.

Unlike *From the Beast to the Blonde*, Ruth Bottigheimer's *Grimms' Bad Girls and Bold Boys*, referenced earlier for its analysis of the Grimms' anti-Semitic "The Jew in the Brambles," is a more specific historical look at folklore, focusing on the folklore of the Brothers Grimm. In particular, Bottigheimer's goal is to "provide a content analysis of the Grimms' tales" (x), and she does so with a focus on the darker aspects of the collection, such as sexism, violence, eroticism and anti-Semitism. These aspects of the

folklore are highlighted by contemporary authors such as Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth in their revisions of the tales, as is shown in chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this thesis.

Whereas Bottigheimer, Warner and Tatar give historical context on folktales that informs the background of this thesis to some degree, Jack Zipes' research on folklore and the Grimms' folktales informs this thesis even more. He is one of the most prolific theorists in his discourses on how the tales function as socializing agents. A professor of German at the University of Minnesota, his numerous books on fairy tales include: *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*; *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, and the Culture Industry*; *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*; and *Why Fairy Tales Stick*. Throughout his scholarship, Zipes argues that "critics and scholars have failed to study [the fairy tale's] historical development as genre" (*Subversion* 1). Rather than seeing the tales as universal and ageless, he takes a socio-political perspective, viewing the narratives as written in order to understand current social reality and thus open to study in terms of how they worked to critique or complement social systems. This socio-political stance draws on the work of a wide range of theorists, including postmodernist Fredric Jameson, Ernst Bloch and even Sigmund Freud.

Zipes' work includes analyses of the differences between folklore and literary fairy tales, critiques of the socializing force of Disney's fairy tales (especially in his chapter "Breaking the Disney Spell" in *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale*), and studies of the German use of fairy tales during and after World War II. For Zipes, the best fairy tales are emancipatory, allowing writers (and hopefully readers, too) the chance to feel free or to learn the strategies to free themselves from oppressive social

circumstances. As Zipes says, “[such tales] interfere with the civilizing process in hope of creating change and a new awareness of social conditions” (*Subversion* 191).

Zipes’ essay, “The Liberating Potential of the Fantastic in Contemporary Fairy Tales for Children” (170-194), in *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, further illuminates his ideas on emancipatory fairy tales, studying folktale authors writing after 1945 in England, the United States, Italy, Germany and France. Zipes is concerned with “depict[ing] the motifs, ideas, styles, and methods used by these writers to make the fantastic projections within the fairy tales more liberating” (172). He looks at two main processes in which they do this, transposition and fusion, which are two methods of retelling and creating dialogic, or imaginatively liberating, tales versus monologic, or didactic, tales.

Retellings are also the focus of Zipes’ essay “Contamination of the Fairy Tale,” in *Sticks & Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children’s Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter*, in which Zipes uses theories of intertextuality to demonstrate that all retellings of stories must be based on a pre-text, or preexisting text. These retellings, however, are rarely simple replications or reproductions of their sources (107).

In his research, Zipes has yet to examine the differences between the contemporary retellings and the Nazis’ retellings of folklore.

2.6 Psychoanalysis

Although Zipes has much to say against Bruno Bettelheim, especially in his essay “On the Use and Abuse of Folk and Fairy Tales with Children: Bruno Bettelheim’s Moralistic Magic Wand,” in *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and*

Fairy Tales, Zipes exhibits similarities with Bettelheim. One of Zipes' main concerns, how folktales can liberate the mind, is the same foundational question of Bruno Bettelheim in *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. Bettelheim's study uses a Freudian psychoanalytic approach to study Grimms' folktales and their effects on children. Like Max Luthi, Bettelheim does not recognize the historical nature of the stories nor the Grimms' rewriting process. It is for this ahistorical approach as well as his rigid application of Freudian theories, mainly, that he has been so harshly criticized by theorists such as Zipes and Bottigheimer. However, his study, and Zipes' response to it, provide an illuminating way of viewing the stories that is pertinent to my study.

In response to a fear of folktale censorship and parental worries that folktales are too horrific for children, Bettelheim argues that the Grimms' tales reveal ways for children to "master the psychological problems of growing up—overcoming narcissistic disappointments, oedipal dilemmas, sibling rivalries; becoming able to relinquish childhood dependencies; gaining a feeling of selfhood and self-worth, and a sense of moral obligation" (6). He also sees folktales as a form of therapy: "Through contemplating the story the disturbed person would be led to visualize both the nature of the impasse in living from which he suffered, and the possibility of its resolution" (25).

Although in *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bettelheim does not mention the potential therapeutic value of the folktales for victims of the Holocaust, or potential value for children undergoing wartime traumas, his other works and personal history tie him strongly to the Holocaust. In 1938, he spent a year himself imprisoned in the Buchenwald Nazi concentration camp (Pollak 53-4). Soon after, he journeyed to the United States and

ended up in 1944 securing a job as director of the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School at the University of Chicago. His publications, other than *The Uses of Enchantment*, included work on Nazi concentration camp victims. As Pollack notes, these works, including the book, *The Informed Heart*, included arguments that individual psychological well-being and determination were factors of a person's ability to survive in a concentration camp (315). These arguments were attacked for their unscientific basis, much as Zipes has attacked Bettelheim's analyses of folktales (358-9).

In "On the Use and Abuse of Folk and Fairy Tales," Zipes points out Bettelheim's lack of training and inadequate research methods. He also notes that Bettelheim "never read fairy tales to his children or developed a method of using fairy tales with children" (*Breaking* 180) and, in *The Uses of Enchantment*, "employs Freudian terminology like a puritanical parson encouraging parents to have faith in the almighty power of the fairy tale" so that a child can "voluntaristically work through internalized problems with the aid of a fairy tale and become a well adjusted autonomous individual" (188). Instead, Zipes concludes that

folk and fairy tales remain an essential force in our cultural heritage, but they are not static literary models to be internalized for therapeutic consumption. Their value depends on how we actively produce and receive them in forms of social interaction which lead toward the creation of greater individual autonomy. (199)

As my analysis of Murphy's, Rushforth's and Yolen's texts will show, it is through authors' contemplating *and reworking* of the folktales that the characters within the texts gain therapeutic support. What kind of therapeutic support do they offer? Do they help the characters mature sexually and detach from their families, as Bettelheim's

arguments would suggest? Or do they allow for “greater individual autonomy” as Zipes suggests? And what exactly does Zipes mean by “greater individual freedom”? Furthermore, how are the tales produced and received to access this support? These questions will all be addressed in the following chapters. As I will show, the folktales in the contemporary novels help characters both grow up and detach from families in order to survive, such as in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, and sometimes they bring characters closer to their families, acting as points of access to family history, as in *Briar Rose* and *Kindergarten*. Furthermore, they free the characters by helping them explore social history.

The idea that folktales are therapeutic as psychological defence mechanisms is further developed by Kenneth Kidd and Donald Haase in their essays on folktale narratives in Holocaust children’s literature. Kidd, in his essay “‘A’ is for Auschwitz: Psychoanalysis, Trauma Theory and the Children’s Literature of Atrocity,” sees the folktale as a conduit for transmission for both reader and writer of traumatic events and through transmission allowing for healing. Haase, on the other hand, in his essay, “Children, War and the Imaginative Space of Fairy Tales,” follows Bettelheim’s notions of the folktale as therapeutic because “the patient finds his own solutions through contemplating what the story seems to imply about him and his inner conflicts at this moment in his life,” and thus uses folktale motifs and symbols to represent and interpret the horrors of his or her surroundings (25).

Bettelheim, Haase and Kidd view the folktale as a psychological defence and therapeutic process, but Haase and Kidd, in particular, view it as a psychological defence and therapeutic process for children suffering through times of war. The horror inherent

in Grimms' folktales (such as the gruesome beheading in "The Juniper Tree" and the children's abandonment in "Hansel and Gretel") is another issue that Bettelheim examines and that is further pursued by Kidd and Haase. Their work is pertinent to this thesis since the main characters in the novels under discussion consciously use folktales as psychological aids, particularly identifying with horrific elements, which in turn helps them come to terms with the horror of the war.

2.7 Studies of Folklore in Nazi Germany

Cultural historical folklorists are sources of information on the Nazi regime's use of the Grimms' folktales as National Socialist propaganda. Maria Tatar, Marina Warner, and especially Jack Zipes have touched on this issue. Tatar's attention consists of little more than a paragraph in her essay in *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*:

Few cultural documents have played so key a role in constructing a national identity. If the first association of many people in this country to the word "Germany" is to Hitler and the Holocaust, the second is more than likely to the Grimms' *Children's Stories and Household Tales*.... As early as 1971, in the work of the American poet Anne Sexton, we find a rewriting of "Hansel and Gretel" that alludes to a "final solution" and turns the oven of the finale into a distinct reference to the concentration camp crematoria.... From Jane Yolen's novel *Briar Rose* to Roberto Benigni's film *La Vita e bella*, we find the same haunting combination of fairy-tale text and Holocaust memoir to chart the harrowing journey of Holocaust victims and survivors. What these narratives tell us has something to do with how the fairy tale is powerfully associated with the

cultural notion of Germany. But they also remind us of how the stories capture human drama and emotion in their most extreme forms and conditions and thus provide the appropriate narrative vehicle for capturing historical events that defy intellectual comprehension. (Tatar xlvii)

Warner, another cultural historian, states, "Fairy tales' simple, even simplistic dualism can be and has been annexed to ugly ends: the Romantic revival of folk literature in Germany unwittingly heralded the Nazi claim that 'their' fairy tales were racially Aryan homegrown products" (*From the Beast* 410).

Neither Warner nor Tatar attempts to explain specifically how the folktales were used by the Nazi regime and to what extent; they only discuss why they may have been used and that they were, as evidence of the social potency of the tales. Their studies are not focused on the Nazi regime's use of the folktale, unlike those of Zipes and Christa Kamenetsky.

Furthermore, Warner and Tatar point to different reasons that the Nazis used Grimms' folktales to promote their regime and ideals. Warner notes the structure of the folktale: its "simplistic dualism" of light and darkness and its struggle to distinguish the enemies from the allies. Tatar points to the intensification of the Grimms' manifesto of collecting tales that represented the "pure" voice of the German people (Tatar, *Annotated* xxxix). They go no further in their discussions.

Zipes, on the other hand, has examined the Nazi regime's use of the folktale in greater detail, including studying how other German authors just preceding the war, during the Weimar period, wrote literary tales to combat dictatorship, promoting a

Marxist utopia. In his studies of these tales, Zipes discusses the Nazi regime's use of the Grimms' folklore and their campaigns banning socialist fairy tales, stopping production of new literary tales, and interpreting the classic folklore as a sacred Aryan relic (*Subversion* 139). His essays on this topic include "Recovering the Utopian Spirit of the Weimar Fairy Tales and Fables" in *Utopian Tales from Weimar* and "The Fight Over Fairy-Tale Discourse: Family, Friction, and Socialization in the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany" in *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*.

Zipes argues that "the Weimar and Nazi periods are extremely important for grasping the general development of the fairy-tale genre in the Western world at large" (*Subversion* 135) due to the battles over how the folklore was re-written and re-interpreted by different social groups. Why did the Nazis, and the other political groups, choose the folklore as a mode for their literary propaganda?

According to Zipes, the reason is found in the history of the classic folktales as helping children "to adapt to expected roles in the bourgeois socialization process" (*Subversion* 137). For any political or social group trying to teach children to act or behave in a certain way, it is easier to reuse a literary form already known for socialization of children than to create a new form. In particular, the Grimms' literary tales endorsed "abstention set by male figures who reward the accumulation of the proper bourgeois values with a good solid marriage or place in a secure social order" (*Subversion* 149), a social order including the concept of militaristic power, or might makes right, and the importance of a strong leader of the country "who sets a model for the rest of society" (*Subversion* 149), all of which meshed with the National Socialist vision of an ideal German state.

Zipes explores not just aspects of the political use of folktales, but also the reception of the tales. The German people, especially those affected by the Great Depression, experienced a longing for the “good old days, for the stability and the order of what was projected to be a more idyllic period” (*Subversion* 152) and so the Grimms’ folktales, which pictured a long-ago era of happiness and stability and rewards for “underdogs” such as the peasants, were a comforting medication or drug pre-packaged by the National Socialists.

Like Zipes, Christa Kamenetsky is a key source on the Nazi regime’s use of folklore. Kamenetsky, a professor of English at Central Michigan University who had her first four years of schooling in Nazi Germany, has studied the Nazi regime’s use of folklore in great depth. Her essays “The Uses and Misuses of Folklore Terminology” and “Folktale and Ideology in the Third Reich,” and her book *Children’s Literature in Hitler’s Germany: The Cultural Policy of National Socialism*, examine the roots of children’s literature in Germany and threads of literary thought, like the German Romantics’ concept of the *volk*, which were extrapolated into retold tales during the Nazi regime. Her study of the Nazis’ use of children’s literature covers not only their use of Grimms’ folktales, but also their negative and positive censorship (“negative censorship” being literature that was banned and even burned, and “positive censorship” being literature that was used and manipulated) of picture books, primers, puppet shows and plays and even *volkish* rituals for children. When examining the “positive” censorship and endorsement of Grimms’ folktales, she provides in-depth analysis of their conflation and fusion with Nordic myth, something Zipes’ studies do not discuss.

