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The Stepmother in the Grimms' *Children's and Household Tales*

No German childhood without fairy tales; no folk-specific and racial education without them!

—from *The Application of Racial-Political Teaching*
(a teacher's manual published in Leipzig, Germany in 1938, qtd. in
Bottigheimer, 1987: 22)

Fairytales tell us that women are good only when they are beautiful, hard-working, submissive, and naïve. Women often find themselves in difficult predicaments—locked in a tower, banished from the home, or lost in a forest—only to be rescued, usually by royal men who want to marry them. The evildoers who make life difficult for them in the first place are usually strange old women, witches, stepmothers, or some combination thereof.

The figure of the stepmother has been commented on within academic studies of children's literature, yet these comments seem to focus on her gender alone. This essay is an attempt to overview some ways in which the stepmother is racialized in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. (*Children's and Household Tales*) (*CHT*).¹ I write this essay as a white non-Jewish woman who is interested in questioning interlocking binary constructions, especially in child-oriented cultural media that educators and parents often treat as benign.²

I build upon the Grimms scholarship of Ruth B. Bottigheimer (1987), John M. Ellis (1983), and Maria Tatar (1985) to show how the stepmother can be read as a convergence point for the Grimms' historically situated anxieties about an imaginary threat against the family and nation. The stepmother represents feared social forces that threaten to destabilize imaginary family and national bonds established through an ideology of biological sameness. She is

a feminized and racialized Other constructed through misogynist and anti-Semitic stereotypes. I offer a framework within which *CHT* can be read and provide some examples of how I have read the stepmother in some of the tales.

German nationalism and anti-Semitism

The Grimms maintained that their stories were pure expressions of German culture, collected directly from the mouths of authentic German peasants, free of “whatever might be suspect, i.e. what might be of foreign origin” (qtd. in Ellis, 1983: 92). The “authenticity” of this German culture (or of anything for that matter) is deeply disputable in many ways, only two of which I will discuss here. First, the Grimms were committed to the German romantic nationalist project that aimed to construct a central German identity by racializing Others. Secondly, the Grimms were committed to a moralistic valorization of the biological family—a unit of sameness and belonging that can be understood as a microcosm of the nation.

The Grimms wrote *CHT* at a time when the Atlantic slave trade was at its height and what Paul Gilroy calls “raciology” had already been established (2000: 58). Hatred of Jewish people as a primarily religious group was transforming into anti-Semitism—hatred of Jewish people as a primarily “racial” group (Jakobowicz, 1992: 22). The relationships between slavery, colonialism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism are of course too complex to address here, but I will attempt to note some basic interconnections. Nation-building in Europe and in the colonies relied upon both wealth reaped from slavery and colonization, and the raciological philosophies elucidated by enlightenment intellectuals in order to rationalize white domination. Nationhood was materially and conceptually fashioned out of the exclusion of enslaved Africans from white nations, cultures, and political spheres (Gilroy, 2000: 54-96). Black agency and resistance brought about the loss of benefits gained through slavery and colonization. One way of guarding against such rebellion (and support for it) was to justify white domination by racializing enslaved people: ideologically constructing their skin colour as an indicator of physiological subhumanity, deviance, and inferiority in opposition to the constructed superiority of the whiteness of slavery and colonization’s beneficiaries (Gilroy, 2000: 58). Raciology of course did not only target Black people: it served to constitute and reconstitute entire social hierarchies of race according to changing hegemonic interests.³ In early nineteenth-century Europe, it was in the hegemonic interest of building a Christian German nation that Jewishness became racialized as a *biologically* determined Otherness in opposition to what was assumed to be standard whiteness. Increasingly, Jewish Otherness was located in the blood—not so much in Jewish culture or faith, both of which could be theoretically renounced through assimilation or conversion.