Other folklorists, such as Wolfgang Emmerich, specifically study folklore under German National Socialism. Emmerich's "The Mythos of Germanic Continuity" in *The Nazification of an Academic Discipline*, for example, studies the "mythical origins of the German folk-nation" (36) and how its propagation was closely related to the defamation of foreign influences including the Christian or the Jewish (44). Emmerich's essay examines a few of the Nazi interpretations, including "Cinderella" and "Little Red Riding Hood." He only includes a part of the Nazi retellings, although he provides enough of the work to illuminate some of the basic ways the Nazis re-envisioned all of the Grimms' works.

On the other hand, Judith K. Proud's book, *Children and Propaganda*, specifically studies two fascist retellings popular in Vichy France, in the period from 1940-1944 when France was occupied by the Nazis. In particular, Proud examines full texts of "Bluebeard" and "Little Red Riding Hood" (in the Grimms' collection these tales are known as "Fitcher's Bird" and "Little Red Cap"), which are explicitly fascist and which are examined in this thesis in contrast to the contemporary anti-fascist retellings. Such Vichy France fascist texts were published in Paris by publishers such as NEF, and Mazeyrie, companies that were connected with the Nazis. Mazeyrie, in fact, was "effectively requisitioned by the Nazis" in 1940 (Proud 26). The version of "Bluebeard" Proud examines has no publishing information, was inspired by the Nazis, and bears "censorship inscriptions linking it to the German Propaganda Abteilung, the branch of Goebbels' Berlin-based propaganda machine" (Proud 26).

Proud's study is especially illuminating since she argues why the folktales may work well as propaganda texts in her section "Stylistic Elements in the Fairy Tale

Facilitating Propaganda" (29), which goes beyond Zipes and Kamenetsky's conclusions that the folktale's history as a socializing force and its history as a German nationalistic genre in the early 1800s are the main reasons for its use as propaganda.

Proud identifies stylistic elements, including an analysis of the folktale genre as a "familiar wrapping" to lull a reader into accepting a propagandistic message. Proud examines structural elements that render folktales particularly good tools of propaganda. She argues that the folktale's simplicity – especially its stereotyped, exaggerated characters – seems to aid in identifying and separating who and what is evil from who and what is not. She also argues that the violence inherent in many of the tales could promote violence (29-31). Furthermore, the fact that many of the folktales are actually devoid of much overt magic (in "Hansel and Gretel" the only magic is the house created from food) points to the possibility of the tales becoming real (29-31).

Proud goes no further in her examination, and only analyzes two propagandistic texts, but her points are illuminating, especially her conclusions as to why folktales work well as propaganda tools. If her arguments are valid as to why folktales are useful for propaganda campaigns, why are folktales also well used by those who are trying to liberate minds? Is there something threatening about the inherent, dialogic, liberating force of folklore and fairy tales that made the Nazi regime want to control the folk literature through censorship?

2.8 Holocaust Children's Literature

Since the Holocaust and in the years following World War II, children's literature in Germany changed radically. These changes included a banning of Grimms' folktales during the American occupation, as noted by Jella Lepman, the pioneer and founder of the International Board on Books for Young People (56).

During a 1946 Munich exhibition of international children's books, Lepman observed firsthand the link some adults and children made between folklore and Holocaust horrors. As she recounts:

Once an old woman leading a child by the hand asked me, 'Aren't there any books of fairy tales without Hansel and Gretel in them?' I thought. 'What a strange question.' 'The child's parents died in Auschwitz, in the gas chambers,' she went on. 'Yes, in the witch's oven. And the connection between the two frightens me. This child was in the camp herself and escaped only by a miracle.' I immediately realized that the ancient arguments about the cruelty in fairy tales now had to be weighed from an entirely different angle. (55-56)

Lepman, a German Jewish journalist who sought refuge from the Nazis by fleeing to Britain, was employed by the American army to "develop cultural and educational projects for women and children" (5), including ensuring children had access to books in post-war Germany in the 1940s and 1950s. Lepman believed that providing international children's literature would help promote tolerance and acceptance and conquer racism, as well as providing hope for those Jewish and German children in Germany who had experienced the Holocaust and the war.

As time passed, however, adults recognized that there was also a need to represent the horrors of the Holocaust and somehow educate children who no longer had direct experience of it. Children's literature authors, and writers and artists in general, have struggled to find ways of representing the Holocaust. As Kokkola and Baer note, these stories take many forms and use many different techniques (Kokkola 11, Baer 383). Theorists such as Lydia Kokkola, Hamida Bosmajian and Adrienne Kertzer have analyzed the struggles of authors trying to represent historical facts in fictional narratives, usually focusing on how authors chose to narrate the events.

Whereas there have been many studies of Jane Yolen's use of the folktale as a narrative structure in *Briar Rose*, especially in books and articles concerned with children's literature's representation of the Holocaust, there are few studies of Peter Rushforth's novel *Kindergarten* or Louise Murphy's *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*.

Only the reviews bring to light the power of these books. Inge Judd's review of *Kindergarten* focuses on how the Grimms' grimmest folktales are woven through the plot which touches on terrorist attacks in West Berlin, correspondence written during the Holocaust, and family love and understanding (1328). Gregory Maguire's review in *School Library Journal* is similar, lauding "the startling drama of juxtaposing fairy tale, history and personal experience" (162). Surprisingly, however, I came across no studies of Rushforth's novel.

Reviews of *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* sound similar to those of *Kindergarten*, focusing, as they do, on the story's blend of realism and fantasy. As Hazel Rochman says in her review in *Booklist*, "the Grimms' story is always there like a dark

shadow intensifying the drama as the searing narrative transforms the old archetypes” (1744). Edward Cone in his review in *Library Journal* also notes how Murphy herself is not a survivor of the Holocaust, yet “appropriate[s] it in order to deepen our understanding of this perhaps most heinous episode in human history” and “stays remarkably close to the original version with significant twists” (124).

Zipes, in *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, mentions Murphy’s novel as an illustration of “alternative Hansels and Gretels” (212). He draws attention to Murphy’s deconstruction of fairy tale stereotypes, noting how “the children’s stepmother becomes a resistance fighter and saves Gretel from murder [and] Magda [the witch] constantly finds ways to combat the prejudices of the villagers” (217). However, this is as far as he goes in his analysis, saying himself that “this short summary does not do justice to Murphy’s work” (216).

On the other hand, reviews as well as in-depth articles proliferate about Jane Yolen’s *Briar Rose*. Lydia Kokkola’s study of Jane Yolen’s *Briar Rose* in her book *Representing the Holocaust in Children’s Literature* focuses on how suppression of information and arrangement of the novel like a detective story help communicate with the intended audience, a means of “honoring the scale of the Shoah without burdening young readers with more information than they can cope with” (28).

Adrienne Kertzer’s powerful book *My Mother’s Voice* notes how “*Briar Rose* respects the narrative expectations of young adult romance fiction, only to abandon those expectations in the concluding ‘Author’s Note’” (67). Kertzer sees the folktale narrative of *Briar Rose* as a lie, in order to get readers’ attention, to appease their need for a story with a happy ending. *Briar Rose* ultimately keeps the folktale’s happy ending (Becca’s

grandmother is awakened by the kiss), even though the peritext at the end of *Briar Rose* notes that “Happy ever-after is a fairy tale notion, not history ... [N]o woman ... escaped from Chelmno alive” (*Briar Rose* 202). Some details are not even explicated in this peritext, such as the word “stirring” – an object of debate between Becca and Gemma (Yolen 128). Stirring, in a crematorium, means to poke the burning bodies with a steel poker (Kertzer, *My Mother’s Voice* 74). As Kertzer eloquently observes,

If we persist in thinking that children need hope and happy endings (and I must confess that I believe that they do), then the stories we give them about the Holocaust will be shaped by those expectations and we will need to consider narrative strategies like Yolen’s that give child readers a double narrative, one that simultaneously respects our need for hope and happy endings even as it teaches us a different lesson about history. (74-75)

Evelyn Perry takes a very different stance from Kertzer on what the folktale means in Yolen’s *Briar Rose*. In the article “Poetry and Archaeology: Narration in Contemporary Re-tellings of Folk and Fairy Tales for Young Adults: Jane Yolen’s *Briar Rose*,” Perry, in the same vein as fairy tale socio-political theorists, sees in the thrust of Yolen’s book not the representation of the Holocaust, but the representation of both literary and social history. The re-writing of “Sleeping Beauty” is indicative of how all history is told through narratives, which are constantly being re-written.

Rather than seeing the folktale as a narrative construction, as a falsehood in order to help readers cope with learning about the Holocaust, Perry sees the re-writing of the folktale as analogous to the re-telling of history. Both must be updated to retain their

ability to speak poignant truths. The folktales have always been in a process of re-visioning, re-writing, and re-telling, like history itself. Perry argues that those who have scorned folktales for their power to teach are denying the power of folklore.

Paul Douglas's "Mother May I? The Use of Fairy Tales in the Fiction of Jeff Ryman, Jane Yolen and Angela Carter" agrees with this analysis, although he is more pessimistic about the power of the folktales. Douglas views the tales as irrelevant to contemporary issues unless they are completely rewritten. "Ultimately," he says, "Yolen's novel shows that while the classic fairy tale in its traditional plot may be irrelevant, the outlines of the tale resonate in the consciousness of the contemporary reader" (16). This view considers classic folklore plots as static and irrelevant in today's world. However, their themes still resonate.

Ellen Weil, in her article "The Door to Lilith's Cave: Memory and Imagination in Jane Yolen's Holocaust Novels," compares Yolen's two Holocaust novels, *The Devil's Arithmetic* and *Briar Rose*. Like Perry, Weil sees the main theme of *Briar Rose* as "coming to understand the ways in which remembering is transformed into storytelling, and about the crucial role of storytelling in making sense of our lives" (102). The link between Becca and Gemma, the younger generation's understanding of their family histories, is made through the folktale, which emphasizes the importance of storytelling and memories, even if the memories are confused (103). Weil's thesis also agrees with those of Kokkola and Kertzer: she sees the power of the fairy tale in *Briar Rose* in its ability to "order [the] experience [of the Holocaust] and make it bearable" (103).

However, none of the above-mentioned studies looks at more than one combination of folktale and contemporary Holocaust narrative, which means they cannot

come to conclusions about folktale Holocaust literature. Nor do they link the Nazi regime's use of the folktales to contemporary authors' use of the same Grimms' work. Although they consider why the folktale may be an appropriate device for telling Yolen's Holocaust story, they do not consider the ironic context of how the folktales were also good narrative devices for the Nazis, and thus how the contemporary retellings and the Nazis' use of the Grimms' works are at the same time similar and different.

None of the theorists discuss how Yolen's narrative is distinctly a young adult crossover book. All three books that this thesis analyzes are situated on the cusp between what is young adult and what is adult literature. Even the picture books that use folktales in Holocaust narratives mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis are considered crossover literature. Is there something then about Holocaust literature that necessitates an older audience? Or does the retelling of the folktale particularly appeal to young adults? Certainly Steven Jones, in *The Fairy Tale: The Magic Mirror of the Imagination*, lists reasons why retold folktales appeal to and touch teenagers. He includes issues of maturation and romance, leaving one's parents' home, and establishing a home of one's own (25). And Diane P. Tuccillo, in "Happily Ever After: Teens and Fairy Tales," notes similar points, emphasizing that teenagers' interest in folktale fiction has blossomed over the past few years.

One may consider that the combination of Holocaust and folktale does indeed have something to do with the age group that the stories target. We must remember that books combining the two have been written for younger audiences, such as Lowry's *Number the Stars*. However, most of the Holocaust folktale retellings are directed at young adults, even the picture books. Similarities will therefore be drawn in this study

between the books that share this audience and elements they share that set them apart from the Grimms' original tales and the Nazis regime's interpretations.

The Holocaust children's literature folktales are not just any kind of folktale: they are particularly dialogic tales. The negative response to the use of the fairy tale in Holocaust narratives (because the form is considered by some to be too comedic or light) is responded to by Kertzer, Weil and Kokkola, who attempt to confront the detractors with their arguments that a consolatory narrative (such as provided by the folktale) is necessary to help children cope with learning about such horror. Perry and Douglas argue, too, that the folktale narrative is historically a narrative that captures social history and teaches it, and so is appropriate for even the most horrific of subjects like the Holocaust.

By viewing Holocaust children's literature folktales through the lenses of intertextuality and the greater socio-cultural context from which folktales stem, we can observe three main themes in how the power of the folktale is both perceived and used. First, the folktale as a form is not emotionally biased; folktales have just as often been critiqued for being too "horrific" and too "powerful" as too "light" and "happy." Second, the power in the message of a folktale persists until it is retold; therefore it is important to retell tales that were used by the Nazis to reclaim the power of that literary tradition in a new message. Third, there is a powerful historical root to folktales, and retold tales such as those by Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth are inherently different than the Nazi folktale narratives in that they recapture the dialogic nature of folklore.

3 Theoretical Methodology: Intertextuality

3.1 Overview

How does one go about examining the Nazi regime's folktale propaganda as compared to Holocaust folktale literature for young adults? The postmodern theory of intertextuality is especially pertinent to any discussion of re-telling old stories, including the Nazi regime's re-telling of the Grimms' folktales. According to Allen, intertextuality is the idea that all texts are webs or garments woven from the already written and the already read (6). As Roland Barthes notes in his book of collected essays, *Image – Music – Text*, the very word 'text' is, remembering its original meanings, 'a tissue, a woven fabric' (159). Thus, intertextual study attempts to find and examine the narratives that have been transformed within the text. Every text therefore has meaning in its relation to other texts; a text's meaning is found both inside and outside the text itself (Allen 37).

The threads that make up a text's cloth from the store of literary and cultural history are not unique, but the way in which the threads are woven is unique. This metaphor is especially applicable to folktales, as identified by Marina Warner in *From the Beast to the Blonde*. As she notes, "The veillées, or evening gatherings, for gossip, news, and stories, were part of artisan as well as agricultural working life.... Taking place after daylight hours ... work continued, in the form of spinning, especially, and other domestic tasks" (20-22). The metaphor of the spinner of tales, the wheel, and the spindle is seen in stories such as "Sleeping Beauty." As Warner says,

Spinning a tale, weaving a plot: the metaphors illuminate the relations, while the structure of fairy stories with their repetitions, reprises, elaboration and minutiae,

replicates the thread and fabric of one of women's principal labors—the making of textiles from the wool or the flax to the finished bolt of cloth. (22-23)

The idea of spinning is also pertinent to the discussion in this thesis of propaganda and the extremes to which the folktales can be “spun.” The same threads (plots, characters and motifs) can be used to create tales with radically different messages. Just as there are many forms of folktales, there are also many variations of intertextual studies.

How does one examine the ways in which these intertexts have been transformed? Many postmodern scholars, including Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Linda Hutcheon and Fredric Jameson, have slightly differing views. The approach I find most appropriate for my purpose is that of Julia Kristeva in her interpretation of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of intertextuality.

3.2 Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva

Intertextuality was first coined by Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian philosopher, psychoanalyst, feminist and novelist. In her essay “The Bounded Text,” Kristeva defines her approach to intertextuality: “[I wish] to define the specificity of different textual arrangements by placing them within the general text [culture] of which they are part and which in turn, is part of them” (36).

In other words, Kristeva seeks to study a text's “arrangement of elements that poses a double meaning: a meaning in the text itself and a meaning in what she calls ‘the historical and social text’” (Allen 37). In this thesis, I examine the folktale elements in Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth's texts by investigating where the elements come from,

how they affect the historical and social text and also how they make meaning within the text itself. The folklorist's structural, postmodern, cultural-historical and psychoanalytic approaches will be used in understanding the literary and academic history of the folktales. However, in analyzing how the folktales make meaning in the contemporary texts themselves, and what kind of meaning the folktales make, I will use Kristeva's theories of dialogical and monological narratives to see if the contemporary texts can be read as dialogic as compared to the monologic Nazi propaganda.

Kristeva sees all narration as a dialogical matrix. Only through certain narrative structures is this intertextuality, this ambivalence of writing, exteriorized. In particular, Kristeva separates two different genres of text, one that foregrounds its own intertextuality and one that does not: monologic versus dialogic. Her essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel" details these two kinds of texts and how one can identify them.

Dialogic and monologic texts were terms created by the philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin. Working in the early 1900s in Russia, Bakhtin was one of many philosophers who examined Saussure's theory of semiotics and expanded upon his ideas to examine how language is not only representative but also culturally and historically bound, as well as being bound through power relations. Bakhtin saw all utterances as dialogic—existing through social and ideological subject-positions. In particular, his books *Rabelais and His World* and *The Dialogic Imagination* detailed his theories of dialogic and monologic texts. Kristeva's translation and interpretation of the ideas of those books emerged in her essays "Word, Dialogue and the Novel" and "The Bounded Text," collected together in the book *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. She was the first to introduce his theories into academic circles in Paris.

The difference between Kristeva and Bakhtin is that Bakhtin's theories centre on how particular subjects employ language in their particular ideological situations.

Kristeva, on the other hand, favours more abstract terms and turns to text in general rather than subjects, or authors, to explain her ideas. She also builds on notions of how dialogic texts can be subversive and freeing—looking in particular at a text's phenotext and genotext. The idea of the genotext is “that part of the text which stems from the ‘drive energy’ emanating from the unconscious;” it is usually concerned with “rhythm and intonation, melody, repetition and even kinds of narrative arrangement” (Allen 50). It is inherently liberating for both author and reader. The ‘swept away’ feeling writers and readers often experience when they are fully absorbed in their activities, for example, is connected to the energy of the genotext. The phenotext, on the other hand, is the “part of the text that is bound up in language and communication” (Allen 50).

3.3 Monologic Discourse

In monologic discourse, as in epic, scientific, and historical writing or any representative mode of description and language, the text refuses to enter into dialogue with itself. In monologic discourse, language is the carrier of concrete, universal and collective ideas. The narrator's point of view is absolute, usually coinciding with the wholeness of a God or community – in other words, a “transcendental signified,” a term used by French semiotician and father of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida (qtd. in Kristeva, *Desire* 77).

The Nazi regime's interpretations and reworkings of the Brothers Grimm's folktales can be read as monologic discourse in the extreme. For the Nazi regime, “the

German folktale was no longer considered a mere reflection of folklore or literature but “realistic evidence” of a community life founded in the Nordic Germanic past that had special relevance to the present time” (Kamenetsky, *Children's* 71). Furthermore, all other ways of interpreting or reworking the folktales were censored to ensure that the Nazi interpretations were absolute and indisputable (Kamenetsky 71). Thus, not only do the rewritten texts of the Nazi regime such as “Dragon-slayer” (Zipes, *Utopian* 25) present a monologic narrative – a narrative that serves to communicate plot and characters to a reader that is the “receiver of a fixed, pre-determined reading” (Keep n.pag) rather than the site of meaning making. In fact, the society itself was a monologic society, denying dialogism at all levels.

Monologic discourse encompasses Barthes' idea of the readerly text in which the reader is passive, usually led towards some meaning or “truth.” Barthes' definition of writerly text, words in progress, is very similar to Kristeva and Bakhtin's notion of dialogic text, which is seen as a work in progress. Readers of writerly texts are invited to be active participants, just as readers of dialogical discourse are. In fact, in the carnival tradition, as in the folklore tradition, viewers or listeners are truly active participants, physically as well as mentally, with their facial responses, claps or cries, and voiced suggestions.

3.4 Dialogic Discourse

Dialogic discourse, which includes carnivalesque and Menippean discourses, exteriorizes this conscious literary productivity, and often brings to light sexuality and death, this structure's underlying unconscious theme (Kristeva 78). Out of this dialogue

“the structural dyads of carnival appear: high and low, birth and agony, food and excrement, praises and curses, laughter and tears” (Kristeva 78-9). According to Bakhtin, the carnivalesque refers to the period of time in medieval Europe of great carnivals, occasions where temporarily the authority of the church and state were upturned, allowing for free thinking (Soanes 262). The carnivalesque is the literary manifestation of the spirit of the carnival. Menippean satire, which is named after the satires of Menippus of Gadara, a philosopher of the third century, is a genre of literature that actually appeared much earlier in the writings of Antisthenes, a student of Socrates and “one of the writers of Socratic dialogue” (Kristeva 82). According to Kristeva, Menippean satire, similar to the carnivalesque, is a form of literature that is politically and socially disturbing and anti-authoritarian.

In “Word, Dialogue and the Novel,” an essay based on Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and his World*, Kristeva begins by examining carnivalesque traditions, which she sees were absorbed into Menippean discourse and the Socratic dialogues. As she says,

Carnavalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest.

There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law. (65)

Thus dialogic discourse, or the carnivalesque, is inherently anti-authoritarian.

Folklore too can be defined as a dialogic discourse. Like the underlying themes of carnivalesque and Menippean discourses, sex and death are the themes of many of the Grimms’ folktales including “Sleeping Beauty,” “Hansel and Gretel,” “Bluebeard,” and “Little Red Riding Hood.” As well, structural dyads that make up carnivalesque and

Menippean discourse can be found in folklore. The structural dyads of folklore are identified by Luthi in his book *The Fairytale as Art Form and Portrait of Man*. As he notes when analyzing the Brothers Grimm's tales,

Without contrasts, the fairytale would lose its distinctive character. They are something which derive from its tendency toward extreme completeness of form, and they come into being, like so many other things in the fairytale, to a certain degree in and of themselves, as a consequence of this tendency to the extreme, to vigorous stylization. Beautiful and ugly, good and bad, success and failure, helplessness/perplexity and successful outcome, emergency and rescue, enchantment and disenchantment, reward and punishment, gold and pitch, death and resuscitation, appearance and reality, high and low, magnificent and dirty, small and large, real and unreal—these and other polarities run through the world of the fairytale in manifold variation. (95)

However, although the folktales of the Brothers Grimm may exhibit structural dyads, they are not dialogic texts. They do not exhibit other carnivalesque traditions such as exteriorizing the process of literary meaning-making, and the themes of the tales are not anti-authoritarian; rather they “tend to be overtly patriarchal and politically conservative in structure and theme and reflect the dominant interests of social groups that control cultural forces of production and reproduction” (Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick* 2). However, similar to the carnival, oral storytelling is a process of dialogue and interaction between audience and performers (or storytellers). It is a site of active meaning-making. Although not all folklore is necessarily a political or social protest,

folktales, especially in the oral tradition, seem to fit notions of dialogism, not monologism.

So why, then, if we view folklore as dialogic, would the Nazi regime use such discourse for propaganda? One can speculate that perhaps the regime's fear of folklore's dialogic nature was part of the motivation to control it and to deny any interpretations of the tales except the Nazis' own. Certainly the Nazi regime tried to control and eradicate everything that challenged its dogma.

As mentioned above, the carnival is an active site of meaning-making; the performers depend on the audience. As Kristeva notes, "the scene of the carnival, where there is no stage, no "theater," is thus both stage and life, game and dream, discourse and spectacle" (79). In "Word, Dialogue and Novel," she goes on to relate this to the Socratic dialogues, which were also places of active meaning-making. Socrates would take his questions into the streets to discuss with passersby in order to find answers. Furthermore, Menippean discourse, a form named after the Greek Menippus, a cynic and satirist, whose works influenced the works of Lucian and Marcus Varro, draws on Socratic dialogues and the carnival structure.

Menippean novels, according to Bakhtin and Kristeva, are the ultimate dialogic novel. They often fuse mystical symbolism with macabre naturalism, and include "pathological states of the soul, such as madness, split personalities, daydreams, dreams and death," as well as the contrasts with the positive, such as virtuous courtesans and generous bandits (Kristeva 83). Their narratives include abrupt transitions and changes, citations from other literary works and often become a hybrid of genres including "short stories, letters, speeches, mixtures of verse and prose" (Kristeva 83).

As Kristeva says, “the multi-stylism and multi-tonality of this discourse and the dialogical status of the word explain why it has been impossible for classicism or for any other authoritarian society to express itself in a novel descended from Menippean discourse” (83). Bakhtin, too, shared this viewpoint. As Allen notes, “At the heart of Bakhtin’s work is an argument that the dialogic, heteroglot aspects of language are essentially threatening to any unitary, authoritarian and hierarchical conception of society, art and life” (30). This thesis is concerned with how the folktale was rendered monologic during the Nazi era, and how in the post-war period has been returned to its natural dialogic mode.

3.5 Monologism and Dialogism in Folklore

The Nazi regime’s use of the Grimms’ work was monologic. One may speculate that, perhaps, fearing all dialogic, heteroglot aspects of language, they forced one of the most dialogic forms—the folktale—into a monologic discourse, trying to impose one and only one interpretation of the folktales and deny all others. The oral folktale is an essentially dialogic form, told in performer/audience setting similar to the carnival and dynamically open to many interpretations. How have contemporary folktale re-tellers been able to emphasize its dialogism? Bahktin and Kristeva's terms and their notions of intertextuality provide part of the framework for this study of Grimms’ folktale Holocaust retellings. Each of the following chapters studies, in depth, one of the three contemporary Holocaust texts in terms of how the folktale within the text functions dialogically, especially in comparison with the Nazi monologic retellings.

How can *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, *Kindergarten*, or *Briar Rose* be read as dialogic works? Through close reading of the texts, I will analyze if and how the folktale narratives within these contemporary novels display aspects of Kristeva's dialogism and genotext. I will observe such details as whether or not the texts focus on "rhythm and intonation, melody, repetition and even kinds of narrative arrangement" (Allen 50) as compared to focusing on producing "clear and unequivocal meaning" (213). I will also examine the hybridity of the texts, the prevalence of structural dyads (including sexuality and death, and creation and destruction), the connection of folktales to pathological states of the soul, such as madness, and whether or not the texts enter into dialogue with themselves. This final point, the exteriorization of conscious literary productivity, will be of particular importance to substantiate my argument that Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth create powerful, positive and liberating novels by illuminating how they and their characters are using folktales as tools – keys psychologically protecting themselves and keeping themselves free from Nazi imprisonment, keys to open their family histories and social histories, and finally keys to the creative imagination.