Jewish people in Europe first achieved formal equal rights with the French Edicts of 1792; most European states gradually followed suit thereafter

(Arendt, 1979: 11; Jakobowicz, 1992: 19-20). These first steps towards legal emancipation were met with violent resistance. When the German states came under the control of Napoleon in 1806, non-Jewish Germans received Jewish legal emancipation as another Napoleonic imposition of (alien) French values. Reactionary anti-Semitic violence was part of a larger movement to unify disparate Germanic territories under the banner of "nationhood." German romantic nationalism—rediscovering, preserving, and producing "purely" German cultural projects—had begun in the last half of the eighteenth century. It gained momentum, in part, as a form of resistance to Napoleon and all the "alien" political and economic conditions associated with him—liberalism, steps towards formal equal rights for Jewish people, and capitalism (Almog, 1990: 13-14; Ellis, 1983: 3). The Grimms actively participated in romantic nationalist projects, including but not limited to their work with German fairytales and legends (Ellis, 1983: 100).⁴

German romantic nationalism helped mobilize older Christian myths about the Jewish person as a dark eternal outsider within new social conditions for the continuous purpose of deflecting attention away from actual causes of economic strife and loss of power amongst white Christian Germans. The centuries-old persecution of Jewish people in Europe was overtly Christian and in part rested upon interpretations of Biblical passages in which Jewish people were read as closely associated with the devil, the murder of Christians, and generally all evil (Trachtenberg, 1983: 20-49). The stereotypical "Wandering Jew" of Christian myth, punished for the murder of Jesus and the crime of Judas, never to be at home anywhere in the world, appears continually in various European literary and popular cultures (Felsenstein, 1995: 32-36, 62, 92).

In the Grimms' era, popular opinion—especially the opinion of anti-Semitic nationalist intellectuals with whom the Grimms socialized—falsely associated both capitalism and liberalism with an imaginary Jewish conspiracy. Over the centuries, the economic survival of Jewish people in Europe had been relegated and restricted to the margins of the official economy as they had been banned from settling, farming, or entering professions. Some Jewish people engaged in money-lending, sometimes providing credit to monarchs and nobles during the Middle Ages. In return they were granted precarious protections as a vulnerable "nation within a nation" (Jakobowicz, 1992: 21; Arendt, 1979: 11, 14). As legal emancipation eroded these protections, the Middle Age myth of Jewish people as usurers became reconfigured as the stereotype of Jewish people as capitalists. They became blamed for spreading economic inequalities under early capitalism, associated by reactionary forces with the same universalist liberal-democratic changes that had granted Jewish people formal equal rights (Jakobowicz, 1992: 8, 19). They also became associated with another universalist political formation that was seen as a threat to the nation: socialism. Jewish assimilation was caught up in a contradictory double stereotype. Jewish people were seen as either too Jewish or strayed too far from their permissible cultural grounds; either international capitalists or

internationalist socialists (in either case bent on world domination); but they were never understood as part of the nation (Almog, 1990).

By mobilizing these older myths, nationalists could define the German nation as a central closed entity of whiteness and Christianity in *opposition* to marginalized unruly Blackness and non-Christian faiths such as Judaism. The Grimms appropriated the figure of the stepmother, already understood as an Other to the family by virtue of her lack of biological/ “authentic” family ties, inserted her body into their texts and then inscribed other signifiers of Otherness onto it. This had the effect of compounding the pre-existing constructed inferiority of the stepmother (contrasted with the biological mother and father) and the pre-existing constructed inferiority of Jewishness and Blackness (contrasted with Christianity and whiteness).

The authentic mother/family/nation

The Grimms wrote in an era that also saw changes to the conceptualization of reproduction, domesticity, and their relationship with emerging nations. To a large extent, capitalism removed economic production from households where it once co-existed with social reproduction. This intensified the imaginary divide between the allegedly apolitical female-dominated domestic sphere and the allegedly political, male-dominated public sphere (Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako, 2001: 16; Fox and Luxton, 2001: 27). Women’s reproductive capacities were increasingly charged with the duty to reproduce racially pure progeny for the nation. Women’s proper domestic sphere—like the racialized nation—was romanticized as a familiar and biologically united solace from the competitive dangers of a newly capitalist and liberal world (Collier *et al.*, 2001: 16). Of course, this conceptualization was incorrect for many reasons.⁵ For one, most families have been riddled with the opposites of what is believed to be biologically imperative love: economic exploitation, incest, rape, abuse, and other forms of violence.