4 **Breadcrumbs and Blood: *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel***

It is not hard to see why Louise Murphy's *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* is aimed at adult and young adult audiences. Its passages depicting madness and the rape, starvation, and mutilation of children during the Holocaust by the Nazi soldiers are difficult to read. It is hard to endure such scenes of brutality as Gretel's rape (133), or Telek's maiming of the Polish children who are blond and blue-eyed to prevent them from being taken by the Nazis (Murphy 155-7). Such scenes surpass even the fantastical horror of the harshest Grimms' tales such as "Fletcher's Bird," in which a stepmother cuts off the head of her own stepson, or "The Willful Child," in which a mother beats her child back into the grave. According to Zipes, "Hansel and Gretel" itself is considered one of the more traumatic of the Grimms' tales because of the parents' abandonment of their children in the woods and the cannibalistic behaviour of the witch whom the children find there (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 195).

Although a famed German fairy tale, "Hansel and Gretel" appeared in print long before the Brothers Grimm recorded it from Dortchen Wild, Wilhelm Grimm's wife. Parts of the plot appear in Perrault's "Le petit Poucet" in 1697 and "Finette Cendron" by Madame d'Aulnoy in France in 1721 (Opie 236). Folklorists and cultural historians, such as Iona and Peter Opie, Maria Tatar, and Jack Zipes, have analyzed the connection of the tale to historical events. These connections include the abandonment of children due to starvation in the 1700s (Tatar, *Hard* 49-50). Historical events also include the tale's connection to the Holocaust. As the Opies say,

It is sad to report, as Jella Lepman has done in *A Bridge of Children's Books*, 1969, that when the great exhibition of children's books was staged in Munich

immediately after the Hitlerian war, an exhibition that was intended to be, and was, an opening of doors to the new generation in Germany, it was found that the story of 'Hansel and Gretel' was not always regarded as preposterous, that the fantasy was too close to reality, that for some the witch's oven too much resembled the gas chamber at Auschwitz. (237)

Tatar furthers this discussion of the tale's connection to the Holocaust, saying,

The punishment of the witch has been read as a portent of the horrors of the Third Reich. That the witch is often represented as a figure with stereotypical Jewish traits, particularly in twentieth-century illustrations, makes this scene all the more ominous. In her rewriting of "Hansel and Gretel," the poet Anne Sexton refers to the abandonment of the children as a "final solution." (*Annotated* 84)

For the Nazi regime, the "Hansel and Gretel" tale depicted a historically relevant conflict that served as National Socialist propaganda. As Zipes details in *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*, "Hansel and Gretel" depicts class conflict. In particular, it is a story of victory for the peasants and lower estates. As he notes,

The struggle depicted in this tale is against poverty and against witches who have houses of food and hidden treasures. Here again the imaginative and magic elements of the tale had specific meanings for a peasant and lower-class audience at the end of the eighteenth century. (38)

The depiction of the "wealthy" witch as a Jew who ultimately is defeated by the heroic and successful "German" peasant children was used by the Nazi regime, pre 1945, as proof of the villainous nature of the Jewish people and the resourcefulness of the

German peasants (Tatar, *Annotated* 84). As Tatar says, "The punishment of the witch has been read as a portent of the horrors of the Third Reich. That the witch is often represented as a figure with stereotypical Jewish traits, particularly in twentieth-century illustrations, makes this scene all the more ominous" (84).

During the Nazi Regime, peasants in folklore, like Hansel and Gretel and their family, represented traits that were highly valued and promoted, including "loyalty, courage, honesty, endurance under trying circumstances, a readiness to fight against enemy forces, and a manly mastery of difficult situations, due to an inborn drive for achievement" (Kamenetsky, *Children's* 76). Furthermore, as Kamenetsky notes, "to the Nazis, the peasant was not merely a member of a given class and a 'preserver' of folk tradition, but a symbol of the Nordic Germanic ancestor representing the 'blood-and-soil' idea of racial strength as much as the spiritual determination of a Nordic warrior" (42). These ideologies were promoted by Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazis' chief ideologist, and carried out in literature (including articles, pamphlets, posters, postcards and books) by Joseph Goebbels, the German Reich Minister of Propaganda, who founded the Reich Culture Chamber, established to "control art, literature, theater, press, radio, music and film" (Kamenetsky 32).

While cultural historian folklorists study "Hansel and Gretel" in terms of its relation to socio-political contexts, psychoanalytic critics such as Bruno Bettelheim look at the tale and its psychological relationship with the child reader according to Freudian psychology. As Bettelheim believes, "the fairy tale expresses in words and actions the things which go on in children's minds" (159). "Hansel and Gretel," in particular, according to Bettelheim, "tells about the debilitating consequences of trying to deal with

life's problems by means of regression and denial" (160). Hansel and Gretel have reached the point in their lives where they can no longer rely on their mother or stepmother to gratify all of their oral needs. Unable to deal with this forced maturation, they regress and deny the process of growing up. "The gingerbread house stands for oral greediness and how attractive it is to give in to it" (*Uses* 161) and the witch is the "personification of the destructive aspects of orality . . . in order to survive, they must develop initiative and realize that their only recourse lies in intelligent planning and acting" (*Uses* 162). This Freudian interpretation of the tale has been lambasted by cultural historians such as Maria Tatar; in her book *Off with Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood*, she is concerned that Bettelheim overlooks the abandonment of the children by the parents instead making the children the villains of the piece.

Unlike Bettelheim's interpretation, Murphy's "Hansel and Gretel" narrative is not about overcoming the oral Oedipal stage of maturation, but rather is concerned with repression, maturation and physical and psychological coping. In Murphy's novel, the folktale functions as a defensive psychological tool the Jewish children use to hide and protect themselves from the incomprehensible fantastical horrors they are witnessing and suffering through.

This shows the dialogic and deconstructable nature of the folktale—how it can be interpreted to suit the reader's own situation. As the children take on the identities of the characters in the tale, they in some respects mirror the traditional tale, and in other respects transform it. A dialogue between their lives and the folktale lives emerges, each one interacting with the other, so that the result is a narrative that is not true to the traditional "Hansel and Gretel" story but does echo it in some ways. Changes to the tale

include reversals of the concept of evil. Actions and characters depicted as “evil” in the Grimms’ version are now depicted as “good,” or at least part of the spectrum of typical good and bad behavior, whereas the authentic “evil” is represented by the Nazi regime. This depiction of “evil” reflects other extremes in the novel— extreme horror, extreme violence, madness and abusive sexuality. Overall, the focus of Murphy’s story is on life’s darkness, which is a different interpretation and use of folklore than the Nazi regime’s focus on the “life-giving” elements of stories and folktales.

Furthermore, rather than being shown as a static literary product that contains “truths” and “proofs” to be consumed, the root folktale in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* is revealed as a tool that can be adopted and adapted by anyone. In other words, the novel is a testament to Zipes’ thesis in *Breaking the Magic Spell*:

Folk and fairy tales remain an essential force in our cultural heritage, but they are not static literary models to be internalized for therapeutic consumption. Their value depends on how we actively produce and receive them in forms of social literature, which lead toward the creation of greater individual autonomy. (199)

The True Story of Hansel and Gretel begins with a Jewish family, father, stepmother and two children, on a motorcycle fleeing Nazi soldiers. With their combined weight, there is no way they will be able to escape. Thus, the stepmother convinces the father to stop the motorcycle and send the children into the woods, so they can all have a chance to survive. In case the children encounter other Nazi soldiers, the stepmother tells them to pretend that they are German:

‘Our names?’ The girl clung to the sidecar.

‘Never say them. You don’t have Jewish names anymore.’

'Who are we?' The boy smiled. It was interesting. He wouldn't be himself . . .

Slamming her fist against her head, their Stepmother shook loose an old memory.

'Hansel and Gretel,' she screamed over her shoulder at the children who were now almost hidden in the trees. 'You are Hansel and Gretel. Remember.' (4-6)

The children adopt the folktale names immediately. The reader is never given their real Jewish names. Although neither the children, nor the stepmother, nor any of the characters seem to recognize the names come from a Grimms' folktale, certainly the folktale lies in the subconscious of the stepmother, who "shakes loose the old memory," and the children, who are unnaturally fearful of Magda's oven—Magda being the witch in the woods with whom they have found protection. For example, when they must hide in the oven to escape Nazi soldiers, they think that they are going to be cooked and eaten. For the stepmother, clearly "Hansel and Gretel" is a tale she was once told: it connects to her notion of Aryan Germany – for she chooses those names to give the children German identities.

As their plight worsens, the children increasingly retreat into these folktale identities. Hansel, who is younger than Gretel, soon forgets his Jewish name, and identifies himself as Hansel completely. Gretel is the one who retains their memories of their past selves, but, when she is raped by Nazi soldiers, her mind becomes "a single, light-filled room that kept her very still" (134), and she forgets everything, except songs and memories of her grandfather. She forgets her father, stepmother, and the real names that embody the identities of her brother and herself. It is as if, to protect and preserve herself, Gretel retreats into a complete fantasy existence. Hansel is terrified, since he also cannot remember who they were.

In a sense, the folktale offers them protection from an outside world that has gone mad. Even the plot of the novel becomes increasingly similar to that of the folktale. The children have to hide in the giant oven while the Nazi soldiers burn Magda's house. Magda ends up captured and sent to a concentration camp, where her body is burned in the ovens. It is one of Murphy's most graphic passages:

The short white hair left on Magda's head lit around her face and burned first. It was a puff of light for a second, and then the skin began to burn . . . The heat was so great that even the bones turned to ash and only an occasional tiny lump showed that the ash had been a person. (254)

A few things can be drawn from these words. First, the unsparing description is characteristic of the entire novel, which includes scenes of mutilation of children, beatings, killings, and very realistic descriptions of starvation, including bowel problems accompanying it. These un-prettified representations are in contrast to the "pretty" folktale, such as the Disney versions of folktales, as well as the prettified folktales of the Nazi regime, and their focus on "symbols of life" intending to support "the Nazis 'positive' population policy" (Kamentsky, *Children's* 79). Such extreme descriptions, as well as the novel's focus on madness and the subconscious, align with Menippean or carnivalesque literary tradition. As Kristeva says,

The carnival first exteriorizes the structure of reflective literary productivity, then inevitably brings to light this structure's underlying unconscious: sexuality and death. Out of the dialogue that is established between them, the structural dyads of carnival appear: high and low, birth and agony, food and excrement, praise and curses, laughter and tears. (*Desire* 78-9)

Although *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* is not the kind of postmodern novel that is self-reflexive, constantly commenting on its own literary production, it certainly exteriorizes the literary process by transforming an old story into something new. And a dialogue indeed is established between two of the narratives: the Holocaust narrative and the folktale narrative.

The Holocaust narrative forces the folktale narrative to undergo radical transformations. Murphy's folktale narrative contains all the elements of the Grimms' story, but all these characters and elements (such as the oven) are now protagonists. Rather representing evil, the "witch" Magda is a force of good, rescuing and caring for the children when they have no one. This figure of the older woman with the power to heal and help living in the centre of the magical woods can be seen as symbolizing the dialogic forces of this folktale. Not only is she representative of the transformation of the folktale, she also resembles the tellers of the tales – the old folk women of the oral tradition that told the tales and kept them alive.

Magda's oven, too, saves the children from being burned. Even the other traditionally evil figure in "Hansel and Gretel," the stepmother, is portrayed as a good, woman, albeit a survivalist. The Nazi regime takes the place of villain—it is the ultimate antagonist. In other words, with the presence of the Nazi regime, the traditional antagonists of "Hansel and Gretel" are depicted in a role reversal as good, or at least as part of a normal spectrum of good and evil, as seen in all adult behaviors. Indeed, Magda is a little odd, as is her brother, the priest, who is morally ambivalent. The stepmother, too, is not perfectly free of blame. After all, she does choose to leave the children alone together, to stay with her husband, rather than separating with one child, which might

have been a more responsible solution, especially for the survival of the children. However, no antagonist's behaviour can compare to the horrors inflicted by the Nazi regime. It is as if Murphy's novel suggests that not even evil fantasy characters are evil enough to represent or symbolize the historical horror of the Nazi regime. They are evil beyond any fantasy.

As Adrienne Kertzer says of Jane Yolen's *Briar Rose*, the folktale provides consolation for the reader (*My Mother's* 68). By using the "Sleeping Beauty" folktale, Yolen can give her readers a familiar and soothing narrative and not overwhelm them entirely with the Holocaust narrative. Although this criticism may be partially valid for *Briar Rose*, and will be revisited in the next chapter of this thesis, it is certainly not true of *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*.

The reader is not protected from the descriptions of brutal actions. Instead, for readers familiar with the Grimms' folktale, the folktale motifs are suddenly given powerful new associations as when "ovens" are shown to symbolize concentration camp crematoria. However, the child characters inside the novel are protected rather than overwhelmed by the folktale. Thus the many functions of the folktale are shown simultaneously. Readers can see how the folktale genre can be a consoling and protecting force, and also a genre capable of imparting brutal social history.

The folktale's characters are unspecific enough [as Max Luthi notes – "the figures do not appeal as individualities but as carriers of the action, as fillers of roles and carriers of meaning, as symbols" (*Portrait* 157)] to allow for the children to don them as roles, symbols and most importantly, disguises. The children take on their new names easily, almost joyfully, and, once they do so, are not as frightened as they should be venturing

into the woods. This could show how subconsciously the folktale, at least the Grimms' version of "Hansel and Gretel," permits the children to hope for a happy ending as well as preparing them for being alone and meeting danger, even violence.

Because of the potent association of the Grimm brothers' folktales with Germany, "Hansel and Gretel" allows the children to hide their Jewish identities. Moreover, if one agrees with Bettelheim's thesis, the subtext of the tale provides psychological encouragement to mature and face life without their protective parents. It also facilitates their retreat into a total fantasy-based madness in order to escape facing a traumatic, incomprehensible atrocity. The folktale only provides this protection and psychological aid because its narrative can be transformed, because it is neither static nor rigid but is open for interpretation, and because it is part of the free literary domain. The children shed the folktale when they no longer require its protection.

The True Story of Hansel and Gretel ends in mystery. We never find out who the children are. Their names are left unknown. Only at the very end of the novel, when Hansel is losing his own mind because he is unable to take care of both of them and his life is in mortal danger for the last time, does Gretel snap out of her madness, and remember everything, everything except "the two names" which were "gone" (283). Only when they find their father, and their father addresses them, do they return to their previous identities, in the last pages of the book. With the end of the war, they shed the folktale, and resume their lives. In the last paragraph of the novel,

He [their father] spoke each name slowly, quietly, the crowd of workers that had gathered around the three catching up the sound and echoing the names in whispers. He spoke their names over and over, and watched these gifts brought

out of darkness, these bits of flesh, this blood of his blood and bone of his bone, his children, begin to smile as they become once again, themselves. (296)

Thus the title of the text “The *True Story* of Hansel and Gretel” (emphasis added) is actually in contradiction with (or to) the text – for this is not the “true story.” In fact, the narrative shows how there is no one “true story” but rather many possible versions of “Hansel and Gretel,” since other fictional characters could become the folktale characters in other narratives. This same form of title is used for other fractured fairy tale books for children, such as the well-known *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, by Jon Scieszka and illustrated by Lane Smith, which also depicts the plastic nature of folktales.

Whereas the Nazi regime did not allow for diversity, thought, experience, or interpretations of the folktales other than their own, in Murphy’s novel the folktale is shown to be a malleable genre that is not disassociated from the real world. Furthermore, unlike the Nazi regime’s use of “Hansel and Gretel” which they interpreted to prove and justify their notions of racial superiority and which they treated as fact or evidence, Murphy’s novel presents the folktale as a tool that the characters in her novel use to psychologically protect themselves in this time of horror. Furthermore, the folktale is a tool for Murphy as an author, to show how the Holocaust was beyond the comprehension of the most fantastical of imaginations. The narrative shows the impossibility of censoring a folktale, for folktales reside deep in everyone’s minds – as memories that can be “shaken loose” to be used by any person in any time.

5 Barbed Briars: Briar Rose

Jane Yolen's *Briar Rose*, the most critically respected young adult novel to fuse folktale narrative with Holocaust history, has much in common with Louise Murphy's *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*. In particular, both novels include characters that use Grimms' folktales as coping mechanisms, losing themselves in folktale characters. The novels also transform Grimms' folktales to highlight darker rather than sunnier aspects of the tales and present the folktale as a malleable genre in which universal stories are echoed in all of history with different specific details. Finally, both novels leave their readers with mysteries not completely solved.

Briar Rose differs, however, from the *True Story of Hansel and Gretel* in substantial ways. Rather than taking place during the Holocaust, the story takes place well after; in the early 1990s. Furthermore, the folktale root of the narrative is essentially transformed into a mystery story, with the main character Becca acting as family detective. Although on the surface, the story may seem to include only one re-mastered Grimms' folktale, it actually includes two: "Briar Rose" and "Aschenputtel" (these are Grimms' titles for the tales "Sleeping Beauty" and "Cinderella," but since the latter titles are more commonly known, these are how they will be referred to throughout the rest of this chapter). As well, the book is more openly dialogic than *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, for the characters, especially Becca and Stan, engage in dialogue about the making of stories and folktales, and Becca is very aware of the process of deconstructing story.

This dialogue between the characters foregrounds a theme found in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*: that the folktale is a powerful tool for imparting information.

Similar to *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, in *Briar Rose* the folktale is also a psychological tool, an identity that Becca's grandmother takes on in order to survive through the Holocaust. The folktale is also shown as a toolbox of clues, which Becca can use to discover the social history of the Holocaust in Poland and her grandmother's history. Furthermore, the folktale is a narrative tool for Yolen to chart Becca's path/life.

As I will show, both "Ashenputtel" and "Briar Rose" were heavily used as propagandistic tools by the Nazi regime to convince youth and others to absorb ideas of racial superiority. However, the tales were not shown as tools but rather empirical proof of this racist notion.

The first known "Cinderella" appeared in China around 850 AD, and was titled *Yen-hsien* (Tatar, *Annotated* 114). In Scotland, Cinderella is called "Rashin Coatie," and a little red calf (the godmother) provides her beautiful dress for the kirk (the church) where she attracts the eye of the prince. In Hollywood, Cinderella takes the form of Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*, Drew Barrymore in *Ever After*, and several others. The earliest European version of "Cinderella" to appear in print was Giambattista Basile's "The Cat Cinderella," the Sixth Diversion of the First Day in his *Pentameron*, published in 1634. But, as Altmann and de Vos argue, "In North America, most popular versions of the tale are based on Charles Perrault's "Cendrillon," published in his *Histoires, ou contes du temps passé*, in 1697" (*New Tales* 36).

The Grimms' version of "Cinderella," "Aschenputtel," seems to have come indirectly from a French source (*New Tales* 42). Unlike the Perrault version, however, the Grimms' story includes a hazel twig, which grows into a tree (a symbol of her dead mother). This tree helps Aschenputtel, providing her with dresses for the prince's ball.

Cultural historians and postmodernists have approached this tale from many angles, many taking feminist perspectives. For example, Jack Zipes, in *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World*, has traced how the tale has changed from reflecting a matriarchal society, with a young woman actively achieving success with her mother's help, to a patriarchal tale in which the heroine is a "helpless, inactive pubescent girl, whose major accomplishments are domestic, and who must obediently wait to be rescued by a male" (141).

Psychoanalytic critics such as Bettelheim have taken a different stance on the tale, one that Zipes has challenged. Bettelheim sees the tale as reflecting sibling rivalry and sexual maturation. According to Bettelheim, only when Cinderella is able to grow out of her rivalry with her sisters/step sisters and jealousy of her mother/stepmother, and call to her mother for help, is she able to grow up and find a proper social/sexual relationship. Zipes, who sees the modern tale as an insult to women, does not agree with Bettelheim's interpretation of it as a "symbolic parable of self-realization and healthy sexuality" (Zipes, *Breaking* 66).

During the Holocaust, the tale took on vastly different interpretations for the Nazi regime. As Wolfgang Emmerich says in his article "The Mythos of Germanic Continuity," "Cinderella" was manipulated and "employed pedagogically and propagandistically to stir up hatred of foreigners" (45). He relates one such interpretation of Cinderella, which goes as follows:

Rising early, carrying water, building a fire, cooking and washing, that has become the lot of German girls. Service: not to one's own folk, not to one's own

clan. Such service would be priceless! But no, it is to a foreign kind, for those who have penetrated into this holy place. (45)

Representative of the anti-Semitic tendency of Nazi interpretations of folklore, here the stepsisters and stepmother in "Cinderella" are aligned with "foreigners," the evil ones forcing Cinderella to labour. Also, the protagonists of "Sleeping Beauty" and "Cinderella" were both interpreted as the ideal image of a German, Aryan woman. These princess heroines were described as

[t]he archetype of a pure virgin who became the well deserved prize for the courageous hero who had overcome the dragon or the enemy by a vigorous and determined fight. She was his reward, but more than that: she was the needed complementary force for the fighting man, destined to perpetuate life and to give life. If at the end of most folktales the hero married the princess whom he had won by his actions, their marriage symbolized the life cycle and the timelessness of the German nation. (Kamenetsky, *Children's* 79)

"Sleeping Beauty" – the main folktale that inspires Yolen's narrative in *Briar Rose* – has an equally impressive history to "Cinderella." However, unlike "Cinderella," the early European versions of "Sleeping Beauty" differ dramatically from the Brothers Grimm's version. Giambattista Basile's "Sun, Moon and Talia" (1636) and Charles Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty in the Wood" are both highly sexual stories that continue long after Sleeping Beauty awakes, compared to the Grimms' "Briar Rose." In "Sun, Moon and Talia," the Sleeping Beauty, Talia, is raped while in her slumber, and in "Sleeping Beauty in the Wood" the prince's cannibalistic mother intends to devour Sleeping Beauty and her children (Tatar, *Annotated* 233).

Similar to their theories of "Cinderella," cultural historians such as Zipes and Tatar have analyzed the Grimms' version of "Sleeping Beauty" as a "bourgeois myth about the proper way that males save . . . comatose women" (Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm* 152). The cultural historical view of "Sleeping Beauty" differs dramatically from the structuralist and psychoanalytic readings.

Bettelheim, rather than interpreting the sleeping state as a depiction of a passive female waiting for a man, sees the sleep as representing part of adolescence. As he says,

Adolescence is a period of great and rapid change, characterized by periods of utter passivity and lethargy alternating with frantic activity While many fairy tales stress great deeds the heroes must perform to become themselves, 'The Sleeping Beauty' emphasizes the long, quiet concentration on oneself that is also needed. (*Uses* 225)

Sleeping Beauty wakes up, according to Bettelheim, not because the right prince has come to kiss her, but because it is time for the onset of her menstruation. She is ready to grow up. For children and adolescents reading this tale, the themes provide the needed psychological comfort that, although maturity may take a while to happen, eventually it does come.

For the Nazi interpreters of folklore, Sleeping Beauty did not wake up because it was her right time, but because the right leader, the right "prince" came along. The prince in "Sleeping Beauty" often was interpreted as Hitler awakening Germany from its slumber, as typified by the poem written in 1934 by Adolf Holst (Zipes, *Utopian Tales from Weimar*, 24-5) or in handbooks for elementary school teachers, like the one written by Heinrich Lohrmann, who writes, "Yet, one day, the sun god will arouse to a new life

all those who have fallen into a deep sleep . . . Adolf Hitler, who has made us a gift of the new flag of light (with the symbol of the swastika) . . .” (qtd. in Kamenetsky, *Children’s* 90).

The happy ending of the tale, the awakening of Sleeping Beauty, was interpreted as more than just the happy ending of one individual’s narrative. The awakening was symbolic of the entire German nation’s “happy” awakening by Hitler. As Jennifer Rosenbaum writes in her collaborative article “The Political Manipulations of Sleeping Beauty,”

The universal popularity of the tale means that any movement with a strong central leader figure, claiming to seek a re-establishment (or reawakening) of national values and culture, could easily adapt the story to its purpose. The symbolism of the tale is clear and casts characters in the distinct roles that are essential for political propaganda. It is worth noting however, that the tale can also be used against such propagandists . . . Another interesting version is Josef Reding’s ‘Girl, Forget That Prince!’ While the obvious slant to this poem is a feminist one (and it was probably intended as such), it can also be interpreted as an anti-fascist poem, telling the nation not to trust strong populist leaders who claim to be able to solve all their problems. Rather they must seize the bull by the horns and tackle their problems directly. (n. pag.)

An individual seizing and tackling her own problems directly is, in fact, one of the main themes of Jane Yolen’s *Briar Rose*. Becca has listened to her grandmother, Gemma’s, version of “Sleeping Beauty” all her life, without knowing her grandmother’s past, or even her grandmother’s real name. It is only after her grandmother dies that

Becca realizes that the folktale may be a key to unlocking the mysteries of her grandmother's life. Becca begins to tackle the problem like a detective, to sift the fact from the fiction.

By examining Gemma's version of "Sleeping Beauty," and discovering the facts behind the fiction, Becca is able not only to unearth the mysteries of her family's past, but also to gain insight into the history of the Holocaust as well as contemporary Polish problems related to the Second World War, including the difficulty of inhabitants of the Polish town of Chelmno to speak about the past, because, as the priest of the town says, they are ashamed of their inaction during the war (Yolen, *Briar* 143). Yolen makes a powerful point here: that those who are unwilling to speak and reclaim their voices are trapped in the negative past, but those who are willing to hold dialogue about the past and with the past can move forward and build a future. These dialogues will not be pleasant, especially not happily-ever-after, but they will facilitate the process of healing and resolution.