Family and mothering can be understood as ideological constructions whose meanings and functions can be created and manipulated for the purpose of gaining, maintaining, exercising, and diminishing different types of power. Assuming this definition, it makes sense that the Grimms’ representations of family and mothering would be constructed in concordance with their nationalist aspirations that used and facilitated various racializations including that of Jewish people. By making the stepmother responsible for evil deeds in many of their tales, they implied that the only authentic mother is the biological mother, and the only authentic family bonds are biological ones. If the authentic, biologically-constituted family is a safe solace from the conflicts of the world that originate from “foreign” incursions into the nation, and if the family is also understood as the most natural and basic unit of social organization, then it is not difficult to posit that the safest social bonds are biological ones. Biological ties presumably indicate authentic unity, if not uniformity, which is threatened by (non-biological) difference. This understanding of the authentic family

empowers racialized classifications and arrangements of people into hierarchies by making claims to the biological basis of “race,” origins, and belonging.

The Grimms' editing of what they claimed to be “authentic” German folklore is one example of their deep investment in constructing a stable German national identity. In his book *One Fairy Tale Too Many* (1983), John M. Ellis examines how the Grimms themselves wrote most of *CHT* or withheld information about the origins of the tales. In the prefaces to subsequent editions, the Grimms reluctantly admitted to having had written and changed the text (Ellis, 1983: 13-19). Despite their admissions and the obvious changes made to the text between editions, the Grimms and many scholars continued to emphasize that *CHT* was “pure ancient Germanic myth” (qtd. in Ellis, 1983: 107). From comparing printed versions of the tales with pre-publication manuscripts, Ellis concludes that many of the tales were of non-German origin and were rewritten to render the textual style more literary, and to make plot, characters, and motivations less violent and immoral (Ellis, 1983: 11, 72, 92). The Grimms never published exact details of the people from whom they collected these tales—aside from Dorothea Viehmann, who became known as the *Marchenfrau* (“fairy tale woman”) of popular German nationalist pride (Ellis, 1983: 26). The Grimms described her as the quintessential German storyteller: an old peasant woman living in a cottage who recited tales from memory. However, subsequent research about the Grimms' sources revealed that Viehmann was a French-speaking, middle-class, literate woman of French Huguenot origin, as were the friends and families from whom the Grimms collected the bulk of their tales (Ellis, 1983: 26-33).

If we are to accept the notions of “authenticity” and “purity” at all, Ellis makes clear that the Grimms' allegedly “authentic German” sources were “inauthentic” Germans/“authentic” Others. Their allegedly “pure” stories were extensively tampered with in order to mask the real “impurities.” Upon reading only a few tales from *CHT*, the violent Others that emerge are marked by non-biological/“inauthentic” motherhood, femininity, non-Christian faith, and Blackness—motifs all linked in some way to anti-Semitic ideas about Jewish people. In contrast, those who are exonerated from violence are marked by biological/“authentic” family relations, masculinity, Christianity, and whiteness.

Exonerating biological parents

The Grimms knew that the family was not an idyll of love as it was mythologized: many of their stories tell of poverty and the relentless menial labour in family homes that marked the first decades of Europe's shift to capitalism (Bottigheimer, 1987: 123-142). However, this instability was blamed on a feminine outsider—the stepmother. In her analysis of the stepmother in *CHT*, Maria Tatar argues that “Enshrining the stepmother as villain brings with it the added advantage of exonerating both biological parents from blame for the miserable conditions at home” (1985: 38). Biological mothers in *CHT* are usually good-hearted but ill, silent, or dead. As Bottigheimer explains:

Snow-White's mother thinks to herself but never speaks, and when her daughter is born, she dies. The same is true of Cinderella's mother, who first adjures her to be good and pious—and then dies. Hansel and Gretel's mother is entirely absent, while the mother in "The Twelve Brother" speaks once before disappearing forever from the tale, a pattern which recurs even in that ultimate tale of powerful womanhood, "The Goose-Girl." (1987: 53)

In contrast to the passivity and silence of the biological mother, stepmothers are living, active antagonists who use speech as their weapon against the family (Bottigheimer, 1987: 53). In the home they harshly nag at their innocent stepchildren and husbands; in the forest they cast spells; by the end of the stories their true evil natures are revealed and are somehow punished, usually with violence if not death (Tatar, 1985: 30). We can read from these tales the chilling message that the only good mother is dead and silent.