In *Briar Rose*, the more facts Becca links to the fairytale symbols of Gemma's version of "Sleeping Beauty," the darker the already dark tale becomes. The prince turns out to be a partisan fighter and his kiss is mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to the young Jewish Gemma, whom he discovers gassed and lying in a pit of dead bodies near Chelmno, the concentration camp housed in a castle. He is a homosexual, and therefore does not become her partner. The war is the "curse" in this version of "Sleeping Beauty" (85), inflicted not by a jealous fairy who was uninvited to the princess's christening, but by the Nazi regime. The concentration camp is the dark fairy tale castle. The Sleeping Beauty's comatose sleep is Gemma's near death from the gas. The man who ends up

being Gemma's lover is one of the partisans too, but he dies before the war is over.

Gemma, pregnant, must make her way alone to America.

Gemma, it is explained, much like the children in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, lost her name and identity during the war, and took on the folktale character of "Sleeping Beauty." This loss is connected to her gassing – which placed her both physically and psychologically near death. After she is brought back from the death through the fairy tale kiss/mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, the partisans she is with ask her who she is. But she cannot remember. As she says, "I have no memories in my head but one" (Yolen 221). That single memory is the folktale "Sleeping Beauty." And so the partisans decide to call her Princess (the Polish word: *Ksiezniczka*).

This scene is similar to the one in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* when the stepmother bangs her hand on the side of her head, which loosens the memory of "Hansel and Gretel." "Sleeping Beauty" is part of Gemma's subconscious that cannot be gassed away. Instead the folktale rises to the forefront of her consciousness when she is in trauma and in need of psychological help. Subsequently, she is saved from death by the partisans.

This seems to suggest at least three aspects of folktales: that they are permanently ingrained in our collective subconscious; that they are adaptable enough to help one to make sense of the most violent and terrible times; and that the characters within them are one-dimensional enough to be representative of a myriad of individuals.

Donald Hasse states that he is "interested in how children of war—especially as adults later reflecting on their violent wartime childhoods—have had recourse to the space of fairy tales to interpret their traumatic physical environments and their emotional

lives within them" (361). Haase argues that children of war trauma use the folktales to "transform their physical surroundings into a hopeful, utopian space as a psychological defense and means of emotional survival" (361). Gemma in *Briar Rose* enacts this vision using a folktale as a "psychological defense and means of emotional survival," but not necessarily because the folktale is transforming her surroundings into a "hopeful, utopian space." Rather, the folktale is rooted in her subconscious. And, instead of projecting a hopeful space upon a wartime landscape, the folktale in *Briar Rose* actually symbolizes mostly the evil of the war-time landscape. It reflects the unhappy ending of the war, for, in the version of the folktale Gemma relates to her grandchildren, most of the characters remain asleep (i.e. dead) and the prince does not survive.

As the years pass, Gemma tells her version of "Sleeping Beauty" compulsively to her daughter and granddaughters. She never relates the realistic part of her history with the partisans, or her husband, but instead incorporates these elements of her life into the folktale, so that the story takes on a darker ending than the Grimms' "Sleeping Beauty." The prince does not survive, nor does anyone else awake. Although this ending is accepted by her daughter and grandchildren, it is rejected by her grandchildren's friends, like Becca's friend Shirley, who does not like Gemma's version of the story and refuses to stay overnight at Becca's house (34). Furthermore, Gemma's insistent retelling of her narrative can be seen as another symbol. The power in the message of a folktale persists at least partly by virtue of the tale being told and retold. What makes this novel unusual and special is that it exteriorizes the storytelling process, showing how messages are incorporated into texts. It is a meta-text on the act of storytelling itself.

Gemma remembers the war only through the folktale. Our only hint that she actually does remember more comes when she is near death: "The old woman opened her eyes. 'I was the princess in the castle in the sleeping woods . . . promise me you will find the castle. Promise me you will find the prince. Promise me you will find the maker of the spells'" (16). One wonders whether or not the characters in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, who have lived through the war as pseudo-folktale characters, will also grow up remembering their past as a folktale. To bury such memories is not depicted as negative. In fact, Becca tells Potocki (the homosexual partisan who rescued her grandmother and whom Becca meets in Poland) that she believes her grandmother's memories of what happened were all buried in her mind, Potocki replies, "Just as well [they were] buried, my dear. I am glad she did not have my dreams" (231).

Similar to elements in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, this dialogue shows how for Joseph, the partisan prince who rescued Gemma, fantasy is preferable to the fantastical horror of the Holocaust.

In fact, even some of the horror of the Holocaust is hidden from the readers of *Briar Rose*. Although Becca's detective work exposes many facts, some are not revealed. In particular, no woman actually escaped the Chelmno camp, a fictional change to history that Yolen acknowledges in her peri-text at the end of the novel (236-7). Also, although Becca, at twenty-one, is a good deal older than the children in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, *Briar Rose* does not go into such graphic, physical detail. For example, as noted by Adrienne Kertzer in *My Mother's Voice*, the word stirring is never explained although it is present in the text, when Gemma is telling the story to a young Becca. "Stirring" in the concentration camp crematoriums meant "poking the burning bodies

with a steel poker" (Kertzer 74). Is this horrific context hidden to protect a young reader? Does Yolen add the "Cinderella" folktale to ease the narrative?

Although theorists such as Kertzer and Lydia Kokkola do believe Yolen suppresses information and uses the mystery and folktale narrative to parcel out the horrific facts slowly so as not to overwhelm a young reader, I wonder if it is the "reader" Yolen is worried about. Perhaps she is just as concerned to depict her character Gemma artfully and realistically. It is unlikely Gemma would tell her youngest granddaughter the meaning of "stirring," especially since Becca questions her about it at a country fair, hardly the appropriate place for such a serious and potentially disturbing discussion. Furthermore, Gemma's memory is fused with the folktale. She cannot remember everything properly herself because of the gassing, and may not remember exactly what "stirring" meant. Likewise, Yolen's choice of Chelmno seems less to do with the fact that it didn't have a single woman survivor than its fit with the folktale plot, since it was the only concentration camp housed in a castle.

Also, Yolen does not hide other unpleasant facts. Yolen does not shirk from representing the Polish people in Chelmno who are silent, anxious and angry about the past. She also depicts the treatment of homosexuals during the Nazi regime, one of the main reasons the book was widely challenged when it first was published. As Yolen said in an interview about this matter,

The homosexual content is slight compared to "homosexual" books. That is, there are no real sex scenes, and one bedroom scene that is really about politics, not sex.

But I did not make up the pink triangle camps. "Briar Rose" deals pretty directly in one section with the infamous "Pink Triangle camps" in which the Nazis

incarcerated known or suspected homosexuals. In fact the "Prince" character is a gay man -- or so it seems at first. Because there is a homosexual character in the book, the novel has been banned in some places, and actually burned in Kansas City on the steps of the Board Of Education by a right-wing religious group. I do not believe they read the book. (Stone n. pag.)

Although *Briar Rose* may, in general, contain less gritty, graphic "carnavalesque" passages than *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, the book is more openly self-reflexive. The fictional characters, Becca and Stan, more than once engage in dialogue about fictions, especially folktales, and joke about happy endings, and the difference between fiction and reality (such as Becca's family history). This is especially poignant since they themselves are Yolen's fictional characters. The closest the characters come to recognizing this is in a scene when Stan tells Becca that everyone is made up of different stories:

When he saw her hunched over the papers that morning, he'd sat on her desk and leaned forward. "Stories," he'd said, his voice low and almost husky, "we are made up of stories and even the ones that seem most like lies can be our deepest hidden truths." (64)

Becca, unaware of her own presence in a story, or her own life's echo of "Cinderella" (which will be discussed further below), is conscious of deconstructing her grandmother's story, teasing out the threads of "Sleeping Beauty" from the woman's life. She even compares Gemma's version to other versions (in a credible intertextual manner), as in this scene:

In the storybooks she'd read in school, everyone got to wake up at the prince's kiss. But in Gemma's version, the implication was that they all still slept . . . no wonder Shirley what's-her-name who had lived down the block never wanted to come back and sleep over at the house again. (Yolen 390)

Dialogues between Becca and Stan near the end of the novel illuminate their recognition that there is always more to a story, always a different way of interpreting it, and always mysteries left unsolved, just like the mysterious identities of Hansel and Gretel in Murphy's novel. As Becca says to Stan, when she arrives home from Poland, "I found out most of the story, but not all" (236).

Some of the mysteries of Becca's family story that are left unsolved include the identities of Gemma's family; the question of what happened to Gemma before she was rescued by the partisans, and the resolution of Gemma's "true" name amidst the bevy of names she gave herself (including Gitl Mandlestien, Dawna Stein, Genevieve, Gemma and Princess).

We are left with the mystery of Becca's own story, a story that seems to end happily-ever-after with a "long and very satisfactory kiss" from Stan, but also with her whispered words, "[i]t ends happily, you know, even though it's awfully sad along the way" (236). Although in these words she seems to be referring to Gemma's life, she could also be referring to her own, a life that also echoes a folktale. While Gemma identifies her past as a folktale and can't see or remember the truth of it, Becca can't yet see the folktale in her own present. Becca is only subconsciously aware of her presence in a "Cinderella" narrative. This subconscious awareness is hinted at when she explains, 'My older sisters shared a room And secrets. They were jealous that I had a room to

myself, even if it was the smallest room in the house, not much bigger than a large closet" (233). This shows that she is aware of her sisters' jealousy towards her, an echo of moments involving Cinderella's own jealous stepsisters.

Furthermore, Becca's two older sisters, Shana and Sylvia, both of whom are pretty and married with children, scorn Becca's belief in her grandmother's story, much like the stepsisters in "Cinderella." For example, as Sylvia says, "If she's not crazy believing it—you are. Grow up, Becca. Shana and I have'" (13). Like the heroine Cinderella, Becca is in the right, and her sisters are in the wrong. The clues of the folktale lead her to startling family discoveries. They also lead her closer to winning the heart of Stan, her boss at the newspaper.

Although only one of the many academics studying Yolen's book has commented on her use of "Cinderella," (Ellen Weil in her article, "The Door to Lilith's Cave: Memory and Imagination in Jane Yolen's Holocaust Novels"), this second folktale is significant because it suggests that folktales can represent a range of human experience. They can be texts about the Holocaust or about what we may consider mundane moments, such as squabbles with siblings and the beginnings of new love. The folktale world is in the past, present and future, a natural part of our lives. Folktales are within our subconscious, and, being there, they can aid us psychologically. They can help us understand our lives and our society when nothing seems to make sense. They can provide us with an identity when we need to hide our true identity, or when we have forgotten it.

Interestingly, too, the folktales used by Yolen seem to echo the older versions of "Sleeping Beauty" and "Cinderella," older than even the Grimms' versions. Instead, the

"Cinderella" tale in *Briar Rose* echoes the strong matriarchal line that Zipes traces in the earlier versions of the tale (*The Brothers Grimm* 141), and this parallel's Becca's identity as a strong female character. Gemma's version of "Sleeping Beauty" recalls the darker, more violent and sexualized versions such as Giambattista Basile's "Sun, Moon and Talia" with cannibalism (humans killing/gassing humans) and a marriage and sex in the woods.

It seems apt that Yolen would chose to turn to the darker, older stories connected more closely to the oral storytelling tradition, since much of her book is about the oral storytelling process. Folklore told orally was an active meaning making process, just like Becca's process in this novel. In contrast to the Nazi regime's interpretation of people relying on a prince "Hitler" coming to wake up Germany, in this novel a single individual has the ability to awaken the past and solve her problems. She neither relies on a political leader, nor does she rely on a prince. Unlike the interpretation of Cinderella as the perfectly passive, hearth-ridden Aryan woman, Becca is a strong active heroine, who leaves her home on her quest for history. Although she may still be committed to finding her prince (Stan), Stan neither rescues her from any dangers nor solves any of the mysteries for her, but guides her gently on her path by offering advice.

Yolen makes varied use of the Grimms' folklore to impart anti-fascist messages, but she does not conceal her use of the folklore. Instead, she portrays folklore as a means to uncover hidden history, both social and family history, ultimately depicting folklore as a vital part of human lives, inherently dialogic because of its changeable nature, psychologically protecting and inspiring figures like Gemma and Becca.

6 Folktale Family: *Kindergarten*

Peter Rushforth's *Kindergarten* is a powerful novel about creative activism, showing how characters, and readers too, can use texts, particularly folktales, as tools to uncover and understand social and personal history. Unlike *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, which transforms one folktale, or *Briar Rose*, which incorporates two folktales, *Kindergarten* transforms and references several different Grimms' folktales including "Hansel and Gretel," "Fitcher's Bird," "The Wolf and the Seven Kids" and "The Golden Key." Furthermore, *Kindergarten* makes textual references to children's literature beyond the Brothers Grimm. The first three chapters alone include over fifteen references to children's authors and illustrators of works as far ranging as *The Wind in the Willows*, *Rupert Bear* and *Charlie Brown*.