It is likely that the Grimms, through their editing, intentionally enhanced the stepmother's evil attributes. This is true in at least one case. In an 1810 working manuscript of "Hansel and Gretel," both the mother and father share responsibility for abandoning the children, and no mention is made of whether the mother is a stepmother. Changes were made to the story so that, in the first edition, it is the mother alone who suggests and then pursues abandoning the children (Ellis, 1983: 64-65). In the fourth edition, the content was changed again and the mother was clearly identified as a *stepmother* (Ellis, 1983: 73). What began as a story about a couple's mutual abandonment of their children was gradually rewritten to blame only a non-biological mother for this violence.

This exoneration of biological parents is gendered. In *CHT*, there is only one story about a father who persecutes his daughter in contrast to twelve tales about a stepmother persecuting a daughter (Tatar, 1985: 38). The father in "Hansel and Gretel"—like almost all the husbands in *CHT*—very reluctantly agrees to participate in the wicked stepmother's plan. He assumes a passive role in abandoning the children, and expresses great joy when his children find their way home to him (Tatar, 1985: 29; Ellis, 1983: 64-65). His innocence is rewarded with treasure brought by the children, and they live happily (and richly) ever after. In contrast, "it is probably not merely coincidental that the two siblings return home to find that their cruel stepmother has vanished once they have conquered the evil witch in the woods" (Tatar, 1985: 29).⁶

At a time when the family and nation were being romanticized and idealized as units of biologically-driven love and harmony, it is not surprising that the Grimms wrote into "Hansel and Gretel" a blame for violence on the outsider—blame that in reality was routinely and violently marked onto the bodies of Jewish people.

Exonerating Christians

The Grimms inscribe anti-Semitic stereotypes onto the body of the

stepmother not only to emphasize her as an “inauthentic” outsider to the family(/nation). They also mark her with heresy to emphasize her as an outsider to Christianity. The tales “Hansel and Gretel,” “Twelve Brothers,” “Six Swans,” “Brother and Sister,” and “Snow-White” each present the stepmother (or mother-in-law—another inauthentic mother) as a witch in disguise or as a cruel woman who uses magical powers against the children (Tatar, 1985). In historical practice, the lines that demarcated the identities of witches and Jewish people in white Christian European consciousness are, in some ways, obscure.

Christian ignorance and fear of Jewish rituals etched within white European culture the myth of Jewish people as sorcerers (Trachtenberg, 1983: 67). Throughout the Middle Ages, Jewish customs—such as blessing crops and various mourning rites—were taken as evidence of Jewish plotting with the devil to curse or poison Christians (Trachtenberg, 1983: 83, 90). A plethora of laws based on these myths regulated the lives of Jewish people.⁷ They were seen as inherently predisposed towards the kidnapping and murder of usually young, virginal Christians for their use in what was imagined as anti-Christian, devil-worshipping rituals at Passover (Trachtenberg, 1983: 124, 138, 145; Felsenstein, 1995: 35, 148).

There are noteworthy similarities between the persecution of Jewish men and women and the persecution of non-Jewish or -Christian women in the Late Middle Ages. Women's knowledge of medicinal arts was interpreted as a dangerous connection to nature and the devil not shared by Christian men. Jewish men and women were frequently accused of the same crimes as were non-Jewish or -Christian women believed to be practising witchcraft: host and image desecration, poisoning wells or food, illegally practicing medicine, cursing, and anything involving blood (Trachtenberg, 1983: 212). Graphic representations of the bodies of both female witches and Jewish people employed symbols such as “horns, tails, cloven hooves, and the attendant demon or devils” (Trachtenberg, 1983: 208). Both were constructed throughout European history in law, Christian customs, and popular culture as biologically deviant, demonically linked to nature, unpredictable, and eternally preoccupied with the destruction of Christendom. Located within a patriarchal social order that establishes femininity as inferior to masculinity, these graphic and textual representations feminized Jewish men and non-Christian women and thus marked them as inferior.

Anti-Semitic fears are clearly at work in the representation of Christian children in *CHT* who often face displacement, incarceration, impoverishment, or death, usually at the hands of stepmothers. For example, the stepmother in “Little Snow-White” orders a huntsman to take the young and beautiful Snow-White into the woods, kill her, and bring her lung and liver back to the stepmother as evidence of her death. The huntsman instead pities and frees Snow-White (men, after all, are noble and brave) and brings the stepmother the lung and liver of a boar, which she salts, cooks, and eats (Grimm and Grimm,

“Little Snow-White,” 1985: 127). Anti-Semitic notions of Jewish people as wandering, elderly, and cunning pedlars, and also as sorcerers who want to poison Christians, are at work as we read about the stepmother’s attempts to kill Snow-White, now living with the seven dwarves in the forest. She disguises herself as an old peddler-woman and “beguiles” Snow-White into buying a poisoned comb and then a poisoned apple (Grimm and Grimm, “Little Snow-White,” 1985: 129-132).

Similarly, in “Hansel and Gretel,” the witch in the woods (who we are to assume is the stepmother) deceives the children in order to kill and eat them:

The old woman had only pretended to be so kind; she was in reality a wicked witch, who lay in wait for children, and had only built the little house of bread in order to entice them there. When a child fell into her power, she killed it, cooked and ate it, and that was a feast day with her. (Grimm and Grimm, “Hansel and Gretel,” 1985: 46-47)

The stepmother deceives the children, just as anti-Semitism ascertained that Jewish people at this time deviously feigned assimilation, only to infiltrate and destabilize the Christian German nation. Both Jewish people and witches in real life were often accused in blood libels of using the organs and blood of Christian children in sacrifices to Satan, medicinal concoctions, and in the preparation of Passover food (Trachtenberg, 1983: 124, 138, 144; Felsenstein, 1995: 148, 214). The stepmother eats children on her “feast day”—possibly a code word for Sabbath.

In “Rapunzel,” an old “enchantress” terrifies Rapunzel’s father into promising to give her his first child in exchange for the rampion plant that his wife so craved. Implicit in this tale is the fertility-inducing power of rampion, as the couple had been hoping to God for a child before the mother began craving it, and has a child shortly after the deal is made with the enchantress. Both witches and Jewish people were credited with the power to make fertility-inducing potions in the Middle Ages (Trachtenberg, 1983: 57). The enchantress quickly takes newborn Rapunzel away from her parents and locks her in a tower in the woods (Grimm and Grimm, “Rapunzel,” 1985: 38-39).

Indicative of anti-Semitic loathing of usury, sometimes there is a financial exchange for children initiated by the evildoer in *CHT*, such as in “The Girl With No Hands” and “The King of Golden Mountain.” In “Little Briar-Rose” and “Hansel and Gretel,” witches/stepmothers have caches of jewels that are stolen back by the protagonists (Bottigheimer, 1987: 131-132). This expropriation is not problematized but is rather assumed as justified—the implication here is that the goods originally belonged to the Christian protagonists and were then stolen by the Jewish witch/stepmother.

Exonerating whiteness

The relationship between Blackness and Jewishness lies not only in shared

African heritage and histories of oppression, dispersal, and resistance but also lies in shared constructed Otherness. As such, graphic representations of Jewish people in the Middle Ages depicted them as friends of the devil or the devil himself, and furthermore emphasized what were understood to be distinctly Sephardic characteristics such as dark skin, dark thick hair, and dark eyes. Blackness, Jewishness, and evil were equivocally imaged as irrevocably belonging to the same dangerous, foreign bodies (Felsenstein, 1995: 86-87).⁸ In *CHT*, metaphorical or actual Blackness is ascribed to the stepmother.