By including so many intertextual allusions, Rushforth highlights how texts are always in relationships with other texts and are tools that are forged from the material of other texts, rather than "occurring independently or in isolation" (Allen 211). This effectively "undermines any argument for final and unquestionable positions, since every position within language is a space of dialogic forces rather than monologic truth" (Allen 211). Out of all the many references in the book, *The Grimms' Fairy Tales* is the most important and referenced. The second most referenced is *Emil and the Detectives* by Erich Kastner. *The Grimms' Fairy Tales* and *Emil and the Detectives* appeal to seventeen-year-old Corrie, the main character, more than any of his other books, partially because they were books read to him in his childhood and partially because they relate to what he is currently trying to understand: the horrors of the Holocaust and his own family's relation to it.

Emil and the Detectives, published in 1931, is a children's mystery set in Berlin. It was banned during the Holocaust, and became part of Nazi book burning ceremonies in Berlin in May 1933 (Kamenetsky, *Children's* 32). The reasons for its banning include Kastner's own opposition to the war and the book's message that adults aren't always right, a message also imparted in *Kindergarten*. Like *Emil and the Detectives*, the folktale illustrations by Corrie's grandmother in *Kindergarten* were banned during the Holocaust because she was Jewish.

The Grimms' folktales, however, appeal to Corrie even more than *Emil*, perhaps because they are more present in his everyday life. The grandmother Lilli's illustrations of the Brothers Grimm's work hang on the walls of the family home. The Grimms' folktales are also told by Lilli to Corrie's youngest brother, Matthias, as bedtime stories (37). Furthermore, the gingerbread house made for their special Christmas Eve dinner is a "minutely-detailed Hansel and Gretel gingerbread house, like the nightlight that Jo had in his bedroom" (28). On Christmas Eve, they watch a television cartoon of "Hansel and Gretel," which Corrie dislikes, because, "like Humperdinck's opera, it [had been] prettified and sentimentalized" (8):

The two main folktales in *Kindergarten* are "Hansel and Gretel" and "Fitcher's Bird." Both are important for different reasons for Corrie and the narrator. "Fitcher's Bird" is specifically important for its theme of opening and unlocking secrets. "Hansel and Gretel" is critically important because of its plot similarity to the Jewish children's abandonment in the woods of the war. Since the social history of "Hansel and Gretel" is described earlier in Chapter Four of this thesis, only the social and academic history of "Fitcher's Bird" will be discussed here in this chapter.

“Fitcher’s Bird” (also known in its French variant as “Bluebeard”) is one of the gorier of the Grimms’ tales, revolving around a key, a lock and a mystery. A recently wedded girl is given a set of keys and an egg; she is told by her husband to make sure she keeps the egg safe and never to enter one particular room. Curiosity, however, leads her into the room, where she finds “a big basin full of blood, and in it . . . chopped-up pieces of dead bodies” (Tatar, *Annotated* 203). First recorded by Perrault in *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, the tale echoes many other myths. In particular, as noted by the Opies, it is reminiscent of religious texts and myths such as Lot and Sodom, Pandora’s Box, and Psyche and Cupid (105).

Although the most obvious villain of the tale is the murderous Bluebeard or “magician” as he is called in “Fitcher’s Bird,” as Maria Tatar discusses in *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, the heroine could be perceived as the antagonist. As she says, “the heroine’s curiosity [is also singled out] as an especially undesirable trait” (158). Yet Tatar notes that the villainous nature of the magician and the heroine are not comparable. After all, one is a serial killer, while the other luckily is curious enough to discover her husband’s murderous crimes. Her curiosity is what saves her from being murdered.

Bettelheim, on the other hand, focuses on the woman’s curiosity. For him, the blood-stained key (or blood-stained egg) that the heroine is obliged to surrender to her husband symbolizes “marital infidelity” (*Uses* 302). Bettelheim argues that for children the attraction of the story is the confirmation that adults hold terrible sexual secrets, and that, “the person who seeks cruel revenge for infidelity is deservedly undone, as is one who experiences sex only in its destructive aspects” (*Uses* 302).

Unlike either the psychological or cultural historical interpretations, the Vichy regime, the de facto French government that ruled from 1940-1944 during the Nazi occupation of France and actively worked with the Nazis, took a simplified stance towards the tale, identifying the murderous husband as evil, and the curious young woman as innocent. "L'Homme aux mains rouges" ("The Man with Red Hands"), as one of these versions was called, is analyzed by Judith Proud in *Children and Propaganda*. She notes that the tale and its illustrations are anonymous and undated, "with no publisher or printer," but the tale does "bear censorship inscriptions linking it with the German Propaganda Abteilung, the branch of Goebbels' Berlin-based propaganda machine that was hard at work in occupied Paris" (27). The text is explicitly linking "evil" with communism – the murderous "Bluebeard" is revealed as Stalin on the final pages, and the illustrations highlight racist stereotypes associated with Russia. For example, as Proud notes,

Stalin and his henchman have the thick eyebrows, slanted eyes, and hooked nose typical of visual representation of the Soviets in this period, and Stalin is further typified by his characteristic thick drooping moustache. Europa and Germain, on the other hand, are clearly Aryan. (37)

The main hero of the tale is the male figure who rescues the young bride. In the Grimms' version this figure is her brother; in this rewriting it is a Prince, and not just any prince – Prince Germain. The names alone show who is to be identified as good and who is to be identified as evil. Prince Germain – "German" – is the hero, and marries Princess Europa – "Europe" – while the Russian magician/Bluebeard figure is blatantly named Stalin. The tale leaves no room for an active reader. Also, although the tale is clearly

being used as a tool to incite racism, it is not presented as a piece that has been imbued with political agenda, but rather as a story that proves who are the heroes and who are the villains of the world. As Proud says in her analysis,

What is particularly shocking, perhaps, is the fact that rather than embodying abstract human characteristics, such as greed, lust, envy etc., exaggerated for greater effect, these propaganda stories pin this antisocial behavior on real sections of the community, and by identifying fictional characters with living individuals, transform their actions from the allegorical into the representational.
(38)

So too, do novels such as *Kindergarten* change the allegorical into the representational, and “pin” the “antisocial behavior” on real sections of German society, namely the Nazi regime. However, the difference is that, unlike propagandistic works which were presented as truth although being used to promote fascist agendas, the contemporary novels such as *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, *Briar Rose*, and *Kindergarten* use the tales to impart their own anti-fascist and anti-racist messages, but also show how they are using the tales, and do not present their messages as incontestable truth.

Kindergarten, especially, is a novel that foregrounds the process of creating a text. It is also a novel about the dangers of monologism and the power of dialogism. As Corrie tries to understand the extreme behaviour of some human beings, especially the capacity for such extreme atrocities as the Holocaust, he spirals into a monologic way of thinking, into a depression, only to be released from this through the power of dialogue.

Texts like the folktales and conversations with his grandmother help draw Corrie out of his depression.

It is no wonder that Corrie becomes depressed. His mother was killed by terrorists during shootings at an airport in Rome. He and his two younger brothers now live with Lilli in a small Suffolk town. It is Christmas and the terrorist group responsible for his mother's death, Red Phoenix, is now holding hostage a group of schoolchildren in Berlin, a news event that has triggered the children's memories of their mother's death. Their father has flown to the United States to aid in a fund-raising drive for an organization that aids victims of terrorism. Furthermore, while exploring in the British boy's private school adjacent to their house, where their father is schoolmaster, Corrie discovers a secret mail room where he discovers a set of letters, dated just before and during WWII, written by Jewish parents in Germany pleading with the schoolmaster of the time to let their children stay at the school for reduced fees. Corrie is reminded of the story of "Hansel and Gretel" in which the children are forced to leave their parents due to extreme circumstances, and to make their way through "a dark pathless forest" (1).

Not only does Corrie open a door to discover the letters, the letters themselves open another door in his mind—a door that Rushforth describes as being opened two years previously when Corrie learned that Lilli was Jewish, and that no one knew what had happened to his grandmother's family during the war. Rushforth writes, "Discovering his Jewishness – it couldn't be denied, could it? – [Corrie] felt as though he had opened some forbidden door, and made some shocking discovery which overturned all the certainties in his life" (32). Rushforth aptly connects Corrie's doors (literal and figurative) to the opening of doors in "Fitcher's Bird."

By opening a locked door, the heroine in "Fitcher's Bird" makes a physical discovery that relates to her personally. She, after all, is married to the magician and will probably end up like the dead women behind the locked door. By opening the schoolhouse door, Corrie makes a physical discovery that also affects him personally. However, unlike "Fitcher's Bird," in which opening the door is both a positive and negative act, negative in that it shows the heroine terrible murders and positive in that it allows her to escape a similar dreadful fate, for Corrie, opening the door and finding the letters only opens doors in his mind that lead to depressing thoughts about how the children in the letters all died in the concentration camps. As the novel develops and he reads more of the letters, Corrie has trouble seeing any good in humanity.

Corrie believes the Jewish children were twice abandoned into a "dark pathless forest" (1) by the war. First, because of the war, their parents had to unwillingly and with great heartache send them to the unknown British boarding school to try to save them. Second, because of the war, when the school can no longer take the children, they and their parents are really sent into the "dark pathless forest" – the forest of the concentration camps, where "crematorium" ovens await. For Corrie, there is no happy ending for this version of "Hansel and Gretel." He rewrites "Hansel and Gretel" in his mind.

His story begins similarly to the Grimms' version, but radically shifts at the point in the original at which Gretel tricks the witch and pushes her into the oven. In Corrie's version, Gretel dies in the witch's oven. At this point in his story, Gretel is described as a Jew, and the witch represents the Nazi soldiers in the concentration camps. The witch

undresses Gretel, cuts off "all of Gretel's hair, close to her skull," and makes her remove her necklace which "had a little star at the end of it" (116).

This novel differs from both *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* and *Briar Rose* in that Corrie is actively reworking and re-imagining a folktale. Rather than usurping a folktale identity, as did the two Jewish children in *The True Story*, or deciphering one as did Becca, he is reworking one to fit what he is learning and his thoughts about it. By transforming the tale, he finds a way to give expression to his feelings and to liberate himself from the confines of pre-written texts and histories. As Rushforth's narrator observes, Corrie felt "as if he were at the edge of the earth, facing out across the unknown, at unmapped and desolate regions stretching endlessly away [at] the beginnings of the outside world, a mysterious and untracked wilderness" (118). This is powerful for Corrie because it gives him a great sense of freedom, of being able to forge one's way, and chart an original path. However, he is still depressed and not yet able to see how to move forward into this free world of thought.

Corrie's character is representative of the negative results of learning with a lack of dialogue. Without being able to converse or have dialogue with other people (Lilli is silent about her family and the past, and he is afraid to mention either to her) Corrie becomes depressed, which is a monologic state of mind. It is not until the end of *Kindergarten* that Corrie recognizes positive aspects to his discovery of the letters, to learning about the lives of the Jewish children, and to the power and freedom he has achieved by retelling "Hansel and Gretel."

Implicitly, the concept that positive and negative elements are intertwined in life is present from the very beginning of *Kindergarten* in many scenes and descriptions. For

example: "Stoke. That was what a stroke was. A gentle touch of affection. A gentle touch on the brain that could cripple" (3). Even the phrase "the dark pathless forest" appears as both connected to terrible situations such as children being sent alone to Britain or to concentration camps, as well as to wonderful situations such as the fantasy land Jo and Corrie have made up around one of Rousseau's paintings of an Island. They call their fantasy land "Rousseau" and it is a comforting place with a "dark and pathless forest" (130).

Explicitly, Corrie recognizes the power and freedom he has accessed by retelling fiction to capture society and history at the penultimate point of the novel during his birthday celebrations. Unsurprisingly, this realization coincides with the opening of another door, the door of a cupboard against the wall, which brings another secret to light. Hidden beneath this door is a "large framed photograph" of all Lilli's family members, all of whom were killed in the war. Although the reader might assume that these people would be unrecognizable to Corrie and his brothers, they are not. Lilli's family members were her models for her illustrations of the Grimms' fairy tales. Since the boys are so familiar with the paintings, which are hung throughout the house, they immediately recognize the faces in the photograph (138).

When Corrie learns about his family from Lilli, who is finally able to speak about her past, he is able to speak about what he has discovered and how he feels. He reveals his view that the war demonstrated the truth of humankind: that all people are capable of the worst atrocities when they are afraid, or pressured by totalitarianism. Lilli gives Corrie new insights. At first agreeing with him, "Yes, I thought all mankind was worthy of contempt for what had happened" (144), Lilli goes on to note the good things

humankind did, even during such awful times – those few who spoke out against what was happening, those who helped save her family's plates and silver. One of these redemptive elements is the poem in *Children's Voices* that went with the music Corrie wrote for "Hansel and Gretel," a musical number he wrote during his discovery of the cachet of letters. The poem implies that those who are doing evil—not the victims—are the true ones lost in "the dark pathless wood" (147-8).

Although the children, Hansel and Gretel, may be physically lost and in pain, they are not lost like their parents who abandoned them. Their parents are lost in their minds and hearts. This sentiment is further explicated by Lilli, who conveys some of the most powerful observations in the book:

We are wandering, we are lost in darkness, perhaps, in England, in Germany, over much of the world, but it is the children who will lead us out of the darkness, who will put an end to our wandering. With each child's birth, they say, the world begins again, and it is you who must use your life in trying to find a way, trying to light the darkness. This is what I truly believe. (148)

Thus Lilli places the promise of bettering the world in her grandson's hands. For her, the happy endings of folktales, especially the happy endings that emphasize children defeating evil, are true. Lilli also emphasizes that the rewriting of folktales, keeping folktales present and active, and connected to contemporary culture, is one way we can hope for a better world. As in *Briar Rose* and *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, the folktales have protected a Jewish family, not in the sense of keeping them physically alive, but in the sense that Lilli's folktale paintings effectively kept the images and memories of her family alive.

However, protecting and preserving is not enough, according to Lilli. Stories need to be retold, and re-illustrated in order to keep memories alive. This is parallel to Yolen's viewpoint in her book *Touch Magic*. She states that we must keep the folktales current since they are

among the most basic elements of our education: creating a landscape of allusion, enabling us to understand our own and other cultures from the inside out, providing an adaptable tool of therapy, and stating in symbolic or metaphoric terms the abstract truths of our common human existence. (19)

Although folktales affect humans at some deep psychological and subconscious level, their plots must be constantly retold with new details to reflect changing minds, ideas, and social situations. The propagandistic versions, such as Vichy France's version of "Fitcher's Bird," reflect a racist bias; using the tale as a tool ostensibly to prove the Nazis' racial superiority. Corrie's "Hansel and Gretel," on the other hand, reflects his anti-fascist views; he is using the tale as a means of showing how horrific, callous and calculated the murders of the Jewish children were in the camps.

Because Corrie is a character using the tale to express himself, the novel overall is showing readers that folktales can and should be used by anybody to convey his or her opinions or feelings, advocating freedom of expression. *Kindergarten* effectively models how the tales can be used to promote any kind of agenda, even an immoral one.

Realizing the power creative works have in affecting change, Corrie recognizes that his creative voice will allow him to improve the world, which releases him from the confinements of depression. This is emphasized in his final thoughts. The novel ends with him thinking of the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*, a play the children put on for

Lilli on Christmas Eve, in which “after sixteen years of winter, a barren mountain and perpetual storm, tears shed daily at the grave of a wife and child buried together, Leontes’ wife return[s] to him from death” (149). By lighting candles (i.e. creating something bright) we can remember those who are lost and dead, and that in itself is beautiful and good. In other words, by learning about the past, caring about the people who died, and rewriting “Hansel and Gretel” to reflect this, Corrie is keeping their stories and memories alive. Knowing this gives him hope, as symbolized by light and happier thoughts.

Kindergarten’s theme of creative activism is present even in the structure and style of the text. The novel is composed of more genotext than phenotext, two approaches to writing coined by Kristeva. The genotext includes the

elements of a text which unleash or signal semiotic forces which derive from the earliest stages of a subject existence, when drives and desires are not controlled and channeled into the “Symbolic Order” (the social categories and divisions of language). Texts which unleash the genotext are resistant to social standards of communication, breaking stylistic and linguistic conventions, and tend to be those of avant-garde and experimental writers. ... [On the other hand] texts which attempt to produce clear and unequivocal meaning will be almost totally describable in terms of the phenotext. (Allen 213)

Kindergarten indeed is an avant-garde book with a strong genotext, not only moving backwards and forwards in time (beginning with Christmas Eve dinner, then in the middle returning to the morning of Christmas Eve, and then at the end, finishing with Corrie’s birthday after Christmas), but also back and forth within Corrie’s mind, conscious to unconscious, dreams to reality.

Briar Rose also flows from past to present with scenes from the past in which Gemma tells her "Sleeping Beauty" story to a young Becca. However, the passages are organized at the beginning of each chapter and italicized to alert a reader to the change in time and place. In *Kindergarten*, there are no clues to alert readers to textual changes. Instead the text simply flows, encouraging a reader to engage and make up his or her own mind as to whether or not certain sections are dream or reality, or in a character's conscious or subconscious mind. This genotext style is like the old carnival settings in which the open space of the theatre, rather than the closed off settings of today, created interactions between spectator and spectacle, as in oral storytelling. This is directly opposed to the one-way relationship of propaganda.

Even the title, *Kindergarten*, hints at the narrative's themes of active learning and creating. Kindergarten is the first year of school, a time when children begin to be acculturated into the broader community beyond the family. However, kindergarteners' minds are still open. Like a kindergartener, Corrie is learning about the "rights" and "wrongs" of his society; he is deciding how and if he can work to better this society with the tools available to him. These tools turn out to be texts such as the Grimms' folktales.

Overall, the rewritten Grimms' folktales in *Kindergarten* psychologically aid Corrie, not in Bettelheim's approach of coming to a sense of one's own sexuality and growing up, but certainly in coming to terms with public history, and also the family history that makes up who one is. Furthermore, *Kindergarten* shows us the importance of being informed, open, active and creative. It opens doors for readers, including the rich world of folktales and their personal and social relevance. As a dialogic novel, its intertextuality shows how our contemporary world is constructed from other texts, and its

rhythmic genotext advocates for active readers. *Kindergarten* is an activist's novel – not only engaging the reader to make of it what he or she will, but also promoting activism in the sense that its messages advocate for people to fight for what they believe in, and keep working, rewriting and coming to understand culture and humanity, and not to give up in the face of depression, terrorism or war.

VII Conclusion

This study's aim has been to understand how and why the same Grimms' folktales, such as "Hansel and Gretel," "Briar Rose," and "Fitcher's Bird," have been used by both Nazi propagandists and by contemporary novelists in anti-fascist Holocaust novels for young adults. Although many folklorists have studied the tales, the Nazi regime's use of the tales, and the contemporary children's novels about the Holocaust, none have studied the relationship between the Nazi propaganda and the contemporary young adult Holocaust novels, nor have any studied more than one contemporary young adult Holocaust novel that uses folklore. This thesis therefore explores new ground in examining the similarities and differences between the Nazi propaganda and the contemporary novels, and the similarities and differences between and among the contemporary novels themselves.

Indeed there is a relationship between the Nazi regime's use of folklore and the contemporary novelists' use of it. This relationship is one of reversal. Applying Julia Kristeva's definitions of monologic and dialogic discourse, we can see how the Nazi's use of folklore was monologic, whereas the contemporary novelists' is dialogic. The Nazi regime interpreted the heroes and heroines as Aryan German and claimed connection between villains and Jews. They did not allow for any other interpretations or versions of the folktales other than their own. They denied that their interpretations were only interpretations, claiming instead that they were natural and truthful. Their points of view were absolute, and they demanded a passive readership. They, in other words, used the folktales as keys to lock up minds.

The contemporary novels, *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, *Kindergarten* and *Briar Rose*, on the other hand, use folktales to unlock minds, to allow for freedom of thought. They use folktales in a dialogic manner. They invite readers to be active participants, discerning for themselves the themes and meanings of the texts. The novelists exteriorize the process of storytelling and meaning making, rather than obfuscating it. In fact, Murphy's, Yolen's and Rushforth's young adult novels are startlingly similar, perhaps because the novels' narratives are all working against the Nazi regime's narratives which they undoubtedly recognize as monologic – if not consciously then at least subconsciously. It is difficult to imagine any sensitive, thinking person not perceiving the Nazi narratives as rigidly single-voiced.

Clear similarities connect the three contemporary novels. For example, although none of the three are literary fantasies, like the Grimms' folktales themselves, they are human psychological fantasies, involving characters that turn to the fantastic world of folklore in the face of wartime trauma. In *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, the two children take on the identities of Hansel and Gretel, and retreat further into the "Hansel and Gretel" folktale as their situation and chance of survival worsen. In *Briar Rose*, Gemma remembers her wartime plight through the story of "Sleeping Beauty," and her granddaughter Becca is only able to discover Gemma's true history through deconstructing Gemma's version of this folktale. In *Kindergarten*, Corrie turns to "Hansel and Gretel" to make sense of the atrocities of World War Two and the terrorist attacks of more recent history.

Furthermore, the novels are all meta-texts. Rather than hide the process of storytelling and meaning making, they are texts about storytelling itself; they exteriorize

this process. In *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, the folktale begins when it is “shaken loose” from the Stepmother’s memory. The children recognize that they are in the madness of a fantastical horror story – in this case the story is both “Hansel and Gretel” and the Holocaust itself – and that madness ends when the children reunite with their father who reminds them of their true names. Finally they are able to resume their real identities, and discard the names of the folk characters.

Briar Rose and *Kindergarten* are meta-texts even more explicitly than *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*. In *Briar Rose*, Becca grows up listening to her grandmother recount her version of “Sleeping Beauty.” Although her sisters do not believe her, Becca knows that it is this story that holds the key to her grandmother’s past. In *Kindergarten*, Corrie tells himself a story, a re-written folktale, in order to make sense of his newfound knowledge about the Holocaust.

It is through folktale illustrations that Corrie comes to know his grandmother’s family. Also, Lilli, his grandmother, explains to him how it is through creative efforts and endeavours like stories, art and music that dialogue between people and cultures emerge for the hopeful betterment of society.

The dialogic similarities of the three novels do not end here. They are all mysteries. There is the mystery of personal identity in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, and mysteries of family history in *Briar Rose* and *Kindergarten*. They also all turn to the darker and older aspects of the folktales, rather than sunnier aspects, thus illuminating the structural dyad of life, such as birth/death, madness/sanity (madness and rape in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*; the Kiss of Life in *Briar Rose*; death of the

folktale children in *Kindergarten*). These darker aspects were more commonly found in older oral versions of the folktales, the “unsanitized” versions.

Oral storytelling is a highly dialogic medium, as recognized by the interaction between teller and audience. Older women, traditional keepers of the oral tradition, play a major role in all three novels, too. In *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, the old “witch” Magda is the healer and helper of the children. In *Briar Rose*, grandmother Gemma is a storyteller of her tale and history, and other tales as well. In *Kindergarten*, grandmother Lilli is not only a teller and painter of folktales, but also a storyteller. Her stories of her family and the past, and her wise words, heal and help Corrie understand that the future of society is in his hands.

In all the novels, the folktales are used by characters to reach a state of “greater individual autonomy” (Zipes, *Why* 199). They help the characters mature and become closer to their families. Sometimes they even able characters to survive. The authors may be clearly using Grimms’ folktales; however, they are also constructing modern literary folktales that resonate with the oral folktale tradition.

Despite their similarities, the three novels have differences, too. Although they are all dialogic, they do differ in their degree of dialogism. Whereas *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* and *Briar Rose* can be defined as phenotexts, more structured novels written with cues to ease the communication of their stories and plots, *Kindergarten* is more of a genotext, fluidly moving from past to present, from characters’ subconscious to conscious minds, focusing on the communication of emotion rather than plot. Despite these slight differences, all three novels are strikingly dialogic, in opposition to the monologic propaganda of the Nazi regime.

In this thesis I have addressed only the questions of how the same folktales – written in two very different styles – have been used to achieve two very different cultural and societal goals. Many other approaches to this material exist for the purpose of further research. Murphy, Yolen and Rushforth's novels were the sole works I discovered that met my criteria: English-language young adult novels about the Holocaust that make use of Grimms' folklore. However, it would also be interesting to examine a selection of picture books and middle readers about the Holocaust that use Grimms' folklore (such as *Number the Stars*, *Sleeping Boy* and *Rose Blanche* discussed in the Introduction section of this thesis) to see if they share the same dialogism. Also, a study of the illustrations of these middle reader and picture book texts in relation to any illustrations available in the Nazi regime's folklore publications, as well as discussion of what makes illustration dialogic or monologic, would be valuable.

Due to my inability to read German, I was limited to an examination of translations of the Nazi folklore propaganda. Those who can access the primary source material in the original language may create a more detailed analysis of how the propaganda is monologic. Furthermore, it would be interesting to study contemporary Holocaust writing for children and young adults beyond American and British publications that incorporate Grimms' folklore, and if so, how those compare to Murphy's, Rushforth's and Yolen's books. Finally, a study of audio-visual materials on the same topic or on wartime trauma beyond the Holocaust would be topical. Children turning to folktale fantasy to psychologically cope with wartime trauma has been the theme of highly acclaimed films such as *Life is Beautiful* and *Pan's Labyrinth*.

The many directions further research on this subject could take will expand as the folktales continue to be retold. Retelling alone, however, is not the key to a positive and tolerant future society. As this thesis has shown, *how* folktales are retold is a key to opening the imagination.

Indeed, folktales can teach the most profound lessons, both negative and positive in intent and outcome. The folktale genre is so malleable, and such a strong socializing force, that tales such as the folktales of Nazi propaganda can be shaped into keys that lock up minds, denying freedom of thought and inducing passivity. On the other hand, folktales can be shaped as keys to open a box of stories, to continue an open dialogue about personal and social history that will inspire active creativity, tolerance, and love.

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