Examples of the use of Blackness as a signifier for outsider evildoers can be found in "The King's Son Who Feared Nothing" and "The White Bride and the Black Bride" (Bottigheimer, 1987: 138). The former is about a king's son who tries to save a maiden from a curse placed on her by a group of devils—a curse that has made her skin black. The latter tells the story of a stepmother, her daughter, and her stepdaughter, whom God approaches in the form of a poor man asking for directions. The stepmother (who we later learn is in fact a witch) and her daughter are rude to the poor man, and are punished by God:

When the step-mother came home with her daughter, and they saw that they were both as black as coal and ugly, but that the step-daughter was white and beautiful, wickedness increased still more in their hearts, and they thought of nothing else but how they could do her injury. (Grimm and Grimm, "The White Bride and the Black Bride," 2002: np)

Objects that are instrumental in the conquest over evil are described as literally white, such as the white pebble-stones Hansel throws behind him as he and his sister are led into the forest by the stepmother. These white stones, like the white duck that appears later in the story, help the children find their way out of the dark woods (the stepmother/witch's lair) and back to their father's home.

Blackness is associated with deceit, the unknown, loss of home, displacement from (or contamination of) family through the inauthentic/non-biological mother, and godlessness. Whiteness is associated with luck, return to home, return to the authentic/biological father, and salvation by God.

It is not enough that the Grimms tell their readers that the stepmother, who I read as a Black Jewish outsider to the authentic family/nation, is bad. Accompanying this is the moralistic message that outsiders will not get away with their "crimes"; that God, the authentic/biological father, the white man, he who belongs, will righteously bring punishment and death to her. In *CHT*, wicked women—the bulk consisting of stepmothers—are routinely punished, sometimes with death, and usually by means of heat or fire on the spot (Bottigheimer, 1987: 27, 97). This can be explained by collective memory of witch-burning times (Bottigheimer, 1987: 101), but also alludes to mass burnings of Jewish people in the Middle Ages, especially during times such as

the “Black Death” when plagues were sometimes interpreted as the effects of mass poisoning committed by Jewish people (Trachtenberg, 1983: 100-105). In contrast, men’s punishments in *CHT* never involve fire, are often doled out to them only after going through juridical proceedings, and lack the gory descriptions that typically accompany women’s punishment (Bottigheimer, 1987: 98-99).

Conclusion

The Grimms wrote *CHT* at a time when both the family and the German nation were primarily understood as groups of people linked by biological, loving, and necessary bonds. In the Grimms’ tales, fear of invasion and contamination were embodied by a wide range of Others of whom the stepmother was only one. In children’s stories, the body of the stepmother is an ideal candidate for the embodiment of Jewishness, Blackness, and unruly non-Christian femininity because of its *a priori* status as an inauthentic mother, an imposter, a biologically different outsider. The reader knows already that stepmothers do not authentically belong to the family: when signifiers for Blackness, Jewishness, and heresy are ascribed to her, we are told that these attributes do not belong either. We can read from the German nationalist context of the tales that what these various forms of Otherness do not belong to is the nation. Like the family, the nation is a closed central entity of biological sameness, the borders of which must be fortified against incursions, crossing, mixture, and contamination that will bring loss, displacement, and death.

The 210 tales in *CHT* are rich and disturbing sources of insight into the myth of biological sameness that empowers various oppressions such as racism, anti-Semitism, and misogyny. These constructions of the sanctity of the white nation and the biological family are not archaic, static evidences of a sad chapter in Germany’s history. They are active pieces of literature that continue to instill racist fears of Blackness and Jewishness, and mythological love for whiteness, into the imaginations of children and adults alike. If we do not make the (valid) decision to not read these disturbing tales, they can at least assist us in interrogating and destabilizing our own racialized and gendered imaginings of belonging and Otherness.

I would like to thank khuya bag, Marc Bernhard, Dr. Rozena Maart, and Ali Sauer for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.

¹This essay deals with the tales in *CHT* that do *not* specifically identify characters as Jewish. There are several tales with clearly identified Jewish protagonists and antagonists in earlier editions of *CHT*, such as “The Good Bargain,” “The Jew Among Thorns,” and “The Bright Sun Brings It to Light.” In these tales, the male Jewish character, because of his greed or foolishness, ends up being punished for his striving for wealth (Bottigheimer, 1987: 123-

142). The Grimms also reprinted German legends in a separate work published in 1816, *Deutsche Sagen (German Legends)*, which were overtly anti-Semitic, usually involving blood libels (accusations of ritual murder by Jewish people). See Grimm and Grimm, "The Jews' Stone," "The Girl Who Was Killed by Jews," and "The Eternal Jew on the Matterhorn."

²My interest in this topic first formed during a workshop on sexual assault facilitated by Dr. Rozena Maart at the University of Guelph's Women's Resource Centre in January 2002. Maart presented a slideshow that included images of male predators and/or rapists in fairytales. The authors and illustrators of these tales racialized these figures as Black men. I began asking myself, among other questions, how evil female figures in fairytales are racialized.

³Thus we can look at how, for instance, at one time Eastern European immigrants to North America were not considered white—and how they came to be considered white when it was in the interest of the ruling class to do so.

⁴Jacob produced original work on the German language, *German Grammar and History of the German Language* (Ashliman, 1999; Ellis, 1983: 5), and helped found *Wollzeilergesellschaft*, a small group of German folklorists. Wilhelm was closely associated with the *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft* (Christian-German society), which Grimms scholar Ruth B. Bottigheimer has described as an anti-Semitic, sexist, and "reactionary group of hereditary nobles, higher bureaucratic functionaries, and a few scholars and artists" (1987: 141). Amongst the members were intellectuals such as Johann Fichte whose work helped lay the theoretical foundations of anti-Semitic fascism (Bottigheimer, 1987: 141; Cohen, 1962: 294-319).

⁵Households were (and still are) implicated in capitalist political economy in many ways different from those traditionally identified by feminists who tend to focus on women's unpaid reproductive labour in the home. One example of this is that within communities marginalized by slavery, ghettoization, dispersal, economic exploitation and other effects of colonialism, many women and children have worked for pay or as slaves both inside and outside of the home. Social reproduction was not reserved only for biological mothers but was carried out by men, women in caregiving roles not established through heredity, and the broader community.

⁶Although this example does not involve stepmothers, "The Girl Without Hands" was the result of the Grimms splicing together two slightly different versions of the same story in order to censor out the first half of the version that very clearly implicated a father in incest. The omitted storyline tells of a man who cuts off his daughter's breasts and arms because she refused to "marry" him (Ellis, 1983: 78). In its place, the Grimms inserted a storyline in which the father promises the devil whatever is standing behind his mill, which happens to be his daughter. The daughter, in an incoherent twist of the plot that bespeaks of editorial intervention, loses her hands when her father tries to remove her from the bargain (Ellis, 1983: 77-78).

⁷Some examples of this are: Jewish people were often forbidden to attend

coronations out of fear that their alleged “evil eye” would curse the king (Trachtenberg 70); Jewish people had to wear horned hats or badges picturing horns (symbols of the devil) to identify themselves in public (Trachtenberg, 1983: 44, 46, 67); Jewish people were often depicted in political pamphlets and religious literature with goatee beards, symbols of the goat, understood to be the devil’s favourite animal (Trachtenberg, 1983 46–47); Jewish people were forbidden to practice medicine out of fear that their medical practices were in fact magical rites used to kill, maim, or poison Christians (Trachtenberg, 1983: 93); and Christians were forbidden to buy or consume wine made by Jewish people, and Jewish people, in turn, were forbidden to touch food sold at the market place (Trachtenberg, 1983: 100).

⁸In “Little Red-Cap” (also known as “Little Red Riding Hood”) and “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids,” shrewd, dark wolves eat (actual or metaphorical) white Christian children. “Wolves amongst sheep” can be seen as a metaphor for historically marginalized communities—Black people, immigrants, and Jewish people (these communities are of course not mutually exclusive)—constructed as “dark” outsiders by white people (Felsenstein, 1995: 79). Both Black people and Jewish people have been represented in racist texts, laws, graphics, and discourses as “beasts”: a particularly disgusting example of this form of oppression is the fact that Christians in certain parts of Europe in the Middle Ages were forbidden to marry Jewish women and faced excommunication as well as charges of “bestiality” should they breach this law (Trachtenberg, 1983: 187).

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